



Fall 2012

WHERE DOES YOUR FOOD COME FROM?



Inside North Cascades Institute's dining hall in front of the foodshed map. Turn to page nine for the complete story.
Photo: Mike Cuseo, Sous Chef at the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center.

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From the Regional Director

I am happy to announce the latest edition of the PWR GreenVoice newsletter. Climate change response remains one of my top three areas of focus for the region. This newsletter highlights accomplishments in our parks that reduce greenhouse emissions and incorporate sustainable practices into all our program areas. Not only can we learn from each other by sharing successes and lessons learned, we can also reach out and create a learning environment for the public while preserving our precious resources.

Please take time to view this newsletter, and once again I thank you for your on-going efforts to advance our climate change response.

Chris Lehnertz

Connecting Food to Place in North Cascades National Park

- Christen Kiser, Graduate Student at North Cascades Institute

Food touches all aspects of people's lives, from the air they breathe and the water they drink to the way people think about themselves in relation to their communities and cultures. In an age where the production, consumption, and culture of food are largely disconnected, North Cascades Environmental Learning Center (ELC), operated by North Cascades Institute and located in the heart of North Cascades NP (NOCA), is working hard to rebuild those ties by considering how food flows from the farm to the table and all the processes in between.

The foodshed vision began because the Institute wanted its food services, which serve an estimated 80,000 plates of food a year, to complement the broader mission of the organization: to conserve and restore Northwest environments through education. Chefs at the ELC aim to purchase and prepare food based on as many of the following criteria as possible: local, healthy, sustainable, organic, ecological, ethical, and tasty. Although at times it may cost a little more and require additional logistics, achieving the goals of the foodshed project helps to minimize the ecological and carbon footprints of the Institute by significantly cutting down on the energy used in the transportation, processing, and packaging of food products.

Sourcing from local farmers and teaching about the foodshed also allows the Institute to draw new connections between people, nature, and community through education. Youth and adults who come to the facility learn about where their food comes from, how to minimize and reduce waste, how to compost, how to select food that is healthy and in season, and how climate change is affecting agriculture and water resources. "The most rewarding thing is meeting kids that come up with their classrooms or for a family gathering and getting them excited to eat healthier food," explains head chef at the ELC, Shelby Slater. "One of the biggest reasons the kids get hooked on our fresh vegetables is where I get them from: local farms. I want kids to think about what is on their plate and where it comes



Cascades Climate Challenge students working on a local farm and learning about the effects of climate change on agriculture and the future of food. Photo: Aneka Singlaub, Cascades Climate Challenge Program Coordinator.

from. I want them to think about what impact our food choices have on the environment."

One of the key lessons learned through working to implement the foodshed goals in NOCA is that partnerships really matter. The chefs at the ELC have worked hard to build and nurture relationships with the people who grow their food by frequently visiting the many farms, ranches, and granaries of western Washington. Collectively, the Institute community is now better equipped to educate the public about the healthy food services they provide, to take pride in the fact that approximately 65% of the food is sourced from local, organic, and sustainable growers year round, and, most importantly, to celebrate the deliciously fresh meals prepared each day for participants and visitors to North Cascades National Park.