

Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention and Sustainable Practices

Washington State Department of Ecology
Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program

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Governor honors Columbia Plateau Producers for putting environment and community first

OLYMPIA – Gov. Gary Locke has honored **Columbia Plateau Producers** with the Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention & Sustainable Practices.

The awards recognize businesses, agencies and organizations that reach high environmental protection goals – conserving vital resources such as energy and water and reducing or eliminating hazardous waste – while making products and providing services.

Columbia Plateau Producers and six other winners were recognized for preventing pollution and using business practices that are “sustainable” – those that support the vitality of the economy, the environment and the community. State Department of Ecology Director Linda Hoffman presented the awards with Tom Fitzsimmons, Gov. Locke's Chief of Staff.

Columbia Plateau Producers, of Reardan, grows and markets wheat under the Shepherd's Grain™ label, the first dry-land eco-friendly trademark in the marketplace. The co-owners and member farmers grow their crops using direct-seeding systems, which avoid traditional tilling of the soil. This preserves the soil's natural biosystems, saves fuel, prevents soil erosion and limits water runoff.

With direct seeding the farmer uses less fuel. In fact, long-term members have reduced their fuel consumption by 54 percent and newer members have reduced it by 32 percent. It is also healthier for the soil and the farmer. One owner's farm is located in an extreme wind erosion area where particles blown into the air are a size that can contribute to respiratory disease. The direct seeding has nearly eliminated wind erosion on his farm.

The farmers in Columbia Plateau Producers are committed to providing fair and safe working conditions according to the requirements of the Food Alliance, a non-profit organization promoting sustainable agriculture. They buy and ship their seed and grain products in bulk, reusable containers. And they educate other farmers and college students on sustainable farming.

Fitzsimmons acknowledged the winners' financial and professional effort, and applauded their hard work, saying, “Our grandchildren should inherit a clean environment, a good economy and healthy communities. This vision takes effort and costs money – we know that, and we deeply thank you for your investment.”

This year's winners were selected from 25 applicants by a panel of expert judges. The judges included a past award-winner, conservation and pollution prevention experts, and representatives from labor, and environmental groups. The judges evaluated the entries on how they reduced the use of toxic materials and the waste created, increased their use of renewable and recycled materials, conserved energy and switched to renewable energy sources, conserved water, and minimized the environmental effects of a product throughout its life cycle.

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Governor's Award Web site: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/sustainability/GovAward/gov_awards.htm

Information about the winners: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0404013.html>

Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>