

Meet the Staff



Mark Nielsen began at the District in 1987 and became the manager in 1997. He currently manages both the Franklin and Benton Conservation Districts. Mark has a Master of Science in Horticulture from Washington State University. His areas of expertise include irrigation management, groundwater monitoring, and water right changes and transfers. Mark additionally serves as an alternate on the Franklin County Water Conservancy Board.



Heather Wendt has worked for conservation districts for 19 years. She works in Benton and Franklin counties promoting the wise use and conservation of natural resources. Heather is responsible for coordinating and implementing numerous programs including the Heritage Garden Program, the Livestock Nutrient Management Technical Assistance Program and WSCC's Non-shellfish cost-share program. She is the former President and current Treasurer of the Washington Conservation Society. When Heather isn't wearing her superhero conservation cape she enjoys spending time with her family, attending her daughter's volleyball games, and traveling.



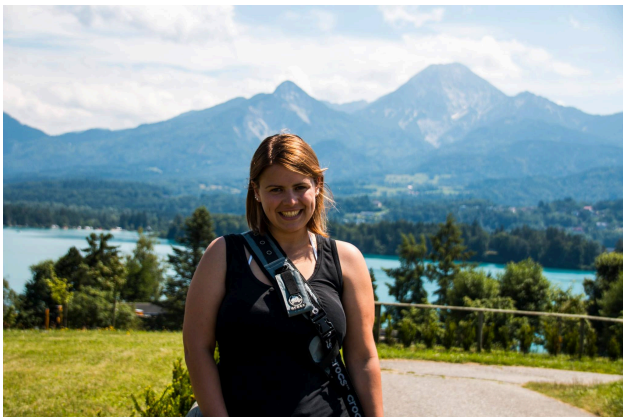
Patricia Eldredge has been with the Franklin Conservation District since 2009. She has three children and ten grandchildren. Patricia was born and raised in the Tri-Cities. She loves spending time with friends and family, boating, camping, and vacationing especially in Cabo San Lucas.



Kara Kaelber is the District's Education Director and has been with the district since 2005. She coordinates the Salmon in the Classroom, Water on Wheels and Wheat Week Programs around Washington State. During the summer, Kara and Naomi roam around the state putting on teacher workshops in Project WET, Project WILD and Project Learning Tree. Kara is a certified teacher and Program Administrator. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities from WSU and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Heritage University where she is currently an adjunct faculty member. Kara is also a member of AgForestry Class 37 and a recipient of the Carol Mercer Inspiration Award. In her spare time, Kara hangs out with her husband and three teenage kids.



Naomi Alhadeff joined the Franklin Conservation District in 2012. She teaches our education program "Wheat Week" as well as our "Water on Wheels" programs throughout Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties. Additionally, she is the Washington State Project WET coordinator and facilitates educator workshops statewide. She also helps facilitate the "Salmon in the Classroom" program for our Pasco schools. As a dedicated nerd and Wildlife Biologist, she enjoys spending time outdoors with her two dogs, Barley and Olive. When she's not in the classroom you can find her gardening, reading, or watching the Montana GRIZZLIES with her best friend and partner Ryan!



Tara Lichtenstein began at the district as an AmeriCorps volunteer in 2014 and has recently become a full-time member of the team. She teaches "Wheat Week" and "Water on Wheels" as well as manages the district's outreach efforts. Tara grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, and moved to the Tri-Cities shortly after graduating from the University of Maryland Baltimore County. Tara lives with her boyfriend Sebastian in Richland where they enjoy travelling, socializing, and Netflix.