**“Watch U.S. Make Okanogan Great”: The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Okanogan Project**

**By**

**Kelsey Doncaster, Historian, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

**Kelsey Doncaster, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Historian, will present a lecture about Reclamation’s Okanogan Project. Today the Okanogan Project is operated and managed by the Okanogan Irrigation District and irrigates approximately 5,000 acres in the Okanogan Valley. In 1905, the U.S. Reclamation Service authorized $500,000 to build the Okanogan Project in a rugged country 100 miles from the nearest railroad; becoming the first Federal irrigation project to be built in Washington State. When irrigation reclaimed the land it blossomed with fruit. The Okanogan Project was touted as one of the very best Reclamation projects and held the record for highest gross return per acre of all the government irrigation projects in the 1920s with orchardists winning numerous awards for the apples they grew**.

**Doncaster will discuss this pioneer Reclamation project with rare photographs and documents from the National Archives to tell the story of what it took to overcome geographic obstacles with an irrigation system that involved dams (Conconully, Salmon Lake, and Salmon Creek Diversion), flumes, hydro-electric powerplants, pumping plants and earthen canals. He will also discuss how the Okanogan Project struggled to operate at full potential with the planned size of 10,000 acres when there was an uncertain supply of water. You will thoroughly enjoy this presentation of rare images, little-known facts, and surprising events in the history of the Okanogan Project, as well as learning a bit of Doncaster’s own historical family ties to agriculture in the Okanogan Valley.**