



Okanogon Valley Land Council Newsletter

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The mission of the Okanogon Valley Land Council (OVLC) is to enhance wildlife, fish, agricultural, and forestry values in the Okanogon Valley by:

- *accepting and overseeing conservation easements received from private landowners*
- *creating public educational opportunities for people interested in land conservation issues and projects*
- *assisting private landowners who wish to preserve family lands for future generations*

Call us at 509-486-2765, 877-486-2765 toll-free, e-mail us at info@ovlandcouncil.org, or write to us at Okanogon Valley Land Council PO Box 293, Tonasket, WA 98855.

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OVLC Receives Funds to Help with Molson Property Enhancement Project

Good stewardship was a primary motivation as OVLC began a project designed to improve recently purchased land near Molson. To assist in these efforts, Jeff Heinlen, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Linda Appel, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), were consulted. They recommended that a key focus be on the enhancement of wildlife habitat, especially work to benefit the Columbia sharp-tailed grouse. A small lake on the property was identified as an area around which vegetation might be planted that could be used as win-

ter forage for the grouse. A combination of water birch, chokecherry, and wild rose were identified as an important and viable mix of species for wildlife enhancement.

With these initial ideas, OVLC turned to two programs designed to help landowners interested in protecting, restoring, and enhancing wildlife habitat: the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program (WHIP) through the NRCS and the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) through the WDFW. Each program requires an application which is reviewed to make sure the proposed project meets

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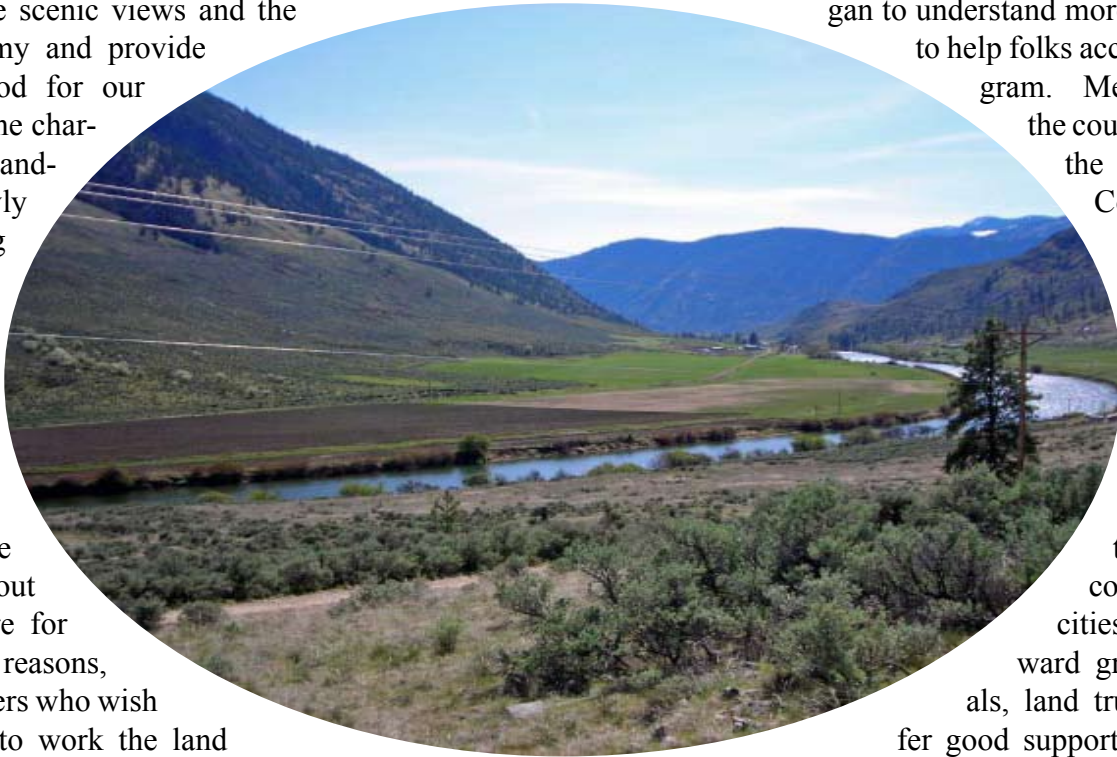
Site of enhancement project along northern lakeshore



New Program Aimed to Help Preserve Farmland

Working lands are a visible and historical part of the Okanogan landscape. Farm and ranch lands contribute to the scenic views and the local economy and provide delicious food for our tables. Yet the character of the landscape is slowly changing as more of these lands are being subdivided, sold, and developed. While some have opted out of agriculture for a variety of reasons, there are others who wish to continue to work the land and to keep family farms and ranches for future generations.

An exciting new program is offering some help to those interested in preserving key agricultural lands. The Farmland Preservation Program, established by the Washington State Legislature in 2005, is a grant program aimed at preserving economically viable farmlands in Washington State and enhancing ecological functions on those lands. Counties and cities are eligible to apply for grants which may be used to acquire farmland development rights through purchase of agricultural conservation easements. A county or city may also buy farmland outright, place an agricultural easement on the property dedicating the land to agricultural use, and then resell the property to someone who will maintain the property as a working farm. A portion of a grant also may be used for improvements that enhance the agricultural production of the preserved farmland and help restore or enhance ecological functions.



OVLC first became aware of this program soon after its development in the fall of 2005. Work began to understand more about how to help folks access this program. Meetings with the county and with the Methow Conservancy, a neighboring land trust, helped to clarify potential roles that each could take. While counties and cities put forward grant proposals, land trusts can offer good support by helping to identify projects, communicating

with landowners, and completing the baseline and annual stewardship work. Land trusts can also help search for matching funds, a critical component that must come from an outside source rather than from the county.

In April 2006, the Okanogan County Commissioners took the lead in this new program and put forward a proposal for a pilot project in the Methow for this year's grant cycle. Work is currently being done to develop policies and procedures for implementing this program in the county. OVLC remains committed to helping preserve working lands and hopes it can be a future partner in helping to preserve farmland in the Okanogan Watershed. For more information about this and other farmland preservation options, please contact the OVLC office at (509) 486-2765 or email us at info@ovlandcouncil.org.

Student Writing Celebrates the Okanogan

Fifty students, their family and friends, teachers, and interested community members attended an awards presentation in March, honoring middle school students for their outstanding achievement and participation in the 2006 Okanogan Oral History Project. OVLC sponsored this first-time project as a way to connect students to stories of the land and to build an appreciation for the area in which we live. Students were asked to discover what it was about the Okanogan that made it a special place and home for long-time community members. Students gathered information through interviews and conveyed that information in a written essay. The presentation evening in March was an opportunity to hear student essays and to meet some of the elders who had shared their stories.

OVLC contacted over 50 public and private school teachers of grades 6-8 and invited them to participate in the project. Though only four were able to follow through this year, many more expressed an interest in participating and are planning it as a part of their curric-

ulum next year. Finalists and winners from each school were: Janine Cortez, Brian Bautista, and Jimmy Bautista from Ms. Luana Harlan's class at Brewster Adventist School; Charissa Birdtail, Casey Waters, and Barbara Cox from Ms. Sheri Edwards' class at Nespelem School; Austin Baker, Isaac Bessette, and Mariah Priest from Ms. Cathy Darley's class at Omak Middle School; and Matthew Egerton, Madi Hatch, and Tyler Matthews from Mr. Lee Root's class at Oroville Elementary School.

OVLC is grateful for the participation of the Okanogan County Historical Society which helped evaluate student essays. Historical photographs of each school's community were gathered by the Richard Ries, president of the historical society, and were on display at the presentation. OVLC is already working on next year's project and is looking forward to encouraging even more students to explore and discover the special stories and qualities of this unique area.

No Place Like Home

By Barbara Cox

Bertha Mustard has lived in Okanogan County for fifty-five years, from 1951 until the present time, 2006. She considers Owhi Flat outside of Nespelem her home. She has family and many friends who live in Okanogan county. Berth is my paternal grandmother.

Bertha was married to Ira Cox for thirty-six and a half years. Together they had and raised six children, one who has passed away. She has four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She has helped to raise them.

Bertha has made many friends throughout the Okanogan County over the year. Many of them have moved or passed away.

Bertha loves the beauty of the Okanogan County: the forests, streams, lakes, rivers, land and the wildlife. What a sight to see! She loves to get up in the morning and see Moses Mountain out her door. The snow cover is unbelievable on the trees that are on the mountain.

She tells me, "I just love it!"

Bertha can remember the real bad winters, when snow drifts were seven to eight feet high. When the winter temperatures would drop to minus twenty degrees and

Barbara Cox and her grandmother at award ceremony



...Like Home

stay that way for a few days, Owhi Lake would freeze over clear across the lake.

When electricity and irrigation were brought to Owhi Flat area, she was amazed. Then along came telephones. Since then, modern technology has become something else. She has seen the inventions of computers, cell phones, microwaves, digital cameras, color television, compact discs and DVD players to name a few.

Bertha has lived on a ranch for most of those fifty-five years. Milking machines and round and bread loaf bales of hay were unheard of years ago, along with computerized farm equipment and air conditioned cab tractors.

She has seen many businesses in Okanogan County

open the doors. Some of those are still in business today, such as Rawson's in Okanogan. Other businesses have closed the doors for various reasons. Bertha has experienced hard winters, hot summers, has seen many children born, watched them grow up and have families of their own, and has seen fires destroy many of the Okanogan County's forests. She tells me, though, that Okanogan somehow starts over again. This is why she is proud to call Okanogan her home: her family, friends, and the natural beauty of the Okanogan County.

My grandma makes me proud. I admire this lady for all she has done for me. She has been battling cancer for two years. She is always there for me. She is helping to raise me. Bertha said, "There is no place like home. Okanogan County will always be home to me."

Coming Up!

Bats of the Sinlahekin

Tuesday, August 1, 6:00 p.m. at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Headquarters

Our evening will feature a presentation on local bats by Neal Hedges, Wildlife Biologist for the Bureau of Land Management, and Dale Swedberg, Manager of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Learn about the characteristics and importance of Big Brown bats, Silver-haired bats, Townsend's big-eared bat, pallid bats, and more. A limited number (8-10) of interested people will have the opportunity to observe the bats during a survey following the presentation. Be prepared for cool evenings and bugs. Contact Christine at (509) 486-2765 for more information.

...Enhancement Project

criteria and targets specific species. OVLC received great support and help from NRCS and WDFW staff while preparing the applications. OVLC's application to WHIP was accepted; the application to LIP is still pending.

When Linda Appel notified OVLC in March about acceptance to the WHIP program, she set up a time for a site visit. The purpose of this visit was to make evaluations necessary to prepare the final conservation plan and contract for the project. The plan includes planting a mixture of trees and shrubs on the northern shore of the lake, mulching to control weeds and retain mois-

ture, and protecting the young plants with solid wall tubes and fencing to keep livestock out. Next steps include development of a design package which will outline the steps and techniques needed to implement the project. Work on the plantings will begin in spring of 2007.

The resources available to OVLC are available to all landowners. If you are thinking about stewardship and restoration on your property, perhaps the local NRCS and WDFW offices would be good places to start. Or, if you would like to assist OVLC in this restoration project, give us a call at (509) 486-2765.

Connected to the Land

This is the second article featuring OVLC board members sharing their history with the land and their motivation for dedicating time to the work of the land trust.

Fernne Rosenblatt

Mountains and meadows are my cathedral, a place of calm and peace. I walk, hike, ski and observe the Okanogan in her varied seasons. This contact with the land helps me to see the beauty of nature and appreciate the small place I play in the scheme of things. I am a recreational birder and botanist. My husband, Roger, and I own and manage a 450 acre forest. We spend a lot of time getting our hands dirty and our bodies tired taking care of the woodlot, restoring the riparian area and figuring out ways to share this experience with our community. This work teaches me patience, how much control I do not have in this world and helps me to focus on caring for this land in my brief time here, while appreciating the privilege I have in being able to be in the Okanogan

I would like to see the Okanogan Valley continue as a farming, forestry, fishing and recreation environment. I think the land trust needs to take a leadership role in conserving the lands which permit the above activities and lifestyles, as well as working with private landowners and both government and non-government groups which seek to expand the economy and look for innovative approaches to affordable housing and the health of the community. We need to focus on healthy land and healthy people.

Fernne lives in Seattle but has been able to spend more and more time in the Okanogan since her children have grown. Fernne has four sons, two grandchildren, a B.S. in Community Development and an M.Ed. in Education Planning from the University of California, Davis. She presently has a small family mediation practice and continues to work in victim and offender mediation.

Roger Rosenblatt

I have been spending a substantial part of my life in the Okanogan since the early 70's, drawn by the forests and mountains, recreational possibilities, and unspoiled landscape. Fernne and I have been active in skiing, hiking and snow-shoeing, and in trying to restore the little corner of the Okanogan for which we have responsibility. I love high lonely ridges and the gnarled old trees, especially swept by untracked snow, far from the clamor of cities and towns.

I would like to see the Okanogan as a mosaic of agricultural land and wilderness, unsullied by the blotchy ugliness of modern, commercial settlement and the chaos of crowded human society. I am involved in the Okanogan Valley Land Council because I see it as a chance to make a contribution to maintaining this very special place.

Roger is a professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Washington. Roger joins Fernne in working with the Omak Middle School for the past six years to organize an annual one-day conservation field day on their land.

