



River's End Prospers

by Bobbi Lindemulder, Lead Small Farm Planner

Situated on the Skykomish River south of Sultan, River's End Ranch provides scenic views of what much of Snohomish County farmland used to look like.

Advisory Board. This requires that he keep up with changes in regulations, new programs that help agriculture, and local and statewide farm issues.

Once I saw the fields full of grazing cattle, the view of the Cascade Mountains, and heard the sound of the river, I instantly understood why owners Gerry and Stacy Labish had invited me to their 40-acre cattle ranch for a consultation. We live in a particularly gorgeous part of the country and the Labishes want to protect this land, and most importantly - farm this land.



The view of the Skykomish River from River's End Ranch.

I first met Gerry and Stacy about ten years ago when they contacted me regarding their interest in a farm plan. They had moved to their farm in 1988. Gerry was a farm kid and Stacy was a self-proclaimed "city girl" willing to give farm life a whirl.

Why spend all this time and effort? The one thing I take away every time I talk to Gerry is that, above all, he wants farmers in Snohomish County to succeed! His number one goal is to keep the beef industry in Snohomish County viable.

What they both found at River's End Ranch was a deep desire to farm while still preserving what they felt was quickly slipping away. They dug in, got involved, and have become key players in the local cattle industry. They also joined other 'doers' and became part of an enlightened group doing their best to preserve and enhance agriculture in Snohomish County.



Gerry concentrates his efforts on monitoring regulations, improving education for Cattlemen's Association members, and for the past few years, getting a local beef processing facility started in the County. "You have to be engaged with what's going on in the county. You have to keep up-to-speed with everything that's

going on", Gerry said.

Life on the Farm

Gerry was born and raised on a ranch in Eastern Washington and has been involved in the beef industry all his life. A truck driver for Safeway by trade, he retired in 1997 to farm full time. Stacy was formerly a hairdresser. She also worked for Safeway and retired just weeks ago.

A farm plan I developed for the Labishes ten years ago helped them to focus on, and put into practice, the things they needed to do - to not only to meet their goals, but to protect the environment and help them remain in business. Now fully implemented, this plan has helped them improve their operation, keep on task with their goals, and gives them the satisfaction of knowing they are protecting the surrounding environment for the next generation.

Gerry and Stacy run a productive Black Angus cow/calf operation on their 40-acre ranch, running between 25 and 50 head of mother cows. They also lease about 70 additional acres locally.

As part of their farm plan, the couple installed fencing and alternative watering sources to keep cattle out of waterways; added gutters, downspouts, and outlets to buildings; created grazing plans, and began a pasture/hayland planting rotation. They also manage livestock waste by collecting it during the winter and recently added a new waste storage system.

Did I tell you they REALLY like their Angus!? They chose Angus cattle for their calving ease, good mothering ability, disease resistance, and profitability over other cattle. The marbling in the meat is another factor they like. Together with their Australian Shepard, Gus (the official "greeter" of the group), they are an exuberant team — tackling daily chores and working side-by-side the best they can to keep doing what they feel called to do.

Encouraging the Next Generation

Staying Active and Informed

The Labishes have been involved with the Snohomish County Cattlemen's Association since 1997. Gerry has been serving as President for the past five years. Stacy already took her turn as president and now serves as Treasurer. Gerry is also a member of the Snohomish County Agriculture

Gerry not only has goals for his own ranch, he encourages others wanting to farm. He's hosted the Cattlemen's Field Day the past two years with WSU Extension - Snohomish County, Snohomish Conservation District, and 'Her-Ang-Dus', a local 4H group.

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Spring 2008

Serving Snohomish County
and Camano Island

Assessment Update

After a flurry of meetings, press releases, presentations, and website updates, Snohomish Conservation District has submitted the final 'Assessment Proposal Package' to Snohomish County officials.

Conservation districts across the state are eligible to request an assessment to help fund programs on a more stable basis. In Washington State, thirteen districts operate with assessments. Snohomish is the largest district without this funding.

The complete proposal package is available for viewing at the District office. It includes a summary of District accomplishments, a cost-benefit analysis, letters of support from both landowners and various groups, and an annual work plan.

Give City Chickens a Chance

Find out how to make chickens part of your life on page 4 in the "Creating Your Own Backyard Haven" section.



Inside

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- ❖ Recycle Plastics
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- ❖ Election Update
- ❖ New Classes & Tours

"Earth is so kind - just tickle her with a hoe and she laughs with a harvest."

Douglas Jerold

River's End Prospers - continued

Farming From His Point of View

Gerry invites many new farmers to his ranch to help them learn farming basics. A lot of folks ask him the best way to make a profit farming. His answer? "It's got to be a way of life first, and maybe you just might make some money at it".

Make no mistake about it though, Gerry is a businessman. He was one of the first in the area to make haylage, a forage that is baled at a higher moisture content than dry hay and stored in sealed plastic wrap.



Haylage is packaged in these white bags which are easy to move out to where livestock are situated.

a custom mineral mix made for cattle in our region. Area beef producers now have access to a custom mix designed for local cattle, with additional selenium and copper, which our soils are deficient in.

That's what those big white marshmallows are dotting valley fields. Besides incorporating this feed into his business, he also produces enough to sell, along with regular baled hay.

Working with Western Feeds, Gerry also created

Continued Challenges

The biggest challenge Gerry and Stacy face now is their age, and the knowledge that their kids aren't interested in taking over the farm. "It's tough, but, there's opportunity here in Western Washington", Gerry said. "Look at ten years ago. There was almost no one putting up haylage. Now there's lots of it. With new technologies over the years, and learning what to plant, we're now able to put up hay as good as what's being produced on the east side of the state".



Bales of haylage make quick work of feeding for Gerry and Stacy on a recent Spring morning.

Something Gerry really wanted to do was create a website that cattlemen could use as a marketing tool to buy or sell cattle, equipment and feed, as well as local beef. This winter he got his website; in fact he got two, and they're both up and running!

When asked why they chose to work with the Snohomish Conservation District, Gerry responded, "I've felt comfortable working with the District, primarily due to their non-regulatory nature. And they provide voluntary measures to help us make things here work that are not only good for the environment, but good for our operation".

The Labishes are also supportive, compassionate, and eager. They've brought new farmers under their wings to teach them what someone once taught them.

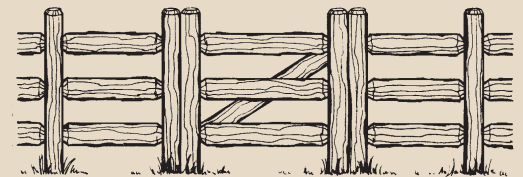


Stacy and Gerry Labish



The entryway to the Labish farm, which is both a Conservation District Merit Farm and a 1994 Cattlemen of the Year award winner.

Gerry and Stacy have paid attention to their elders, who have history, knowledge, and stories of the past. But most of all, they're willing to at least listen, if not learn, knowing that to change is not always a bad thing. With change comes growth, survival, and new opportunities.



Healthy Backyards = Healthy Streams

Bothell and Lynnwood residents are benefiting from a grant to help protect and restore the Scriber and Swamp Creek areas. As part of that grant, Snohomish Conservation District will be offering workshops and tours on low-impact, environmentally-friendly backyard conservation techniques.

The first class, in Brier in April (see box), will be taught by Jennifer Carlson, a Seattle-area landscape designer and owner of Haven Illustrated. She will focus on creating a backyard haven, evaluating what you have, improving your soil, recapturing water, backyard chickens, and more!

Ryan Williams, District Resource Technician, will show participants how to create a rain barrel from scratch at noon. Victor Inera, District Restorationist, will cover pet waste issues and protecting streams.



Top Right: Jennifer Carlson's front entryway serves as a screen between the house and a busy road.

Center: Jennifer is helping evaluate the potential for collecting rainwater in these three tanks.

Left: The sidewalk along the side of Carlson's home sports this attractive fence and easy-care plants.

Also: See Jennifer's chicken coop on page 4. Designs for this modular unit will be for sale at the workshop.



Creating Your Own Backyard Haven

Saturday, April 26th
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Brier City Hall

- Organic gardening
- Working with your site
- Building soil
- City chickens
- Recapturing water
- Know your watershed
- Controlling pet waste
- Making a rain barrel

Register at: workshops@snohomishcd.org
or call 425-335-5634, ext 123

Sponsored by: Snohomish Conservation District and the Washington State Department of Ecology Clean Water Fund with assistance from Haven Illustrated - Jennifer Carlson, the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, and the City of Brier. Graphic is from Good Nature Publishing (goodnaturepublishing.com).

Riding Season Brings Responsibility

by Amanda Ruzicka, Farm Planner

Spring is upon us and that means, for some, getting ready for trail riding. Trail riding is a rewarding experience between rider and horse. However, there are some guidelines to help ensure a safe ride for you and your horse, while also reducing your effect on the surrounding environment.

The Horse

Know your horse. Your horse should be under your control at all times, well prepped for trail riding, and in good physical condition. Stay calm and teach your horse how to react to the immediate terrain and changing surroundings.

The Rider

Be prepared! This entails knowing your route, what type of weather is possible, and bringing appropriate clothing (including hunter orange during hunting seasons).

The Trail

Only ride in areas where you have the landowner's permission. Show your appreciation by picking up any litter you see. Stay on marked trails - do not make new ones. New trails can destroy wildlife habitat, create erosion, muddy nearby streams and lakes, and result in closing the whole trail. Who wants that?

Manure and Bedding

Manure happens. Clean up after your animal and avoid leaving manure piles that can ruin other trailriders' experiences. If riders stop in groups for any length of time and concentrate piles of manure, dismount and kick the manure around to disperse it. At the trailhead and in parking lots, clean up old hay and spilled bedding. Throw a bucket of water on puddles of urine to help disperse it further.

Water

Cross waterways only in designated areas and cross in single file. These crossings have been designed to minimize the impact on streams and rivers.



Make use of designated crossings for watering your horse and crossing streams.

Wildlife and Dogs

Observe wildlife only from a distance, never feed wild animals, and avoid wildlife during sensitive times like mating and nesting seasons. By respecting these guidelines, you can ensure wildlife will be around to enjoy in the future. If you take dogs with you, make sure they are leashed at all times for their protection, as well as to protect wildlife, other trail users, and horses. Riding with an 'out-of-control' dog increases your chances of things going wrong - consider leaving the dog home.



Matt Livengood and his horse are protecting sensitive plants by sticking to a designated trail.

Emergency Conditions

Situations can occur that are out of your control so try to be prepared for any emergency. Carry these with you when you ride: a whistle and/or cell phone, personal identification, a map of the area or GPS (Global Positioning System) unit, a hoof pick and duct tape for emergency repairs, and drinking water for people. Also, consider ID tags for your horse in case you get separated. Ride with other people or at least tell someone else where you are planning to ride, when you are returning, and who is riding with you.

Follow the Backcountry Horsemen's Motto

This motto, "Leave No Trace", means you put back what you find, carry out what you brought, and take all litter with you. Any riding group you belong to can follow this practice and make a positive difference on the trails they use.

Share the Trails

Keep your horse under control, under safe speeds at all times, and close all gates. Be polite and courteous when approaching others and if there's any question, give other users the right-of-way. Safety and courtesy are more important than who has the right-of-way. Basic trail stewardship can ensure the safety of you, your horse, other trail users and the environment. Remember, what you do as a rider reflects on all riders. The above stewardship practices help keep trails open for everyone and remind us that riding is a privilege well worth the effort to maintain.

Photos courtesy Alayne Bickle, Executive Director, Horses for Clean Water.

Recycle Your Plastic In Stanwood and Monroe

Great news for those of you who have been waiting for the next agricultural plastics recycling event! Two events will be held the last weekend of May in Stanwood and Monroe. Do your part to keep plastics out of landfills.

You can recycle these types of plastic:

- ◆ Nursery trays
- ◆ Dry, clean baling twine
- ◆ Hay bale covers
- ◆ Silage covers
- ◆ Clean, empty plastic nursery pots



Dates and locations to recycle agricultural plastics:

Saturday, May 31, 2008
10 AM - 3 PM

Skagit Farmers Supply
8815 - 272nd St., Stanwood

Sunday, June 1, 2008
10 AM - 3 PM

Evergreen State Fairgrounds
14405 - 179th Ave SE, Monroe

Many agricultural plastics can be recycled into black plastic nursery items, drain pipe, truck bed liners and plastic lumber for park furniture like benches and lamp posts. See more at: www.snoco.org, search for 'Focus on Farming'.

Two Snohomish County Teams Tie for First at Regional Envirothon



At the Northwest Regional Envirothon competition, held March 27 at Tennent Lake in Bellingham, two Snohomish County teams tied for first place. They are Stanwood High School, coached by Ryan Ovenell, and Monroe's Sky Valley Environmental School, led by Deb Schuldt. Both teams qualify to go to the State competition in Skamania County in May.

Envirothon is a problem-solving natural resource competition for high school students in the US and Canada. Teams compete on their knowledge of soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics and a current environmental issue.

Free Classifieds for Agriculture

Looking for a free classifieds ad section to post agriculture-related items, but don't know where to turn? Try the Tilth Producers of Washington web page. Categories include: Acreage for Sale, Farms, Equipment, Livestock/Feed, Other for Sale, Employment, Seeds, Services, and Value-Added Products. This could be a great way for you to market or purchase a variety of ag-related products, land, or items. Go to: <http://www.tilthproducers.org/> and click on "Classified Ads" on the bar on the left side of the page.

Four Local Board Positions Open

The Stillaguamish River Clean Water District Board is seeking four new members to each serve a four-year term. The open positions represent the Main Stem and South Fork Stillaguamish River as well as unincorporated portions of Stanwood, Arlington, and Granite Falls. There is also one vacant position for a farm rate payer. This Board makes recommendations to organizations working on water quality and water quantity issues in the Stillaguamish Watershed. The Board meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at Peace Lutheran Church in Silvana.

To request an application, contact Sean Edwards at 425-388-3464 ext. 1-4669 or email him at: sean.edwards@co.snohomish.wa.us.

Thanks to our GREAT VOLUNTEERS who helped us get through another action-packed plant sale! We couldn't do it without you!

Also thanks to:

- Snohomish County Parks and Recreation staff
- WSU Master Gardeners
- Washington Native Plant Society
- Sky Valley Environmental School students
- Evergreen State Fairgrounds crew
- and the Washington Conservation Corps crew



Workshops & Tours

Creating Your Own Backyard Haven

Turn your backyard into a private retreat!

Brier City Hall, 2901 228th St SW

Saturday, April 26, 9 AM – 1 PM

We've invited Jennifer Carlson, a landscape designer and educator, to teach you about:

- Organic gardening
- Working with your site
- Building soil
- City chickens and more!

Jennifer's yard is often the site of Seattle Tilth classes on backyard chickens, water recapture, and organic gardening. We will also have information on managing pet waste and making a rain barrel from scratch.



Jennifer's backyard modular chicken coop. Designs will be for sale at our class in Brier.

Summer on the Farm 1

Ice Cream Social and Farm Tour

Lyn Gross Farm, Lakewood

Saturday, May 31, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Join us for some delicious ice cream and tour this mudless farm. Lyn Gross, a single horse owner, set up her farm with a new barn, paddocks, arena, compost sites and most important - good drainage. Lyn's farm was the subject of our cover article in the Summer 2007 NEXUS. Touring this picturesque farm will send you home with lots of great ideas!

Summer on the Farm 2

Ice Cream Social and Farm Tour

Adam Farnham Farm, Machias

Saturday, June 7, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

State-of-the-art, that's the only word to describe the features at Adam Farnham's horse and sheep farm in Machias. Adam, a forensic engineer, has designed a low-input system including:

- A new barn with a unique electrical system
- Lighted arena with environmentally-sensitive lighting
- Effective sacrifice areas and pasture rotation
- and the not-to-be missed aerated compost facility!

Adam Farnham Farm - continued

Learn how Adam composts double-time. He has his farm geared towards chore optimization - the best choice for 'flashlight farmers' (you know who you are)!

Barn Social

Trail Riding Etiquette, Farm Tour, Septic Sense, and oodles of ice cream

Dove Hollow Farm, Lakewood

Saturday, June 21, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Learn how to be an environmentally-sensitive trail steward and tour this awesome farm. Alayne Blicke, Horses for Clean Water, will be on hand to talk about the many facets of trail riding. We also hope to share a new publication on trail riding Do's & Don'ts.

Also on hand - information on your watershed, acceptable methods of controlling pet wastes, and the skinny on maintaining a healthy septic system. Be a true 'green' watershed resident by learning how to control and reduce the impact that you, your family, and your horses have on the environment!

Fall on the Farm

The Dirt on Worms, Chickens, Weeds and more

Loyal Heights Community Club north of Arlington

Saturday, Sept 27, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

This will be a good chance to learn about Best Management Practices on the farm. Network with others in the area who have similar issues or with products or services you can use!

Rain barrels - building a rain barrel from scratch

Weeds - the never-ending scourge of us all

Worm Roundup - making a worm bin for home and farm

Backyard chickens - chicken tractors, food, and more!

Pasture pump demo - providing water to animals

Classes are free, but require pre-registration!

Email: workshops@snohomishcd.org **or Phone:** 425-335-5634, ext. 123 and leave your name, phone number, email address, the number of people who will be attending and which classes. Maps and/or directions will be sent to those who are registered.

New Cattle-Related Websites Geared to 'Beef Up' the Industry!

Members of the Snohomish County Cattlemen's Association have worked hard to create **two new websites** for those interested in raising, selling and buying beef, and other aspects of the cattle industry.



On the County's Cattlemen's Association website, you can find links to upcoming state-wide events, the Washington Cattlemen's Association website, and other educational and networking sources. Parts of the website are still being developed.

This mama cow proudly shows off her new calf.

The second website was developed to help market and sell beef cattle and other beef industry-related items and services. Anyone can post a beef-related item in the classifieds section. You do not have to be a Cattlemen's member or a Snohomish County resident to use the site. Snohomish County Cattlemen President Gerry Labish hopes the site will generate interest and get more local people active in the cattle industry and agriculture.

The websites are simple to use and items are posted quickly and maintained in a timely fashion. There is also a classified section with a form that is easy to fill out. Check them out today and help spread the word – the Cattlemen's Association is looking for people to start using these sites immediately!

The two websites are:

Snohomish County Cattlemen at: <http://cattlemenassoc.org/>

Beef Sales/Producer Classifieds at: <http://www.gotbeef.org/>

Other News

New Supervisor Elected

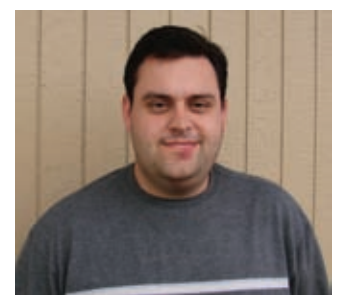


Adam Farnham

Snohomish Conservation District held an election in February for a new supervisor to replace Mark Winterhalter, who chose not to seek re-election. Adam Farnham (pictured) won the election as a write-in candidate. His position will become official at the May meeting of the Washington State Conservation Commission. Thanks to polling officers, Rosemary and Dean Randall, Sue Bell, and Tanya Unruh who donated their time to greet and certify voters.

New District Staff

Ryan Williams is the newest addition to the District. He works with landowners to restore habitat, reduce development impacts, and monitor water quality. Ryan has a B.A. from the University of Washington in Environmental Studies, specializing in Restoration Ecology, and is finishing up a Wetland Science program at the UW. Prior to joining the District, he worked for the Stilly-Snohomish Task Force. Ryan enjoys fly-fishing, mountain biking and boating.



Ryan Williams

Snohomish Conservation District

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Cam Allen, Treasurer
Mark Winterhalter
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Dick Barr

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