

O · R · E · G · O · N *Conservation* SHOWCASE



Joyce and Dan Gover: Long-standing NRCS participants, Joyce and Dan have significantly improved both the soil and water quality on their land.

purchased their 700-acre ranch in 1974. One of the first joint projects with NRCS (known then as Soil Conservation Service) was to purchase a range drill and to do some leveling of the fields. Today, with the completion of a Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) program, Dan has significantly increased the efficiency of irrigation water use, reduced the sediment in the water supply and markedly decreased the draw and cost of power to run the irrigation system.

According to Tom Smith, the CCPI project mobilized a partnership of Wallowa Soil and Water Conservation District (WSWCD), Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB) and three neighboring landowners to improve water quality and quantity as it replaced an open spur ditch off the end of a main irrigation ditch--Big Bend Ditch--with pipelines on 1,100 acres of farmland in the Prairie Creek Basin. And all is going according to plan. "I'm confident the new system will convey sufficient water for irrigation and keep more water for Wallowa Lake," says Tom.

Increased water left in the streams, rivers and lake improves the water quality, which is imperative for good wildlife habitat.

Enterprise, Ore. —

Dan Gover tips one of the 100 hats he has in his colorful collection, and motors an ATV out to the timothy hay field and new pumping station with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist, Tom Smith. The relationship between Dan and NRCS staff has stood the test of time. Dan and the agency have worked together for decades to create a legacy of conservation that has improved soil and water health on his scenic ranch at the foot of the majestic Wallowa Mountains.

Dan and his wife Joyce

*Enterprise
ranchers create
a legacy
of conservation.*

According to Cynthia Warnock, Executive Director of Wallowa Soil and Water Conservation District, “Water quality is our main concern. Fish prompted us to work in this area; farmers need to use the water in an appropriate manner for fish health.”

As a result of the CCPI Prairie Creek project, Dan has converted his ranch from flood irrigation to pipeline and has 25 sprinkler heads working off gravity that formerly had to be pumped. “That saves us money,” says Dan with a smile. “We also put in a variable speed drive pump with the help of Energy Trust. I don’t know yet what the savings will be, but it will be quite a bit,” he adds. There was also a significant difference in what Dan

calls “dirt savings.” “The water is a lot cleaner now; we don’t have the dirt and sediment in the water like we used to.” Not only does equipment last longer when moving clean water, he won’t have the same number of plugging problems. “And we have cleaner water for the fish,” Dan says.

“This CCPI project will have an impact,” says Dan. “With the combination of the earlier pivot and the new pipeline, our production should go up.” And production indeed appears to be up this year. The CCPI project should extend the water season and the whole valley should save a large amount of water. Dan adds, “And if we don’t use the water, it stays in the reservoir for next year. “ An

ample water supply in the reservoir, Wallowa Lake, will allow fall watering which gives a head start on crop growth for next year.

The Prairie Creek CCPI project was intended to demonstrate NRCS conservation concepts to other landowners. Tom confirms the project has generated strong interest, with 12 landowners laying plans to improve four other systems. “We anticipate this will be a multi-year process,” says Tom. Since the cost share for landowners is significant—more than \$100,000 each—Tom is working with partner WSWCD to secure a funding match from OWEB before applying for additional NRCS funds.

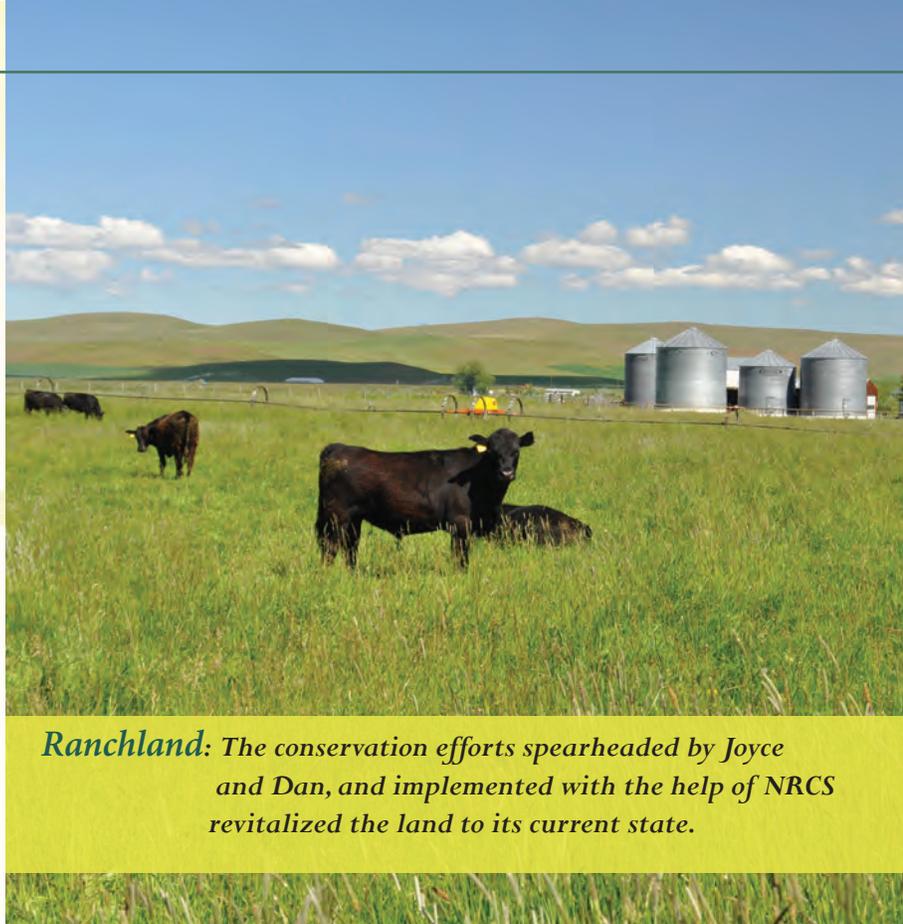
Dan explains the vital role NRCS plays in the improvement of



Irrigation: In addition to previously installed pivots, CCPI enabled Gover to convert his ranch from flood to pipeline irrigation, saving him money and improving water quality on his ranch.

“Without NRCS, I don't think we would be changing our old methods to the New methods... they have a lot of Knowledge and they pass it along to us.”

—Dan Gover



Ranchland: The conservation efforts spearheaded by Joyce and Dan, and implemented with the help of NRCS revitalized the land to its current state.

soil and water health in the Prairie Creek basin: “Without NRCS I don't think we would be changing our old methods to the new methods.” Dan uses conservation practices encouraged by NRCS because he feels it will improve the land and help out production. Dan says of his experience with NRCS, “they have a lot of knowledge and they pass it along to us. Tom is really good to work with. NRCS helps out financially and nowadays you need that.”

Dan's legacy of conservation will be carried into the future because of the visionary planning he has been conducting with NRCS. “The goals for our land are to increase our capacity for growing crops, to meet the clean water standards and to stop soil erosion. If you lose your soil, your ranch isn't very good for very long and you won't stay in business.” Dan removes his

hat and sweeps a long arm toward his ripening timothy field adding emphasis to his words: “You have to protect your land.”

NRCS *Helping People Help the Land*