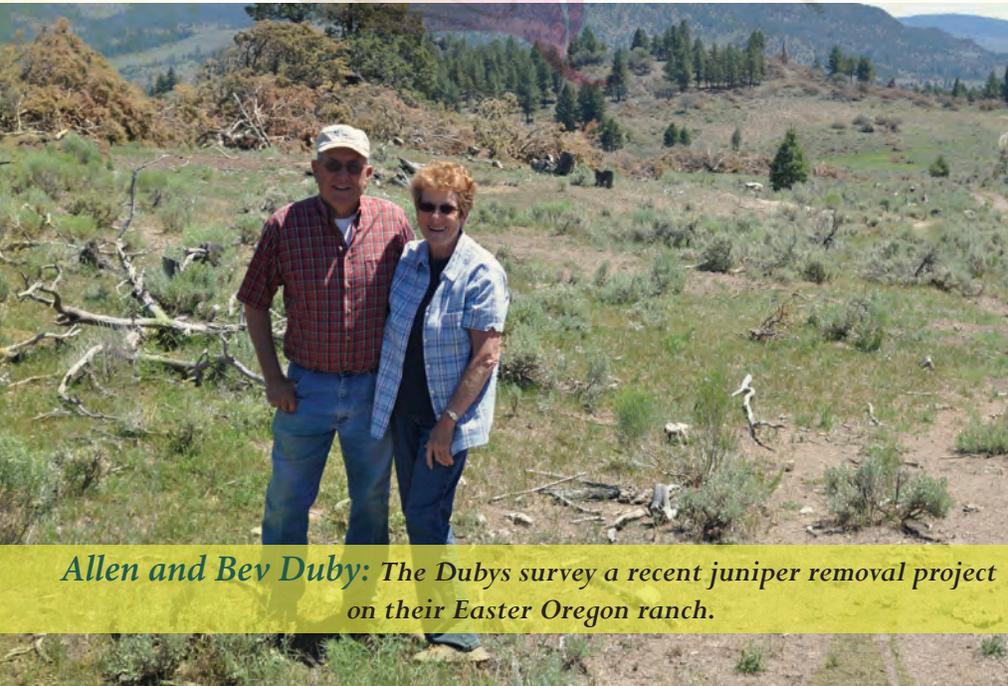


# O · R · E · G · O · N *Conservation* SHOWCASE



*Allen and Bev DUBY: The Dubys survey a recent juniper removal project on their Easter Oregon ranch.*

*Juniper eradication project bolsters Wildlife habitat and increases water quantity on historic ranch.*

*Hereford, Ore. —*

**A**llen and Bev DUBY hang on as their pickup truck bucks and jerks along the ragged tracks of their farm road. The ranchers are out inspecting a 1,000-acre portion of their 10,000 acre ranch—a section that illustrates both the rich farming history in Bev’s family and the progressive conservation practices they are undertaking to assure the family’s future. The Trimble Cattle Company has been in Bev’s family since her grandfather John Trimble and other settlers journeyed from Ohio to make a new home along the narrow

ribbon of Burnt River Valley in Eastern Oregon. The Duby’s rough farm road was originally the Military Creighton Road, built in the early 1860s to transport supplies to soldiers quartered at the Malher Indian Reservation in Harney County.

The Dubys are cooperating on a conservation effort with 75 percent of nearby landowners and numerous natural resource agencies in a USDA-NRCS Collaborative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI). The Sundry/Rooster Rock CCPI project is a watershed enhancement project that focuses on private lands adjacent to the Sundry/Rooster Rock Upland Water Quality Area in Baker County. The large coordination of efforts removes invasive western juniper, reseeds with native grasses and brush, restores aspen stands, thins pine woodlands, bolsters big game winter forage, builds a fire break and improves springs.

Because of the exceptional partnering between agencies and landowners, “We are getting some of these sites back to near pre-settlement conditions,” says Travis Bloomer, Rangeland Management Specialist for the NRCS Baker County field office. “We were able to have a large scale impact,” says

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— Bev Duby

District Conservationist Beau Sorenson. Beau notes the CCPI dollars have provided a stable source of funding for three years, enabling other agencies and organizations to leverage their dollars to “address these landscape problems here in the county and specifically in this area.” The Burnt River Soil and Water Conservation District is providing administration while Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have all come on board as partners.

“We have a legacy of conservation that goes back six generations,” says Bev. She explains that conservation is done with purpose on the Trimble ranch and has attracted more wildlife to their

land. “We’ve seen a lot more mule deer as a result of the projects,” says Bev. Allen has observed growing populations of wild turkey and chuckers, and has sighted several cougars on their land. He is hoping pheasant populations will also return. Travis says the CCPI program has really helped people help the land: “While we are improving the habitats, we are increasing plant production and it seems by removing juniper there is more water available.”

Rangeland experts at Oregon State University advise that new juniper woodlands pose a critical threat to watershed and ecosystem health wherever they occur, especially on shallower soils. Once juniper becomes dominant, only its careful removal benefits the watershed. The removal process on the Duby’s land includes cutting



*Wildlife: Mule deer lunch on the Duby’s hay crop. Rocky Mt. Elk and big horn sheep are other large upland wildlife species that seek winter forage on the Duby’s land.*

most of the juniper, removing the trunks, reseeding with native grasses, and scattering branches and debris across the landscape to protect grass seedlings as they emerge.

The invasive western junipers may use 20-40 gallons of water each day and take up soil nutrients before other plants begin growth in the spring, leaving little food for natural grasses, forbs and brush which eventually die out. Without the surface roots of the grass and shrub cover, the bare mineral soils are easily washed away as sediment to pollute streams and rivers. Allen remarks on the project work done so far on Trimble Cattle Company land: “It is impressive—solid juniper down on 1000 acres.” Landowners are educated and motivated by the results they are seeing from the CCPI project. According to Beau, “The producers we are helping are starting to do a lot of these projects on their own—going in and removing the juniper that is encroaching on these rangelands; opening up these habitats.” The communal effort will benefit the overall watershed health, wildlife and specifically the sage-grouse, which is identified as a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act.

Travis and other NRCS staff are working with the Burnt River landowners on management plans – putting in place rotational grazing practices that should produce healthier plants, better weight gain on cattle and increase in profit at market. “So landowners are achieving their economic goals together with their conservation goals,” he says.

Working with NRCS on a



*Juniper: Young juniper grows amidst an older juniper project, indicating the continued need for diligence in managing juniper encroachment with prescribed burning or additional cutting.*

project was a new and positive experience for Bev and Allen. “The NRCS staff served us above and beyond the call of duty,” says Bev. “I have never been in a more friendly office and they really make an effort.” Bev pointed out the NRCS staff made the application process go smoothly because they gave clear and complete explanations, informed the landowners of opportunities that matched their land and goals, and helped them stay on schedule with the paperwork. Bev says, “Inspections were made by the NRCS staff right on time, even in bad weather.”

Downed junipers are being cut up and hauled away for firewood by local workers. Bev says, “If only there was a market for juniper poles like there was a few decades ago. My great granddad put in the first telephone lines and they used all juniper trees.” And the name of the phone company wasn’t Bell or Comcast or Verizon, but Juniper Telephone Company.

Bev and Allen hope their legacy of conservation for the Trimble Cattle Company “will make it work for our son and his family to stay. We have the potential of the seventh generation on this ranch soon,” says Bev with a broad and knowing smile.

## NRCS

*Helping People Help the Land*