



# THE CONSERVATIONIST

## JACKSON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

FALL 2006

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

### Jackson SWCD

#### Celebrating 40 Years of Service & More to Come

This year Jackson SWCD is celebrating forty years of service to the citizens of Jackson County. Do you wonder how things began? That question prompted the writing of this article to share the background and history of the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District.

The idea for soil conservation began with the “Dust Bowl” days of the 1930’s. The soil in the Great Plains region of the southwest had been damaged by wind and rain because the protective layer of vegetation that covered the soil was impaired or destroyed through poor farming practices and overgrazing. Sometimes there was too much rain, while other areas remained dry. With the lack of rain, windstorms piled powdery topsoil in desolate drifts. From study and observation during his career as a soil scientist in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Hugh Bennett was convinced that soil erosion was a menace to long-term productivity of the land. The public works programs created in response to the Great Depression provided him with an opportunity to put people to work on saving soil. Beginning in 1933 as head of the Soil Erosion Service, he received emergency employment money to demonstrate soil and water conservation methods in select watersheds. The work proved popular and Congress created the Soil Conservation Service with the Soil Conservation Act of 1935. For the most part, the early agency continued to promote soil conservation through demonstration projects as trained soil conservationists worked directly with farmers.

Passage of the Act signaled the time to convince farmers across the country to engage in conservation practices. One of the best ways to spread soil conservation beyond scattered demonstration projects and encourage agricultural reform was to have individual farmers and ranchers take an active role. They had to accept conservation as a goal and ultimately make it a regular part of their farming operations. Because of the Soil Conservation Act, farmers could rely on the availability of equipment, labor, and the assistance of trained soil conservationists to make conservation happen.

In 1937, the federal government defined a model conservation district law for all states to consider. Such districts would be classified as “special districts” because they would have limited purposes and would not be a local unit of government (like a county or city). In 1939, the Oregon Legislature passed the Soil Conservation District Law, creating the mechanism by which soil conservation districts could be established in the state.

In 1951, the Sams Valley-Beagle Soil and Water Conservation District was formed, encompassing 59,040 acres of farms, orchards, and ranches. Within three years, 837,000 acres had been added from Prospect in the north as well as the northeast part of the county including Eagle Point and Lake Creek (see map). The name of the District was changed to Jackson SWCD. During this time, the Ramsey Canyon Dam was built with the help of the District. The dam and delivery ditches were built to irrigate 400 acres by five local landowners along with the

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*Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District is your gateway to natural resource assistance. Board members and staff work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to ensure educational and on-the-ground technical assistance opportunities take place which help the landowners of Jackson County.*



**Chair's Corner**

*By Barbara Niedermeyer*

I would like to extend a BIG THANK YOU to ALL our supporters for the passing of our tax rate. And a special Thank you to the Friends of Jackson SWCD who were out there campaigning for the District. I would also like to thank all the county commissioners for their wonderful support to the district obtaining the tax rate. The tax rate will allow us to hire more staff so that we have a quicker turn around time when a customer requests our help.

I want to congratulate Keith Corp and Marsha McCormick as the winners of the 2006 Cooperator of the Year award for the Southwest Basin area. A plaque was given out at the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention in Newport on November 14, 2006.

Jackson SWCD has been very busy since the last newsletter. We printed another 10,000 copies of the Rural Living Handbook the middle of October and they are being distributed around the valley at various medical offices and stores. If you would like a copy, please contact our office.

We are in the process of planning our annual meeting/celebration. It will be on February 9, 2007. We will have more on it later. In the mean time mark your calendars.

Until next time,  
Have A Koala-ity Day !

**Memo:**

**Front Office Hours**

**Linda Town is available 1-5 pm Monday to Friday**

**Phone calls and Walk-ins are Welcome**

**Call with questions regarding your operation or come pick up a Rural Living Handbook!**

**Jackson**

**Soil and Water Conservation District**

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Linda Town, Administrative Secretary  
Janet Mogel, Fiscal Officer  
Margaret Meierhenry, Newsletter Editor

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**USDA, Farm Service Agency**

**Staff:** Trent Luschen, County Executive Director  
Diane Rabbe, Program Technician  
Donna Finch, Program Technician

**Tax Deductibility for Donations / Contributions**

Please think of Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) if you are interested in donating, gifting, granting, and/or bequeathing items, real or personal property, or monetary contributions for soil and water conservation efforts. Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government. IRS Code, **Section 17 0(c) (1)** states: Contributions or gifts to a state or any of its political subdivisions, i.e., conservation districts, are "charitable" contributions for tax purposes, and are, therefore, **tax deductible**. (See IRS Publication 526: Charitable Contributions).

JSWCD depends on funding from grants, donations, County Service Partners, and some State funds to implement, maintain, and/or support soil and water conservation efforts. Your help is greatly appreciated. Contact **Linda Town (541) 734-3143 linda.town@or.nacdnet.net**

**County Committee members:**

**LAA1** - Suzanne Ginet, Chairperson  
**LAA3** - Lori Mefford, Vice-chair  
**LAA2** - Mel Morris, Member

## Manager's Message

### Randy White

#### JSWCD District Manager

This is my first attempt at providing a "Manager's Message" section in our newsletter. Fortunately, we have plenty to talk about since our last edition. First and foremost, I would like to thank all of the people (and you know who you are) that helped the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District with a successful Tax Rate measure. I would also like to thank all of the citizens of Jackson County that showed support for the District by voting for the measure. Your confidence in our mission will help provide a sustainable source of landowner assistance for natural resource stewardship in our county. As the District moves forward, we will do our best to assure that Natural Resource Concerns become landowner opportunities.

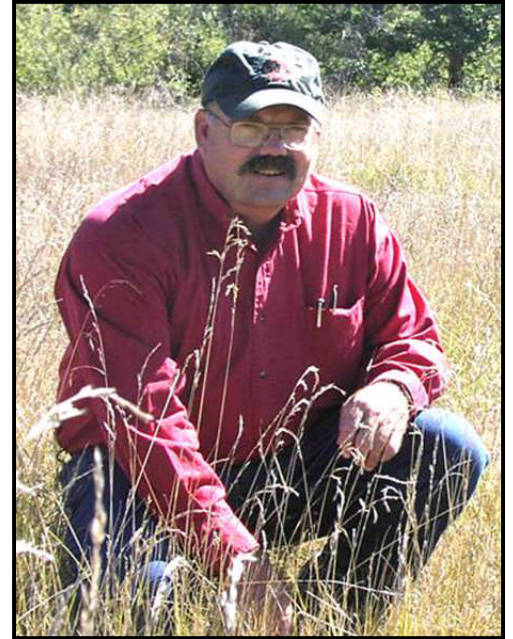
A big help to Jackson County citizens is the printing of the second edition of our Rural Living Handbook. We printed 10,000 copies the middle of October and over 6,500 copies have been distributed, to date. This sought after publication is a great source of information for those thinking about moving to the country, as well as those that already own and/or manage rural properties. The Rural Living Handbook can be found at local libraries and many businesses, or give us a call if you would like a copy or know of someone that could use a copy. The publication is free, but we ask that you cover the mailing cost if you cannot pick one up at the office. The District office is located on Parsons Drive, Suite 102, Medford, (541-734-3143).

Another big boost for the District is the addition of a WEB site. Ken Schiff with GuiGuy has helped the District put together an excellent site with great information and interesting links to help you with many of your landowner projects. Please check it out at [www.jswcd.org](http://www.jswcd.org).

In conjunction with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), we have landowner assistance programs that can help with both technical and financial assistance for your soil and water conservation needs. These programs range from landowner small grants, through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement board and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) in conjunction with NRCS, or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, through FSA. You are welcome to come in and talk with us about any of these programs or just simply talk about some of your goals and objectives for your operation.

The Districts Farm and Ranch Resource Management (FARRM) group is another way to get help from friends and neighbors that are engaged in similar types of operations. Folks who are new to farming or ranching learn from members who have been established for years. There are informal monthly meetings, workshops, with local, as well as, an annual farm tour expanding the opportunities to see farming operations first hand.

We would like to hear from you,  
Randy



## New Staff at Oregon Department of Agriculture

In May, Eric Nusbaum started as the new Agricultural Water Quality Specialist for the ODA. He was previously the District Manager for the Siuslaw SWCD and during those seven years he became familiar with the SWCD's mission. He also operated a small blueberry farm in Deadwood, OR before moving to take up this position.

As the Water Quality Specialist for southwest Oregon, his duties include the implementation of the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plans and Rules. Implementation provides for:

- ❖ Outreach and education information to landowners, so that they understand their rights and responsibilities under these rules.
- ❖ Investigate and work with landowners concerning valid water quality complaints related to agriculture activity and finding a workable and voluntary solution.
- ❖ Technical assistance to both the District's and local landowners to assist with:
  - the development and monitoring of projects to demonstrate best management practices
  - projects to control water pollution
  - projects that improve degraded watershed conditions.

Contact Eric with regards to any questions or for technical assistance (541-302-3043) or [enusbaum@oda.state.or.us](mailto:enusbaum@oda.state.or.us).

**Celebrating 40 years**

*(Continued from page 1)*

assistance of the District and the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (now known as FSA).

Another district covering the agricultural area of the Applegate and the west side of Medford was formed in 1953. The remaining lands in the southern portion of the county (Ashland) were included the following year, and in 1958 the Evans Creek area was added to the Rogue Soil and Water Conservation District (see map). Each district had a set of directors and worked on conservation issues that were unique to landowners in its area. Funding was a problem and at one time the Rogue SWCD directors pitched in \$5.00 per member each meeting so that they would have some money to work with. Through a federal grant, they purchased a surplus dump truck and tractor, eventually selling them to generate revenue for the District.

In 1966, the two districts were consolidated into the present Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD). The new district combined resources and funding to create a valley-wide conservation plan and work on a cooperative basis to address a wide range of conservation issues: erosion, irrigation, soil classification, timber management, watershed management, drainage improvement, range improvement, and weed control, as well as problems affecting the best use of the land and water resources within the District.

Don Minear, a local orchardist and dairyman, was elected as the first president of the new five-member board. They met in many locations over the years, starting in the county courthouse on Main and Oakdale and later in a corner office on the third floor of the present-day post office. Funding remained a concern after the consolidation of the two districts, so the board approached the county commis-

sioners to ask for help in implementing conservation projects for the Valley. The County bought a pickup truck with a 6-inch auger for the District, which was used for taking soil samples and accessing drain lines. When local residents voted to combine the districts, the measure included an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS]). The working relationship that developed over the years begins with the District signing agreements with individual landowners, then trained soil conservationists from NRCS field offices work directly with them to address conservation problems. Clem Alt was the local USDA soils specialist who oversaw the development of the soil profile for Jackson County.

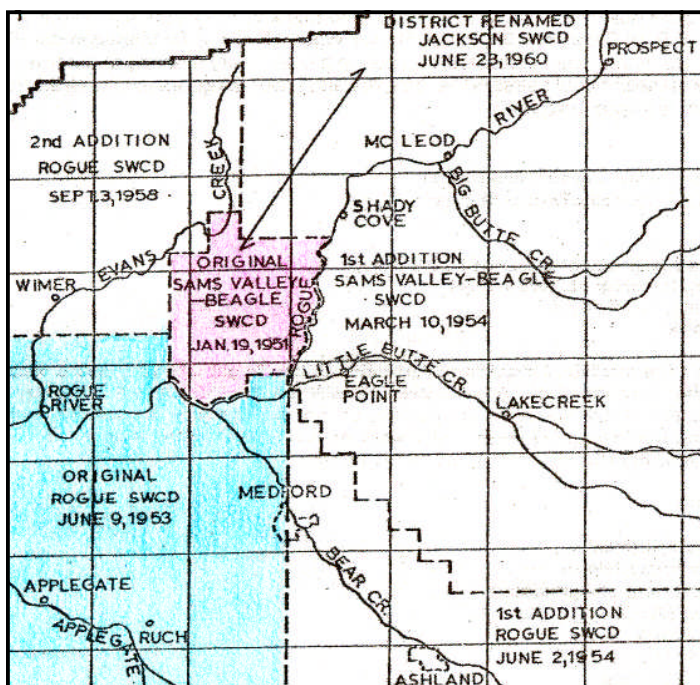
During the 1960's, the District worked on farm plans and designed irrigations systems to effectively use water by leveling ground, installing sprinklers, or digging ponds for storage, as well as draining wetlands. The District worked in partnership with ranchers and farmers to conserve soil and water and to improve their property using a variety of practices, including selective forestry.

In 1969, Linda Town went to work for the Jackson SWCD in the building on the corner of North Riverside and Barnett (most recently home to Subway Sandwiches). The soil scientists were housed in nearby buildings until the soil profile was completed. This soil data has been available to landowners along with knowledge of flood hazards and erosion control techniques to help guide residential and business development wisely over the years. During the 70's, the District occupied other buildings in that location until moving to share office space with other USDA agencies on Ellen Place in the late 1980's. Linda has accompanied each move, including the move to the current location on Parsons Drive.

Demand on natural resources, often created by the expanding population, has created new problems for water quality, quantity, management, and drainage. Over the years, the District has found itself focusing on different types of resource management – from agricultural to urban. It has been instrumental in the development of the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Management Plans and Rules as well as being designated the Lead Management Agency for their implementation. Many Sams Valley landowners received technical and financial assistance with restoration efforts after the Hull Mountain fire in 1994, and JSWCD served as the local contact agency for federal relief disaster funds following the New Year's Day flood of 1997. The District continues to partner with many local, state and federal agencies and local cooperators such as agricultural companies and individual landowners and operators, large or small.

The present JSWCD Board of Directors includes elected representatives from each of the five zones and two

*(Continued on page 5)*



**Celebrating 40 years**

*(Continued from page 4)*

members-at-large. A District Manager implements the day-to-day assistance to landowners with technical and financial support for natural resource stewardship in Jackson County. Progress has been made over the last forty years and with the sustainable funding provided by area residents in the recent general election, Jackson SWCD plans to move forward in its mission to take natural resource concerns and turn them into management opportunities to improve the quality of life for all Jackson County citizens.

**Editor's Note:** A thank you is extended to Don Minear, Dalton Straus, and Linda Town for sharing historical information about the district's beginning. Historical information was also gleaned from the USDA-NRCS web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/articles/convationdistricts.html>



*Congratulations*

**Keith Corp and Marsha MacCormack Corp Ranch**

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts  
— Southwest Basin —

**2006 Cooperator of the Year Award**



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**FARRM AND RANCH RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Annual FARRM Tour  
By Larry Martin

In August, several members of FARRM (Farm and Ranch Resource Management) traveled north to Skagit County, Washington for the beginning of our annual tour. The first stop was at Skagit River Ranch, owned and operated by George and Eiko Vojkovich. Their ranch is certified organic and they produce and market 100% grass-fed beef, pork, pastured chickens, and eggs.

Despite overcast and rainy skies, we were able to observe the USDA certified mobile processing unit in action as eight head of cattle were slaughtered during the day. Skagit River Ranch is one of several producers in that area who formed a cooperative that operates the mobile processing unit and an associated cut and wrap facility. Their mobile processing unit was the first of its kind to operate in the United States. Two employees of the Co-op handled the slaughtering duties while a USDA inspector fulfilled his duties.

While the slaughter unit was in action, we were able to observe George turning his rows of compost and adding the offal from the slaughtered animals into those compost piles. He showed us where he had deposited offal from previous slaughter dates and the offal (except for bones) was indistinguishable after two weeks in the compost.

While at Skagit River Ranch, we were also able to see their chicken and swine enterprises and look at their beef herd on

pasture. We were treated to a lunch prepared by George and Eiko where we had a chance to sit down and visit with Bruce Dunlop, who is currently the head of the meat-processing cooperative.

In the afternoon, we traveled to the cut and wrap facility where we were given a short tour. We were able to see beef from Skagit River Ranch being processed by the Co-op employees working at the facility.


After our tour of the cut and wrap facility, we stopped at a local farm that had a farm store and enjoyed some fresh baked goods and other treats.

The next day, we traveled to Mt. St. Helens and learned about the 1980 eruption and the changes to the area that occurred during the following years.



**Charlie Boyer**  
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The next **FARRM meeting** is scheduled for **Thursday, Dec. 14, 2006**. This will be a Potluck Dinner starting at 6:00 pm. This meeting is being held at the **OSU Extension Auditorium NOT the USDA Service Center Conference Room.**  
**A-M = bring Dessert N-Z = bring Main Dish**

This program promises to be of interest to all. Representatives from **Oregon Livestock Producers Association (OLPA)** and **Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF, USA)** will be presenting valuable information addressing animal ID and its possible future ramifications on all livestock species, Mandatory Country of Origin labeling (M-Cool), and other timely issues facing the livestock industry.

Currently, these topics are in every livestock industry publication, so this meeting, with the representatives of these organizations, is timely and important. Encourage your neighbor and/or friends to attend.

Please **RSVP by December 13<sup>th</sup>**. Call **Linda: 734-3143**

**E-mail: linda.town@or.nacdn.net**

**Special Note: It is the intent of the FARRM leadership to bring more informational topics, such as the above, to our membership! If you have topics of interest that you believe the rest of the members would like to hear and learn about, please let us know.**

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# "Weed of Distinction"

## IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO CONTROL THIS MENACE

### *Puncturevine*



Many noxious weeds are prevalent in the Rogue Valley. Puncturevine (aka Goatheads) is a pervasive, low-growing annual plant with small yellow flowers that sends out seed-bearing tendrils that can reach 6-8 feet in length! Puncturevine grows along road shoulders, dirt roads, in vacant lots, ball fields, and probably on your property or your neighbor's property. If these plants are on your property, or along the road shoulder in front of your place, get rid of them! Don't wait for the State or County road dept – they've got a lot of territory to cover. You have to take control, and if you don't, you'll be the loser – not the state

or the county.

**Treatment** - Puncturevine produces seed within days of germinating. Once a plant produces seed, herbicides will kill the plant, but not the seeds. To get rid of larger, adult plants, a shovel, hoe, or claw hammer works well to sever the root stem. Do not shake the seed loose from the green plant. Place the plants in a trash bag or burn barrel to eliminate further spread of this plant. If plants are allowed to dry, the seed will detach from the plant, so it's important to dispose of the plant immediately after it's removed from the soil. Seeds may be present in the soil from last year's plants, so watch for new sprouts.

Herbicides can be an effective way to control this plant, but only when it's quite small. Spraying a large seed-producing plant kills the plant, but not the seeds, which will detach and remain viable. Therefore, spraying adult plants is not a very effective method of treatment.

**Follow-up** – Puncturevine control requires re-treatment on a 7-10 day interval throughout the summer. Even after initial spraying, seeds lying in the soil will germinate and sprout. The small seedling stage is the best time to treat, since they don't bear seeds yet. Whatever method you use to eliminate this noxious weed, follow through and do not stop the treatment, or you'll find yourself back at square one quickly.

**Winter treatment** – If you remember where your puncturevine plants were from the pervious summer, a propane weed burner can do a good job of killing the seeds during winter months. Most of the seeds are within the upper 1/4" of the soil, so high-intensity heat will certainly kill the seeds. Safety precautions are a must when using this method, as there may be combustible objects nearby and ready to burn.

Diligence and determination are needed to rid your property of this plant, just as with other noxious weeds. It's a fight that cannot be won in a single season. It may take several years to deplete the seed bank in the soil. If you take a season off, you'll soon be back where you started. Inform your neighbors; many landowners are still unaware of this plant and how pervasive in can be. If you only have a few (less than 50) plants, hand pulling and bagging is still the most effective method of control.

For further information, contact Bob Budes, BLM Weed Coordinator, at (541) 618-2287, or [bob\\_budes@or.blm.gov](mailto:bob_budes@or.blm.gov).



### Check out the Jackson SWCD Website

[www.jswcd.org](http://www.jswcd.org)

Learn about your District

- Power Point Presentation: "Who We Are and What We Do"
- Download the "Rural Living Handbook"
- View the JSWCD Newsletter – "The Conservationist"
- Connect with FARRM members sites
- Link to many resources
- Check for up-coming events on the Calendar



## Links to the Past

### Riverside Ranch on Dodge Road

By Lois Wilson

Jim and I bought the Riverside Ranch, comprising about sixteen hundred acres of pasture and wooded area, in 1960 from Burdette and Sybil Dodge. Burdette's father had bought the place in the early 1900's and it had been used for orchards and later for raising hogs and cattle. Burdette told us that at one time a fellow he called "Watermelon" Jackson had raised watermelons on the sandy loam by the river and had made a killing with his early fruit in the California market. During WWII the ranch was taken over by the Army as their extended firing range and then bought back after the war by Burdette.

A wonderful old pump irrigated the ranch down by Dodge Bridge and the water went under Highway 234 up into a notch, from which it then flowed back into the ditches by gravity and with the use of siphons under the highway and Dodge Road. Ninety-four cows, mostly Angus-cross, and three Angus bulls came with the place and we added the first small herd of Charolais cows that came into the valley. We ended up selling the Charolais because at that time dairymen were using them as a cross and our pure beef calves were undersold as if they were part dairy. After a few years, as my husband's law practice was expanding, we decided to cut back on the size of the herd and sold the thousand acres across the highway, retaining the rest along the river. We improved some of the pasture with the help of the NRCS and continued to ranch. A few years ago we applied for and received further help in resituating our pump in the river and added the opportunity for overhead sprinkling. When the children grew up and my husband's law practice took more of his time, we cut back further on the number of animals on the place, but the pleasure of being here and having livestock around us has never diminished. We rent the pasture and a small herd of my cows is cared for along with those of my renter. Renting has meant that, while we are not as intimately involved in physical ranch work, we are still useful in watching out for trouble and providing timely information to the operator when water troughs needing fixing or cows are where they aren't supposed to be.

During the early years, our four children were actively involved in 4-H, having several different projects. The older son applied his lifelong interest in the outdoors to become a tree trimmer and outdoorsman. The next boy lives in Seattle but still enjoys coming home and driving the tractor or fixing things around the place. Our older daughter developed a well-bred flock of Suffolks and eventually used the money she made with them to pay part of her college tuition. The organizational and training skills she learned in 4-H prepared her as a teacher and she later relied on her experience of maintaining 4-H record books when she became part owner of a vineyard and winery. Our younger daughter used many of the skills she learned here and at college to become a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa and today serves as the coordinator of the Southwest Oregon Resource Conservation and Development Council in Grants Pass. Because of my involvement with 4-H and the kids' projects, opportunities were opened up for me to become involved in the fair industry and to discover different parts of the state, meeting some of the wonderful people who live here.

While that last paragraph may not seem directly farm-related, it really is. Being on the ranch has led to all kinds of wonderful experiences for all of us and we feel very grateful to have had this chance, even when it meant standing in the middle of the highway at midnight looking for black cows with a tiny flashlight because some irresponsible unknown person left a gate open and the cattle got out or during lambing season checking on the ewes at midnight (my husband's job, as he was a night person) or very early in the morning (my shift, because I'm the opposite!).

Today's challenges involve finding ways to keep the fields green and growing and to maintain greenbelt status. As urbanized people move into the area, it is more difficult to keep ranching when it collides with city expectations. Cattle do meander on easement roads and leave their calling cards behind and there's really nothing reasonable to be done about it. In addition to pressure from development, rising taxes pose another threat to maintaining the integrity of the ranch and preserving its open space. This place, with its loamy bottomland and available water, has the possibility of being used for alternative crops but not all places are as lucky. We are fortunate that there is still a viable farm network here for us, or others like us, helping to explore options and plan for the ranch's future. Despite these challenges, we are ever grateful for the countless opportunity that living on the ranch has offered our family.

**Editor,s Notes:** This column's purpose is to give a historical perspective of the people and the land that make up the communities of Jackson County. If there is a story about your "land" and /or family, contact Margaret at 541-826-6649.

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e-mail [linda.town@or.nacdnet.net](mailto:linda.town@or.nacdnet.net)

Jackson SWCD prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital of familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Jackson SWCD is an equal opportunity employer.

 **Thursday**  
**Dec. 14, 2006**  
**FARRM**  
**Potluck 6 pm**  
**OSU Extension Auditorium**  
**RSVP by December 13th**  
Call Linda: 734-3143  
E-mail: [linda.town@or.nacdnet.net](mailto:linda.town@or.nacdnet.net)  
**Don't Miss This One!!!**  
**Livestock Animal ID**  
**Mandatory Country of Origin**  
**Labeling**  
**Meet Representatives from:**  
Oregon Livestock Producers Association  
Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund  
United Stockgrowers of America

**E-MAIL NOTIFICATION OF  
NEWSLETTER**



IF YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE  
THE CONSERVATIONIST (JSWCD  
NEWSLETTER) **ELECTRONICALLY** RATHER  
THAN BY MAIL, PLEASE CONTACT MARGA-  
RET AT [SMMEIER@JEFFNET.ORG](mailto:SMMEIER@JEFFNET.ORG) WITH  
YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS. HELP THE DIS-  
TRICT SAVE MONEY ON PRINTING AND  
POSTAGE.

**← Mark Your Calendar →**

**FARRM Meeting: December 14, 2006 Potluck 6pm**  
**OSU Extension Auditorium**  
**JSWCD Board Meeting: December 20, 2006 7 pm**  
**JSWCD Board Meeting: January 17, 2007 7 pm**  
**USDA Service Center Conference Room**  
**JSWCD Annual Meeting: February 9, 2007 6 pm**