

THE CONSERVATIONIST

JACKSON SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2009 VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3

Working Together to Get Rid of Noxious Weeds

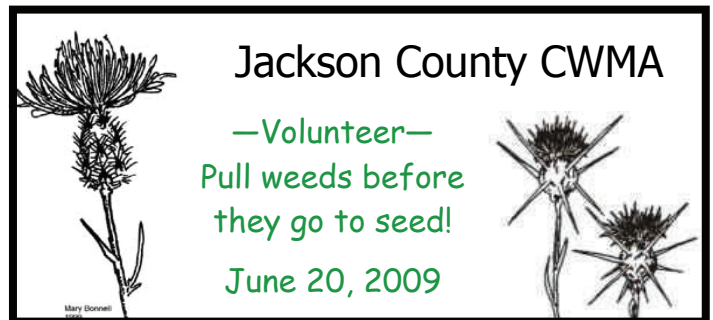
Jackson County Cooperative Weed Management Area—(CWMA)

By Barbara Mumblo, US Forest Service Botanist

Living in the Applegate Valley for over 30 years and working as a botanist for the Forest Service for over 20 years, I've watched yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) move into dry fields, up open south slopes, and move along forest roads into open areas. I'm not the only one concerned about the spread of weeds. For years, a group of folks in Jackson County have been looking for a way to coordinate noxious weed information and work together to get rid of these weeds. We've found that weeds know no boundaries and you have to work with your neighbors to get rid of them. Jackson County doesn't have a County Weed Board any more, but another innovative option for coordination is through a Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). The first time I heard of a CWMA was in 1990 when information about the Greater Yellowstone Area Weed Management Area was being shared.

A couple of years ago, we started strategizing about how we could work together and get an agreement among governmental agencies and landowners/managers; eventually we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These groups of individuals share a common interest in promoting integrated weed management programs. The Jackson County CWMA became a formal reality in early 2008. Since then this dedicated group has been meeting monthly at the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (JSWCD) office.

The CWMA's primary purpose is to collaborate by promoting noxious weed education, coordination, and prevention efforts throughout the county. Each agency/ land manager within the group will continue to control weeds on lands they manage as time and funding allows and also coordinates that work with neighboring lands where possible. We'd love to be able to get rid of all the weeds for everyone, but it's a big job and we're limited in time and funding.



The good news is that many agencies and landowners are doing things in the county to get rid of their weeds. The bad news is that many are not doing anything and some are even bringing weeds in or spreading them – often unaware of their actions.

We have a lot of weeds considered noxious in Jackson County (see the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture noxious weed list at: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PLANT/WEEDS/>) and we seem to find new ones each year. Some of the ways that these weeds can arrive are by:

heavy equipment (plant parts or seed in soil on the equipment); infested hay, straw, or rock; as landscaping material (shrubs or pond plants); or from birdseed.

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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.

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Board Meetings: All are welcome to attend!
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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 170(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).

Your help is greatly appreciated.

Contact: MarkieGermer(541) 734-3143
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Water Harvesting Project a Success!

Sam's Valley Elementary School recently approached the district for help designing and installing a catchment system to collect rainwater off the picnic pavilion roof. With the help of Seven Basins Watershed Council and Grady's Rain Barrels, two 2500-gallon cisterns were installed. Rainwater collected from the roof will be used to water plantings around the pavilion. Prior to the rainwater collection system, students hauled water by buckets to the area to water the new plantings. Thanks to our partners and Sam's Valley Elementary School for making this project a success and for being a great example of using "new" technologies for managing our precious water.



Sam's Valley Elementary School—rainwater catchment system

Volunteers — making a difference!

**Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District – 2008 Volunteers**

Folks that 'stepped up to the plate' and made a difference. (See page 6) We can always use help in the office or out-of-doors. If you are interested in volunteering call Markie at 541-734-3143. Join these volunteers and help the District "Turn Natural Resource Concerns Into Opportunities".

Manager's Message

Hi everyone.

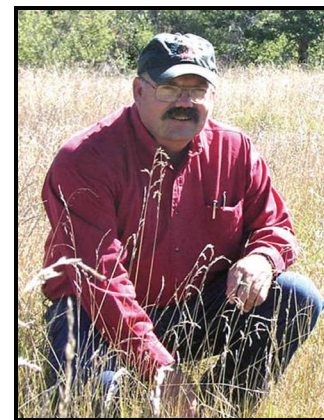
The staff at Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District just spent some time doing a "Mid-Year Review". I am very pleased to inform you that the District is on track to meet the goals of our annual work plan. I would like to take this opportunity to get everyone up to date on what we have done and the activities yet to take place this year.

1. Vicki Simpson is now with the District as the Interim Outreach and Education/Grant Writer and is doing some fantastic projects and activities. She is a great asset to the District team.
2. The District has conducted 46 on-site visits and helped eleven landowners complete conservation inventories and get started on conservation plans.
3. We are working on several irrigation and riparian projects and focusing on developing group projects with landowners on both urban and rural soil and water conservation projects.
4. Over five hundred people have received technical assistance from direct walk-in and phone calls.
5. The District certified its first Smart Horse Certification participant and the first state-wide regional training has been completed. The local program has now been taken state-wide for use by other districts.
6. Staff produced two rain garden brochures, one brochure on best management practices for grazing on vernal pools, two newsletters, and appeared on five radio shows and one TV show.
7. District staff developed and presented two rain barrel workshops. They have also worked very hard on finding materials and developing information on the use of rain barrels and larger receptacles for the capture and storage of rainwater from roof runoff.
8. The District teamed up with our USDA-NRCS partners to complete three prescribed grazing, one pipeline, one heavy use protection area, and two fencing practices.
9. We gave two presentations to Crater High School students on the current and future picture for agriculture in Jackson County.
10. A network server has been installed to improve inter-office communication.

Unfortunately, Patricio Quinde, our Engineer Intern from Ecuador, had to return home after completing six months of his one year program. He was a great help while with the District and he is greatly missed by all of us. We wish him the best with his job and his future.

We postponed the Forage Resource Management Class for this year and expect a full class next year when it will again be offered.

On the positive side we are looking forward to a many activities over the last six months of this fiscal year, which include:



Randy White

JSWCD District Manager

- Working with county-wide feasibility group on alternate energy issues with current focus on anaerobic methane digester
- Hands-on-Ag. Day with OSU for 4th grade students
- Forest and Range Day Camp for 4 – 6 grade students
- Resources and People (RAP) Camp – a natural resource camp for High School students
- Envirothon - a state-wide natural resource competition
- Working with irrigation districts and watershed councils on various group projects
- Working with individual rural and urban landowners on resource conservation projects
- Seeding trials
- Soil moisture trials
- Version 3 of the Rural Living Handbook
- Version 1 of the Urban Living Handbook
- Hiring a Natural Resource Engineer
- Developing our new web-site
- Cooperative Weed Management Area – Pull Together Day (See page 1)

Please view other sections of this newsletter for more details. We hope you will look forward to receiving more information and registration materials on each of these upcoming activities and events.

Summary of activities for the 1st half of the year.

Landowners contacted by SWCD (all activities)	2527
Technical assistance provided	572
Workshops	4
Presentations	4
Demonstrations	2
Tours	1
Displays	2
Elementary / High School classes visited	2
Fact Sheets Distributed	3
Newsletters Distributed	2
Newspaper Articles/Radio/TV	5 radio 1 TV
On-Site Evaluations/On-Site visits	46
Sites Monitored for Water Quality	2
Projects Submitted for Funds	4
Farm/Ranch Plans Completed	3

CWMA-Working Together

(Continued from page 1)

Eradicating weeds can be expensive and labor intensive if you have a large area with lots of weeds. Some weeds can be treated manually, some with herbicides, and some weeds don't respond well to any treatment. One thing that can be done that doesn't need to cost a lot is preventing the weeds from establishing in the first place. If you can prevent weeds from coming to your property or not spread them outside an existing infestation, then you will have a smaller area to control.

Some ideas for prevention include: cleaning heavy equipment before use (knock off vegetation/soil with a power washer), using noxious weed free material (hay, rock, soil), don't plant landscaping material that is known to be invasive, and be careful with bird seed (keep isolated or just use sunflower seed).

Noxious weeds are often spread along roads and rivers – we call them 'road runners' and 'river runners'. A few plants might come into one of these areas and then the seed is moved with road maintenance, ditch cleaning, or by moving down the river on the water. Most people don't treat the weeds between their fence line and the road. Road managers can't always treat all the weeds within that area so infestations get started and move along and away from the road.

We need to be aware of what we are doing and think about the results. I've been guilty myself of parking on top of some starthistle and then closing plants in my door. When I get home the yellow starthistle falls out. If I hadn't noticed it, I'd have started a new site.

It can be frustrating if you find a noxious weed and don't know whom to contact. One suggestion is to find out who owns/manages the land and try to contact someone and explain to them what you have found. Ask if they are aware that it is a noxious weed and help them understand that it is. If you do find a plant on land that is managed by one of the CWMA agencies, chances are there will be more interest about your find and hopefully it will be treated before too long. I know I appreciate being told of weeds on national forest lands. A tip this last year helped me find the only yellow floating heart (*Nymphoides peltata*) site that is known in Jackson County.

The state has a hot line you can call (1-866-INVADER) to report suspected noxious weeds. You're welcome to call me (Barbara Mumblo 541-899-3855) and I'll see if I can help or pass the information on. We can use your help by controlling noxious weeds on your property, working with your neighbors, and letting us know what you find.

Last June, the Jackson County CWMA sponsored the first annual "Let's Pull Together" day. It was a day for volunteers (of all walks of life) to join together at various locations around the valley to pull weeds, learn about weeds, and celebrate afterwards with lunch at Hawthorne Park. We are planning another one June 20, 2009 and hope you will join us to improve our valley and have a good time. Be sure to check with the office (541-734-3143) or the JSWCD web site <http://www.jswcd.org/> in early June to learn of the locations for the volunteer weed pull events.

"Weed of Distinction"

Wintertime Weed Treatment

By Bob Budesá

I'm sure many of you have already started thinking about next year, and of the work that lies ahead. I'll bet if there were things you could do RIGHT NOW to cut down on your workload this spring and summer, you'd be all ears, right? Well, there is! I know the issue of noxious weeds is not foremost on everyone's mind. It's certainly not a moneymaker or breadwinner, but it can sure cut into or take away from income if not properly managed.

One weed comes to mind this time of year because of its growth cycle —**Scotch broom!**

Scotch broom will soon be sprouting leaves and flowers, and shortly after – seedpods. Killing a weed before it produces seed is certainly the most effective way to control a population. Towards that end, pulling/cutting/digging/spraying any of the broom species (scotch, Spanish, Portuguese, French) in early spring is preferable to waiting until seed is produced. As soon as freezing weather subsides and the soil is still moist, brooms can be extracted fairly easily, especially small ones. If you miss that opportunity, try lopping or cutting them off at ground level. Immediately after cutting, apply a dab of glyphosate (Roundup, Rodeo, Accord, etc) to the fresh cut. This systemic herbicide will make its way down through the root system, and either kill or greatly harm the remaining roots.

No matter how diligent and attentive we are, some seeds will sprout. At that point (when small plants are breaking the surface), we have several other tools available to us. Herbicides and manual removal are two other methods that are extremely effective. Remember



however, if you kill a seed-producing plant by spraying or grubbing, and don't physically remove it, the seeds will remain on-site, germinate next year, and you'll find yourself back at square one! That's why it behooves you to kill the plant before it produces seedpods.

And if you have highway frontage property, don't wait for some agency to take care of it. Even though road shoulders are the responsibility of the county, state, or federal agencies, YOUR property is at risk, and as such, YOU should protect it. It's no secret that county, state, and federal funds fluctuate from year to year, or administration to administration, and may not be available when they're needed most.

It's time for all of us to ante up, and join in the fight! If each of us takes care of our own small portion of the problem, we can all benefit in the long run.

Picture provided by Oregon Dept. of Agriculture

A Look at the Future by Vicki Simpson

When you stand on your front porch and look around at your neighborhood, can you imagine solar panels on most of the roofs of your neighbors' buildings, and solar panels on your own barn or garage? Maybe you already see them. Can you envision home wind turbines, here and there, in places where a pretty steady wind keeps the blades turning? Maybe you hear the familiar whistle of a freight/passenger train in the distance once more. On the road there goes the local garbage hauler in a biogas-powered truck on its way to the closest methane digester facility that will turn the garbage waste into gas, electricity and compost. The hauler drives into the facility past trucks hauling wood to the adjacent gasification plant which shares the space because the facility is a co-generation plant. The gasification part of the plant burns forest waste to efficiently produce power and fuel for the plant's customers. Downtown, construction workers at a new office complex dig into the earth to install low-heat geothermal pipes to take advantage of the steady underground temperature to keep heating and cooling costs at a minimum.

These varied energy-producing scenarios could be a glimpse of the future. We all will be a part of determining what the outcome will actually be. Right now, only 6% of our energy nationwide comes from renewable resources. As a community, we have a lot to learn in order to choose the right renewable energy systems for the right places and raise the percentage of our energy produced by renewable sources.

After Jackson Soil and Water District's annual agricultural tour to California in 2008, participants came back to town with great enthusiasm having learned about a state-of-the-art methane digester on the U.C. Davis campus. A decision was made to share the information about this form of renewable energy with the communities of Jackson County. This outreach was intended as the beginning of a community conversation on renewable energy starting with this promising methane digester technology.

Three presentations sponsored by JSWCD on methane digester technology have been held in the last three months at the Medford Library. At each, Dr. Frank Mitloehner, Ph.D., a professor and Air Quality Extension Specialist at U. C. Davis, talked about the advantages, benefits, and costs of this system. The general public was invited to attend, as well as: mayors, county commissioners, DEQ, utility companies, industries who have agricultural waste to dispose of, facilities managers for colleges and hospitals, state and congressional legislators, government conservationists, local alternative energy producers, landfill operators, and waste haulers.

The response has been positive and, of course, more questions have been generated at each meeting. For example, what renewable energy producers do we already have in the valley and how much energy do they produce? What can be done with all the wood waste we'll have from cleaning up our forest? Can it be used for gasification or biofuel? Where would we locate such a plant?

This is just the start of a continuing dialogue and inquiry to find answers to these and other questions that concern the future power needs of our valley. Clean power is just one aspect of the ever-increasing demands on the renewable natural resources of the area and the need to protect and develop such resources.

If you would like to find out more, call the District office at 541-734-3143 or email Vicki Vicki@jswcd.org for more information.

Use the best...

JSWCD is working with local interests to turn waste products into energy sources.

In Jackson County, we throw away about 1,820 lbs of waste per person per year.

— Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Several counties including, Jackson, Josephine, and Curry dump a total of 227,917 tons of waste per year at the White City landfill.

— 2009 Rogue Disposal & Recycling

Recycle the rest!

Jackson County provides and supports programs that minimize waste and conserve resources:

Jackson County SMART Business Program
www.RogueSMART.org

Jackson County Recycling Partnership
www.jcrecycle.org

Jackson County Master Recycler Program

Find out how you can take steps to minimize waste and conserve resources:

Jackson County Recycling Directory
www.RogueSMART.org/directory.html

From appliances, building materials, and electronics to paint, tires and yard waste, the Recycling Directory includes over 50 local waste prevention outlets.

Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District Annual Meeting and Celebration



The traditional annual meeting and celebration was held on January 16, 2009 in the OSU Extension Auditorium. It was an evening of entertainment, delicious desserts, awards, and an auction to benefit the Fred Straube Memorial Scholarship Fund. Leon Flick shared his cowboy poetry while guests treated themselves to a choice of chocolate raspberry cheesecake, tiramisu, 3-layer fudge cake, or apple pie.



Cowboy Poet

Leon Flick has spent most of his life “on the back of a horse, using a cow’s tail for a compass”. He lives and works on ranches in Plush, OR—the farthest town in the U.S. from a freeway. Leon is best known for his humor, but his more serious poems are well written and well received. Over the last twenty years, he has traveled to 15 Western states and Canada, doing his cowboy poetry at gatherings and as banquet entertainment. In 2001, the Academy of Western Artists voted Leon’s book entitled “A Cow’s Tail For A Compass” the cowboy poetry book of the year. Also, Oregon Public Broadcasting profiled his poetry and work on the television program Oregon Art Beat.

The annual celebration is a special time when JSWCD has the opportunity to say ‘thank you’ to the many supporters and to award special folks for their achievements and/or for volunteering during the past year. JSWCD is fortunate to have some wonderful folks that ‘step up to the plate’ when called to help out in accomplishing the many activities the District sponsors; chaperones for the Forest & Range Day Camp and helping with Hands-on-Ag Day, RAP Camp, annual meeting, farm tours, and much more. The volunteers received a hat with the JSWCD logo in appreciation.

Larry Martin was honored as the Jackson SWCD Conservationist of the Year. Larry ranches in Central Point on 40 acres, raising grass-fed beef and sells eggs from free-range chickens. He has experimented with growing different grass varieties and installed the new K-line irrigation system to more efficiently water his pastures. Larry has been a dedicated FARRM member and has spent much time, sharing his expertise by giving tours of his operation. He also gives a presentation to the Forage Resource Management Class offered each year.



Jackson SWCD Conservationist of the Year

Amy Wilson, USDA Coordinator for the Southwest Oregon Resource Conservation & Development Council, was surprised as the recipient of the Manager’s Award. She has been instrumental in facilitating the Districts five year work plan, the annual staff retreat, and is currently helping the District develop



Amy Wilson—Manager Award

Angie Boudro, the District Resource Conservationist, received recognition for her excellent work on the Smart Horse Stewardship Certification program, which is now state-wide for use by other districts.

Ern Russell is the first recipient of the Smart Horse Stewardship Award in the state and received a farm gate plaque to display.



Smart Horse Stewardship Award

The evening also allowed the District to highlight some of the awards it received throughout year, including the following Oregon Association of Conservation District’s Awards: Director of the Year—Charles Boyer, Employee of the Year—Randy White, Outstanding Newsletter of the Year, Outstanding Education Program of the Year, and Essay contest winners Claire Gladman and Mark Gladman. In addition the District was honored by Special District’s Association of Oregon with their Outstanding Special District’s Program for the Rural Living Handbook.

A fun part of the evening events included the silent auction and the bantering of words from C. W. Smith during the oral auction. JSWCD greatly appreciates the time C. W. gives to advancing the Fred Straube Memorial Scholarship Fund. This scholarship fund was established for any high school senior or college freshman seeking to further their education in the field of agriculture or natural resources.



Scholarship Winners

Three young women, were presented with \$500.00 scholarships to pursue their dreams. Kayla Roberts will graduate from Eagle Point High School and plans on majoring in Agricultural Science at Linn- Benton Community College. Paige Marion will move on from Rogue River High School to Rogue Community College and then on to a degree at OSU in Agricultural Education. Stephanie Haupt, an up-coming graduate from North Medford High School will continue her education at OSU in Animal Science.

The JSWCD annual celebration is a great time to enjoy company with neighbors and friends, bring home some wonderful gifts from the auctions, and if one is lucky—even win a door prize. Please plan to join us next year in January for an enjoyable time—don’t forget January 2010.



Across the City Fence

By Angie Boudro — Natural Resource Specialist

EVERY DROP COUNTS! TRY XERISCAPING!

In today's world, water is becoming more scarce due to a growing population and demand for water. Over 50% of the average homeowner's water use is for irrigating lawns and landscaping. With some forethought and solid planning, xeriscaping can reduce landscape water use by 60% while increasing property values!

But what is xeriscaping? Most people think xeriscaping means "zero landscaping", "desert landscapes" or "hardscapes". In reality, the word "xeri" means "dry", which implies that xeriscaped landscapes use less water than traditional yards. These lush and beautiful yards are the result of applying seven principles. Note that these are principles, not steps to be taken in a particular order!

Principle 1 – Plan and Design

Many of us gardeners are tinkerers – try this plant here, move this plant over there. The results may be beautiful, but probably doesn't conserve water, as it should! A good garden plan will minimize water use and maximize color and form through each season.

The first step is to make a skeleton map of the area to be landscaped. Include items such as your home, outbuildings, trees and plants you wish to keep, sidewalks, etc. Make sure to plan a place for your rainwater storage tank! Measure your yard and record all items accurately on the map. Use graph paper and a scale that works for you. Be sure to indicate direction, areas of shade, locations of downspouts, water spigots, electrical outlets, slopes, existing fences and trellises, etc.

Consider how you use each area. Does your dog need an area to romp? Do you want a sheltered "room" for morning tea and a good book? Do you want to plant a large shrub to block a neighbor's rusting camper? Do you want a vegetable garden? It may be helpful to note these items on tracing paper as an overlay, or

to make several copies of your skeleton map before you start locating specific plants so you can try several variations. Finally, begin placing plants on your skeleton map. Group plants according to their light needs (sun/shade) and water requirements. Plants that need lots of water should not be placed near plants that prefer or tolerate dry conditions because water is wasted when watering the plant that does not require it! Taller plants should be in the back and shorter plants in the front. Be as specific as possible when recording the type and number of each plant. Remember to give each plant room to grow!

Principle 2: Create Practical Turf

Areas

Xeriscaping does NOT mean that you cannot have lawn in your yard. In the interest of saving water and minimizing labor and gas use, xeriscaped yards have smaller, well-placed, practical areas of turf that beautify the landscape and allow the family and their pets to enjoy the area. For example, consider shady lawn areas in your yard – would shade-loving plants perform better, use less irrigation water and improve texture and color? Could you use stepping-stones and step-able vegetation in the walkway instead of lawn? Could the border between the street and sidewalk be planted in drought-tolerant, colorful plants that your neighbors would enjoy? Could steep hillsides be covered in bushes and flowers that would attract native pollinators and birds instead of your lawnmower every weekend? Speaking of lawnmowers, when considering turfed areas you may want to look into the "no-mow" turf varieties that are now available. Always choose the variety of turf that suits your needs but needs the fewest inputs in terms of water, mowing (think air-quality!), fertilizers and pesticides.

Principle 3: Select and group plants appropriately

Although you may choose to plant cacti and other desert plants, you certainly don't have to use these plants to have a water-wise landscape! There are many plants that will do well in our climate with just a little supplemental irrigation. Many natives may be able to go all summer without irrigation at all! However, it is important to put these plants in the right place, and to group like plants together.

Within your yard there are many microclimates – areas that differ in terms of light, soil and natural moisture levels. Similarly, plants have different requirements for light, soil and water. Work with nature and put plants where they will be happiest! For example, put plants that have higher water needs next to downspouts, in low-lying areas, or areas that don't drain as quickly. Put plants that prefer direct sunlight and dry conditions on south or west exposures. There are many good gardening books that can provide information on the requirements of different plants. We have some in the office, so feel free to use our library before purchasing your own!

Principle 4: Improve the Soil

Especially in the Rogue Valley, where most of us struggle with clay, it may take some work to provide our plants with good soils. However, the time and effort required is quickly paid off with good results! Although many of us curse the clay, it has benefits too. Clay soils tend to hold moisture longer than sandy or silty soils. However, it is slow to absorb water so be careful to irrigate correctly! Regardless of your soil type, amending the soil with organic matter will do wonders. Good amendments include composted manure and general mixed compost. However, if using native plants, research their fertility preference – many native plants do better in low fertility soils. Contact our office for more information on how to compost, or to get manure through our manure exchange!

(Continued on page 9)

Links to the Past

Niedermeyer/Vaughn Farm History -- Part I

By Nancy Niedermeyer Vaughn

It wouldn't be too far a stretch to say that we have had fire and floods to thank for bringing our family farm into existence. My fraternal grandfather Johann Frederick Ludwig (Louis) Niedermeyer, preceded by one of his brothers, emigrated from Germany to the U.S. in 1886. They came from a farm family and each married sisters of a family who had worked on their farm in Germany. They each purchased property in Nebraska and settled into farming and raising families. My grandfather disliked Nebraska and hankered to move west, but my grandmother, Charlotte Bergfeld Niedermeyer, didn't want to leave her sister – that is, not until after weathering years of droughts and floods. Louis wrote, "My wife could not make up her mind to leave friends and relatives in Nebraska, to start again in a new, unknown to her, area. Lightning hit our house and my wife's resistance was broken." *

They sold everything except small items and moved to Portland in 1900 with five children in tow. Louis left the family in a rented house while he traveled through Washington, Oregon, and California looking for the right spot. In southern Oregon, he "...found good and rich land, a beautiful climate, all around a valuable forest in the mountains...exactly how I dreamed about it." *

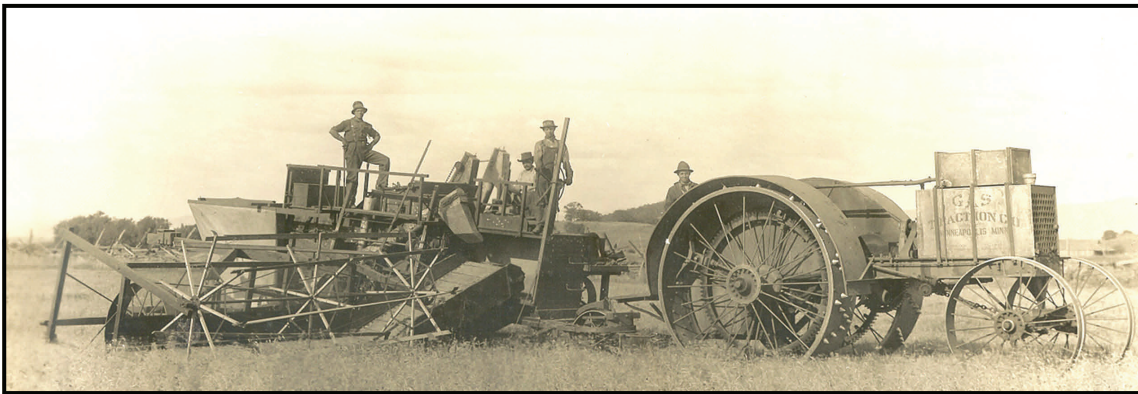
Their first Oregon farm was near Bear Creek, but threats of flooding encouraged them to look for other property. They decided to sell their farm in Nebraska and, in 1902, used part of the proceeds to purchase 600 acres of the Bybee acreage north of Jacksonville. Their house, built in 1903, is a two-story wood

fenced and added drainage to the place. The first seeds they sowed were Luzerne. They raised small grains, alfalfa, cattle and hogs. They were one of the first in the valley to raise alfalfa for seed.

In 1907, "L", as my grandfather was known, decided to raise sheep. A full-time shepherd was required for the flock of 1200. In the spring the sheep were herded through the Cascades, much of it then roadless, to the Klamath Basin for summer range then back in the fall for winter feeding. In their late teens, my uncle Ernest and Otto and my Aunt Emma Niedermeyer Conger were part of the crew. Emma served as the cook.

"L" liked new ideas and innovations. He purchased one of the first two tractors in the valley, a Minneapolis Big Four made by the Gas Traction Company. It burned distillate, had a sixty-horsepower engine, eight-foot tall driving wheels, and could draw ten number fourteen plows giving a twelve-foot swath of plowed ground on each pass. At this rate it was possible to turn over twenty acres a day. One of the huge driving wheels still lies in the grass near our barn. The tractor's great size proved to be its weakness. The high torque it produced often broke the driving gear teeth and even parts of the wheels themselves. "L" was inventive and a skilled blacksmith making several improvements to the tractor which made it almost practical. Tractors made it possible to have other heavy equipment. "L" brought the threshing machine into the valley and had one of the first power combines.

Medford Irrigation District's Phoenix Canal was dug through the farm, but remarkably "L" did not see irrigation as an asset to his operation. He, Emma and other neighbors along the canal successfully petitioned MID to have their lands excluded from the district.



Minneapolis Big Four made by the Gas Traction Company

frame structure in the Queen Anne style that still stands as a landmark at 1176 Old Stage Road. Eventually, additional land of about 600 acres was added adjacent to the original purchase. As property values rose, Louis gradually sold about 500 acres and used the money for business and property investments in Medford and forestland near Butte Falls.

By 1905, there were seven children – five boys and two girls – Emma (Conger), Ernest, Carl, Otto, Anna (Wendt), Henry and John. The family farmed and pastured 700 acres. They

Sometime during the second decade of the 20th Century, "L" decided he wanted to devote more of his energy to business matters in Medford with his business partner, Charley Palm. He decided to distribute the farmland among his children keeping only his home and a few acres surrounding

it. His eldest daughter, Emma, was already married to Henry Conger so she was given a Medford building property of equal value, and the farmland was divided among the six other children. "L" wrote a description of each parcel on pieces of paper and had each child draw one. Those who were already 21 then received title to their parcels and the younger ones received title when they turned 21. Emma sold her town property and she and her husband purchased a farm then known as the Stewart Place on Ross Lane just east of West Side School.

(Continued on page 9)

Niedermeyer History

(Continued from page 8)

My father, John Niedermeyer, was born in 1905 and was the baby of the family. After spending his bachelor years managing the Holly Theater, which his father built, he settled into full-time farming at 1014 Old Stage Road next door to the home of "L" and Charlotte. He and my mother, Opal Hendrix Harvey, were married in 1940. They dry farmed alfalfa for hay and seed rotated with small grains. They also ran about 200 head of sheep on the north end their farm. During the 1950's and '60's they purchased additional land to expand their farm to 230 acres.

In the early 1950's, John secured the water right to a spring and developed a pond to irrigate a twelve-acre grass hay field. In the late 1950's water rights were gained through the irrigation district for another 65 acres. That afforded him the opportunity to secure commercial contracts to grow blue grass and fescue for seed crops. Other seed crops that were grown under contract were zinnias, calendulas, onions and ornamental basil.

By the time of Charlotte's and "L's" death in 1935 and 1942 all the children had built their own houses on their own farms; they decided to sell their parent's home outside the family. Through the years other property sales have been made, but



Queen Anne style home.

four of the farms that "L" gave his children, including ours, are still in family ownership and being farmed. The home "L" and Charlotte built and all the original homes their seven children built are still providing shelter for their occupants.

* Source documents:

Document written by the hand of J. F. Louis Niedermeyer circa 1913
Term paper written by Walter Humphreys circa 1950's
Article written by Vern Weaver for The Rogue Digger Vol. 43, No. 3 published by Rogue Valley Genealogical Society Dec. 2008
Abstract of Title (18072 A) p. 391 published by Jackson County Abstract Company, Inc. Dec. 4, 1918 at 8:00 A.M.

Editors Note: Part 2 will cover the present day farming operation under Ed and Nancy's vision. It is interesting to note the changes in farming practices over the years. The Vaughn's live next door to the original home of "L" and Charlotte Niedermeyer and farm the land Nancy's father inherited.

EVERY DROP COUNTS!

(Continued from page 7)

Principle 5: Mulch

When planting a water wise garden, mulch is essential. Mulch keeps the soil and roots cool reducing how much water plants lose through evapotranspiration. Mulch helps prevent weeds (think less work!) and because it covers the soil, it also helps prevent erosion. Depending on your garden style and choice, mulch may give your yard a more polished look, or it may provide steady inputs of organic matter into the soil. Mulch can be inorganic, such as cobblestone, pea gravel or lava rock, or organic, such as wood chips, bark or grass clippings. Inorganic mulch should be applied over a weed cloth that allows air and moisture to penetrate. A benefit of inorganic mulch is that it rarely, if ever, needs replacing. Organic mulch can be applied directly on top of the soil or if decorative, over a weed cloth.

Saving Water Successfully

- Plan and Design
- Create Practical Turf Areas
- Select and group plants appropriately
- Improve the Soil
- Mulch
- Efficient Irrigation
- Maintain the Landscape

Principle 6: Efficient Irrigation

All this planning would go to waste without an appropriate irrigation system! Although this step can take some time, and may involve some expense, it will save you hours of labor and countless gallons of water if done correctly. Follow these principles to minimize your water use:

- Water in the morning or evening when the wind is not blowing and evaporation rates are lowest
- Keep the water as close to the ground as possible. When possible, use drip, micro-sprays, bubblers or emitters to water. When sprinklers are necessary, use sprinklers that keep the water close to the ground, and use rotary (side-to-side) or stationary sprinkler heads.
- Inspect the irrigation system regularly for leaks, broken emitters, or sprinklers that aren't adjusted properly (the sidewalk doesn't need to be watered)
- Change your irrigation schedule with the weather. Generally, you should do this at least once a month. Turn off your irrigation if a storm moves in, and don't turn it back on until plants need to be watered.

Principle 7: Maintain the Landscape

Although all this planning will reduce the amount of labor required in your yard, regular maintenance will keep it looking its best! Especially the first few years, weeding is important. At least seasonally, you will need to trim shrubs and trees, dead-head perennials, maintain any turf areas, etc. Most shrubs need to be pruned in winter to early spring. Deadheading prevents seedlings, improves the appearance of the yard, and can encourage repeat blooms. However, some plants provide feed and/or habitat for native insects when left without pruning or dead-heading.



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**Important
DATE!**

**JSWCD Annual Agricultural
Tour**

Save the first part of **August** for
JSWCD's

Annual Agricultural Tour

More information to come in the next *Conservationist*
A tour of Oregon's small farms is planned with
emphasis on conservation and energy.

— Anyone is welcome to join —

For more information contact the JSWCD office:
call: 541-734-3143
email: angie.boudro@or.nacdn.net

Saturday March 14th 9:30 am to 11:30 am

Farms to Forest tour at the Lawrence Martin place at
#10 Covered Bridge Road in Wimer.
Registration limited, call Paula at the OSU Extension
Service to Register 541-776-7371
Hear and see how a joint project with Lawrence
Martin, the Oregon Department of Forestry and the
Oregon Water Trust program of Oregon Trout helped
one landowner keep his farm productive
and restore stream flows to Evans Creek. More info
write Jeffrey@owt.org

— WE NEED YOUR HELP —

JSWCD is in need of **free, clean plastic**
55 gal. drums that can be used for the
District's Rain Barrel
Workshops

Please call Vicki at 541-734-3143 if you know of a source!

← Up-Coming Events →

- March 18—JSWCD Board Meeting** Time: 4 pm
USDA Service Center Conference Room
- March 19—FARRM Breakfast Meeting** Time: 8 am
Black Bear Diner, 1150 E. Barnett Rd. Medford
- April 15—JSWCD Board Meeting** Time: 7 pm
USDA Service Center Conference Room
- April 16 FARRM Breakfast Meeting** Time: 8 am
Black Bear Diner, 1150 E. Barnett Rd. Medford
- April 23—Hands-On-Ag Day** 4th grade students
Jackson County Expo
- May 16—Take Care of Oregon Days—Celebrate 150 yrs**
Projects all over Jackson County
watch the newspapers for dates and locations
- May 26— Rain Barrel Workshop** Time: TBA
North Mountain Park, Ashland