

Banner Customers



Photo by Gina Perkins
 Bob Black, owner of Black Distributing and his two Border Collies, Sadie and Sally are customers of Banner Bank. The dogs are treated to cookies each time they come in and clearly know the routine well.

Just two of the hundreds of photos taken by Timothy Bishop of Base Camp Baker during 2014. Both were included in his album of 2014 favorites.

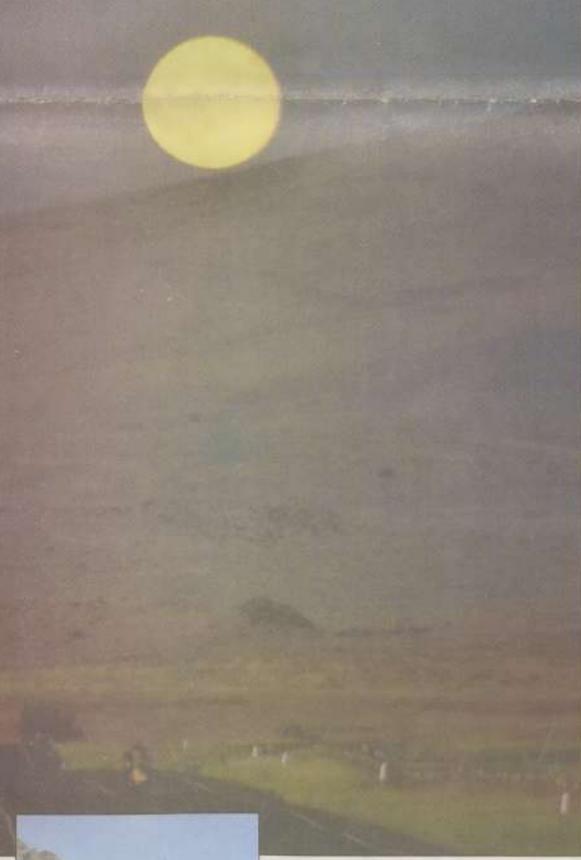


Photo by Timothy Bishop
 (Above) Super Moon taken in July 2014 during the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally

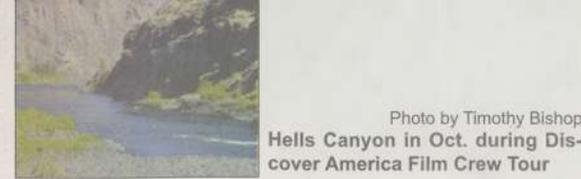


Photo by Timothy Bishop
 Hells Canyon in Oct. during Discover America Film Crew Tour

Interested in NRCS Thinning Program?



If you are a landowner and would like to contact Gerald Loennig about potential projects, he may be reached at 541-856-3783. Initial sign up deadline for 2014 NRCS thinning projects is Jan 16. Questions? Call Jana Peterson at 541-523-5831 x24 or Parker Ussery at 541-523-7121 x 115.



Taking & Leaving a Stand

By Gina Perkins

Gerald Loennig's family has lived on and worked the picturesque ranch located at the base of the Elkhorn mountains on the Anthony Lakes Highway west of Haines for generations. Responsible logging and grazing has been a part of the successful management, resulting in an abundance of wildlife and a healthy stand of trees. Lumber from harvested trees has been utilized to build a shop, hay barn and in other improvements on the ranch. Because it's well managed and ladder fuels are kept under control, Loennig is also helping ensure that his home, outbuildings, and family are protected in the event of a forest fire.

Just as in other types of business and industry, logging—and loggers, for that matter—cannot be painted with the same brush. While images of massive clear-cuts on the west side of the state may be what some immediately think of when the term logging is used, it certainly does not represent the type of responsible, forward thinking forest management practices Loennig, and those with a similar mindset, utilize.

"I'm looking toward helping build a healthier forest. One in which wildlife, water quality, and people are all considered. Logging can look good and we need wood from somewhere. We live in wood homes, have wood furniture, and because of the increasing urban-wildland interface, with more and more people living in or near the forest, we are not just going to let wildfires burn," said Loennig.

In addition to managing his own property, Loennig also does selective logging jobs for private landowners. Employed at Ash Grove Cement as an equipment operator, part of Loennig's duties include the removal of juniper trees at the Durkee plant site. His logging business currently utilizes programs offered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for private landowners. These involve thinning, removal of parasitic mistletoe and danger trees, as well as other ladder fuels helping to protect the larger, healthy trees from devastating wildfire and disease.

Jana Peterson, a forester with the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) overseeing the NRCS thinning projects said, "The goal of the program is to reduce the fuel load and to improve overall forest health. We are seeking to thin the understory and remove diseased trees in the overstory to hopefully break the repeated cycle of disease. Trees less than 8" in diameter are being taken out as well as those larger trees with mistletoe and other diseases."

Peterson meets with landowners considering thinning to discuss the goals and specifications required by the program. She visits the site regularly during the project and when complete, inspects it to verify specifications have been met. If so, Peterson certifies the project, allowing the landowner to be paid.

Some landowners wish to do the work themselves and others seek outside contractors. There are two common practices resulting in the removal of the understory. Slashbusting utilizes an excavator which shreds the trees apart, leaving a scattered pile of debris. It's relatively fast and the nutrient-rich pieces which are left to decompose return nutrients to the soil.

Loennig, however, prefers to selectively thin the trees with a chainsaw and stack the slash by hand, preserving suitable trees for corral poles and firewood instead of leaving them to decay. Not only does it make

each job more profitable, but it results in a much more attractive landscape for the landowner and wildlife, Loennig believes.

"It's a shame not to utilize the trees. I really hate to see them stacked and burned. It's seems wasteful," Loennig said.

He added, "I like to take the time to do a nicer job for the land owner and to be proud of the work I've done." Loennig estimates about 200 cord of firewood will be harvested from his current project in addition to the corral poles.

"Sometimes I hear people complain about the job some logger has done. But I think people need to remember the landowners are the ones who hire the loggers. Consider the end result you want," said Loennig who encourages landowners to look at jobs completed by the loggers from whom they're seeking bids instead of automatically going with the cheapest.

Peterson stated both practices (slashbusting and Loennig's preferred method of completing the work by hand) meet the goal of the NRCS thinning program to create healthier forests and reduce fuel loads. Ultimately, it's up to the landowner to decide.

Loennig is considering the possibility of obtaining a pelletizer in the future to further increase the usability of the slash. He also wonders if a pellet plant might be an opportunity to increase employment opportunities in Baker County; perhaps even something county officials might consider.

"We need more jobs and working in the woods can provide family wage jobs here," said Loennig. He also believes people need to acknowledge the positive impact timber dollars have had on schools and the economy in general.

Loennig is reaping the rewards of responsible logging on his own property and said, "I enjoy looking out my window at the healthy forest on this property which has been logged responsibly over the span of 150 years, while sitting in my wood chair, in my wood house which is heated by wood. This property is home to deer, elk, cougars, turkeys, red-tailed hawks, and grouse. It looks great and will continue to for the next 150 years."



Photo by Debby Schoening
 This large tree was blown over in a windstorm on a family member's property adjacent to Gerald Loennig's ranch. Instead of leaving it to rot, he sawed it for for lumber and firewood. He stated it measured 54". His oldest son, Logan Loennig assisted him.

Dark Side of the Horse

BACKGROUND CHECK ... DONE.

OREGON TRAIL ELECTRIC CO-OP

4005 23rd Street • PO Box 226
 Baker City, OR 97814
 (541) 523-3616