

Wilkinsons selected as 1997 Morrow County Conservation Farm of the Year



Dick and Virginia Wilkinson

The Morrow County Wheat Growers have selected Dick and Virginia Wilkinson's farm as the 1997 Conservation Farm of the year.

Dick and Virginia will have their field day some time in September. The final date will be published when it is scheduled.

The Wilkinsons were selected by a committee consisting of representatives from Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Services Agency, Extension, Morrow County Wheat League and the 1996 Conservation Farm.

Dick is the second generation in his family to produce livestock on their ranch. The Wilkinson ranch, located south of Heppner, was established around 1920 by his parents, Frank and Wavel Wilkinson.

This diversified operation is performed on about 31,000 acres of deeded crop and range land (about 900 acres of that is in CRP), and about 55,000 acres of leased ground. The primary enterprise of the Wilkinson ranch is cow-calf production, but the operation also includes haying, CRP, wildlife management, and logging.

Dick, Virginia, and four hired men form the team that keeps the cow-calf operation running smoothly. The four hired men consist of one full-time mechanic, one full time fencer, and two full time cowboys. When work loads require more help with the cattle, the mechanic and fencer fill in. During the feeding season all four men spend most of their time feeding the cattle. This operation covers a little over six percent of the total Morrow County acreage.

Over the years a number of conservation strategies have been implemented, and are currently in place. Some of these are water management, grazing management, stream bank erosion control, and cropland erosion control.

A major program was undertaken in 1993. This was the installation of a watering system on an 8,000 acre place located up Hinton Creek known as the Justice place. The water system, engineered by NRCS, was a cost share project with the

Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Heppner. The watering system consists of a well, which supplies water to a 25,870 gallon reservoir, and 17 strategically located watering troughs, which are gravity fed through about five miles of water line from the reservoir. Some obvious environmental gains include dispersed grazing due to increased access to water throughout the range and riparian protection by giving water access away from the live streams.

Dicks' grazing plan is another conservation technique. His grazing plan includes cross fencing to better control grazing levels. Dick says that over the years of installing cross fencing, he has increased capacity by one third. Short duration grazing is used to allow range to recover quickly and prevents over grazing which can be counter productive to a cattle operation. Mobile water tanks with fold-down troughs are placed to disperse grazing throughout the range and hold cattle away from riparian areas. When the integrated effects of dispersed watering, cross fencing, and short duration grazing are evaluated, a very environmental and wildlife conscious operation is evident, said a news release.

Wildlife benefit greatly from the management practices that are implemented on the Wilkinson ranch. Some of the beneficiaries are elk, mule deer, wild turkeys, upland game birds, and fish. Most recently, in the fall of 1996, a fish screen was installed in an irrigation canal on the ranch. The fish screen prevents fish from entering the canal, and discharges them down a 40-foot discharge pipe back into the creek. The fish screen was a joint purchase between Dick and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In 1994 Dick and Virginia were awarded the "Landowner of the Year" award by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife "in recognition of outstanding contributions to the fish and wildlife resources of Oregon".

Controlled hunting is permitted on the Wilkinson ranch, in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and vehicle traffic is restricted. Restricting vehicle traffic helps prevent the spread of

weeds, reduces fire hazard, and prevents gates from being left open. Dick even provides some specific camping areas along Willow Creek. No fees are charged.

Weed control is also a major long-term management strategy for Dick. One of the biggest problem weeds is knapweed. About 15 years ago diffuse knapweed infested nearly 10,000 acres of his range land. This infestation effectively wiped out 20 percent of the range, and another 20 percent was partially infested. Dick estimates that the knapweed invasion reduced carrying capacity by about 300 head. A renovation program was implemented with the cooperation of ODFW. Over the

years the knapweed problem has been reduced, but still exists. An annual offensive spraying of infested areas as well as defensive spraying of boarding fence rows will be an ongoing event for years to come.

Another problem weed that is becoming more prevalent in Morrow County is Medusahead rye. Medusahead rye is a grass that becomes unpalatable as it matures. At this time there is no selective means of control for this problem, but Dick feels it is a growing problem that will need to be addressed more closely in years to come.

As a supplemental enterprise of the cow-calf enterprise, haying of grass bottoms on Willow Creek is performed. The bottom

ground is fertilized each spring. The grass is then hayed at the appropriate time and baled into 1400+ pound bales to be fed to the cattle the following winter. Once the grass is baled, the bottoms are available for grazing. The grass hay is stored along with purchased hay in six hay sheds that hold most of the 2000 tons of hay that will be fed during the winter. The sheds are estimated to reduce waste by 10 percent.

The ranch has a lot of timber which is leased to Kinzua Corporation. Dick says he prefers selective logging to thin the timber. After logging, the logged area is assessed to determine if tree planting is

needed. If needed, seedlings will be planted to replenish the timber stand.

The 1200 acres of crop land that are owned by the Wilkinsons consist of 900 acres of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), and the balance has been planted to grass. CRP is the conservation practice that was felt to be best for the dryland wheat ground. CRP also provides some additional wildlife benefits. Prior to CRP in 1977, Dick installed approximately 15 miles of diversion ditches on the crop land to help reduce soil loss.

All the above conservation strategies combined with a focus on wildlife have created the 1997 Morrow County Conservation Farm of the Year.

Lone Site Council conducts meeting

The Lone Site Council met May 14 at Lone High School. Principal Dick Allen reported that the School Improvement Plan has been sent to the district office for final approval by the school board. The council will begin the action plan in the fall of 1997.

Some interest has been shown regarding the vacancies on the council. John Collin and Arlynda Gates have submitted their names for election, filling the parent vacancies. Betty Reitmann and Steve Schaber will run for re-election representing the teachers and Charity McElligott representing the classified employees.

The fall Cardinal Club meeting and potluck dinner is scheduled for September 8. This will allow the parent election to take place before the first site council meeting.

CB/IM teams attend rodeo

The Columbia Basin women's team-Tiffanie and Angela Munkers and Katie McCoin-are number one in Oregon team standings and have been the entire season. They also won the team standings at the Mollala High School (MHS) Rodeo held this past weekend.

Following are local competitors' MHS Rodeo results:
Girls All Around-first Lexi Matteson, Intermountain Team (IM);

Barrel racing-second Nate Filbin, Columbia Basin Team (CB);

Calf roping-second Justin Matteson, IM, third Emmett Evans, IM, seventh Ben Rodriguez, IM, eighth Vic Thompson, IM;

Saddle bronc-third Zane Gibbs, IM, fourth Evans;

Steer wrestling-seventh J. Matteson;

Bull riding-third Ty Wilkins, CB;

Barrel racing-second L. Matteson, third Tiffanie Munkers, CB, seventh Amber Evans, IM;

Pole bending-second L. Matteson; third T. Munkers;

Goat tying-second Laina Mathews, IM, third T. Munkers, fourth L. Matteson, sixth Katie McCoin, CB;

Breakaway-fourth L. Matteson, fifth Angela Munkers, CB, 10th A. Evans;

Girls cutting-fourth A. Munkers;

Boys cutting-second E. Evans, sixth Brian Knowles, IM;

Team roping-first Rodriguez, second J. Matteson, seventh, L. and J. Matteson, ninth E. Evans.

WCCC Tourney

The Willow Creek Country Club golfers will have a Jack and Jill mini-tournament on Friday, June 13 at 6 p.m.

Tournament will involve a nine-hole modified couples type of play with the format determined by the committee in charge.

Prizes will be awarded for low score and special events. The charge will be \$3 per couple for members and \$10 per couple for non-members.

Light snacks will be provided by the committee in charge.

Hosts of the event are: Jim and Cam Wishart, Ralph and Sally Walker and Bob and Suzanne Jepsen.

at the district track meet.

The middle school choir, under the direction of Ron Neighorn, performed in the community play in Heppner, entertained the Morrow County School Board at the April meeting and were invited back to the Senior Center. Several lone students performed in the community play "Mother Goose Madness".

The next meeting of the Lone Site Council will be Sept. 10.

Marriage Licenses

The Morrow County Clerk's office at the courthouse in Heppner reports issuing the following marriage license during the past week:

June 3: Brian Scott Harris, 38, Irrigon; and

Nicolette Anne Lewis, 39, Irrigon.

Mark and Sally Brosnan

*Hardly believable, but true,
A year ago we both said, "I do!"
We've enjoyed this year of true "BLISS,"
But a celebration we did miss!
Join us now, as a party we share,
To say to the world, "WE ARE A PAIR!"
What we have planned is a real fest,
And we want you to be our guest!*

Heppner Elks Club
Saturday, June 14th
6:30 p.m. to ????

Food & Entertainment!

Celebrate Father's Day
Sunday, June 15th at
Beecher's Restaurant, Ione

Featuring A Limited Menu - Includes:

- Top Sirloin Steak
- Chicken Strips
- Rib Eye Steak
- Fried Chicken
- Fried Fish
- Chicken Fried Steak
- Prime Rib
- Baked Potatoes - Mashed w/Gravy
- Potato Salad
- Green Salad
- Fruit Salad
- Dessert
- Complimentary Beer & Wine

Dinner Served Noon until 7:30 p.m.
Reservations Recommended

Beecher's Restaurant & Lounge
350 Hwy 74 • Ione, OR
422-7038

Dad Deserves The Best

Tie Tacks in
Black Hills Gold
and
Anson 22K Gold Electroplate

Peterson's Jewellers
Heppner 676-9200

FREE FAMILY FUN

The Morrow County Arts Council and The Community of Ione present
the FIRST ANNUAL Ione

FESTIVAL*

JULY 4TH

FEATURING THREE OF THE TOP NORTHWEST
BLUES BANDS OF NATIONAL RENOWN!!!
de PAUL DE LAY Band,
L'L LYNNE AND THE SMOKIN' SOLES,
JIMMY LLOYD REA AND THE SWITCHMASTERS

BANDS START AT 1:30 IN THE PARK
MUSIC ALL AFTERNOON - INTO THE NIGHT

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS: Willow Creek Park and Recreation District, ICABO, Ione City Council, Columbia Basin Electric, Monte Cram Ranch, Bank of EO, Morrow County Grain Growers, Wheatland Insurance, Murray Drugs, Pettyjohn's Farm and Builders Supply, Morrow County Unified Recreation District. **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 341-422-7356 OR 341-422-7243.