

Robert and Gladys DuPuis are Oregon Cooperators of the Year

Robert and Gladys DuPuis, long-time residents of Birkenfeld, were named 2003 Cooperators of the Year by the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts at an award dinner November 20, at the Lloyd Center DoubleTree Hotel, in Portland.

Directors of the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District nominated the DuPuis' for the North Coast Basin Co-operator of the Year award because of the years of conservation leadership they have provided to their community and the excellent manner in which they have carried out their conservation plan. They were selected for the North Coast region, which advanced them for consideration at the state level.

The DuPuis' have been active District cooperators since 1960. Since then, they have successfully implemented a conservation plan on their 160 acre farm, which is bordered by more than 10,000 feet of Nehalem River frontage. Their farm is currently a beef and sheep operation. Most of the land use is pasture and hayland. The farmstead and barns, where livestock were commonly wintered, is located within 200 feet of the Nehalem River.

Over the years, Robert has been proactive about providing wildlife habitat on the farm. Elk and deer use the pasture for winter grazing and the riparian corridor along the Nehalem River for cover and browse. Beaver, muskrats, otter, and

other mammals are common. Many varieties of song, game

include livestock from the riparian forest buffer. They are in the



birds, waterfowl and raptors also use these areas for food, nesting and cover. Over the years, Robert has planted trees to improve the cover. One 14-acre piece of forestland has been totally excluded from grazing. Areas of the stream bank that began eroding were stabilized by plantings with assistance from the Upper Nehalem River Watershed Council.

In 2001, The DuPuis' took an even larger step for conservation of fish and wildlife. They entered 77 acres (nearly 1/2 of their 160 acre farm) into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Through CREP, they are installing riparian forest buffers along 10,000 feet of the river. They have installed 6600 feet of fence to ex-

process of installing two livestock watering systems to keep livestock from accessing the river for drinking water. In 2003, Robert planted eight acres of trees and plans to plant the remainder in the next two years. So far, his tree survival has been very good. With this project, like all others Robert undertakes, a lot of thought and experience goes into his decisions. He decided to stretch the riparian plantings over a longer period of time so he could give the trees more care and improve tree survival by lessening the chance of a dry season wiping out all of the plantings. In addition to the wildlife benefits, this project will ultimately have a positive effect on threatened and endangered fish, including

Coho salmon and steelhead, that use the Nehalem River by providing shade, large woody debris, water quality improvements and stream bank protection.

In addition to efforts on their own property, Robert DuPuis has actively supported conservation efforts in the Nehalem River Watershed. He has encouraged his neighbors to consider the CREP program on their property and referred others to the conservation district. Robert has volunteered to speak at CREP landowner workshops presented by the

conservation district and watershed council.

Robert and Gladys DuPuis have done a superb job with their conservation plan, from implementation to maintenance. Robert has maintained his conservation practices like everything else – like the 1942 Allis Chalmers tractor he uses and keeps in perfect operating order, the practices such as tree plantings, (that he hand watered this year), and the fence that will continue to be maintained. As he cares for his equipment, he takes care of his land.

Application time for conservation funds

Applications are now being accepted by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The first application deadline for 2004 funding is December 31, 2003.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program for promoting agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, agricultural producers may receive financial and technical assistance for installing conservation practices that address natural resource concerns on the land they own or operate.

EQIP can also assist pro-

ducers in complying with state and national regulations by addressing natural resource concerns including water quality, soil quality and wildlife habitat.

EQIP-eligible land may include cropland, pastureland and non-industrial forestland that is part of an agricultural operation.

If an applicant is eligible and funding is made available, NRCS will write contracts ranging from two to ten years, depending on time needed to carry out installation and management. Typical conservation issues that have been addressed with EQIP in Columbia County include providing manure stor-

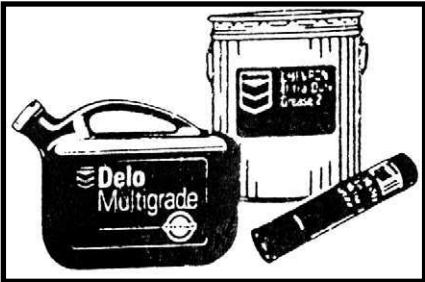
age to reduce nutrient runoff; nutrient management on cropland and pasture; pasture management improvements with practices like cross-fencing, water developments and rotational grazing; stream bank protection with practices such as tree planting and bank stabilization measures; wildlife habitat practices and others.

To apply for EQIP, arrange a site visit by a conservationist, or for additional information, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA-NRCS office. In Columbia County, it is located at 2514 Sykes Road, St. Helens; phone 503-397-4555.

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