



Farm Service Agency

Celebrating 25 Years of the Conservation Reserve Program

CRP — On the Ground

CREP Project

Saves Streams
Walla Walla Co.



Grass Filter Strip

Protects Peone
Creek,
Spokane Co.



CRP Creates

Wildlife Park
Spokane Co.



CRP Provides

Farm Balance
Whitman Co.



CRP Preserves
Family Lifestyle in
Whatcom Co.



Business Grows

with CRP in
Whitman Co.



Whatcom County Riparian Buffer —Photo courtesy of Vera Vander Yacht Thistle

By Vera Vander Yacht Thistle
Landowner

CREP Helps Preserve Family Lifestyle and Restore Salmon Habitat

Editor's Note: The following article was submitted by Vera Vander Yacht Thistle. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Project (CREP) she refers to was planted in 2002 and encompasses 18.5 acres. The project is located 20 miles east of Bellingham and is along the riparian areas of the Middle Fork Nooksack River and two tributaries: Canyon Lake Creek and Carlson Creek. The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe planted the project. The plantings include large stands of shore pine and Sitka spruce in open fields, a thriving willow stand in a wet field, and western red-cedar, Sitka spruce and western hemlock interplant in an existing hardwood overstory.

In 1948, our family moved from our 40-acre farm on Huntley Road to Welcome Valley to a 247-acre place, which my husband Ken thought would have more opportunities for our children.

25 Years of CRP

(continued on next page)

We had a small herd of purebred Guernsey cows and were able to increase the herd on the larger place. We shipped the milk to Darigold in cans.

When new modern milking parlors were required, we switched to beef cattle. There was some timber on the place, but most was kept and only selectively logged, while Ken and oldest son, Duane, bid and logged locally.

It took me awhile to get used to living so far from Bellingham where most of my family lived. But, I soon got acquainted with our neighbors and enjoyed the many activities in the valley. My family came from town often and enjoyed the place, too.

Three baby girls were added to our family, making four girls and two boys. Our large place proved to be a great place to raise a family, with Canyon Creek and Nooksack River on our borders and two smaller streams where salmon came up to spawn.

The boys went fishing and hunting and also were in FFA at Mt. Baker High School. The girls enjoyed hiking and camping and were in Camp Fire Girls and 4H clubs. Our children appreciated nature and were taught to respect and preserve the environment.

The pasture grew plenty of feed for the animals and with no milking to do, made more time for logging and cutting wood for our furnace.

It was our plan to deed small (2-5) acreages to each of our kids since we had property on both sides of the road, making lots of frontage. Ken talked of retiring, but couldn't quite pick a time. Then he was diagnosed with cancer. Even after surgery and chemo and radiation, he passed away on May 22, 1981.

I lived at the place alone for six years with the help of my family. Both sons, Duane and Dennis had served in the military and never wanted to leave our community again. Duane started his own tree farm and wood business and Dennis his own excavating business.

On Valentine's Day, 1987, I married a wonderful guy. Cliff was married to my sister for many years and she had passed away two years before. We had always been good friends and now we needed each other and fell in love. My six children and his two, wholeheartedly, approved of our wedding.

The first thing Cliff wanted to do was to carry out the plan to deed my kids their property. It took months to go through all the permits, etc. for the short plots. All of my children, except one, still occupy their lots.

So many picnics and family gatherings were part of our lives and still can be, thanks, in part to such programs as the CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program), sponsored by the government.

A few years ago, Cliff and I decided to move to Bellingham, but we find ourselves driving out a couple of times a week.

Last summer, we formed a family corporation so the family could take over when we're gone. We know how they feel about taking care of the place. With their help, we already have developed two campgrounds, one with a large rustic shelter to share with our friends and relatives as well as for church activities.

When we heard about the CREP program for salmon enhancement from a friend who has a farm at Van Zandt, it seemed to fit right in with our plans. They have been in CREP for a year and are very pleased with it. We can lease the land along waterways for up to fifteen years for planting trees, etc. to benefit salmon spawning and also bring us some income, along with some acreage we had in Christmas trees.

The people from CREP have been very cooperative and wonderful to work with. We feel it is a very worthwhile program that serves two purposes for us. So far, I would recommend it to anyone who wants to save both the salmon and the environment. Also, in our case, it helps to preserve our family lifestyle.