

Ground Truth



Quarterly Publication of the Diablo Trust – A Northern Arizona Collaborative Grassroots Land Management Team



The Diablo Trust is a 501(c)(3) land management team created in 1993 to promote the social, biological and economic sustainability of 426,000 acres of intermingled federal, state, and private lands southeast of Flagstaff, AZ by engaging in a collaborative stewardship process that is in harmony with the natural environment and the broader community.

The phrase “Learning from the land and sharing our knowledge, so there will always be a West” captures our mission.

Ground Truth is the quarterly publication of the Diablo Trust, mailed free of charge to everyone on our mailing list.

If you would like to be added to, or removed from, the mailing list, please contact us at:

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Contributors are solely responsible for the content of their articles, and the opinions expressed in articles, linked materials, and comments are not necessarily those of the Diablo Trust.

Diablo Trust Headlines

As seems invariably to be the case, a great deal has happened at the Diablo Trust since our last newsletter. Let's get you caught up on some of the highlights:

- Carrie Cultra, who is profiled in our “Getting to Know...” feature on page 2, oversaw the second round of ecological data collection in our Integrated Monitoring for Sustainability (IMfoS) program this summer. IMfoS, launched in 2005, is now in its second round of collection and analysis of ecological, social, and interactive data and is establishing itself as a benchmark monitoring program for collaborative management. As Federal and State agencies are increasingly limited by budgetary and personnel constraints, a multi-party monitoring program like IMfoS becomes not only the source of valuable information but a powerful example of how grassroots organizations like Diablo Trust can help agencies fulfill their mandates and contribute to the long-term stewardship of landscape-scale areas.

- August saw our annual Camp-out Under the Stars, hosted once again in partnership with Flagstaff Friends of Traditional Music, at a new location: Sawmill Springs. The weather was perfect, the potluck dinner was astounding in its breadth and quality, the music was sublime, the Sunday morning Cowboy Breakfast was epic yet again, and rumors ran rampant that this was the most enjoyable Camp-out yet. Wishing to remain impartial on this matter, we can neither confirm nor deny this possibility. But you can view pictures from this and other Diablo Trust events in our “Views from the Ground” feature on page 7 and via the slideshow feature on our website, www.diablotrust.org.

- The newly expanded Diablo Trust board of directors, profiled in the previous newsletter, continues to be very active. In this issue, beginning on page 3, we are pleased to offer an excerpt of Rick Knight's excellent article, “Ranchers as a Keystone Species in a West that Works,” originally published by the Society for Range Management.

- The board has been especially busy with the launch of our new “One Dollar Per Acre” fundraising campaign, which can now be viewed on the Diablo Trust website. When you have a moment to do so, we'd greatly appreciate your taking the time to consider this request for your support.

- Late September brought about, as it has the last three years, the Annual Gathering of the Sustainers of the West, co-hosted with the Museum of Northern Arizona. On a crisp fall afternoon, about a hundred folks came together for Flying M's famous pit-barbecue, catering by Pesto Brothers, and the foot-tappin' sounds of Bill Vernieu. It was once again, as the Museum's Susie Garretson put it so well in these pages a year ago, “a delight to be amongst others who share a love and concern for the Colorado Plateau.” And, as per the Camp-out above, we have the pictures to prove it.

- Our work at the forefront of recreation management continues apace. In the vein of this year's annual meeting theme, “Taking the Wreck out of Recreation,” we have invited an impressive group of recreation managers and stakeholders to guide a planning process the intended result of which will be a Demonstration Project for Travel Management and Recreation Use on the Diablo Trust land area. Stay tuned, as you will be hearing much more about this in the months ahead.

- In October, one of the supporters of our recreation work, the National Forest Foundation, invited the Diablo Trust to participate in a Collaboration Workshop near their home in Missoula, MT. We were honored to join a wide range of collaboratives from across the country in an energetic, informative, and truly inspiring three-day workshop.

Diablo Trust



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Getting to Know... Carrie Cultra

Carrie is a graduate student in the Masters of Environmental Science & Policy program at Northern Arizona University and the coordinator of the Diablo Trust's 2008 Integrated Monitoring for Sustainability project.

"I am inspired by Diablo Trust's desire to collaboratively manage such a large piece of land and it's commitment to doing so sustainably. Fundamentally, I see it as an effort to preserve what it is that I love about the West.

"I came to Flagstaff in 2005, after three years in the Peace Corps in Paraguay, to work a 6-month field season collecting data on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon where my love of this place was born.

"My passion for conservation biology is rooted in my love for science and the outdoors, and in my belief that really good management decisions can come from community participation. Living in a place as beautiful as Flagstaff has given me even more incentive and motivation to work with people who are trying their very best to keep this area the way it is. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with the Diablo Trust on a project that values conservation, community and sustainable land management."



Carrie's Diablo Trust Profile

Born in: Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Childhood hero: Michael Jordan

Current hero: My parents: they are happy, peaceful and do what they love.

Favorite College Class: Tropical Rain-forest Biology in Costa Rica.

Book you recently enjoyed: "The World Without Us" by Alan Weisman.

Hobbies: Bike riding, hiking, camping, fishing, identifying plants and monitoring.

Fondest Outdoor Memory: Catching my first fish using my dad's fly rod.

Possible Ranch Nickname: "Li'l Biscuit" (or at least so says Derrick).

Favorite Western: "Tombstone"

Favorite Western-Wear Item: My red cowboy boots.

Favorite Ranch Recipe: Biscuits and sausage gravy (as if there were any other kind!)

If you had a home on the range, actor you would cast in the role of your husband: For starters, he'd have to make me laugh and look great in Wranglers and cowboy boots. After that, we'll have call-backs.

As of yet unrealized life's dream: Saving the world, or at least a part of it.

Favorite Quotation: "Be the change you want to see in the world"
- Mahatma Gandhi

Ranchers As A Keystone Species In A West That Works -- An Excerpt

By Richard L. Knight

Keystone species - a species whose importance is disproportionate to its numbers.

Ranchers and ranching are both an occupation and a process that encompass the realities of the American West. As the landscape of the West is blended, half public and half private, ranching builds connections between public and private lands, and between rural and urban communities. Ranching works well, ecologically, economically, and culturally. If ranching declines, rather than prospers, so to will the health of human and natural communities decline.



Ecologically, ranching as a land use is compatible with the natural heritage of the West. It keeps lands open and stewarded, keeps human densities low, and safeguards private lands from fragmentation. Economically, ranching provides home-grown food, pays its own way, and supports a fiscally responsible economy. Culturally, ranching covers a time frame dating back over 400 years, one of the oldest land uses that Euro-Americans have given the New World.

A natural alliance exists between urban consumers of food and open space, and rural producers of food and open space. Regrettably, this logical symbiosis has waned during past decades. A strong rural-urban partnership is as essential to a healthy West as is a strong public-private land connection. As these relationships deepen, so to will the health of the human and natural communities of this region.

An honest appraisal about ranching as a land use in the New West, however, first requires that we acknowledge the current "highest and best uses" of the West, both private and public. Exurban development and outdoor recreation are presently the highest and best uses of the private and public lands, respectively, in today's West. These land uses have replaced livestock grazing as the principle use of the West only decades earlier, particularly in the arid West.

Because land health is dependent upon land use, it is impossible to discuss ranching without also discussing the

land uses that are replacing it. Some people might think it is a far stretch to connect livestock grazing on private and public lands with exurban development and outdoor recreation on private and public lands but I see it differently. The protection of open space, food production, ecosystem services, and the aesthetics of rural areas runs right through agriculture. At one end stands a rancher, at the other end a developer. We have arrived at a point in our history where conversations about western lands and land health, grazing, ranchettes, and recreation are entwined and cannot be separated. They must be dealt with simultaneously when discussing the future of our Next West. Importantly, these discussions need to include more than just the ecology of competing land uses, they need to also address the economics and the cultural aspects of these land uses as well.



Ecology

Although land ownership in the West is blended, the division is not equal. The private lands are the best watered, occur at the lower elevations and contain the richest soils. Understanding the history of settlement of the public domain is key to appreciating why the federal lands are largely "rock and ice" or "desert and thorn." The implications to biodiversity of this historical truth are even more important. The private lands are disproportionately important to the maintenance of our region's natural heritage because they are disproportionately more productive. Although no one has calculated the ratio, private lands may be an order of magnitude more important to the maintenance of the region's biodiversity than are the public lands. Truthfully, however, species of conservation concern could no more survive on just the private lands of the West than they could survive on just the public lands.

Ranching, because it encompasses large amounts of land with low human densities, and because it alters native vegetation in modest ways, has been found to support

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Keystone [cont'd]

biodiversity of conservation concern. The alternative uses of private and public lands do not tread so lightly. Outdoor recreation is the second leading cause for the decline of Federally threatened and endangered species on public lands, while residential development is the second leading cause for the listing of these species on all lands in the U.S., both private and public.

When rural lands, whether in farms or ranches, are subdivided there follows an increase in landscape-level fragmentation. For example, when ranches in Larimer County, Colorado were subdivided, there was an almost ten-fold increase in road densities and fragmentation from houses which perforated the previously intact rangelands. This observation led us to wonder how biodiversity, from songbirds to carnivores to plants, differed across the principle land uses of today's West. Accordingly, we examined these taxa on a landscape that was part rangeland, part exurban development, and part protected area without livestock.

The upshot of the biological changes associated with the conversion of rangelands to ranchettes will be an altered natural heritage. In the years to come, as the West gradually transforms itself from rural ranches with low human densities to increasingly sprawl-riddled landscapes with more people, more dogs and cats, more cars and fences, more night lights perforating the once-black night sky, the rich natural diversity that once characterized the rural West will be altered forever. Is that the West we want? It will be the West we get if we do not slow down and get to know the human and natural histories of our region better, and then act to conserve them.

Economics

During a time when America's red ink is swelling large enough to swamp the world's largest economy, it is encouraging to realize that ranching tends to be fiscally responsible. On private lands, ranching is far preferable to the "highest and best" alternative, exurban development. Study after study have all reported the same finding: property taxes from rural residential developments come nowhere near paying the costs of county governments and school districts, whereas farming and ranching allow counties and schools to remain in the black. In Montana, for example, for each dollar of property taxes from ranchettes, counties and school districts, on average, have to ante up \$1.45 to meet these costs. On farms and ranches, however, they show a surplus, having to only produce \$0.25 of goods and services for every dollar of property taxes.

Culture

The West is a region of diverse ecosystems, cultures, and economies. Ranching as a land use, and ranchers as a cul-

ture have been with us for over 400 years, dating back to the early Spanish colonists who struggled northward over El Paso del Norte and found a home for their livestock near present-day Espanola, New Mexico. Western ranching has spanned the time scale from the First Americans to the astronauts, avoiding the moving-on mandate of the get-rich-quick industries of mining and logging.

So today, in our haste to remake ourselves once more into the Next West, might we avoid some mistakes if we showed respect to the ranching culture? A definitive answer to that question eludes me but my gut says yes, going slow and getting to know one's human and natural histories is essential to living well on a place.

Conclusion

America is gradually waking up to one consequence of our globalizing economy; the loss of locally produced food on private lands that provide critical ecosystem services and open space. As ranching diminishes in the West and agricultural jobs move offshore, so to does the opportunity for our urban publics to reconnect with the rural tasks of husbanding food on well-stewarded land. Gary Nabhan captured this when he wrote:

"The simplest fact about Western ranches is the one most folks tend to forget: raising range-fed livestock is one of the few economic activities that produces food -- and potentially ecosystem health and financial wealth -- by keeping landscapes relatively wild, diverse, and resilient."

Imagine a time when Westerners eat locally produced food from private and public open spaces, offered and received with grace and a fair market value by urban people who no longer take for granted the societal services of local farmers and ranchers. Equally important to this winning equation are rural people who acknowledge the importance of urban areas and offer a friendly handshake to their urban neighbors. Perhaps to vision this, we need to remind ourselves that humans, whether rural or urban, can be keystone species or the ultimate weedy species, depending on their relationships to land.

Richard L. Knight is Professor of Wildlife Conservation at Colorado State University

This article originally appeared in its entirety in Rangelands, a publication of the Society for Range Management, Volume 29, Issue 5, and is excerpted here with the generous permission of the author and the publisher, Allen Press Publishing Services.

To view the entire article, including figures and references, please visit www.diablotrust.org/news_articles.htm

Diablo Trust President's Report

By Mandy Roberts Metzger

Since our last newsletter, we have experienced sadness in our Diablo Trust family as we mourn with Norm and Gail Lowe the death of their son, Abraham, 18. Abe spent many hours with his parents at Diablo Trust events. We first met him as an energetic and teasing 5-year old, and watched him grow to become a handsome young man about to embark on an adult journey. Our thoughts and prayers are with Abe's parents and family. Donations in memory of Abraham Lowe may be sent to the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, PO Box 36233, Phoenix, AZ 85067 and to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, 525 Metro Place North, Suite 220, Dublin, OH 43017.



One hundred years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt designated November 26, 1908 as a general day of Thanksgiving writing, "the growth in wealth and population has surpassed even the growth in territories. On we prosper in the things of the soul is character that counts."

Roosevelt might agree that "things of the soul" can be secured in the knowledge that seasons change and renew both in life and nature. Ducks take flight from the waters on Mormon Lake; there are bear tracks near the corrals at the Flying Mountain. The Drought anchor for both sustainability and comfort is never overlooked, especially during this holiday season.

Please know that we in Diablo Trust are deeply grateful for the countless blessings of friendship, and for the opportunity to work with you towards a sustainable land-based future. We hope your Thanksgiving meal is filled with fresh and local flavors from agriculture producers both near and far.

(Editor's Note: Mandy was elected to the Coconino County Board of Supervisors and will take office on January 6, 2009)

Money Matters & Your Support Will Make a Difference

Please check out our new "One Dollar Per Acre" Fundraising video at www.diablotrust.org

Diablo Trust Monthly Meetings



All Diablo Trust meetings are free & open to the public. We generally meet on the second Friday of every month, but please check our online calendar at <http://www.diablotrust.org/calendar/> for exact meeting times, locations and agendas.

You're Invited!

Would you like to see a particular topic discussed at a monthly meeting? Interested in joining one of our working groups? Looking to volunteer? Just contact the office at (928) 523-0588

Current Working Groups & Chairs

Science & Monitoring
Tom Sisk & Norm Wallen

Land Projects
Bob Prosser & Jack Metzger

Education
Norm Lowe

Wildlife
Henry Provencio

Roads & Recreation
Judy Prosser

Artists
Darcy Falk & David Osborne

Rural Planning
Bill Towler

Volunteer Shout-Out

For a volunteer-based organization like ours, very little of import happens without the all-guts, no-glory work of folks who put considerable time and energy into making necessary things happen, whether in the office or on the ground.

At this time, we'd like to give special thanks to John & Lois Neff, Linda Marie Golier, Jim Hall, Bruce Johnson, Brent & Judy Mullen, and Melanie Lawrence for helping to conduct our Recreation Surveys, and to NAU Students Kevin Wiesmann, Chris Langenkamp and Jessica Makowske, from Professor Kimberly Curtis' Political Ecology Class, for helping out with the Social & Interactive surveys that are an integral part of our IMfOS monitoring project.

Interested in volunteering for the Diablo Trust? Call the office at (928) 523-0588.

Meanwhile, back at the Ranch...

We are well into our "Fall Works." This is the time of year when we gather our cows from the high country and move them towards the low elevations for winter. We wean the calves, sell the steer calves, and pregnancy test the cows. All the cows and calves are vaccinated and ear-tagged if we are keeping them. We sell yearling bred heifers to other ranchers, and the steers to a feeder that sends them to wheat pastures in Texas, Oklahoma, or Kansas. It is a busy time but enjoyable, especially after having had a good summer in terms of rainfall. Calves are fat – cows are pregnant and in good shape.

Rainfall was fairly sporadic and not a lot was recorded anywhere. However it was one of those years when we never really dried out too badly from the spring, with the exception of the north part of the ranch. About 40% of our winter country is not in very good condition and had a minimal amount of rain this summer. The middle of the ranch, and the summer country are in pretty good shape.



We had a unique Ranch Reunion of past employees in August. We had about 100 people with their kids and ours. To memorialize the event Derrick took photos for us. It really was a good time.

One of our sons brought three of his senior classmates home for a last weekend from Colorado State University where he is majoring in Ag Business. They are all doing a project for a keystone class in which they are analyzing our concept of changing from spring to late summer calving. Knowing this means nothing to most of you, we bring this up because it is a huge change for our operation that has numerous domino effects and probably some unforeseen consequences. It is our hope that these brilliant young minds can improve upon our concept. On a side note, it was interesting that while they are all from U.S. ranches, one was Greek, the other Italian, and the other Hawaiian. Great to see such diversity.

We hope you all have a wonderful fall season and that the your holidays are full of good times with family and friends.

Our very best,
Bob & Judy
- T - Ranch

Views from the Ground



Carrie Cultra, demonstrating the proper 'over-the-shoulder' technique for finding a random sampling plot, on Anderson Mesa



Tom Sisk & Gary Nabhan catching up at the 2008 Camp-out Under the Stars at Sawmill Springs



Hopi corn, enjoyed by all at the Camp-out thanks to Norman Honanie



Eli Bernstein and Jess Pratt toasting their tasty potluck dinners at the Camp-out



County Supervisor Carl Taylor (right) talking up his Pioneer Tool Display at the 2008 Gathering of the Sustainers of the West



A typically bountiful dinner plate at the Sustainers' Event: Pit Barbecue, beans, coleslaw, potatoes, oh my...



Lynne Nemeth and Lanny Morrison, who certainly appear to be enjoying their first Sustainers' Event



Paloma and Julietta Fernandez commandeering the dessert table at the Sustainers' Event



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“Learning from the land and sharing our knowledge... So there will always be a West”

Upcoming Diablo Trust Events

Friday, December 12: Diablo Trust Christmas Party hosted by Jim & Wendie Highsmith, 5 - 9 pm
Please bring good cheer and potluck contribution to appetizer/fingerfood/dessert lollapalooza.
For directions and further information, please call the office at (928) 523-0588.

Wednesday, December 17: Recreation Planning Project Panel (RecP3) at the AZGFD Offices,
3500 S. Lake Mary Road, 1 - 4 pm
This will be the first full meeting of the group convened to guide the planning process for a
recreation and travel management demonstration project on the Diablo Trust land area.
For further information, please call the office at (928) 523-0588.

Friday, February 20: 2009 Annual Meeting
8am - 4pm, location and agenda to be announced, but please save the date.

June, 2009: Reflections of the Land at the NAU Art Museum; please stay tuned for exact dates and submission
information, there will be an update from the Artists' Working Group early in 2009.

Please visit our website, <http://www.diablotrust.org/>, for details and further information on these and all future events.

Funding for this newsletter is provided by these organizations and supporters like you.

