



TulalipCares.org

Tulalip Charitable Contributions Funds Distribution Report

NAME OF AGENCY: Conservation Northwest

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GENERAL GOALS: Connect the big landscapes, protect the most vulnerable wildlife, and conserve our natural heritage for future generations.

SPECIFIC USE FOR THIS AWARD:

This award was used to assist with operational expenses.

For more information please read the attached report from Conservation Northwest.



RECEIVED
JUL 27 2016
BY: *[Signature]*

Sentinel: one who keeps guard or watches

To Conservation Northwest's best supporters, the *Forest Sentinels*

July 22, 2016

Dear Marilyn,

As dusk settled over a late June day on a ranch just north of Yellowstone National Park, I got to watch a grizzly bear ambling through a nearby meadow. Yet the highlight of my trip had to do with cattle.

I was there with our wolf team—Jay Kehne and Paula Swedeen, along with Allen McEwan of our Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative, attending a workshop on low-stress livestock handling. Maybe it was the mountain air, but I was sure seeing things in a different light.

You've heard much about the range riders we help employ to keep peace between wolves and cattle in eastern Washington. But what if there were more efficient means to keep cattle herded up and less prone to predator attack? And what if that method had substantial other benefits for the land, the cattle, and the rancher's bottom line? Such promise was what we, along with a handful of other conservationists, agency personnel, and ranchers had come to investigate.

Traditional livestock handling in the American West can be a brutal affair involving dogs, mounted and shouting cowboys, and even electrical shock wands used to impose will. Cattle subjected to such stressful treatment are vulnerable to weight loss and even injury. Some stewards have found ways to persuade herds to move without subjugation. In so doing, they save labor costs while profiting off fatter, happier cows. Such an approach might reduce the swagger of cowhands and make for awfully dull rodeos, but it can enable a single child on foot to calmly move a large herd more efficiently than a half dozen mounted men. And it might just be a game changer for reducing conflicts between livestock and predators, and for saving livelihoods in rural America.

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The key is working with the natural herding instincts and calm nature of the cattle. They don't like stress and harassment any more than we do. So a proficient handler can use stress as a cue to train the herd: want them bunched up at night so they're less vulnerable to probing wolves? Then train them to feel stress when alone, and unstressed when grouped. Want them to stay out of fragile watercourses? Then teach them (using human presence) to feel a bit of stress while standing in a creek and a sense of release from stress when they return to upland areas of the range.

At the workshop near Yellowstone we saw demonstrations of simple techniques and heard convincing testimonials from credible ranchers. It all made perfect sense to me, based on my experience as a Wyoming cowhand one summer almost 40 years ago. There is an attractive convergence of interest here for ranchers and wildlife advocates. Done right, it can even pay for itself in reduced labor cost and elevated production.

Some ranchers employing low-stress livestock handling are also using Holistic Management (HM) techniques espoused by Allan Savory, who promotes the notion that natural and beneficial herbivory involves a pattern of very heavy use (when, say, a bison herd moved through) followed by a long period of nonuse and recovery. Cattle management based on this method involves fencing to concentrate heavy grazing on each paddock or pasture for a short time, trampling grass and weeds fully, then excluding animals for as much as a year or more.

Savory and HM have been heavily criticized for decades by conservationists (including myself) skeptical of its win-win premise and validation of cursed bovines, but HM is gaining credibility through experience. There is even some anecdotal evidence that HM can increase carbon stored in soils to the benefit of the atmosphere. Though this result is likely at a much lower extent than Savory claims in his heavily watched TED talk, the more thorough range observation and management that HM provides does lead to improved environmental outcomes. In 2015, I joined Dave Werntz, our conservation and science director, and Jay Kehne in touring a Spokane County ranch that's been using HM for a decade with impressive results for the rancher and his land.

The upshot of all this is encouraging. There is reason to believe that cattle can be raised in ways that are more economically rewarding and enjoyable to the ranchers themselves, carnivore friendly, weed resistant, supportive of riparian health, and carbon positive. There are of course exceptions, including places where biodiversity or aesthetic concerns dictate that no livestock use is appropriate. But in general we need to be open to the counter-intuitive notion that well-managed cattle can actually be beneficial. It's even possible that the ubiquity of cow pies across the West is an unnecessary aberration,

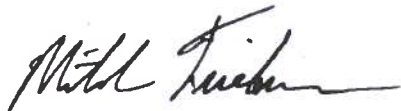
caused by the unintended effect of excessive antibiotics on natural dung beetles, which in many areas will normally be abundant enough to quickly compost the patties.

All of this raises questions of why such common sense and profitable husbandry isn't already in widespread use. Much of it comes down to the fact that new techniques like low-stress handling and Holistic Management simply take more work to learn and employ than current conventional methods. Many ranchers are too comfortable and accustomed to turning their unsupervised cattle out to summer pasture in high country and awaiting their return in autumn. Conveying a new ethic and skills was the impetus for the Yellowstone-area workshop, and will be for future events we hope to help bring to Washington.

It can be a challenge to get such methods swiftly adopted, even if for the shared benefit of people, predators and our environment. We are exploring this challenge with agency, academic, ranching, and other partners. It will take thought and tact, as we can expect resistance based in habit and even cultural identity. I noticed that the ranchers already employing the techniques I've described are thoughtful, educated, early-adopter personalities among the 4th and 5th generations of families steeped in ranching heritage. For some reason this type of person seems more abundant in the western Montana ranching community than that of northeastern Washington, where so much of our work is focused.

Challenges notwithstanding, these interesting issues are well worth our thought and effort. If we can help spread the use of these techniques, the benefits will not only be fewer conflicts with wolves, cleaner streams, and perhaps less carbon in the atmosphere, but also more prosperity and stability in rural ranch communities, which will help keep remote lands in agriculture, open space, and habitat instead of falling to development.

For the wild,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch Friedman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mitch Friedman, Executive Director