



United States Department of Agriculture



Above: Ned (left) and Marilyn (center) Livingston were instrumental in forming the Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership in the mid '90s and have been engaged in proactive forest management with local, state and federal partners. Their son Duncan (right) currently manages the family's historic Gerber Ranch and is doing juniper removal and forest health treatments with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard

Participant:
Livingston Family

Project:
Gerber Watershed
Forest and
Juniper Project

Location:
Klamath County



**Oregon
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**

Klamath County Juniper Project Saves Water, Reduces Fire Risk

CONSERVATION PARTNERS MAKING PROGRESS IN THE GERBER WATERSHED

Junipers are thirsty trees.

In Klamath County's Gerber watershed, one juniper can suck between 10 to 100 gallons of water per day from the soil. Additionally, juniper can intercept nearly a third of precipitation, which keeps much-needed rainfall from entering the soil profile.

That leaves less water to feed shallow aquifers, recharge groundwater springs and support forage growth for agriculture.

And in Oregon's high desert, water conservation is critical.

That's why a group of conservation-

minded agencies and landowners are working together to address the problem with the Gerber Watershed Forest and Juniper Project.

The project's primary goal is to address the critical need for water conservation in the Gerber watershed by strategically removing invasive juniper and managing forest stands.

Not only does the project help keep more water in the soil, it also reduces the risk of wildfire because it removes excess vegetation that acts as fuel for a fire to spread.

The project also improves habitat for mule deer, elk, antelope and other wildlife.

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There’s still not a reliable commercial market for juniper, so for landowners there’s no money in it. You need someone to help with the costs to make it a viable business option.
”

—Duncan Livingston
Landowner

Progress on Private Lands

The Livingston Family is participating in the project. They completed juniper removal and pre-commercial thinning this year with financial assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

“We have a vast amount of juniper on this property, but we want to clear it out in the areas where it makes sense to do so,” says Duncan Livingston, a fourth generation family member who is managing the property in place of his parents, Ned and Marilyn.

Foresters with the Oregon Department of Forestry worked with the Livingston family to develop a personalized forest management plan that guides their decision making.

“Our family is not interested in cutting every juniper out there,” Duncan adds. “We want to leave junipers that would historically be on the landscape if natural fire could do what it’s supposed to do.”

Duncan says the financial incentives from NRCS were critical in getting the work done.

“There’s still not a reliable commercial market for juniper, so for landowners there’s no money in it,” Duncan says. “You need someone to help with the costs to make it a viable business option.”

In just two years of this project, NRCS has obligated about \$1 million in financial assistance to help private landowners in the Gerber watershed do this important conservation work.

A Family History of Partnership

The Gerber Ranch has been in the Livingston family since 1885. Duncan’s grandfather conducted the family’s first commercial harvest on the property in the early 1950s to help pay for his three daughters’ college tuition.

Since then, the family has commercially logged the 1,500-acre parcel four times. They have also done several thinning projects and prescribed burns to help improve the health and vigor of the trees and native vegetation.



**Above (before)
Right (after)**

By removing invasive juniper trees on their property, the Livingston family is helping to keep more water in the soil profile where it can feed shallow aquifers, recharge groundwater springs, and support forage growth for agriculture.





Above (before)
Right (after)



“It’s great to see private and federal entities working together. You can look at this forest and it tells its own story, but it’s up to all of us to interpret it and take care of it properly.”

—Ned Livingston
Landowner

“Our family really started thinking about forest health in the early ‘80s as a tool to make the trees grow healthier and to build a more resilient landscape,” Duncan says.

The Livingston’s property borders public lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Over the years, they have developed relationships with those agencies and have done prescribed burns together across the public-private boundary.

“It’s great to see private and federal entities working together,” Ned says. “You can look at this forest and it tells its own story, but it’s up to all of us to interpret it and take care of it properly.”

The partnership dates back to the early ‘90s, when Ned and Marilyn Livingston

helped form what is now called the Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership. The Livingston family was instrumental in cultivating this partnership between private landowners and local, state and federal agencies to achieve conservation success across ownership boundaries.

Going forward, the partnership has many exciting plans to advance conservation in Klamath County. Learn more about their efforts at <https://www.klfhp.org/>.

Learn more about conservation opportunities in Klamath County by contacting the USDA Klamath Falls Service Center at 541-887-3500 or the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District at 541.883.6932.