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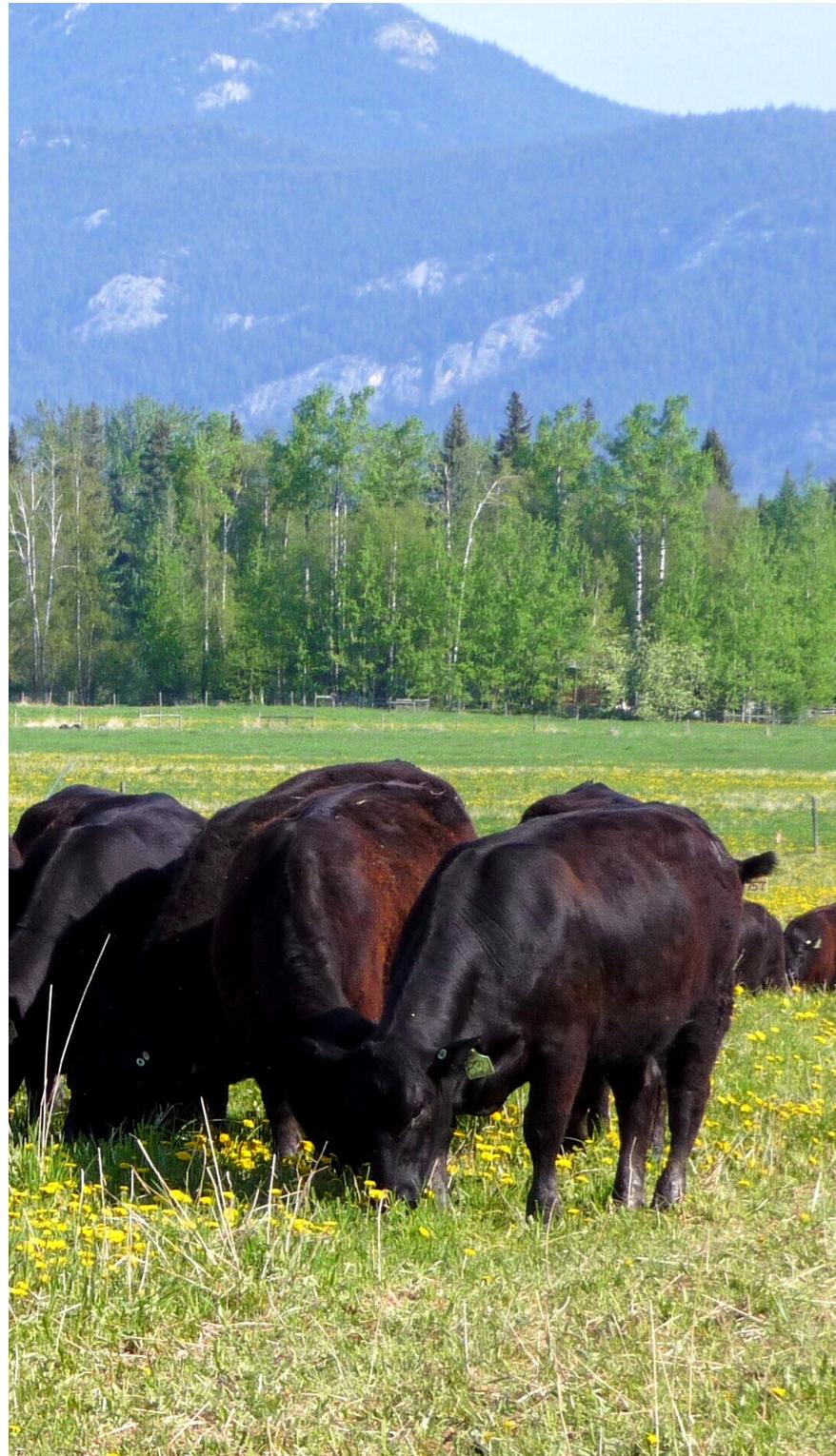




CANYON TREE FARMS

Lynn Jackson & Harry Hooke
Fort St. James

Environmental



CANYON TREE FARMS

is the 2011 recipient of the BC Cattlemen's Association annual Environmental Stewardship Award. Lynn Jackson & Harry Hooke were nominated by fellow ranchers, Charly and Lucille Belsham, for being an established ranch that has made environmental sustainability its main priority.

Harry and Lynn were both raised on farms, but each pursued other careers before returning to the ranching life 15 years ago to raise their two sons, Jackson and Harrison. The 2000 acre ranch is located along the Stuart and Necoslie Rivers in Fort St. James. The ranch is within the high elevation sub-boreal spruce zone, which offers a short growing and grazing seasons. The ranch was started from raw land that had mostly been logged in the previous decades. Today the ranch is self-sufficient comprised of private and leased lands, along with three woodlots. Canyon Tree Farms is able to grow all of their own feed on the 350 acres of crop and pasture land.

Canyon Tree Farms ran Angus cross commercial cattle for the first four years, and is now a purebred Angus breeder. Harry and Lynn pride themselves on the type and quality of cattle they raise, which is evidenced by an increasing demand for their purebred bulls and replacement heifers as well as their consistent production of AAA carcasses. Recently, Lynn and Harry have diversified and established a successful local meat sales enterprise, selling directly and through the local farmers market. In addition to the cattle, Lynn and Harry also have a small herd of paint horses which are used extensively for working cattle.

The BC Cattlemen's Association recognizes Canyon Tree Farms for implementing environmentally sustainable management practices on their successful diversified ranch operation.

Stewardship Award



1) Raw land



3) Cleared land ready for seed



2) Cleared land



4) Finished fields

CLEARING LAND

To reach their goal of environmental sustainability, Lynn & Harry use an “integrated resource management plan with the underlying principle that every hectare of ground is utilized for what it is best suited.”

Today most of the land is treed to some extent with small openings created through harvesting. These openings in the forest canopy serve as hubs where cattle graze and provide brush control.

“ Protecting water is the prime commitment ”

GRAZING MANAGEMENT

Canyon Tree’s grazing management plan has a focus of environmental sustainability. To achieve this, the grazing systems are a combination of strip grazing and rest-rotational grazing. On the ranch, miles of electric fencing and solar powered electric fencers have been installed. The overall goal is to protect the natural ecosystems while improving grass production and decreasing input costs. Lynn and Harry have found this method leads to better utilization of forage and builds soil health without the use of commercial fertilizers. The grazing method has also helped control invasive plants, such as buttercup and thistle, are almost eliminated from the pastures. Hay fields are not grazed in order to ensure maximum crop yield. Cattle are winter fed on fields that are either scheduled for restoration or need the extra natural fertilizer. In the winter, the ranch uses bale feeders to minimize feed waste.

CERTIFICATION

Lynn and Harry are keen to adopt new ideas and certify their ranch and beef products through available programs. The ranch registered in the Verified Beef Production program which requires audits of record keeping for animal health and food safety protocols. The ranch was the first in their area to have a completed Environmental Farm Plan. As part of their commitment to stewardship, the ranch continues to use their integrated resource management plan.



Solar panel for electric fence



Electric fence used for strip grazing



BEFORE:
Necoslie River banks annual erosion



AFTER:
Stabilization with rip-rap and logs
(frozen Necoslie R. in foreground)



Restricted livestock access to riparian area with
a nose pump waterer

WATER & RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

Water quality and sustainability are at the heart of ranch management strategies and are showcased in the environmental projects completed to date. To Lynn and Harry “protecting the water resources is the prime commitment and everything else falls into place around that.” Because livestock access to riparian areas has been eliminated or severely restricted a water distribution system has been installed with solar waterers and frost-free nose pumps.

Lynn and Harry’s biggest environmental challenge is trying to establish channel stability on the Necoslie River. This river has extreme flow cycles, ranging from virtually dry to a raging torrent. A crossing was installed but extraordinary river conditions washed it out. Lynn and Harry will continue to install sweeper trees and rip rap as a means to stabilize the banks. The crossing will be reinstalled to minimize cattle impacts on the waterway. The Stuart River flows adjacent to the property.

WILDLIFE

The two river systems running through the ranch enhance the biodiversity already found in the numerous riparian areas. A wide variety of wildlife including blue and red listed species and migratory birds are seen in the spring and fall. Endemic populations of moose, deer, and black bears are a common sight with an occasional visit from a wandering grizzly bear. The numerous salmon runs enhance habitats for eagles and ospreys which feed and nest along the rivers, and geese, beavers, fishers, and muskrats make their home in the waterways. In the winter Trumpeter swans, kept company by a host of ducks, are seen on the open waters of the Stuart River.



THE FUTURE

Lynn & Harry were one of the first operations in their area to complete and implement their Environmental Farm Plan. Their future stewardship plans include: stabilizing the banks of the Necoslie River, adding more safe watering sites for cattle and increase strip grazing areas. Jackson and Hooke are always looking for opportunities to offer value-added products and increase market share. The family are active members of the community, involved in their local and regional cattlemen’s associations, as well as 4-H, and the Angus Associations.



Home Ranch — Fort St. James



THANK YOU FROM LYNN & HARRY

We hope that our two sons will recognize that there are rewards for doing a good job, and in this case the Environmental Stewardship Award is a great honour. We would like to thank the Environmental Farm Plan program and the Verified Beef Program for helping us to put into practice many of our plans and ideas. We would also like to thank the breeders and cattlemen for helping work together through some very tough times. We would especially like to thank Charly and Lucille Belsham for their on-going encouragement, support and pearls of wisdom. And finally, we'd like to thank the community of Fort St. James for their continuing support of the farm gate sales and the great quality of life we enjoy here.



THANK YOU TO OUR JUDGES & SPONSORS

This award is made possible through the generous financial contributions of our sponsors: BMO Bank of Montreal, Beef Cattle Industry Development Fund & Check-off levy, the BC Wildlife Federation and Doug Haughton's Black Angus Natural Beef.

Stewardship award winners with sponsors. Doug Haughton, Amos Rossworm (BMO), Harry Hooke, Lynn Jackson, sons Harrison and Jackson, and Doug Fossen (BCCA).

NOMINEES

Two strong nominations were received for the award this year and the selection committee found it difficult to choose one over the other. BCCA appreciates the time given by the selection committee members: Doug Fossen (BC Cattlemen), Barbara John (Environment), Jim Forbes (Agriculture), and Don Tretheway (Conservation) in evaluating this year's nominees. BC Wildlife Federation generously donated a large framed wildlife print for our other nominee, Agnes Jackson of Napier Lake Ranch in Kamloops. The BC Cattlemen's Association acknowledges Agnes and her late husband Roy for their outstanding stewardship and commitment to the cattle industry.



Agnes with her grandchildren

