



Protecting Special Lands in Western Oregon

# CURRENTS

Winter 2014

## Oak landscape protected

### Pollock Oaks Conservation Easement in the Umpqua River Watershed



RYAN RUGGIERO

*Jim Lee, a Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District employee, inspired landowners Dale Carey and Joyce Machado to restore and protect these oak woodlands on their land.*

**Dale Carey had no idea** oak trees would be such a big part of his life.

Dale and his wife Joyce Machado retired to 62 acres of oak woodlands on Pollock Creek in Douglas County nine years ago. “The minute we got off the road, I said I like this place already,” recalls Dale. “It’s beautiful land, that’s about all I can say.”

A self-described nature person, Dale spends most of his time on his land. He tries to walk it every day. He knows practically every tree and rock, having worked extensively to restore habitat on the property.

In late October, Dale and Joyce took another step to protect their land by donating a conservation easement to the McKenzie River Trust. The easement permanently protects the impressive oak habitat, upland prairie, marsh,

and forested wetlands from future development or commercial use.

### “It’s about the oak trees.”

Jim Lee, a Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District employee, inspired Dale and Joyce to make some big changes on the property – changes that eventually led them to the ‘forever’ protection of a conservation easement.

Joyce met Jim at an open house at Kanipe County Park, just down the road from the couple’s property. When she began telling him about the oaks on their land, Jim’s eyes lit up. Jim visited Dale and Joyce’s land many times in the coming years. He described what oak habitat offers for native critters and suggested they remove the fir trees that were beginning to crowd out the oaks.

While hesitant to cut any trees at first, Dale and Joyce used Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funds, matched by their own savings, to thin out their stands. They sent the downed firs to a lumber mill. Dale was determined that all the proceeds – over \$20,000 – should go back into the land. Then Cindy Bright, also from the Soil and Water Conservation District, helped

## The richness of oak woodlands

The newly protected 62-acre Pollock Oaks Conservation Easement is located within an important oak habitat priority area in Douglas County. Other lands contributing to the vision include Kanipe County Park, the BLM’s North Bank Habitat Management Area, and MRT’s Gill Oak Conservation Easement.

All in all, the area is made up of several thousand acres and contributes to the health of native species like Columbia white-tailed deer, Oregon coast coho, western rattlesnake, Bullock’s oriole, western bluebird, and yellow-breasted chat.



KIT LARSEN

*Native species like this western bluebird find a refuge on the Pollock Oaks Conservation Easement.*

Dale and Joyce improve the habitat in Pollock Creek for coho salmon.

“Jim convinced me,” said Dale. “Oak trees have character, plus they support all kinds of life. I never knew that before I met Jim Lee.”

Jim died in 2011 at age 49 after an intense battle with cancer. Speaking with Dale today, you can hear how Jim’s legacy of supporting private landowners in their restoration work will live on in the oak trees of Douglas County.



BRUCE NEWHOUSE

*Landowners Joyce Machado and Dale Carey.*

*continued on back page*

## Protected forever

At some point in those many years of restoration work together, Jim suggested that Dale and Joyce consider a conservation easement to permanently protect their property for fish and wildlife. The McKenzie River Trust came up. As Dale recalls, the organization was “just another abbreviation,” part of the alphabet soup of the conservation world.

Then Land Protection Manager Ryan Ruggiero came for a visit, and

the possibility of long-term protection became more real.

When asked how he feels about his property being protected, Dale gets philosophical. “Forever. What a concept. I hope that’s the way it is.”

“Life is just slower up here,” says Dale. “We see lots of deer . . . There’s elk and bear from time to time, and beaver and [coho] salmon down at the creek.” Dale loves to catch sight of a western bluebird or pileated woodpecker, and hummingbirds and vultures migrate through.

Now, thanks to Dale and Joyce, and years of encouragement and effort by Jim Lee, all those creatures and their homes will be protected. Forever.



NICOLE NIELSEN-PINGUS

Nearby protected oak woodlands include MRT’s Gill Oak Conservation Easement.

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1245 Pearl St.  
Eugene, OR 97401

541-345-2799

[mrt@mckenzie.org](mailto:mrt@mckenzie.org)  
[www.mckenzie.org](http://www.mckenzie.org)



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