

Life on the Range

Butch Klaveano - A Master of Managing for Multiple Use



The Klaveano Ranch.

Photos and article by Steve Stuebner

Butch Klaveano is a master of managing for multiple use. He shares grazing lands in North Central Idaho with a garnet-mining operation, recreationists, Potlatch Corp., and the Forest Service. He shares his private ranchland near Pomeroy, Wash., with a wind farm, and fences off streams to protect steelhead and water quality.

But Klaveano understands that the public doesn't always get the multiple-use concept without a little public relations and education. This was true in the Fernwood area in North Central Idaho.

"With all of the people coming up here in the summertime, we were starting to get some scrutiny from people wondering, what are you doing?" Klaveano says.

"They were asking the timber companies, Potlatch, and the Forest Service, why are you logging? They were questioning the cattlemen, why are you destroying property and riparian areas?"

This was in the early 1990s. The questions were coming from new employees working for land management agencies as well as from the public. Klaveano remembers coming to the first meeting with donuts in hand for the group, and someone said, "We don't eat that kind of food." It was a little bit of a rocky start, but after people started talking, things got better.

About 10 different entities working side by side in the 50,000-acre area formed the Emerald Creek Management Cooperative. "It was to tie everything together,

educate the public, and educate ourselves," Klaveano says. "Each one of us was kind of a separate entity out here, but as we had meetings, we understood a little better about what each of us were doing. The end result was a good thing. Everybody was happy. Just like any good relationship, it's all about communication."

The communications helped with managing livestock. Potlatch would give Klaveano a head's up that they would be logging in a certain area, and that would help him decide where to pasture his cattle on Potlatch land. Idaho Fish and Game officials discovered a few instances where Klaveano's cattle managers had placed salt too close to a road, which had the unintended effect of big game animals congregating near the road, and inviting hunters to shoot from a

road.

“So we moved the salt,” he says. “This whole area is multiple use. We’re all in this world together. With better information and communication, our management improved for everyone concerned.”

The cooperative involves the Forest Service, Potlatch, Klaveano Ranches, Emerald Creek Mining Co., Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Lands, University of Idaho, and more. Klaveano owns about 1,950 acres in the area, including a big meadow adjacent to Emerald Creek, where his Angus-cross beef cattle graze alongside a commercial garnet mining operation. The Fernwood area is wet -- it receives an average of 50 inches of rain per year. “That’s why we’re here,” he says. “It’s very productive for cattle, and it’s also an area where trees grow very rapidly.”

Once the management cooperative had been formed, the different groups kept talking,

and all of the issues were addressed. Now things are quiet, Klaveano says. To him, that means the management of the area is in harmony. “No one seems to have any complaints,” he says with a smile.

All told, Klaveano grazes about 900 cow-calf pairs in the Fernwood area in the summer. On a drizzly June day, his cows grazed one part of the big meadow along Emerald Creek, while mining operations dug for garnet in a several acre-area nearby. The creek is fenced to allow a new riparian restoration project to reach fruition.

Emerald Creek Mining Co. hired a professional hydrologist to design the stream project. “The stream is designed by hydrologists for optimum fish habitat,” says David Thom, president of Emerald Creek Mining in Fernwood. “The idea behind the alders is to shade the stream to keep the water temperatures low. We have glides and riffles in the stream to enhance spawning beds and the feeding areas for the trout. It’s

more friendly in terms of habitat for cut-throat trout.”

The mining operation provides extra income for Klaveano. “We lease the land for mining from Butch,” Thom says. “We cooperate in fencing out the areas where we’re mining so we don’t conflict with the grazing, and we also fence it off to keep the cattle off the reclamation plots.”

The scale of the mining operation is comparatively small, allowing the company to excavate a small portion of the meadow at a time, extract the garnet, and then reclaim the land. “We mine a substrate of gravel that carries garnet sand,” Thom says. “It ranges from a few feet down to about eight feet down below the surface. “We strip back the top soil, mine out the garnet substrate, replace the top soil, re-seed the meadow and make sure the area is reclaimed properly.”

Emerald Creek also is managing an aspen stand in the meadow in hopes of expand-

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ing the trees and wildlife habitat in the area. "We've been mining around the aspen grove in the last 25 years or so," Thom says. "We fence it off to keep the elk out."

Last year, when Emerald Creek planted a number of aspen seedlings, the "elk came in and chewed them right down," he says. "We learned our lesson after that. With the barrier fence in place, we'll transplant trees next spring and restore the aspen grove area."

Thoms shows us the tiny pebbles of garnet in the palm of his hand. Garnet is used as a cleanser for sand-blasting ships and also for waterjet cutting to remove paint and other things. "It's tough, coarse and very pure," he says. "It's quite unique. We expect to be here for many years to come."

Emerald Creek Mining has received several awards from the Idaho Department of Lands and the Forest Service for showing excellence in mine reclamation. That works well for Klaveano, who wants to make sure that the meadow remains productive for cattle grazing. "Once we're released from the reclamation bond, the land is put into productive service for Butch's operation," Thom says.

About a mile or so up the road, a Forest Service campground provides a place to camp for people who like to mine star garnets on a hobby basis. It's a popular place in the summer. To help with education, Klaveano visits with people at the campground to talk -- and listen -- about multiple use.

"I really wanted to hear what they had to say and to educate myself as much as them about what their thoughts and feelings were," Klaveano says. "The little kids, they really love seeing the livestock, love seeing the cows. As farmers and ranchers, we're trying to do the best we can for the area, but also need to be educated. We have to get out of the mind-thought that of just doing what's best for us. We have to do what's best for the whole area, for all of the public."

Across the road from the campground, a

barbed-wire fence lines both sides of Emerald Creek to protect native west-slope cutthroat trout. It also lets the public know that the streambanks and creek water are protected from overgrazing.

Klaveano has plenty of places to graze his cattle in the basin, so he doesn't mind protecting the creek. "There's several little meadows up this valley where they pasture. I just fenced them off the creek. There are two watering areas where the cattle can go in. They're hardened so the cattle can't trample the banks of the stream. The Forest Service has been very good to work with."

Indeed, Forest Service officials agree. Kim Frymire, a range technician for the St. Joe National Forest, said the fencing project protects riparian vegetation, streambanks and spawning areas for west-slope cutthroat trout. She commends Klaveano for cooperating on the project. "He is well-known in our area for pretty good grazing techniques. That's coming from a botanist."

Klaveano keeps his cattle in the Emerald Creek area for the summer months, and in the fall, he rounds them up and brings them to the lower country near Pomeroy, Wash., the location of Klaveano's base ranch. The ranch lies in a pocket of land where Meadow Creek and Deadman Creek come together just upslope of Lower Granite Reservoir, a portion of the Lower Snake River hydroelectric complex.

On the top of the grassy hills above the ranch, the tri-blades of gleaming-white wind turbines spin fast in a brisk wind on a hot summer day. Fourteen of the turbines are located on Klaveano's ranch. Each wind turbine produces enough power to electrify 500 homes a year. Klaveano receives a percentage of the revenue produced by each turbine, which were built by Puget Sound Energy in the winter of 2012.

"This is our winter range," he says. "The best use for this land is grazing, so now we have multiple use again with wind energy. It's green power and cattle, an eco-friendly thing, so it's really a win-win for our county and the whole country. We have great

infrastructure now -- we have road access for fire, spraying weeds and checking cattle. It's been excellent for us."

Klaveano was a Garfield County commissioner when the projects were first proposed. After reviewing the projects, he was a big supporter because of the energy production potential and new tax base for the rural county. There are 149 units installed now in Garfield County, a place where the wind blows consistently next to the breezy Snake River hydro complex. "Each blade is 139 feet long," Klaveano says. "I've heard that each blade costs \$1 million. You can put a 747 inside the circle of those blades."

On the home ranch, Klaveano has partnered with the Washington Department of Ecology to fence Meadow Creek and Deadman Creek to improve water quality. Washington DOE officials say the Meadow Creek project has improved water quality over the last 10 years. Before and after photos show the change in vegetation along the creek.

"The idea is to keep the livestock out of the stream and provide off-site water for cattle," says Duane Bartels of the Pomeroy Conservation District. "The cattle used to cross Meadow Creek all winter long to reach a feeding area. Now they stay out of the creek, and get water from the troughs. The cattle would rather drink out of the troughs than a stream anyway."

The Deadman Creek project was just completed in 2011. It will benefit steelhead spawning habitat and water quality. The \$30,000 project was funded by the Washington DOE; Klaveano had to contribute 25 percent of the cost. "We're improving water quality and also providing some shade for the stream, so we're planting some willow trees and other species."

Deadman Creek also has gaps in the fencing for cattle to follow historic crossing areas to reach upland pastures. "There stream crossing here is a water source for the cattle," Bartels says. "It's hardened so when they drink, they don't stir up a bunch of sediment."

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A total of 16 miles of fence have been built along Deadman Creek, eight miles on each side. Washington DOE allows ranchers to graze the riparian areas. "You can graze it lightly a couple of times a year," Bartels says. "You just take it down to about 4 inches so the grass can seed itself."

From the wet meadows and forests in north central Idaho to the grassy hills above the Snake River, Butch Klaveano tries to work in harmony with other interests all year long with the goal of maintaining a sustainable environment. Wally Butler, livestock specialist for the Idaho Farm Bureau, says Klaveano's mastery of multiple use management serves as a good example to other ranchers.

"I'm a Butch Klaveano fan," Butler says, noting that he's spent time working with Klaveano as a consultant for Potlatch, and as an adjunct professor at the University of Idaho, Butler took a class on a tour of Klaveano's grazing operations. "He's way ahead of the bulk of the ranching operators because he's got many facets to his operation, and he's doing it in an environmentally friendly way. Very progressive. He's an example of what the rest of the ranching community could be doing, or at least ought to take a look at."

Steve Stuebner is the writer and producer of Life on the Range, www.lifeontherange.org, an educational project sponsored by the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission.

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Tracking Milk and Egg Trends

For the third quarter of 2012, shoppers reported the average price for a half-gallon of regular whole milk was \$2.31, up 10 cents from the prior quarter. The average price for one gallon of regular whole milk was \$3.54, up 18 cents. Comparing per-quart prices, the retail price for whole milk sold in gallon containers was about 25 percent lower compared to half-gallon containers, a typical volume discount long employed by



retailers.

The average price for a half-gallon of rBST-free milk was \$3.35, down 22 cents from the last quarter, about 40 percent higher than the reported retail price for a half-gallon of regular milk (\$2.31).

The average price for a half-gallon of organic milk was \$3.81, down 9 cents compared to the prior quarter, about 70 percent higher than the reported retail price for a half-gallon of regular milk (\$2.31).

Compared to a year ago (third quarter of 2011), the retail price for regular milk in gallon containers declined about 3 percent, while regular milk in half-gallon containers declined 5 percent. The average retail price for rBST-free milk decreased 1 percent compared to the prior year, while organic milk declined 3 percent.

For the third quarter of 2012, the average price for one dozen regular eggs was \$1.94, up 33 cents compared to the prior quarter. The average price for a dozen "cage-free" eggs was \$3.22, down 7 cents compared to the prior quarter but nearly double (90 percent higher) the price of regular eggs. Compared to a year ago (third quarter of 2011), regular eggs increased 9 percent while "cage-free" eggs increased 4 percent.

