

FEATURE - LANDOWNERS LEAD OREGON PRESERVATION EFFORT

INTRO: An Oregon farming family and the US Department of Agriculture are part of an effort to preserve land along the coast. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (2:03)

ALONG THE OREGON COAST, ON A TWENTY MILE STRETCH OF THE WESTERN-MOST LAND IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES, A GROUP OF RANCHERS IS LEADING AN EFFORT TO MAKE WORKING FARMS, RANCHES AND FORESTLANDS THE CORNERSTONES OF THEIR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE. THEY'RE ANTICIPATING SOME DEVELOPMENT, BUT WANT TO ENSURE THAT AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY ARE NOT LOST IN THE PROCESS.

Mary Wahl, Curry County, Oregon Rancher: What we're trying to accomplish is that as development comes to this area, and it is, that ranches instead of going away and small logging operations going away, we'd like to have them be the sort of the center, or the cornerstone of this area moving forward and to build conservation and other things into those ranches that will draw people but not draw development.

MARY WAHL AND HER SIBLINGS ARE FOURTH GENERATION RANCH OWNERS. SHE'S AN INFORMAL LEADER OF AN EFFORT KNOWN AS THE CAPE BLANCO CHALLENGE, AND SAYS THEY HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO CARE FOR.

Mary Wahl: You know this is the only place on the west coast that has twenty miles of its coastline not developed. There are only ranches and parks in this twenty miles and that's eight thousand acres along the beach that hasn't ever, ever developed.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IS HELPING THE WAHLS AND OTHER LOCAL RANCHERS CONSERVE THEIR RESOURCES. NRCS HAS ALLOCATED MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS THROUGH THE FEDERAL FARM AND RANCH LANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM. THE WAHLS, WHILE NOT INVOLVED WITH THE USDA PROGRAM, AGREE WITH THE CONCEPT.

Mary Wahl: I mean everybody is after the same thing, that we keep some of these areas, not the whole thing, development will happen some in this area, but that the ranches and the natural resources, instead of disappearing, they become the cornerstone for these areas, and we build on that. We build more conservation and restoration into these ranching operations so the operation can continue, but that we also get the conservation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AT YOUR LOCAL USDA SERVICE CENTER OR AT NRCS DOT USDA DOT GOV. FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.