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## For Love of the Land

*Local rancher pioneers a land use project to help save creek*

By Steve Warga  
RR Press Staff Writer

Long after haying become unprofitable on a stretch of his Wimer ranch off Covered Bridge Road, Lawrence Martin contemplated what to do with the open spaces. The soil never was much for irrigating, the water would saturate the ground then run straight through as if poured into a sieve. Yet without water, his growing options seemed pretty limited.

So he thought back to earlier days. He thought of the teachings and philosophies of his father, James, who was part Nez Perce Indian. Martin says, "My father was what I call a dirt farmer. He liked to deal in the dirt and he liked to see cows everywhere. Ever since he bought this land in 1936, he envisioned this ground being cleared for crops."

On an overcast morning last week, Martin stands on that ground, a plot that begins where Section 15 ends. Behind him, just past an aged wire fence, rows upon rows of evergreen ponderosa pine saplings stand neatly at attention like uniformed soldiers awaiting review on the parade grounds. They're two to three feet tall now, after two years in the ground and they'll remain wrapped in their white mesh tubes for another year yet, protected mostly from foraging rabbits. As Martin talks, a tom turkey struts



Evans Valley rancher, Lawrence Martin, and his loyal companion, Ty, stand next to a native juvenile ponderosa growing along the fence line of one of Martin's reforested pastures.



Like soldiers lined up for inspection, two-year old ponderosa pines tend to the business of reforesting pasture land that would lie dormant otherwise.

between the rows showing off his magnificent fan of tail feathers fronted by a bright red wattle topped by baby blue cheeks. Perhaps he's the commanding general inspecting the troops.

It's all a living testament to the love of the land Lawrence Martin inherited from his father. The pine replanting harks back to dad's Nez Perce-inspired belief that "we don't own this land. We're just passing through. Dad's goal and mine," Martin adds, "is to take care of the land and, if possible, leave it better than

we found it."

Like much of the rest of his property, the parcel being reforested was once populated with virgin ponderosas spotted here and there by cedar and Douglas fir. In 1959, James Martin contracted with Bob Jacks of Jacksonville to log that timber so James and his sons, all five of them, could

gradually clear the stumps and turn that ground into hay production to feed their livestock. Water would come from Evans Creek thanks to in-perpetuity irrigation rights.

Return the ground to its native state. A fine idea that lacked only for money and that's where a friend, Steve Perrett

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