

The Clarence Burch Award

The Clarence Burch Award is given by Andrew Dunigan and the Dunigan Family to honor the memory of Andy Dunigan's grandfather, an innovative and enterprising rancher who courageously embraced new ideas and methods of doing business. The award recognizes individuals, organizations and others who have led by example in promoting and accomplishing outstanding stewardship of private and/or public lands. The goals of the Burch Award are consistent with the mission of the Quivira Coalition and its New Ranch paradigm, i.e., to explore innovative ideas in ranch management and build bridges between ranchers, environmentalists, public land managers, scientists, and others with the goal of restoring western rangelands collaboratively.

2011 NOMINEES:

- Clark Fork Coalition
Missoula, Mont.
www.clarkfork.org
- Cliff Garrison, Ranch Manager, Hearst Ranch
San Simeon, Calif.
- The Diablo Trust
Flagstaff, Ariz.
www.diablotrust.org
- Diane Snyder
Bozeman, Mont.
- Jack and Tuda Libby Crews, Ute Creek Cattle Co.
Bueyeros, N.M.
www.utecreekcattlecompany.com
- Livestock and Land Program
Central Coast of California
<http://livestockandland.org>
- Orella Stewardship Institute (OSI)
Gaviota, Calif.
<http://orellaranch.com/OR/Welcome.html>
- Three Rivers Alliance
Republican River Basin, Colo.
<http://threeriversalliance.org>
- Yager/Van Duzen Environmental Stewards,
Fortuna, Calif.

CLARENCE BURCH (1906-2000)

Rancher, teacher, conservationist, activist, international diplomat and public servant to five governors, Clarence Burch lived an enviable career full of innovation, dedication, curiosity and good humor. He was a man very much of his time, and yet miles ahead of it as well.

The eldest of nine children, Clarence was born in Bromide, Oklahoma, in what was then Indian Territory. Raised on various farms and ranches, he developed a love of the land that grew to become a passion for a lifetime. "My grandfather had an innate sense for natural forces," says Andy Dunigan. "Land was in his blood. Every discussion always started with a question about the weather."

One area to which Clarence applied his "can-do" attitude was water. While serving as director of the Division of Water Resources in the 1940s, he traveled to every seat of Oklahoma's 77 counties to assess municipal and rural water needs. Shortly thereafter, with Clarence's encouragement, and over the objections of the oil companies, Governor Roy Turner signed the state's first groundwater restrictions into law.

He was a careful steward of his own land as well.

"He knew that all he had to sell on his ranch was grass," recalls his son Tom. "So, he took care to do the job right." His grandson agrees. "He understood that land has its limits," recalls Andy. "And he emphasized collaborative solutions to natural resource problems."

Clarence's people skills extended to his family as well. Andy remembers him as an "extremely warm, charismatic man who got along with people from all walks of life." A son-in-law, Jim Wilson, says Clarence could "carry on a conversation on any topic" and did so right up to the end of his life.

Perhaps Andy sums up his grandfather's qualities best: "Clarence embodied what we call today 'The Radical Center.' He was more than just a rancher. He was a public servant, an activist and a man very concerned about the land and sustainable practices. He was a remarkable man."

Quivira Coalition is proud to honor Clarence Burch with an Annual Award presented in his name.



2011 Clarence Burch Award Winner: Three Rivers Alliance

The mission of the Three Rivers Alliance (TRA) is to sustain the vibrant natural and human communities of the Republican River Basin by promoting good stewardship of its land, water and wildlife. The Three Rivers Alliance serves and welcomes landowners as members from the 6,000,000-acre Republican River watershed in northeast Colorado. Yuma County, which lies at the heart of the watershed, supports the second largest number of mother cows in the state. The watershed also overlies the Ogallala Aquifer and is facing severe interstate compact issues on the flow in the Republican River as well as real physical limitations of the aquifer's ability to supply irrigation and drinking water over the long term.

TRA was formed by six ranchers from the Republican River Basin on July 9, 2008, as a Colorado nonprofit corporation, and the organization received its 501(c)3 designation from the Internal Revenue Service in January 2009. Today the organization has over 40 members and is delivering on-the-ground results. TRA's purposes are to:

- provide education and information concerning the Republican River Basin;
- assist with the science, technology, and resources needed to conserve, preserve and restore range conditions, wildlife habitat, riparian areas and agricultural land in the basin;
- promote good stewardship of the basin through funding projects and consensus-based partnerships; and
- promote understanding and respect for the critical role ranching and agriculture play in conservation.

TRA is accomplishing its purposes by advocating for landowners in the Republican River Basin to help them gain access to resources in order to remove invasive species, manage their range more effectively, and protect wildlife and plant habitat in riparian and rangeland areas. TRA members and partners help landowners to apply for government and private grants to serve these purposes.

In a larger sense, TRA is demonstrating its ability to convene important discussions to find common

ground and develop constructive approaches to some very difficult issues facing the Republican River Basin.

Specifically, TRA is involved in several current projects that demonstrate its concrete contributions to directly improve: ranch management and range conditions, youth and adult education, fundamental business conditions for ranch success, and long-term prospects for a robust agricultural economy and healthy environments in the Republican Basin. The following are short accounts of these projects and programs and the resources and partners TRA helped leverage for them.

Water Conservation. The Ogallala Aquifer, which underlies the Republican River watershed and sustains the community ecologically and economically, is a limited and stressed resource. As a result, the water issues facing the Basin are complex, difficult, contentious and long-term in nature. There are no quick or easy fixes, but TRA is working with partners on an ongoing basis to convene decision makers and stakeholders to identify, develop, and deploy constructive technologies and practices that will aid in the conservation of their precious groundwater resources. This issue is at the core of the organization and is a common thread in many of their other projects.

Holistic Management Mentoring Program. Working with the Savory Institute and local conservation districts, TRA is promoting and helping to implement a 2011 Savory Institute Holistic Management seminar series in the Republican Basin to improve the critical thinking skills and decision making rigor of local ranchers. At least one rancher is seriously evaluating the opportunity to more fully implement a Holistic Management program and is open to sharing the experience as a demonstration project.

Ranching and Wildlife (RAW). The Three Rivers Alliance launched its Ranching and Wildlife program on May 11, 2011, to raise awareness in urban and suburban communities of where food comes from and now farms and ranches also support wildlife. The program brought 36 grade-school students from Colorado Springs to the McArthur

Ranch on the South Fork of the Republican River to experience a four-part program on birds, soils, wildlife and ranching. Fourteen high-school students from the local Bethune School District ran the program and taught the program. The curriculum for RAW was developed by a group of ranchers near Karval, Colorado and adapted by TRA and the Bethune School District. TRA plans to continue the program and help support its expansion in Colorado.

Branded Beef Supply Chain and Market

Analysis. TRA hired an intern from the University of Michigan MBA/MS-Environmental Studies joint degree program for the summer of 2011 to help it better understand the branded beef business opportunities available to its members and the organization and how pursuing those opportunities might improve their financial and environmental performance. The intern spent 11 weeks on the ground in Colorado working with TRA members, feed lots, processors, wholesalers, retailers and other partners to develop a robust and business-oriented understanding of the social, health and environmental attributes of the beef produced by TRA members, the markets that might exist for the beef, and what the supply chain challenges are in the non-commodity beef business. The intern is currently completing her work, and TRA members are evaluating the preliminary results of her work and how they can use them to improve the performance of their operations.

Russian Olive and Salt Cedar Removal. Under TRA's leadership, Russian olive and tamarisk were removed over the last three years from well over 500 acres along more than 30 river miles in the Republican River Basin at a cost of more than \$400,000. Removing these non-native trees improves wildlife habitat, restores pasture and enhances the hydrologic function of riparian zones. On its way to effectively eradicating these invasive species from the watershed, TRA intends to treat another 1,200 acres in the basin by continuing to work with Yuma County Pest Control District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wild Turkey Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Wyoming Groundwater Management District, and the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Ranch Plans and Improvements. TRA facilitated the allocation of more than \$44,000 from the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Habitat Partnership Program for new fencing and water source projects on three properties, impacting more than 300 acres and improving riparian habitat.

Dead Wood Removal. TRA is helping landowners recognize and address the range and weed management challenges posed by dense falls of dead cottonwood trees in the riparian zones of the Republican River system. Because these dead tree falls are so dense, they preclude livestock grazing, reduce the effectiveness and raise the cost of weed control, and deter some wildlife use. To help landowners address this problem, TRA helped landowners obtain \$23,500 from the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and the Wild Turkey Federation to consolidate fallen timber on approximately 40 acres of river bottom on two pilot properties. Based on the pilots, the program is expanding to other properties with good prospects for success.

Summary. Three Rivers Alliance and its members are putting valuable projects on the ground and effectively setting the stage for improving the fundamental conditions for agriculture, wildlife and community in the basin. Their work is a testament to the vision of the members, their openness to new ideas and their willingness to engage with partners in ways they might not have just a few short years ago. That is also a testament to both the need and opportunity to work in new ways—ways that improve practices and conditions necessary to sustain the productivity of grazing lands in the Republican Basin and across the western United States.

