



THE MONROE MONITOR & Valley News

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Former councilman's plane lifted from mountain lake



(Top) A HELICOPTER TRANSPORTS A WRECKED PLANE Saturday belonging to former Monroe City Councilmember Ken Berger from its winter resting place at the bottom of remote Lake Isabel in the proposed Wild Sky wilderness area near Gold Bar. Berger, an experienced pilot and outdoorsman, said he was taking off from the surface of the lake in his Helio H-295 floatplane (shown above) when he realized that, for some reason, he didn't have sufficient power to get to altitude. He banked hard and returned to the lake, landing hard. His passenger suffered cracked ribs. The two men swam to the shore as the plane settled into 50 feet of water, Berger said. The men then hiked out of the primitive area. Officials pondered what to do with the plane, considering leaving it in the water, as it could be more disruptive to move it than to leave it, but ultimately decided to move the plane. PHOTO BY SPARKY MULLINS

(Below) ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, the submerged airplane was retrieved from a depth of more than 200 feet. A recreational diver was hired to attach cables to the sunken aircraft. The pontoon floats had to be removed from the plane in order to lift it, as they were embedded in mud. The seats were also removed. The plane was hauled downriver to Firstair Field in Monroe where it now sits forlornly on the grass.



Sacrificial land

How flooding one farm could save other farmland

BY POLLY KEARY, STAFF WRITER

When county officials told Dave Remlinger and business partner Steve Davison of Monroe that they might have to remove the dike protecting their newly acquired 225-acre property from the river, Davison was apoplectic. The pair had just bought the old Hanson farm behind the prison with plans to put a composting business there.

"At first I was going to tell them to go to hell," said Davison. "But they showed me the hydraulics. They showed how many farms would be saved if we sacrificed this one."

An old dike built along the edge of the partners' land was keeping water from flooding that land, as it had historically, and instead was flooding land further down stream, Davison said, including historic farm properties in the Tualco Valley such as the Frohning farm and the Werkhoven dairy.

So the owners changed their plans. Instead of the large composting business they had envisioned for the property, they would create a wetlands there.

But thanks to a controversial state policy, creating wetlands can be a viable business too.

Now Remlinger, 40, and Davison, 46, and others are investing millions into the property, recreating the braided river channel that once existed there, planting dozens of species of native plants, and hoping against hope they will make their money back.

Mitigation banks

When anybody builds anything in the wet, spongy lands that serve as the lungs of the Puget Sound's waterways, that person must replace that land.

Because it is that land that cleans and filters water on its way back to the ocean. That land is where baby fish hide to get bigger, where dozens of kinds of birds and amphibians and insects and mammals live and nest and hunt, where native plants flourish.

Without those oozing, dripping marshes, salmon perish and with them an entire coastal fishing economy, too. And those lands can absorb the brunt of floodwaters sometimes, too, easing pressure on other lands along riverbanks.

So when developers destroy wetlands, the law requires they replace it.

Typically they build another one right next to the one they destroyed. An example can be seen at the corner of SR 522 and Fales Lake Road, where developers created a large wetlands to replace one torn out in the building of a new interchange and overpass that was completed last year.

All over the state, one may find such artificial wetlands at the edges of shopping centers, new school buildings and housing developments.

The problem is, half of those wetlands fail.

"It's clear we need to improve in compliance," said Gail Terzi, who works on wetlands creation with the Army Corps of Engineers, although Terzi noted that "failure" can merely mean that it failed to meet some number such as amount of fish expected to live there.

The other problem is that 100 acres of small patches of disconnected wetlands does not adequately replace 100 acres of a single, continuous swamp.

So instead of getting a developer to build a wetlands to replace that which was lost, sometimes the state allows that developer to buy wetlands credits, that is, to pay someone else to build a piece of wetlands in a mitigation bank.

That can result in a savings for the developer; it can cost a developer \$1 million to build an acre of on-site wetlands that a mitigation banker could provide offsite for about \$650,000 or so.

It sounds like a win/win, but not everyone is happy with it.

Controversy

"Why are you making wetlands out of ag land?" grumbled a neighbor of the new mitigation bank, now called the Skykomish Habitat Mitigation Bank.

It's a question a lot of people ask.

If a wetlands has to be big and complex to thrive, so does a farming community.

Without farms and dairies, feed supply stores, warehouses, brokers and other support industries leave the area.

As farms move out, residential development moves in, and residents are not fans of the noise and smells associated with commercial farming.

Without legal protection, ag land can vanish like Tualco Valley fog. That is why zoning laws don't allow some land to be used for other than agricultural purposes.

But even zoning laws don't work to save ag land all the time. A recent study found that only half of the 63,000 acres in Snohomish County now zoned agricultural are actually being used for agriculture.



HEAVY EQUIPMENT will remove more than a million cubic yards of gravel from this property, recreating historic river channels that will serve as habitat for salmon fry and other species. Remlinger and Davison hope they will find enough developers to pay them to offset the environmental impacts of development so that they can turn a profit on the restoration of their land. This bird's eye view is from Remlinger's ultralight airplane. PHOTO BY POLLY KEARY

Most of the rest is taken up by buildings, roads, trees, or is unsuitable for farming, the study found.

The Remlinger property is only the second privately owned mitigation bank in the county. The first, created by Victor Woodward further east in the Tualco Valley, was built on ag land that had previously been in use as a corn field (although it was so wet the owner was unable to find a farmer to buy it before selling it to Woodward, the wetlands entrepreneur said).

But the Remlinger piece is a special case, some people say, as it has been flooded so many times that it has no value as farmland.

"There's very few acres that could sustain a corn crop over there," said Andy Werkhoven, co-owner of the Werkhoven Dairy, a historic farm located just across the river. "It's a gravel bar. The soils have been washed away."

Breaking the levee

A stone's throw across the river from the Remlinger property, a pile of rock lines a section of the Werkhoven's riverbank.

It's there to keep any more of that bank from washing away into the river.



ACROSS THE RIVER from the property belonging to Steve Davison (left) and Dave Remlinger (right) of Monroe, a farmer has dumped a load of rock on the riverbank to try to prevent further erosion. Davison and Remlinger hope that by removing a dike that protects their own property from the river, erosion will slow along the opposite bank. PHOTO BY POLLY KEARY

It's also not legal and the state has already ordered the Werkhoven dairy to remove it. That's because anything you do to harden a riverbank at one point causes water to hit someone else's bank harder downstream.

But part of the reason the water is tearing away at the Werkhoven's bank is because the state put a dike along the Remlinger's property decades ago, Remlinger believes.

The Remlinger property used to flood first and frequently. But the nearby prison used to get its drinking water from a well on the property, and the well became useless during floods.

So the state put a dike along the edge of the property to protect the well.

"The dike was put in in the 1930s," said Vaughn Collins, a river specialist with Snohomish County. "It turns the river there and prevents it spilling onto those properties. We believe it has some bearing on the floodwaters of the Tualco."

Last November, floods all but drowned the Tualco Valley. That kind of flooding isn't likely to be offset by removing merely one

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Monroe seeks way to protect historic homes, businesses

BY POLLY KEARY, STAFF WRITER

Every time a historic home is torn down in Monroe, a piece of Monroe history is lost.

Some members of the community hope that won't happen any more.

They hope to convince the community and city to adopt a law creating a town historical registry, giving protection to historic homes, businesses, and possibly even districts, such as Main Street and Lewis Street.

Many people don't know it, but just because a property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places doesn't mean it is protected from anything.

But if a town creates a historic register of its own through the state, then properties listed on the local register can be protected by local laws.

"If a person in Monroe had a historic property they wanted to save and then they sell it, the new property owner can do what he wants with it," said Beth Stucker, lead organizer of the effort to create a Monroe registry. "But if it was listed on the local Historic Registry, the new buyers couldn't knock it down."

And homes or businesses listed on the registry could also get financial help for fix ups.

"There is state property tax incentive that if [historic building owners] put in 25% of the building's assessed value on work on the building, once that work has been completed, you say here's what we did and what we spent, for 10 years you get that amount deducted from the valuation of your property (and you pay taxes on the reduced total)," said Megan Duvall, the Certified Local Government Coordinator for the State of Washington. "So if you spent \$50,000, you get \$50,000 deducted from the valuation of your property."

Not only homes but entire districts can be added to a town's historic register. Once a district is on the register, the homes and businesses within the district become eligible for the tax break.

But they also become subject to some restrictions.

Typically, owners of historic buildings are required to keep the place up, not to destroy it or alter it without checking with the city first.

But also, some cities include within their historic districts buildings which themselves are not historic, but which are so close to the historic buildings that should they become run down or unattractive, they would ruin the whole district. Buildings located within historic districts also become subject to the



A PROPOSAL to create historic districts in Monroe could protect homes such as this Lewis Street residence from ever being demolished, and could qualify the owners for financial incentives for restorations and improvements.

PHOTO BY POLLY KEARY

design standards that the city has outlined for that district. Those design standards also apply to any new building constructed within the district.

Stucker would like to see the several blocks that make up the downtown along Main Street made a historic district, as well as the residential blocks along Lewis Street along which are many historic homes.

"It would be really beneficial in that we would see some properties saved," she said.

In order to set up a historic district, Monroe would have to take three steps.

The first would be to adopt an ordinance setting up a local historic registry.

Once that was set up, then the city would have to create a commission to decide whether buildings and districts meet the criteria established for what makes a historic property or area.

Then the city would have to apply to the state to become a Certified Local Government. Once the state has recognized the city as having a legitimate historic registry, those buildings that are registered therein become eligible for the tax incentive.

And once a city is certified, the entire city is eligible for some funding, too.

"We pass through 10% of the money we get from the federal government," said Duvall. "That's usually \$110,000 to \$120,000."

Cities can apply for a portion of that money for things like surveying and other projects associated with preserving and creating a historic dis-

trict. Historic districts are also approved by city ordinance.

Once a district is suggested for protection, all the property owners are notified of the proposal by letter, newspaper and other council efforts.

Then there are a series of public meetings.

After that, the property owners vote, whether by ballot, letter or petition.

Most ordinances require that only a simple majority of property owners approve the proposal. So if 51% of the property owners of a proposed historic district approve, then the designation is legally allowable.

Even then, the process is not complete.

In most cities, the historic commission then forwards a recommendation to the city council that the area be made a historic district. The city council still has the option to deny the designation.

Stucker would like to see the ordinance adopted before another historic building is lost in Monroe.

In particular, she is concerned about the Monroe School District Building on Ferry Street.

The school district may vacate the building soon, and the historic old school could be torn down.

And, she says, preserving and improving the Lewis and Main street areas will support the efforts of the city to brand Monroe as a destination.

"People, when they move here, they often say it was those areas that attracted them," she said.

Former Seahawk arrested in Monroe

Former Seahawk, New England Patriot and Washington State University Cougar football player Chad Eaton was arrested at his Monroe home Saturday, July 21, at about 3:30 p.m. on suspicion of domestic violence.

His wife Tina was arrested last August for domestic violence for allegedly punching her husband in the nose because she suspected he was seeing someone else, according to court records.

The couple is divorcing; she lives in Redmond, but it is unclear who the alleged victim is in the current case.

Eaton paid a \$2,500 bail and was released the following day.

Eaton spent five years as a defensive tackle with the New England Patriots before coming to the Seahawks in 2001. He played 32 games for the Seahawks before injuries and salary caps took him out in 2004.

FARMLAND: Saving land and fish

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dike, said Collins, but lighter flooding could be reduced downstream if floodwaters were allowed to spill onto the Remlinger property first, Werkhoven and others believe.

"They can't get it done fast enough," said Werkhoven. "What Dave's doing could be a real help to the area. If they don't do something, it will destroy my place and I might as well turn my place into a wetlands."

Not only could the wetlands save farmland, it could save fish.

Already fish fry are swimming in the newly recreated river channels, said Terzi.

"Last time we were there, we saw thousands of coho fry," Terzi said. "We were pleased to see that."

Creating nature

Seen from Remlinger's ultralight aircraft, the Remlinger property looks more like a gravel mine than a swamp at this point.

That's because restoring land to its original condition is actually a large operation.

Below, gravel trucks line up to remove earth from the site, and backhoes carve out the old streambed once again.

More than 150,000 plants of 38 native species have been planted.

Remlinger and others have poured about \$3 million into the property so far, and more than \$1.5 million into permits and that's without selling even one credit yet.

When Remlinger thinks about how much money he and Davison stand to lose, he starts to giggle.

"We're idiots," he said. "We should have built shopping centers."

Creating wetlands can cost a \$1 million an acre, he said, because of all the science that goes into it, as well as all the permits.

But even if he eventually does it for a fraction of that, he stands to lose a lot if developers don't wind up buying as many credits as he hopes they will.

The risk is high, acknowledged Woodward, who opened the area's first and only private mitigation bank in 2005.

"Banks are being permitted without an understanding of what the demand might be," he said.

He has found that there is a small demand, and he is optimistic enough about the future of banking that to buy four other sites around the state, intending to turn them into wetlands banks.

Remlinger is prepared for a loss for now, just in case, he said. He was able to sell the gravel that was extracted from the site, Terzi noted.

And even if they can't sell credits for enough money to recoup their expenses, Remlinger and Davison can still use their new skills.

"We formed this company called Wetlands Creation, LLC," Remlinger said. "We can still build wetlands for

others." In other states, mitigation banking has been successful, though, and Remlinger thinks that if he and Davison are successful too, others will follow.

"If people see us do good, they'll want to do it," he said. "If they say 'Those guys took a bath, why would I do it?' then we'll see more shopping centers."

Local residents enjoy Movies Under The Moon



THE THIRD ANNUAL "Movies Under the Moon" summer festival offers film favorites for the public to enjoy. On Friday, Aug. 3 the feature film will be the award-winning New Zealand film, "Whale Rider," (PG-13). On Friday, Aug. 17, "Grease" (G) will be presented. Festivities begin at 7 p.m. and include children's activities provided by the YMCA. The Monroe Community Concert Band will provide music beginning at 8 p.m., followed by the featured film at dusk,

approximately 9:15 pm. The event is free and families are encouraged to bring blankets or lawn chairs, and picnic food. There will be free popcorn and water; the concession stand will also be open. The movies are shown at Lake Tye Park on Fryland's Boulevard in Monroe. For more information go to www.monroearthcouncil.org or call the Sky Valley Family YMCA office at (360) 805-1879.

PHOTO BY JIM SCOLMAN

Second annual Gold Bar Gold Dust Days treasured by community

BY LAUREN ROSENTHAL, MONITOR INTERN

As Gold Bar Gold Dust Days planner Joe Beavers put it, "This was the second annual Gold Dust Days. That is a joke, because the first one was in 1978."

Although it took almost three decades before the first annual Gold Bar Gold Dust Days could be followed by another such festival, the high spirits of the July 27-29 festival's attendees indicated that it was more than worth the wait.

Each day featured a variety of food, vendors, and children's activities. Friday's events included a bicycle rodeo, horse rides, a kick-punt-pass competition, and a royalty pageant.

A parade through the streets of Gold Bar kicked off Saturday's events as fire trucks and law enforcement vehicles carrying local notables Mayor Crystal Hill and her children and the lovely Miss Gold Dust, Lacey Ische, crawled by swarms of onlookers. A variety of classic cars, military vehicles, and motorcyclists were included in the parade, as was the Sultan Pirates youth football team, and the 4-H Club.

A classic car show on the Gold Bar Elementary School field featured such treasures as a cherry red 1969 Ford Ranchero with a plastic python perched menacingly on its engine, and a 1964 Volkswagen Bus with a mountain bike secured on its rooftop luggage rack.

Motorcycle enthusiasts showed off their bikes, many wearing leather jackets emblazoned with CMA, the Christian Motorcyclists Association. Rider Bryan Lipsy of Monroe was one of the many CMA members in attendance.

"I woke up a year ago and I decided I wanted to learn to ride motorcycles. So I did. I think this is a lot of fun, with the community out saying 'hi' to their neighbors. We could easily manage this in Monroe," said Lipsy.

Vendors such as Iris Jensen, Terri Rieman, and Jackie Rowe of Costumes and Wardrobes Unlimited attracted many to their booth, selling vintage clothing and handmade costumes. Rieman served as a walking advertisement, wearing an ornate red pool-hall girl dress of her own design.

"We got started in this business because I always sewed costumes for my kids and I got jealous of them and started sewing costumes for myself. Hey, I like dressing up for me," Rieman laughed.

The Simpson family of Monroe was one of many families enjoying the many attractions the festival offered.

"It's a nice weekend, and a nice outing. I like the car show, but my daughter really loves the kids' events," said Chris Simpson as music floated through the air from the stage located behind the elementary school.

In the spirit of the event, local vendor Warren Hartz left his post at his Silk From the Hartz booth Saturday afternoon, where he spent most of the weekend selling hand-dyed silk wares, to pick up his acoustic guitar and head to the stage, where he was a featured artist among several scheduled live acts.

Other events included a sock hop swing dance, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, karaoke, and a display of vintage military vehicles. Sunday featured live music and church services.

Organizer Beavers was proud of the event, and even more so of the many citizens who pitched in to help make it happen.

"We have showcased the talents of our citizens; the artistic, musical, and organizational talents of Sky Valley citizens," said Beavers.

Mayor Crystal Hill was in agreement.

"The city supported Gold Dust Days with funding, but the citizens, like Joe Beavers and Ray Pullman, really carried it off. I'm enjoying it as both a mom and a Gold Bar citizen.

"We really have a strong identity in our community. This will be an annual tradition," said Hill.

Find out about the virtual academy

Washington Virtual Academy will hold a parent information session on Friday, Aug. 3 at 6 p.m. for grades K-10, at the Best Western Sky Valley Inn, 19233 U.S. Highway 2, Monroe. The academy curriculum will be reviewed, and lessons and materials will be demonstrated. Parents will have opportunity to ask questions as well. For more information, visit <http://washva.org>.

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