Friends & Neighbors, Hello from the Borderlands;

We hope that the past year has been healthy and productive for you and your family. I know that our family has been grateful for the opportunity to work and live in the Malpai borderlands for so many years. The summer monsoon rains have come to our valleys and we are all thankful.

In taking on the job as new Executive Director, I have given a lot of thought to what has made the Malpai Group successful. Sometimes the most important discussions that a ranching family has is talking at the kitchen table. As with most ranching families the discussions about the future of the ranch and the continuation of our traditions and values as they relate to open space are important talks to have. In most ranching families, the changing of the guard from one generation to the next is guided by the older generations and the wisdom they have collected from a lifetime of experience in ranching.

The Malpai Borderlands Group is also planning for the future and succession of our organization. For over two decades the group has been working toward the goals of our mission statement, which is an idea that becomes more valid as open spaces become even more rare in the West. Working in the borderlands and the beautiful open spaces in it, inspires my motivation to support the Malpai Borderlands vision.

We continue to have the “kitchen table” discussions surrounding the continuance of the mission of the group. We are moving forward through working with a varied group of people from all over the world and in our community for shared goals that are centered around open spaces, ranches, wildlife and the people that inhabit the Malpai working area. Looking back at the accomplishments of this organization shows me what people working together can accomplish. Continuing the collaboration on common goals is a lesson that Malpai members have been successful in practice but also in teaching new members of our organization. It has been a wonderful experience working and learning from Bill & Mary McDonald, Carrie Krentz, the Malpai board and advisors. Tamara and I are blessed to have such patient and conscientious mentors.

As Tamara and I take on new roles supporting the Malpai Group’s mission as Executive Director and Finance Coordinator, I ask for your support. We ask for your financial contribution either with the envelope provided with this newsletter, through the website, or with Amazon smile. I ask that you become involved and look forward to meeting with you and listening to you.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Rich Winkler
Co-Executive Director Malpai Borderlands
The Malpai Borderlands Group is pleased to announce that it has acquired a conservation easement on the Johnson Ranch in Hidalgo County, New Mexico. The Johnson Ranch has been in the family for four generations and is a multi-generational operation to this day, with all family members also having off-ranch occupations. For instance, G. Ray Johnson has done everything from providing stock for rodeos (which he still does) to being an assistant basketball coach with the legendary Don Haskins at the University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP). The Johnsons also have the contract for delivering mail to the rural routes around Animas, New Mexico, which is just 5 miles from the ranch headquarters. All of the family is committed to doing whatever it takes to keep the ranch going and protected from development. The ranch lies near subdivided land, but also adjoins four other ranches on which the Malpai Group already holds easements. This easement acquisition was very important in keeping the contiguous block of open land here protected for traditional ranching and the open space values that come with it.

With this acquisition, the Malpai Borderlands Group now holds conservation easements on 16 ranches covering nearly 82,000 acres of private land. Little by little, the dream of an open space Malpai Borderlands region protected in perpetuity from further development is getting closer to being real.

As we were preparing this newsletter, a story came out in the local paper about another jaguar sighting in our area. The jaguar was photographed in the Chiricahua Mountains and was the third time this individual was documented in the last nine months. The presence of this male is a reminder that the work of the Malpai Group to protect the wildlife corridor between the Chiricahuas and the Sierra Madre in Mexico is what allows these magnificent animals to continue to roam into this area.
KRENTZ SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR 2017-2018

**RAYCE WAGLEY**
Rayce is our newest scholarship recipient and will be a freshman at NMSU. Rayce is the fifth generation to be raised on his family farm in Animas, N.M. He will work toward a degree in Genetics and Biotechnology. His goal is to improve our current crops and increase food production. Rayce graduated with a 3.96 GPA and ranked 2nd in his senior class at Animas High School.

**CAYLIN TIBBETTS**
Caylin is a junior at NMSU. She hopes to graduate in May of 2018, one year ahead of schedule. Her grades are excellent and she is working full time. Caylin is engaged and will be married in May at the Air Force Academy, which her future husband attended. Congratulations to a wonderful woman. She hopes to get a teaching job in Agricultural Education after she graduates.

**HOLLY FREEMAN**
Holly is a junior at West Texas A&M at Canyon, Texas. She is a Pre-Veterinary/Animal Science major and her GPA is over a 3.3. She is also a member of several campus clubs, including the Pre-Vet club and the Block and Bridle Club. Tricia Elbrock of Animas wrote in her letter of recommendation that “she has never found a more dedicated, hardworking individual”. Holly loves living in west Texas and lives in Amarillo.

**DALLAS POMPEO**
Dallas enters her senior year at NMSU. For her first two years she achieved a grade point average of 3.78. She is a member of the NMSU Collegiate FFA Chapter and was inducted into the Sam Steele Society of NMSU ACES. She is a member of the Collegiate Wool Judging team and helped her team earn 6th place overall at the Denver Stock Show this year. Dallas is majoring in Agriculture and Extension Education with a minor in Animal Science.

**ZACHARY WINKLER**
Zachary is entering his sophomore year at NMSU. He has earned a GPA of 3.56, his freshman year, majoring in Electrical Engineering. Zach is the son of Rich Winkler, the newly appointed Executive Director of the Malpai Borderlands Group. Zach’s mother, Tamara, is the newly appointed financial officer of the Malpai Borderlands Group. Zachary is a Crimson Scholar at NMSU, which is one of the highest academic honors a student can earn.

**KALEIGH BEST**
Kaleigh is entering her Sophomore year at NMSU. She earned a 3.1’ GPA her freshman year and is majoring in Animal Science and focusing on a minor in equine medicine. A former high school principal wrote in her letter of recommendation that Kaleigh “ has a positive attitude and a dedication to do the best at whatever task is before her. She is an example of strength combined with compassion”.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact us at malpaigroup@gmail.com

**MALPAI/STOCKER SCHOLARSHIPS 2016-2017**

_If you shop at AmazonSmile, log in to https://smile.amazon.com/ and select Malpai Borderlands Group._

It’s easy to help.
San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 2,369 acres within the much larger Malpai Borderlands Group landscape. It is a major goal of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to work with landowners within this area to improve overall habitat conditions for all plants and animals, and to lead the recovery and long-term protection of rare species. Virtually everyone recognizes that healthy uplands are important to resident and wintering migratory birds throughout the watershed and also help maintain and perpetuate economical livestock management in undeveloped areas, ensuring perpetual open space and corridors for all fish and wildlife. Additionally, watershed projects that address erosion and retention of runoff benefit the shallow aquifer and are crucial in providing perennial wetlands for fish and wildlife throughout the area’s private lands and on the downstream refuge.

The benefits of numerous habitat protection projects influenced runoff during Hurricane Odile in September 2014, which dumped significant rain in southeast Arizona within a short time. Resulting flooding on the refuge through Black Draw (headwaters of the Rio Yaqui) peaked at over 24 feet deep and was over one half mile wide. True, many fences, bridges, signs, roadways, and other infrastructure were damaged and required repair or replacement. Yet, surprisingly, erosion and habitat damage from the flood were minimal. Established riparian vegetation acted to dissipate energy and slow flood waters. Healthy grasslands minimized soil sheet erosion. Deep, narrow portions of the flood channel widened in some areas in response to floodwaters, creating a broader, shallower, healthier floodplain. Most fish and wildlife weathered the flood very well, though some were displaced or “went with the flow” to downstream areas in Mexico.

Huachuca water umbel, a rare wetland plant, was uprooted in some areas and transported downstream where clumps of the plant lodged in the channel and ultimately re-rooted and expanded the population, demonstrating a long-suspected survival adaptation. Three years following the flood event, nature perseveres and unique fish and wildlife are again thriving across this resilient Malpai Borderlands.
We are planning for a transition in leadership this year. Bill McDonald and Rich Winkler are currently serving as co-Executive Directors, with Rich scheduled to assume the position at the first of the year. At the same time Mary McDonald will step down as Finance Coordinator and Tamara Winkler will assume those duties. This is a critical time to evaluate future goals and priorities, so we held a planning retreat with the Malpai Board of Directors and advisors. We decided that these are some key topics we will take action on.

**Board Makeup and Diversity**

Many board members have been involved since the beginning, over 20 years ago, and we see a need for younger members and new ideas. We had an in-depth discussion of desirable qualifications of current and potential board members, as well as ideas for increasing the diversity of the board. At the same time, we will provide for retiring board members to continue involvement in an ex-officio or emeritus role. A nominating committee will be appointed with the charge of doing a more in-depth evaluation of potential board members and officers.

**Fire and Agency Relationships**

The Malpai Borderlands Group enjoys a very productive relationship with fire management agencies in the area. Recent events have demonstrated that some neighboring landowner and permittees do not enjoy the same open communications. We discussed what we might do to improve communication for our neighbors and the agencies. A community meeting to discuss MBG’s approach to fire planning and management could do much to help the neighbors. Additionally the board will continue to address fire management at the annual agency meeting and continue to publish the Malpai Fire Map.

**Science**

Support for objective science and science based management has always been a cornerstone of Malpai Borderlands collaboration. Board members and advisors agreed that a continuing relationship with USDA Agricultural Research Service and the Jornada Experimental Range is important, as well as maintenance of contacts with other research organizations. We will continue to support a Science Advisory Committee and to host an annual Science Meeting, with increased emphasis directed toward the Habitat Conservation Plan.

---

**Edward Elbrock - Remembering a Good Friend - Ben Brown**

Late last year, we lost Edward Elbrock, a long-time member of our board who had served three terms as Board Chair. Unfortunately, Edward succumbed to injuries suffered in an ATV accident while out working on his ranch. He was a dedicated and hard working member of our ranching community, but he also founded and operated a successful water service business. His company provided much needed well, septic, and heavy equipment services to Hidalgo County and all of Southwest New Mexico and Southeast Arizona for more than 40 years.

However, first and foremost, Edward was a rancher. He loved and cared for his land. He was one of our first Grass Bank ranchers who donated conservation easements to the Malpai Borderlands Group to ensure that their ranches would remain intact, working ranches into the future. His commitment was critical to the early success of our work. As part of an MBG cultural exchange program, he made a trip to Tanzania to teach Masai herdsmen to repair their earthen dams and learn new conservation practices. He often said that he hoped that when he became too old to operate his ranch, that it could become a Grass Bank, too, providing a place for other ranchers to rest their pastures when needed.

On the Elbrock Ranch this year, the rains were generous, the grasses have grown dense and tall, and water and forage are abundant for both livestock and wildlife. That is a legacy that we can all treasure.
The Jornada Experimental Range works with the Malpai Borderlands Group to use science to answer questions identified by the group. One of these questions was how water resources are changing in the region, particularly stock tanks. Some stock tanks reliably provide water in most years while others are variable in response to precipitation. Understanding patterns of water availability across the Borderlands can help managers prepare for the future. Remote sensing provides a long record of surface conditions like vegetation, but we can also identify the amount of water in stock tanks using a simple approach.

We compiled a 28-year time series of Landsat data to identify surface water across the Malpai Borderlands. The normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) can identify water pixels based on the spectral properties of water. After removing cells that were not stock tanks (verified with detailed images), we were able to identify surface water in the study area every 16 days during the 28-year period.

Preliminary results indicate more than 460 separate stock tanks have had water at least one time in the 28-year period. We are currently examining changes in water availability to livestock and wildlife by creating hydrographs for individual tanks and relating the presence of water to precipitation, catchment properties, soil types, and vegetation characteristics. Our objective is to develop tools that enable predictions of the likelihood of changes to surface water availability in the future. Information on the total number of stock tanks with water at a given time will provide important regional information for managing water resources.

Correction to previous newsletter – We want to correct an omission in the Plug and Pond story in our previous newsletter, in which we failed to recognize the work of Van Clothier of Stream Dynamics Inc., in the design of erosion control structures we are using. Thank you Van for your help over the last fifteen years.
MISSION STATEMENT

Our goal is to restore and maintain the natural processes that create and protect a healthy, unfragmented landscape to support a diverse, flourishing community of human, plant, and animal life in our borderlands region. Together, we will accomplish this by working to encourage profitable ranching and other traditional livelihoods which will sustain the open space nature of our land for generations to come.

BILL AND MARY MCDONALD – AN APPRECIATION

The Malpai Borderlands Group came together to fix two major problems in our working area: putting fire back into the landscape after eighty years of federal fire suppression, and keeping the rangelands free from human development.

For five generations the McDonald family has been central to the community, and this is especially true for the Malpai Group. Bill and Mary McDonald were right there with the small band of individuals who came up with the innovations putting the Group on the track of success: forming the positive relationships with the agencies and the scientific community; inventing grassbanks; fire planning; endangered species work; range improvement projects; and creating the Malpai Group itself to hold and monitor easements for open rangelands.

From the first day our group was formally organized, Bill and Mary have held the reins providing steady leadership and support for 23 years – Bill as Executive Director and Mary as Finance Coordinator. These are more than full time jobs yet they also kept ranching at Sycamore Canyon, in the heart of the Malpai region.

Important and demanding as these jobs are, Bill brought something more to the Group – a commitment to what he calls The Radical Center. Bill's ranching legacy and personal life experience convinced him that working in the public and private landscape of the West is too complex for any one point of view to prevail. It requires the good faith efforts of partners from all sectors with a stake in the land.

Never one to back down easily, Bill nevertheless doggedly used his deeply held beliefs to build lasting relationships with all comers in the Borderlands – Forest Service, Wildlife Service, State Lands, Universities, Conservation non-profits, scientists, and just plain folks. More important by far, Bill and Mary McDonald's friends and neighbors thank them in the way that matters most – moving forward with their lives of ranching and raising families in a landscape of productivity and beauty.

We Need Your Help

We are doing our part for the future. Can you please help the Malpai Group protect a place for our next generation to live?

BILL AND MARY MCDONALD

We Need Your Help

We are doing our part for the future. Can you please help the Malpai Group protect a place for our next generation to live?