

A passion for clean energy and sustainable business practices has made a family farm southeast of Salem grow and thrive.

In 1980, Kathy Bridges became a first-generation Oregon farmer in the soil-rich Willamette Valley community of Turner. In her early years, Kathy produced grass hay and sheep for wool and meat. Later, the farm grew ryegrass, sweet corn, and beans.

Kathy's **Santiam Valley Ranch** held another exciting opportunity hidden within the nineteen ponds spread across the property. Dating back to the 1940s, the ponds were home to a number of warm-water fish. "We didn't even know they were there until a neighbor kid caught a bass in one of them!" shared Kathy.

So the ranch turned to aquaculture – raising of fish – which Kathy's son, Luke Fitzpatrick, now manages. Santiam Valley Ranch fish are used to stock ponds throughout the state, and even stocked demonstration tanks at the Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show at the Portland Expo Center.

A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL



After nearly 36 years, Santiam Valley Ranch is flourishing – and with the help of her husband, Ken Dunder, Kathy has built an **earth-friendly** model for Oregon farming. In 2014, the ranch was named the *Sustainable Small Business of the Year* in Marion County.

The crop ground is leased to growers, and in 2015 began producing certified organic sweet corn for NORPAC, the Pacific Northwest's largest fruit and vegetable processor. The amount of crops grown was less than previous plantings, but the revenue actually increased thanks to the added value of corn grown by sustainable, organic farming practices.

The ranch's crops, pastures, and aquaculture ponds are spread across Kathy's 150-acre property. About 100 acres of that land is enrolled in the U.S.

Department of Agriculture's **wetland reserve program**. Kathy and her son, Luke, worked with adjoining neighbors to further enhance the wetland area by incorporating more land from neighboring properties. Now, nearly 500 total acres of land are dedicated wetlands – the second largest private wetlands project in the state! Kathy and Luke's next wildlife project will be creating turtle habitat on their farmland to help the endangered western pond turtle thrive.

SAVING ENERGY

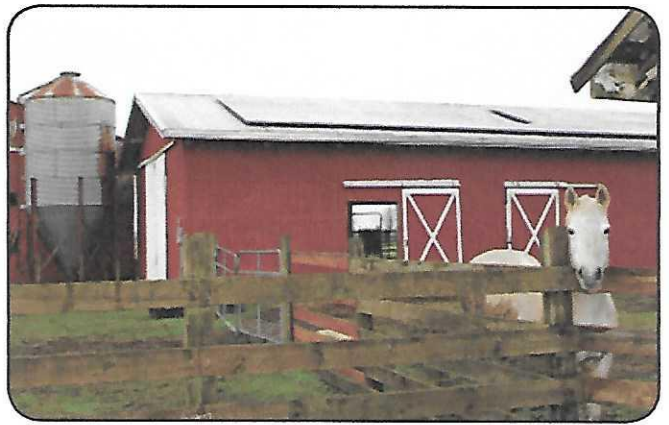
Kathy also found inspiration in **renewable energy**.

Her first project at the ranch was to install a 20-kilowatt wind turbine in 2010, with the help of the Oregon Department of Energy tax credit program. The nearly 5 ton, 120-foot turbine has been producing electricity for the ranch for five years now, and serves as a visible welcome beacon as you arrive at the ranch along Hunsaker Road.



OREGON
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In addition to the Oregon Department of Energy, Santiam Valley Ranch also received grants from the USDA's Rural Energy of America Program, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and the Energy Trust of Oregon. Together, these programs made harnessing wind energy at Kathy's ranch a reality.



To increase her use of renewable energy – and to further lower electricity costs – Kathy and her family turned to **solar energy**. In 2012, the ranch added photovoltaic systems (solar panels) to two barn rooftops, this time with the help of a \$28,000 Oregon Department of Energy Renewable Energy Development Grant. Kathy's out-of-pocket contribution ended up being just a little over \$24,000, after additional support from the USDA-REAP and the Energy Trust of Oregon.

Between the solar panels and the wind turbine, Santiam Valley Ranch's business electricity bill is down to zero – but the commitment to earth-friendly business practices and renewable energy technology is priceless. "To make a change in the world, you have to start with yourself," Kathy shared, with honest conviction.

SANTIAM VALLEY RANCH'S FUTURE



In addition to building habitat for western pond turtles, Kathy and Ken still have big plans for Santiam Valley Ranch's future. "We want to share what we've learned with others."

Their new project will be a Santiam Valley Farm Retreat. "We're renovating an existing building into a lodge – kind of like a Bed & Breakfast...but probably without the breakfast part," Kathy explained. She and Ken hope to invite families to their ranch so they can learn about the farm's operation, go fishing in the well-stocked ponds, and see renewable energy in action. They installed solar panels on the

building's roof to cover electricity needs for the retreat, and have applied for another Renewable Energy Development grant.

Kathy hopes to welcome her first guests sometime in 2016-2017.

Learn more about Santiam Valley Ranch on its website: www.fishsvr.com

SUPPORTING OREGON BUSINESSES

"The programs provided by ODOE, Energy Trust, and REAP made it possible for our ranch to pursue renewable energy," Kathy said. "Without it, the equipment would have been too expensive for our family business to afford."

Oregon Department of Energy staff provide energy expertise and advice for Oregon businesses that want to make a change. In addition to Renewable Energy Development grants, we also provide incentives for energy conservation and transportation projects, administer small-scale loans, and more.

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