

# Farming as if Wild Nature Mattered!

Lindsey Baris  
Eco-Ag winter  
1/30/06

During the Eco-Farm conference, I attended the workshop titled Farming as if Wild Nature Mattered. Two presenters came to share their experiences of incorporating natural biodiversity into their organic farm. Although they are following the rules of the USDA certified organics on biodiversity to help conserve natural and wild habitats, these speakers acted out of emotion and true care for the nature plants and wildlife around their farms.

The first speakers were Micheal and Sharlene Grunerud. They live on an organic farm in New Mexico. They didn't tell us much about what is grown on the farm; they stuck to what is naturally growing around their farm. They had left the border of their land as natural grassland that are kept as a natural habitat for many animals including wild turkey. Trees were left along the river to support a healthy riparian area, which include cottonwood and willow. Within their land, they planted perennials for insect pollinator as well as a wide variety of understory plants within their six acres of orchards to promote insect habitat. Non-native trees, like the siberian elm tree, are pulled to support native tree and shrub population.

Flowers are used as humming bird feeders except for actual feeders. They like to keep it natural. They had made numerous bat houses to attract bats to their land. Bats eat the cotteling moth as well as other destructive insects. They constructed perches around the parameter of their land so birds can use while they hunt for insects. They do not keep birdhouses in the fields. The birds would become dominate of the area and not allow others to come near.

They spoke and like as well as a dislike for gophers on their land. They say that the gophers are good for tilling the fields, yet are bad for the plants they try to grow. In order to control the gophers, they attract ravens, snakes, and owls that are good gopher controls. Snakes are attracted to the brush piles they leave out. These brush piles also attract other birds and rabbits. To control the deer from coming into their farmland, they had planted a field of alfalfa just for them. They like to keep the deer around because they are good for the mountain lions.

They don't own any house cats, because they would kill precious birds and lizards. They have also had visits from black bears, bobcats, scorpions, and a lot of other wildlife that is nature to the area where they live. The Grunerud family likes to educate other farmers on the importance of biodiversity on the farm to keep the natural habitats alive. These natural habitats, to them, inspire to observe, explore, and protect everything around them.

The second speaker during this workshop was Kevin Lunny for the Drake Bay Oyster Farm. He started as a cattle farm that bordered the Pacific Ocean. He uses the cows to disturb the natural grassland. Without disturbance of these grass lands, there would be a loss in biodiversity. This ranch has the highest diversity of endangered plant species along that part of the coast.

He then started his oyster farm to help clean the water. This involves helping support the natural estuary/ riparian zone as well. Eelgrass habitat in the estuary are the most important to support a diverse amount of fish life.

Kevin mostly talked about how his cows help with the grasslands. I could tell that keeping the land as natural as possible is important to him, as well as the Grunerud family. Not only have they revolved their lives around their organic farms, but also around the natural habitats that surround them and are a part of their land. They have expressed that keeping the biodiversity up and the land as natural as possible is a way to give back to the earth as well as make their own land healthy and happy.