



**MARBLE MOUNTAIN
GUEST RANCH**

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Sustainable Guest Ranching

Feb 23, 2015

At Marble Mountain Ranch we have been practicing **sustainability** long before the term became fashionable. We like to refer to sustainability in simple terms as being good stewards of our ranch land and the associated resources. Whether you call it ecotourism, permaculture, green living, sustainability or simply good stewardship, it all boils down to taking care of the land and larger resources so that they can support you in perpetuity rather than maximizing short term gains.

Sustainability for us means the endurance of our resources, cultures, and economics over extended periods of time.

When we purchased what was then Young's Ranch, 21 years ago, we inherited a ranch with decades of deferred maintenance and some negligent stewardship. The previous ranch business model of a large RV resort was at odds to local native culture, it was untenable in its consumption of limited resources, and it was embroiled in litigation with several agencies and local stakeholders. It was essentially at odds with the local ecology, economics, politics and culture.

Our first three years in our new home were spent cleaning up the land. We hired a scrap metal salvage firm to haul out seemingly endless amounts of old metal, and abandoned cars. The abandoned mining pit on the ranch was full of unlabeled barrels of agricultural chemicals and decades of accumulated household trash.



Gabion basket installation to repair canal berms at

Marble Mountain Guest Ranch

Once the clutter was gone we began to work on repairing long neglected buildings, water lines, and fence lines. We replaced flood irrigation practices with more efficient sprinkler irrigation on the pastures. We resolved long-standing litigation with local stakeholders. We then began a long process of replacing aging power distribution through the ranch and improving efficiency in electrical power consumption. Finally, we began the process of beautifying the ranch to become the wonderful home and business that it is today.

Some major changes that took place early on in the reformation were repairs to the historic water canal that carries water around the mountain to supply the ranch. The canal carries all the water needed for potable water consumption, agricultural needs, as well as generating power for the ranch. Marble Mountain Ranch is far removed from access to any public utilities and has, since it's inception, produced all needed electricity via a small hydro power plant.



Hydro electric power plant at California's dude ranch

The early settlers used the water from the canal to mine the land for gold, provide water for their cattle/dairy business and to generate a small amount of hydro-electricity for their homes and hen house. Over the years the hydro-plant was upgraded allowing the residents of the ranch to produce heat, run refrigeration, and all other needed electrical demands for the 13 houses here on the ranch. However, the electrical system was far outdated and required a great deal of water to produce the needed power. By improving the water carrying efficiency of the canal and updating the hydro plant we were able to improve the electrical production capacity while simultaneously returning more water to the creek. The greater levels of return flow help preserve the creek as a viable cold water refuge for the Steelhead and Salmon native to the Klamath River.

Perhaps the single most important change to Marble Mountain Ranch in it's evolutions toward sustainability was the transition in business models. The previous ranch business model was as a 55 unit R.V. / mobile home park. Even in it's best configuration it was a highly taxing consumer of water, electricity, and other resources. Each of the 55 RV / home sites drew power for appliances and air conditioners, consumed domestic water, and produced sewage that was returned to the groundwater. Our current business model of a small capacity all inclusive guest ranch focuses on a smaller occupancy group . Full service guest facilities bring short term visitors into the area, that produce a better profit margin per capita with far less impact on the available resources. Our non-consumptive passage through the local forests and rivers educates and edifies visiting guests without disruptive harvesting of ore, timber or fish. We appreciate resources rather than harvesting them.

Marble Mountain Guest Ranch is a 2 hour drive away from major cities. It became apparent early in our tenure that large gardens were going to be needed to provide fresh herbs and greens for the family and guests. We planted two large garden areas. One grows a wide variety of berries including

Blueberries, Raspberries, Strawberries, and thorn-less Blackberries as well as some more unique fruits such as Gogi Berries and Goose Berries. We also produce 6 varieties of grapes used for the table and for fresh cider. The other gardens and green houses produce every kind of vegetable imaginable. Fresh produce, garden to table, is the theme in our culinary offerings. The gardens are all fed with water that has passed thru the Hydro electric plant, doubling the use of the water that is drawn from the canal. Use of modern drip systems then make the gardens flourish with minimal water consumption.

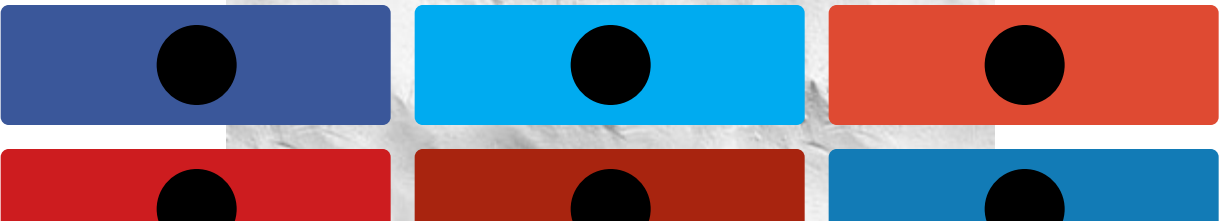


Making fresh apple cider with organic ranch apples and fruits

We acknowledge that every human presence has a footprint of some measure on the larger biosphere. Accordingly, we have also worked, since our Marble Mountain Ranch inception, to minimize this footprint and to be “sustainable” in an economic, cultural, ecological and political arena. We call this formalized definition of sustainability simply as “good stewardship”.

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Family Guest Ranch**

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1 of 1 Specialty lodging in
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