

Rainbows End Ranch & the Glacier/Howser Hydro Project

Letter from Gabriela Grabowski (Storm) to a fellow horse lover

Dear *****

July 2007

Some friends have offered me a web site to tell our tale and perhaps gain donations for our legal fund. I have decided that my long overdue letter to a fellow horse lover would be a good vehicle to do this, so here we go:

Here it is July already and we haven't managed to go out with the herd into the backcountry that surrounds us yet. The horses have been most confused since as you know for the last 6 years we have been going to our camp at the head of the Duncan Lake Reservoir to have our foals. The grass always starts to get green way earlier on the lake then up here in the mountains up Glacier Creek. When we first moved here in 1993, there was not much for traffic, but since ATV's began their invasions we have felt it imperative to avoid them. The horses find them terrifying, and some people have no horse sense and think it is amusing to chase horses or our milk cows into a lather on rocky roads with ditch on one side and abyss on the other. Quads are why we need to travel far away to keep the herd safe. Since we have had to stay at home so far this year we have had one foal vanish and another injured by going over a steep bank into logging slash when 4 motorcyclists looking like Darth Vader sped up the valley. We managed to get the little fellow back on the road and trailer him home but his bruising was severe and I don't know if he is going to make it since his mother, Phoenix, our spirit horse, our albino wildest mare, made off with him and went up the valley. There is plenty of feed up high now, but it takes awhile to get going. I've called him Focus and I sure hope he's OK.

Our place, 'Rainbow's End Ranch', was once a mining claim called 'Elated', first staked Sept. 27, 1895. I found this out by researching its history some 3 years after we bought it. Sept. 27th is my birthday! I was blown away, but I feel a very spiritual connection to this land and the Glacier Creek that runs through it. This is some of the finest drinking water on the planet and I may feel possessive of it but it really belongs to the people of Canada, just like our Crown Land does. Some numbered Corporation now calling itself Purcell Green Power wants to dam up above me and take out 80% of the water through a 4.5m X 4.5m tunnel 7 km long just up the valley. They plan to invade Howser Creek the same way and build roads through Old Growth Reserves and I really don't know where this corporate GREED is coming from but it is here big time and if we can't stop them they will destroy what is left of our wilderness and the things that are sacred to many of us. On June 27th

there was a meeting at the Meadow Creek hall to meet with these wannabe Valley invaders with their corporate agenda to present pictures to the dumb locals. We asked for a meeting rather than an Open House and got one eventually. I doubt these people knew whom they had in their midst, but under one roof were at least 10 powerful women, worldly women for water and wilderness. Some of us have dedicated our lives to this. Glada McIntyre spoke, calling on Friends of Glacier Creek. Eloise was there, Inger in her 80s, Betty, Jana, Rowena, Inana, all of whom oppose Campbell's Jumbo Glacier Resort fast track. It was powerful. Lines are being drawn. I might live at the back of beyond to visually get away from it all, but we cannot get away from the big time exploitation these corporations want to bring to our valley.

Right now the road up Glacier Creek is closed at 13 km. because it is fracturing. We have had horse access to home since last December when they blew the avalanche at 6km on the main Duncan Road. It usually comes down on its own in Feb. The rocks (boulders) on the Glacier Creek road were moved by tourists who seem to habitually ignore signs saying the road is closed. We parked our truck to block it and twice people have moved it! The sign below at the start of the road says no motor vehicles past 13km. This is a liability issue for Forestry. We are negotiating with them at the moment for our freedom to ride and camp in the back country as we have since the early 1980s. According to them, someone complained about horses and cattle being at large up the Duncan someplace. Here's the story of what happened to us after feeding over 1200 bales - packed and ready to set off for our summer adventure! Threats in the mail. Threats in the paper. Whoa!

We had intended to use no vehicle this years and just travel slowly with pregnant mares and cows to our off road camp at the head of the Reservoir. It is over 60km away but in early spring there is little or no traffic since the avalanches are still down. They pose little problem for our pack string. With miles of feed on the roadsides we were anticipating going very slowly without the truck. It is inconvenient, but I've been out here on raw land, no house to speak of, no hydro, etc, so roughing it is nothing new. I have lived in wall tents in winter and stayed cozy. The canopy of Nature is my home. Mick feels similarly. When we met in 1981, he was famous locally as a walker of the mountains. Then we bought a horse together (a Welsh mountain pony) and horses re-entered both our lives. He and I may live separately, but our horses run together. We had a business taking out tourists and hunters and wandered these mountains for years trying to break even. It was a lifestyle we both came to enjoy. This is the tenth anniversary of the start of this particular herd. I wanted to breed my own pack string from scratch and as you know, have produced some real beauties. I guess the palominos must be the Gold at the end of this Rainbow. I breed for personality as well as conformation and this bunch is

totally equine immersion therapy. They are friendly and steady and sturdy. Wow. I am so blessed I can't believe I actually own this land, let alone this wonderful herd of horses. It is a 3 ½ hr ride to the phone and mailbox in the winter (one way). It has to be a 'good' day for such an excursion. We are both pretty arthritic, but we're not quite out of commission yet, eh? You have to do something, so creating a ranch from a slash-pile and raising a herd of mountain mustangs might as well be it. There's no money in it, but oh what adventure...

We were shocked at what MoF put in the mail to the local folks, since the last time we had heard any complaints was in 2003 when I wrote and told them we were camping with our herd and if we now need a grazing permit, to send me an application form. I heard nothing further. This forest district does not issue grazing permits and we have too few animals to qualify for one anyway. I was told in 1999 by a forester that he saw no problem with the horses going to the bottom of the reservoir. The spring grasses there only get flooded. The reservoir is about 60km long - it used to be farms and homesteads and ancient forest. Miles of stumps and grass make it almost like the plains. It is the only flat place with tons of feed and no one to eat it. It has a bizarre beauty. There is such total devastation of ecosystems. We recreate in the mess they made. The trees are gone - burnt and wasted. The stumps remain our legacy. When the Quads arrived on the scene we took the horses where they cannot go. I fail to see what harm we do. Everyone thrives in spring at the head of the lake, before the waters rise. July is the bug month so we don't stay to be mosquito food - we wander farther away from traffic. Last summer we were over 100km from home. We packed trees in for planters in places their ATVs could not go and met some interesting young people who hung out with us and brought their friends. I am into people who want to touch the Earth before we all bite the dust. We had my grandson and his friend (age 15) come camping too. It was lots of fun, but now bureaucracy has seen fit to declare us essentially illegal, so I have had to engage a lawyer to show that we are not. After we received the nasty mail, I went with a friend to the Forestry Office to find out what was up. I got Catch-22 and the run around when I wanted clear answers. They have ignored my letter from 2003 and now attack us, hence the lawyer. My herd is too precious to put in jeopardy. I do not trust the Forestry. They are new guys trying to assert their authority and we are a gray area. We don't fit their rules. Nomads do not exist in their scheme of things and this is what we were evolving into, growing with this herd of horses. There are no rules about how big your string can be, and our herd is accompanied.

We maintain that as campers on remote crown land, we need no permits. They say a horse with no saddle is grazing. I don't know where Topsy and Katrina (the cows) and their progeny fit in. Ranchers would hardly call them

cattle. They are the groceries. Fresh is better, cream for my coffee, milk for yoghurt. I can sit on Topsy. We've had her since the time we went to the auction in the Tercel station-wagon to pick up a few calves. We had no running truck at the time, so we took out the back seat, put in plastic and hay and picked up a few day-old calves. Did you know you can fit 5 in a Tercel? They like country music. The car was retired soon after that trip... it never did smell the same. We laughed a lot. Anyhow, Topsy is far too tame and likely thinks she's a dog. She cavorts at the sight of the horse trailer - she likes going places. Like I said, this year we were going no vehicles, so no Topsy trailer. Now she has a yearling and a new baby. These are not the herding kind of cows; they aren't frightened and follow buckets and run you down. This could get interesting.

We have a lovely crop of foals this year, but until we get things straightened out we are not leaving the valley. Our place is at the bottle-neck. The valley has road for over 40km and lots of feed up top but even this is not legal according to these people. We are the only private land for 15km. No one else lives here, but my horses can't eat the grass? There is little or no game; the valley, although world-class, has been cut top to bottom and now they want to put a new Whistler on top (7,000 bed Jumbo Resort) and dam Glacier Creek up and put a tunnel to the reservoir, destroying old growth and our peace. I know that nothing is forever, but freedom of movement on horseback is our Canadian heritage. I have had to buy another semi of hay and keep the herd up this valley. They don't look nearly as fat as they do at the head of the lake. There are no cattle or fences, just abandoned roads to explore and old trails made when horses were all there were to take you places. Savvy, style and stamina is what we have. This year's colts are mostly linebacks with crosses and striped legs, Grullos. Highlander's grandchildren. I get such pleasure from the foals. They always make you smile. Herd dynamics are divided into youngsters and oldsters, and Kali hangs out with Peter (age 24) and his crowd. She gets along well with Shiva. He is white with blue eyes and is 6 too. We have been riding and packing her all winter. She got bred by Chaos this spring. He looks like Cheyenne (same Mom). She is finally starting to put on some muscle. I am so glad you managed to rescue her so I could set her free. It has taken her a year to become one of the bunch and now she can drink living water and handle her feet. She is really smooth - so big and black - she has grown. I'm sure she is happier than she was where we found her. Morningstar has fathered a red filly I call Flamenca. She has Morningstar's mother's face and his grandma's rump. I love the genetics.

I wonder how long this will all take. These people gave us no notice. We were ready to leave and were out of hay when this notice arrived. According to the lawyer, MoF's threat was not legal. We are now applying for a grazing

permit that until now has not existed. So I just stay home. It is too hot to move out of the shade. I wonder how the seedlings fare in the hot dry cut-blocks, yet Forestry is business as usual. You'd think they'd never heard of Global Warming or how important Old Growth forest is to our survival on this planet. No, they call it progress and development and act like it is inevitable. These corporations at the [Open House] meeting talked about taking away our reasons for being here as though it is of no consequence. Maybe this is my last year of the creek being normal and that's why we've been made to stay home this year. There is much synchronicity at work. The road is fracturing at 13km and has been posted closed by MoF for liability reasons. People just move rocks and come anyway. They even move our truck! Horses and Quads cannot coexist in this narrow steep valley. Tourists going slowly with respect, no sweat, but guys flying on ATV's, no way. They come in swarms. They must look to horses like human mutants who have sprung wheels. Big guts, no legs and wheels. It is a sad social reflection. No one even seems to consider their impact. Motorcycles who try to pass the horses are worse. They produce a blind panic that sends the herd fleeing over sharp rocks to escape the noisy fast thing on wheels ridden by some masked monster. Glacier Creek is too narrow and steep a drainage for speeders. There is nowhere for the horses to go to get off the road except over the bank like Phoenix's fairly newborn colt. He was suspended in the slash over a steep bank, unable to extricate himself. The men got him to the road and when I went the next day on Bud to see how he was, he was still there. I managed to push him a km down hill to a more sheltered spot and then we picked him up in the trailer. He seemed bruised but not broken. I put him in the pen for 3 days and he seemed to slowly be improving and, of course, when I took pity on our 'Spirit Horse' for being penned up and let her out to be with the rest of the bunch who were hanging out, she split [with her colt] before I managed to pen her up again. Looking for a hiding horse in this valley of 39km of main road and 4 logging drainages and miles of cutblocks with tons of graze way up high is virtually the needle in a haystack syndrome. She always was a loner, hopefully he is on the mend. He looked bright, just very sore and crippled in his hips. I guess time will tell.

I just spent 2 days in the saddle to go and find Diablo. He was a perfect gent, not a squeal or a bite to Bud. He had his little bunch way up over Starbird Glacier logging spur up 39km. That's as far as Bud and I made it the first day. Ouch! I spent the night in the open protected by horse and dog and smoky fire. Lots of mosquitoes and no dew even next to the creek. I didn't bring a book, I watched the sky and communed with Nature. The next dawn the herd arrived and we didn't have to go up and over to look for them, thank goodness. I figure Bud and I put in a good 60km in two days and my body is getting old for doing that. I really had to rest when I got home. Bud was born in 1988, the year Mick and I won plaques from the

Horse Council of BC for distances ridden. He came 2nd and I came 9th. Bud was so good. He and I often go in search of whoever is lost or missing, even though he is technically Mick's horse. He understands my slightest suggestions and I swat all his horse flies. We do make a good pair. He sniffs out trails and knows what we need to do. I just love him so much. We are thinking of putting front shoes on Shiva and Kali so we have 2 saddle horse here. Next time they come back I will pen them up. We have had 4 lots of vehicles ignore the MoF road closed sign, a couple of local trucks and a squad of quads. Plus, some American loud-mouth came in with his truck to go take photos to save Jumbo. He was the third to ignore signs, and now the road is blocked by truck and horse trailer right here. No vehicles means just that!

Spirit is on my side, or I am on hers. We have to have our water and our horses running free. Growing with this growing herd has been just amazing. I really dislike selling them and breaking up families, except when it is to really good homes. I can only hope for the best. Anyhow, have a read of the MoF notice. It was so rudely done it made me feel punched in the stomach. All we want is to take the horses in the backcountry away from the Quads. Some valleys have more feed than others; we live to explore and move with the bugs and the situations that arise. We've been doing this for at least 25 years, so what is the problem? Jealousy? There are unhappy vigilantes out there. They even called the SPCA constable on us, but he could find nothing amiss. We are happy and love our animals more than possessions or fuel fed toys. We have sacrificed much to create this place and herd on a pittance. I really want to create clan out here. We could garden and do pottery (I have a propane 6 cu. ft. kiln) and play with horses. I hope you can manage a visit sometime and that ***** isn't too hot for you. I have 5 colts and 2 fillies to trade for hay, mostly Grullos. And then who knows, I really just want to see how they turn out. They change so much and they make me so happy just being around them. I will never be a horse dealer - I love them all too much!

Take care,
Storm

P.S.

What was a dream come true, wandering in the back country with this amazing bunch of horses, has become a bureaucratic nightmare. So far this inconsiderate action on the part of the MoF has placed my herd in jeopardy. We always went to the head of Duncan lake to foal and be safe, away from the traffic. So far I have had one newborn vanish, likely swept away by the river, I have had one badly injured by motorcyclists, and now he and his

mother who would fight to the death if need be are missing. I also had a mare bagging up, ready to give birth, a first timer, come home empty with no baby. On the big flats [at the head of the Duncan Reservoir] we would all have been safe, fat and happy. Here it was a hard spring because the grasses that grow down below us were suddenly forbidden fruit. Grass doesn't come in up here until July. People who don't keep animals or who don't live much outdoors don't know this stuff. So this bureaucratic fiasco, for living my lifestyle without a permit, may have cost me 4 horses. Something is wrong with this picture. We are being punished for being backcountry lovers. We never meet people who don't smile at the herd and express awe at how together they are and how lovely. Is it that [the bureaucrats] cannot stand a little bit of happiness in all the devastation the machines have done to our planet.

In 1988 when we lost the right to ride on the West side of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, we got a \$50 fine for unauthorized horses - that is, although there were others, Mick got the fine. It was a gray area and they changed the law (Order in Council) and then charged us with breaking it! The Conservancy was the only place we could guarantee the wilderness would still be there. Everywhere else, whenever we found a nice place, the machines were right behind us and it would be obliterated, creeks and all - unrecognizable sometimes, and heartbreaking. It was a hard life. We rode in the Conservancy for 4 years using elk trails. It was heaven until the bureaucrats put us out of business. Last time I crossed Kootenay Joe, 5-6 hours up and over, it was with a dog and 9 horses alone. Mick had the wheels. When we started outfitting we had no 4x4 and did it all by horse. It is a steep up and down, a three day ride to camp. Forestry's threat to seize and sell my stock is heavy handed since I am not trespassing on another's grazing lease. They have no grounds. I have always been willing to apply for a permit but permits do not exist! What Forestry has done is abuse its power with this bogus threat. I am now holding the fort. They have threatened more dire consequences for riding in logging [areas] than riding in Parks! All I'm doing is traveling with my herd where no one else is.

Without the lawyer I would not have gotten anything but the run around. Anyone reading this who wants to help fight for freedom to be in our backcountry, please help by contributing.

Thanks

Donations can be made anonymously or not – the following information is needed

**Rainbow Ranch Defense Fund – KSCU New Denver – Maximizer account
#1200856**

Branches of Kootenay Savings Credit Union

Castlegar

1016 - 4th Street
Castlegar BC V1N 2B2

Edgewater

5759 Sinclair Road, Box 39
Edgewater BC V0A 1E0

Fruitvale

1945 Main Street, Box 790
Fruitvale BC V0G 1L0

Invermere

1028 7th Avenue, Box 2580
Invermere BC V0A 1K0

Kaslo

437 Front Street, Box 478
Kaslo BC V0G 1M0

Kimberley

200 Wallinger Avenue
Kimberley BC V1A 1Z1

Nakusp

502 Broadway Street, Box 690
Nakusp BC V0G 1R0

New Denver

411 6th Avenue, Box 128
New Denver BC V0G 1S0

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Salmo BC V0G 1Z0

South Slocan

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Trail

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Trail BC V1R 4B8

Waneta

134 - 8100 Highway 3B
Trail BC V1R 4N7

Warfield

890 Schofield Highway
Trail BC V1R 2G9