



**TOP:** Fall in Buckner Orchard  
**BOTTOM:** Preparing apples for the press

## Buckner Homestead Historic District

Located in Stehekin, the Buckner Homestead Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a cultural treasure to be preserved for all people. Dating from 1889, this complex cultural landscape includes a historic organic orchard which itself is a horticultural archive. In addition to several Jonathon and Rome varieties, the orchard is largely comprised of a variety of Common Delicious apple that is one of the fore-parents of the Red Delicious. Original homestead buildings have been preserved to capture the essence of a pioneering way of life in a remote mountain community. A unique pattern of waterways define an antique gravity fed irrigation system that has met the needs of hayfields, pastures, and orchards for almost 120 years. Below the surface there are prehistoric archeological sites that document landform use extending three to four thousand years.

The Buckner homestead is a physical record of settlement methods and customs of the interior Pacific Northwest. The Buckner homestead does not tell the entire story, but its history is linked to eastern Washington apple industry development, mining booms, and trapping industries that laid the foundations of rural mountain communities and economies. The homestead was, and continues to be, a place where the community can gather to eat, to play, to dance, and to enjoy the serenity of this historic spot.

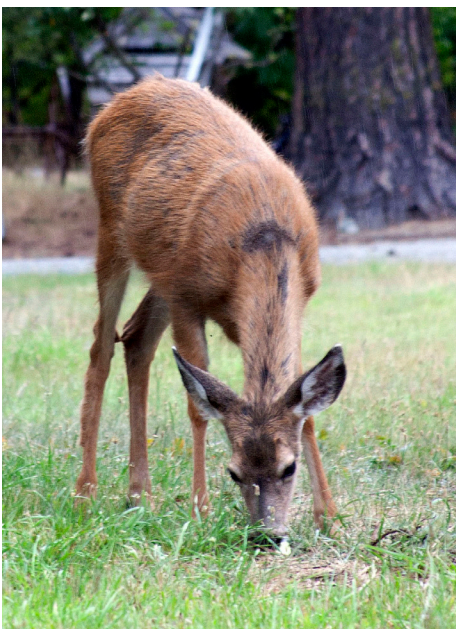
### Status

Since the adoption of the Buckner Homestead Historic District Management Plan in 1995, many components of the landscape have been stabilized through reliance upon a consistent compendium of management practices for all components of the landscape. The project funding for preservation maintenance of the buildings and structures has been secured through successful com-

petition for cultural cyclic maintenance, historic structure stabilization, and repair/rehabilitation funding sources.

As inventoried in 1995, the orchard consisted of 315 apple trees (259 Common Delicious, 42 Rome Beauty, 11 Jonathan, 2 Lodi, 1 Golden Delicious) and 6 Bartlett pear trees. Orchard management will concentrate on rehabilitative maintenance and replanting activities to maintain between 275 and 400 trees. Only diseased trees and trees with pest infestations have been actively removed.

Recently, the orchard component of the Historic District has been exposed to significant increased threats by wildlife, principally black bears and elk. The aging trees are consistently pruned in the historically correct “open bowl” style. This style of pruning allows a greater presence of bears to enter the orchard and climb the trees, often breaking primary branches and sometimes causing



the death of the tree. Elk are increasingly entering the orchard and, by eating the bark, severely injuring the trees and increasing tree mortality.

#### **Discussion**

Park management decisions have enhanced the stability of the trees through active utilization of contemporary horticultural methods that are consonant with historic methods. Engaging a skilled orchardist to actively carry out ongoing management tasks and to consistently conduct an orchard inventory has not only increased the vitality of trees planted between 1912 and 1917, but also demonstrated the economic efficiencies of consistent orchard care, rather than intermittent management activities.

The most urgent task is to find the best orchard management methodology for bears and elk. This activity requires the balancing wildlife populations, the vitality of the trees, and the historic viewshed so valued by visitors and the community. This is an ongoing management discussion.

**TOP:** Deer in Buckner Orchard will sometimes climb partway up the trees to graze on young leaves and immature fruits

**MIDDLE:** Pressing apples using a hand-crank cider press

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Deer grazing in Buckner Orchard