



# GRASSROOTS

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## **Finalists announced for the 2011 Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota**

May 20, 2011– PIERRE, SD – Sand County Foundation, the South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition are pleased to announce the finalists for the 2011 Leopold Conservation Award.

“The health of South Dakota’s landscape is dependent on hard-working farmers and ranchers who are dedicated to ensuring that South Dakota’s land, water and wildlife are in better shape than when they found them,” said Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation President. “The high quality of South Dakota nominees in the first two years of the award in this state made the selection process difficult but it proves that South Dakota’s natural resources are being cared for by innovative landowners who want to see them flourish for future generations.”

The Leopold Conservation Award, named in honor of world-renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, is comprised of \$10,000 and a Leopold crystal. The award is presented annually in eight states to private landowners who practice responsible land stewardship and management.

The 2011 finalists, listed alphabetically, are:

- **Gary & Amy Cammack**, Meade County
- **Jim & Karen Kopriva**, Clark County
- **Mortenson family**, Stanley County
- **Smeenk family**, Butte County

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### **America's Great Outdoors: Salazar Highlights Efforts to Conserve Working Landscapes with Proposed Dakota Grassland Conservation Area**

HIGHMORE, S.D. -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar visited South Dakota in April to highlight the proposed Dakota Grassland Conservation Area as a model for conserving working agricultural landscapes while benefiting wildlife and its habitat under President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative.

Under the proposal, the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will seek to acquire easements from willing sellers on approximately 2 million acres of native prairie habitat to benefit wildlife and support traditional economic activities, specifically livestock production. The proposal will expand land protection already provided by the National Wildlife Refuge System through several wildlife refuges and wetland management districts in the area, including the Audubon National Wildlife Refuge and Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area in North Dakota, and Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota.

"One of the major goals we have established for the America's Great Outdoors initiatives is to work in partnership with private landowners to conserve America's working landscapes," Secretary Salazar said. "Under this proposal, we will join with agricultural communities and other partners here in the Dakotas to conserve wildlife and its habitat while ensuring the continuation of the regions' agricultural heritage."

Salazar conducted a series of site visits to habitat restoration projects on private lands and met with conservation partners, including private landowners, who are working with the Fish and Wildlife Service to conserve wildlife habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region, a grass- and wetland-rich area known as "America's Duck Factory" for its importance to the nation's migratory waterfowl population.

Salazar visited a working cattle ranch near Highmore, in Hyde County, where he met with representatives of the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition, Ducks Unlimited, the Izaak Walton League of America, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, and other partners to discuss the proposed conservation area.

"Last year, federal conservation agencies held a listening session at Pierre to hear from conservation stakeholders about local solutions to key conservation issues in the state," Salazar said. "I am pleased to see the Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners are listening to South Dakotans and have proposed the Dakota Grassland Conservation Area, which will keep

ranchers on the lands and forever protect the vital natural resources of the Prairie Pothole Region."

While meeting with partners in Highmore, Secretary Salazar signed two agreements with private landowners to restore and conserve wildlife habitat on their lands.

These voluntary agreements with the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (private lands) provide for cost-share technical assistance to private landowners and will achieve the twin goals of enhancing grazing regimes for cattle producers and wildlife habitat for federal trust species, especially migratory birds such as grassland-nesting birds and raptors.

In the morning, Secretary Salazar also met with South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard to explore how the Department of the Interior and South Dakota can work together to advance the goals of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative to support local recreation and conservation efforts.

### **Butte County 4-H Team are National Range Judging Champions**

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK - The Butte County 4-H Team along with the Newell FFA Chapter from Newell, SD have returned home after participating in the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual National Land & Range Judging Contest in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 700 teenage FFA and 4-H members competed in the contest held May 3-5, according to contest co-chairman Joe Parker of Talala, Oklahoma. Parker is the president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the contest's principal sponsor. The Concho Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency hosted the Range judging event on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Redlands Community College hosted the luncheon for participants at its Darlington Agricultural Education Farm near the contest site. Total registration for the event exceeded 1000 people with coaches, sponsors, officials and group leaders in addition to the contestants.

The FFA and 4-H participating teams qualified for the national event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. The first two days of the three day event offered contestants opportunities to visit nearby practice sites to get acquainted with Oklahoma soils and plants with information available from soil experts. The actual contest site remains a secret until contest day, so no one has an unfair advantage. Contestants and coaches gather on contest morning to find out the official contest location. They then travel to the site, with a

police escort, in a caravan of over 100 vehicles spanning several miles.

The event ended Thursday night with an awards banquet in the Great Hall of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. Lt. Governor Todd Lamb welcomed the participants. National championship trophies were awarded to team and individual winners in each category of the competition including land judging, range judging, and homesite evaluation. Each category included FFA and 4-H.

In the Range Judging 4-H Competition, the Butte County 4-H team brought home the National Championship! Brodie Shaykett placed 2<sup>nd</sup> individually along with Tyler Swan placing 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jordan Brunner placing 4<sup>th</sup> and Cady Olson placing 5<sup>th</sup>, respectively. The Newell FFA Range Judging Team placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Team members included Jonny Champion placing 7<sup>th</sup>, Kristen Dunn placing 23<sup>rd</sup>, Coral Starr placing 26<sup>th</sup> and Makayla Heisler placing 43<sup>rd</sup> individually. The teams were coached by TJ Swan, Butte County Extension Educator, Dave Ollila Newell FFA Advisor, Jodie Dunbar, Newell FFA Advisor and Karen Swan, Newell FFA Alumni Supporter.

According to Dave Ollila, Newell FFA Advisor, "These opportunities to expose students to the study of Range Management provide students with skills and understanding of a valuable natural resource that drives the economies of Rural America in the West. Many students will pursue careers which require the knowledge of habitat and range resource management.

In addition to practicing and competing in the range judging contest, the Newell FFA and Butte County 4-H members were able to take in some of the local attractions Oklahoma had to offer. They were able to tour the Braum's Dairy and processing facilities where they milk more than 10,000 cows twice a day and process all the milk to be delivered to 270 stores within 300 miles of their farm. Other tours included the Oklahoma City Zoo, Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Lazy E Ranch, and the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. Some other activities included go-carts watching a few horse races at Remington Park, and eating at the infamous Braum's! Jack Link's Jerky supplied more than 40 lbs of jerky to be enjoyed by the 10 South Dakota Teams competing in the National Land and Range Competition.



Butte County 4-H Range Judging Team in Oklahoma City

### **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) to visit with SDGC Membership**

North Central Region SARE (NCR-SARE) is one of four regional offices that run the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, a nationwide grants and education program to advance sustainable innovation to American agriculture. NCR-SARE offers competitive grants and educational opportunities for producers, scientists, educators, institutions, organizations and others exploring sustainable agriculture in America's Midwest. NCR-SARE has awarded more than \$40 million worth of competitive grants to farmers and ranchers, researchers, educators, public and private institutions, nonprofit groups, and others exploring sustainable agriculture in 12 states including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The folks from SARE would like the opportunity to hear from the South Dakota Grassland Coalition membership regarding our sustainability practices in a Listening Session to be held in July. They will use this information to decide how to administer grants in the future. We will be working with the ND GLC and the NE GLC on the sessions. The first session will be on Ken Miller's Ranch, south of Mandan, ND, on July 19<sup>th</sup>. The second session will be on Ravenscroft Ranch near Valentine, NE, on July 21<sup>st</sup>. Please mark your calendars to attend this event to be involved in an interesting ranch tour and learn more about NCR-SARE as well as to provide valuable input to the group. More information will be in next month's newsletter; however, please contact Kyle Schell if you have any questions regarding the event.



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### Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
SD Youth Range Camp	June 6-8	Sturgis, SD	Derek Oliver	605-967-2561
Outdoor Expo.	June 11-12	Huron, SD		
SDGC Bird Tour	June 17-18	White Lake, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Rangeland Days	June 21	Lemmon, SD		605-244-5222
State Technical Meeting	June 28	Ft. Pierre, SD	Jim Faulstich	605-852-2622
SARE Listening Session ND	July 19	Mandan, ND	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
SARE Listening Session NE	July 21	Nenzel, NE	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
Doud's Ranch Tour	July 29	Midland, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
America's Grassland Con.	Aug 15-17	Sioux Falls, SD	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
State Technical Meeting	Aug 30	Pierre, SD	Jim Faulstich	605-852-2622
SD Grazing School	Sep 12-16	Chamberlain, SD	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
State Technical Meeting	Nov 13	Huron, SD	Jim Faulstich	605-852-2622

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Kyle Schell, SDSU Box 2170, Brookings SD 57007, [kyle.schell@sdstate.edu](mailto:kyle.schell@sdstate.edu), (605) 688-6623