



# GRASSROOTS

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## **Mortenson Family to receive the 2011 Leopold Conservation Award**

Pierre, S.D. – June 9, 2011 – The Wisconsin-based conservation organization Sand County Foundation, in partnership with the South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition, is proud to name the Mortenson family of Stanley County as the recipient of the 2011 Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota.

“The Mortenson brothers have embraced the management approach begun by their father and continue to expand upon his vision,” said Brent Haglund, president, Sand County Foundation. “Their innovative methods for grassland, water and wildlife management are truly exceptional. The Mortensons are an example of how a conservation philosophy can be successfully passed along from one generation to the next.”

At the end of the 1940’s, Clarence Mortenson began to wonder how all of the water originating on his ranch could be kept there for use over an extended period of time. This idea sparked his effort to restore the ranch to its natural state. His sons, Todd, Jeff, and Curt, who currently operate Mortenson Ranch, have embraced Clarence’s vision.

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For more information or other events the **SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION** is involved with, please contact Kyle Schell or visit the website: <http://www.sdgrass.org>

In the 1980's, Todd learned about holistic management that moves cattle across the land similar to the movement of buffalo herds. In the spring, the herds graze on grasses in riparian areas while stamping seeds into the ground to help establish trees and grasses. In summer, the cattle are moved to the uplands. In the 1990's, researchers observed a substantial increase in native tree and shrub species along the ranch's streams, as well as an impressive increase in wildlife populations. In addition, the Mortensons' efforts have led to a significant decrease in sediment flowing through creeks on the ranch. Due to practices like these, the family has come a long way since Clarence began his quest. More than 90 percent of the 19,000-acre ranch is back to native grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees.

The \$10,000 Leopold Conservation Award will be presented to the Mortensons at the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association's Annual Convention on December 7 in Pierre. Anyone interested in learning more about the Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota is invited to attend. Please RSVP by November 29 by calling 605.945.2333 or e-mailing [office@sdcattlemen.org](mailto:office@sdcattlemen.org).

The Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota is sponsored by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, American State Bank, Daybreak Ranch, Ducks Unlimited, Millborn Seeds, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Rasmussen Leopold Fund, South Dakota's Conservation Districts, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, the South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition, the South Dakota State University Foundation, Farm Credit and The Nature Conservancy.

### **Holistic Management Tour in the Black Hills National Forest**

Growing awareness of the role we play in our environment is demonstrated through a decision-making process known as "Holistic Resource Management" or HRM, or now just HM. Its creator, Allan Savory states that the greatest strength to this way of raising livestock is "that it leads us to see that we serve our own interests best when we account for

the environmental, as well as the social and economic, consequences of our decisions."

We invite you to join us for a tour to observe the effects of HM practices on public grasslands and forests. The Porcupine Range Allotment encompasses more than 9,200 acres of grasslands, pine forests and aspen stands on lands managed by Black Hills National Forest and South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. What? Governmental agencies that embrace "out of the feed box" resource management? You bet! For 22 years these public acres have been given the green light to be intensively managed to meet a host of natural resources objectives, in addition to providing for a sustained, privately-owned livestock commodity.

We will get out on the ground, talk to the livestock operator and his HM Consultant, view HM accomplishments, demonstrate monitoring methods and par-take in general discussion of grazing plans and holistic goals.

We will begin the tour at 7:00 am at the High School Parking Lot in Custer, (from Custer, go 1/4 mile east of the junction of Highways 16A and 89, turn south on Sydney Park Road and turn right on Wildcat Lane). Private vehicles can park free of charge, and we will shuttle you to and from the Porcupine Allotment. Due to the rugged terrain and need to reduce motorized vehicles, personal vehicles will not be allowed on the tour route. If you must leave early, arrangements can be made to park near the tour site.

Following the tour, at 1:30 pm there will be a catered Chuck Wagon lunch and further opportunity to chat. The Porcupine Allotment's HM Consultant will be available for additional questions. We will return to Custer by 5:00 pm.

Tour cost is \$40.00 and includes transportation to and from the site, mid-morning snack, lunch and handout materials. South Dakota Grassland Coalition Members get in at the discounted rate of \$20.00. Nowhere else during Black Hills tourist season will you find such valuable entertainment (and education)!

Registration is limited to 50. Advanced payment and registration are due July 8, 2011. Contact Kyle Schell at 605-68-6623 or [kyle.schell@sdstate.edu](mailto:kyle.schell@sdstate.edu) for more information.

The majority of the tour will be spent outdoors. Please wear sturdy boots, clothing for cool, wet or hot weather, sunscreen, sunglasses and hat and bring your camera and binoculars. Be prepared for typical afternoon thunderstorms. Portable toilets are located at the Allotment's Ranch House where the tour originates and ends.

Lodging accommodations are on your own. There are various motel, hotel, B&B, camping and horse-camping opportunities through private enterprises (<http://www.blackhillsbadlands.com/>, <http://www.custersd.com/index.php>).

Custer State Park offers camping (<http://gfp.sd.gov/state-parks/directory/custer/default.aspx>) or resorts ([www.custerresorts.com](http://www.custerresorts.com)).

Camping on Black Hills National Forest is through Reserve USA at 1-877-444-6777 or online at <http://www.recreation.gov>.

### **NCR-SARE Listening Sessions to be Held in the Area**

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) in cooperation with the North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, South Dakota Grassland Coalition, and Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition will be conducting public listening sessions at two locations in North Dakota and Nebraska to discuss increasing the sustainability of their agriculture.

The NCR-SARE listening sessions serve as an opportunity to bring together people with differing viewpoints within a community of place to share their perspectives of sustainability and agriculture. Reports resulting from the listening sessions serve as a respected information source on the status and prospects of sustainable agriculture and as such guide the Administrative Council that directs the NCR-SARE competitive grants and other programs.

NCR-SARE and the Grazing Lands Coalitions will partner with cooperative extension and community colleges to provide public meeting facilities in Mandan, ND and Nenzel, NE. The first session will take place on July 19th in Mandan, ND at Ken Miller's Ranch. The second session will take place on July 21st South of Nenzel, NE at the 3 Bar Cattle Co., owned and operated by the John Ravenscroft Family.

"Like nearly all those involved in production agriculture, ranchers depend on the sustainability of the resource they manage for their livelihood," explained Roger Gates of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition. "Maintenance of this extensive grassland resource, consisting almost entirely of privately owned land in the North Central region, is critical to the livelihood of these ranchers and the mutually dependent rural communities." These listening sessions are open to the public. For more information, and to participate either or both of the listening sessions, use the contact information for that site:

- July 19, 1:30pm CST (12:30 MST), Ken Miller's Ranch, Mandan, ND  
 Contact: Mary Stevens, Executive Director, Dakota Prairies RC&D, 701-250-4222 (office) or [dakotaprairiesrcd@gmail.com](mailto:dakotaprairiesrcd@gmail.com)
- July 21, 1:30pm CST (12:30 MST), John Ravenscroft Ranch, Nenzel, NE  
 Contact: Ron Bolze, Coordinator, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, 402 426 2033 (home office), 402 321 0067 (cell), [ron@nebraskagrazinglands.org](mailto:ron@nebraskagrazinglands.org)  
 Contact: Jay Jenkins, Extension Educator, Cherry County, Valentine, NE, 402 376 1850 (office), 800 657 2188 (toll free office), [jjenkins2@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:jjenkins2@unlnotes.unl.edu)

Since 1988, the NCR-SARE has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities through a nationwide research and education competitive grants program. The program, part of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, funds projects and conducts outreach designed to improve agricultural systems.



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### Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
State Technical Meeting	July 13		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
HM Tour in Black Hills	July 26	Custer, SD	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623
Doud's Ranch Tour	July 29	Midland, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Nebraska Grazing Conf.	Aug 9-10	Kearney, NE		
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@sdsu.edu](mailto:kyle.schell@sdsu.edu), (605) 688-6623