



GRASSROOTS

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Mellette County Pasture Walk

Even with some ideal rains this summer, projects on Kevin and LeAnna Green Ranch have been a challenge getting completed. But with every challenge lies an opportunity; and this is their philosophy. On July 20th, a pasture walk took place west of White River, on land being managed by Kevin and LeAnna Green. The South Dakota Grassland Coalition was encouraged by what was happening on the place and organized the pasture walk. Just a few years ago, land that had been sitting idle, was lacking management from a stewardship perspective. Locals must admit having seen plumes of Canada thistle fluff blowing off one of the fields. Mixed with the challenge of decreased soil quality due to years of farming and soil erosion, an opportunity presented itself which Kevin and LeAnna accepted. Nearly 39 people attended the Pasture Walk. Dave Steffen, consultant for the SD Grasslands Coalition, moderated the day. The afternoon started with Kevin and LeAnna providing the group with a painting of what their goals for the place are. We then traveled to the fields to show and discuss what conservation work had been completed to date. The quarter of cropland that once grew Canada thistle was seeded back to a multi-species of native grasses and forbs. Rain presented a challenge for timing of getting the seeding completed this spring; however, frequent rains since have provided the grass seedlings a start. Joe Nichols, with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lead the discussion, as they provided funding for the grass seed and provided the grass drill. (cont'd on pg.2)

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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>

Management of the grass establishment became a discussion among the group, with grazing, clipping and simply letting the grasses establish for two years being alternatives. As Pronghorn Antelope could be viewed on the field, the group moved to the next field. Further west, we were on another cropland field. Increasing soil organic matter and fertility will be the challenge faced here. Cover crops mixed with livestock grazing will be the management tool used, prior to seeding back to native grasses and forbs in four years. Lealand Schoon, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), presented a demonstration of soil structure and infiltration, comparing rangeland versus farmed soils. He described that cover crops are a great way to build soil fertility and shouldn't be confused with nurse crops. Cover crops can be seeded directly after harvest of wheat, corn or even millet hay. Greens objective, in this case, is to use the cover crop to provide grazable forage for livestock, while building soil organic matter, breaking up hardpan soils and increasing good soil bug populations. They no-tilled a "cocktail mix" of turnips, radish, peas, Sudan and pearl millet, into stubble that was left to manage soil moisture. The field will be fenced into paddocks with portable fencing materials to manage the herd precisely where they are needed. As the sun shown down, the topics warmed the group. We moved to the rangeland, next to the cover crop, which will provide access to the cropland field when it is ready to be grazed. Dan Rasmussen, local producer and member of the SD Grasslands Coalition, shared techniques of rangeland monitoring. Rasmussen emphasized that monitoring is valuable in the ranching business. Having the initial scientific monitoring as a basis is important, but then using simple producer-based monitoring determines whether you are moving toward or away from your goals. Gene McCormick, experienced fencer, who specializes in electric fencing, finished the field tour with the 'dos and don'ts' of temporary and permanent electric fencing. The pasture walk concluded with a good discussion among the group. The discussion is what differentiates pasture walk from a field tour. People learn by listening to each other's experiences. Topics that lead to the discussion were conservation

programs, by Mary Scott representing NRCS, beginner farmer/rancher programs, by Carol Hutchinson representing the Farm Service Agency and partnership opportunities, by Ernie Blacksmith representing Tribal Land Enterprises. LeAnna Green summarized the walk by describing how producers don't have to go it alone. There are strong agricultural partners available and establishing that network has made their goals attainable. Everyone who attended enjoyed a day full of information, shared ideas, new friendships and fellowship. Frankie Holt from White River catered an excellent evening meal. No one left hungry.

LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD IN SOUTH DAKOTA SEEKS NOMINEES

PIERRE, S.D. – July 7, 2010 – A new partnership between Sand County Foundation, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition is accepting applications for the \$10,000 Leopold Conservation Award, which honors South Dakota farmers and ranchers who demonstrate responsible stewardship and management of natural resources.

"We're extremely proud to partner with the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition to honor the tremendous, voluntary conservation work of landowners in South Dakota," said Dr. Brent Haglund, president of Sand County Foundation. "This award is a way to recognize farmers and ranchers across the state who are practicing responsible and innovative land, water and wildlife management in the spirit of Aldo Leopold's land ethic."

Given in honor of Aldo Leopold, the Leopold Conservation Award recognizes extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation inspires other landowners in their communities through these examples and provides a visible forum where leaders from the agricultural community are recognized as conservation leaders outside of the industry. In his influential book, *A Sand County Almanac (1949)*, Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own

and manage, which he called “an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.”

"The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association welcomes this opportunity to join forces with Sand County Foundation to shine a light on the innovative conservation practices and work that South Dakota farmers and ranchers do each day to enhance our environment," said Bryan Nagel, president of the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association.

The deadline for nominations is **September 24, 2010**. The 2010 Leopold Conservation Award recipient will be announced at the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association's Annual Convention in December.

“The health of South Dakota's landscape is dependent on hard-working farmers and ranchers across the state who dedicate themselves to ensuring that the land, water and wildlife are in better shape than when they found them,” said Jim Faulstich, vice chairman of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition. “We felt it was important to bring this award to South Dakota to recognize these outstanding efforts.”

For application information, please visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

ABOUT THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD

The Leopold Conservation Award is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. The award consists of an Aldo Leopold crystal and a check for \$10,000. In 2010, Sand County Foundation will also present Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

ABOUT SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation (www.sandcounty.net) is a private, non-profit conservation group dedicated to working with private landowners to improve habitat on their land. Sand County's mission is to advance the use of ethical and scientifically sound land management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and their rural landscapes.

Sand County Foundation works with private landowners because the majority of the nation's fish, wildlife, and natural resources are located on private lands. The organization backs local champions, invests in civil society and places incentives before regulation to create solutions that endure and grow. The organization encourages the exercise of private responsibility in the pursuit of improved land health as an essential alternative to many of the commonly used strategies in modern conservation.

ABOUT THE SOUTH DAKOTA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The South Dakota Cattlemen's Association (www.sdcattlemen.org) is a member-driven organization working to advance and protect the interests of all cattlemen. SDCA works to facilitate a profitable business climate and promote environmental stewardship.

ABOUT THE SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition (www.sdgrass.org) is a non-profit organization that seeks the voluntary improvement of grasslands for the long-term needs of the resource and its various species. The SD Grassland Coalition is dedicated to improving and maintaining the State's grasslands by informing and guiding grassland managers to make cost-effective and environmentally sound management decisions.

South Dakota Grazing School

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition will be hosting two grazing schools this year due to high demand last year. These will be back-to-back in the week of September 13-17. However, the schools are currently full for this year. If you or someone you know would like to attend the grazing school next year please contact Kyle Schell as soon as you can. If you would like more information about the grazing school, visit www.SDGrass.org and check out our brochure.



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Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
Grazing School	Sept 13-17	Chamberlain SD	Kyle Schell	605-688-6623

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, (605) 688-6623