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 multispecies 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)

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 Cattlemens 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 to 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.
Calendar of events:

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Grazing School</td>
<td>Sept 13-17</td>
<td>Chamberlain SD</td>
<td>Kyle Schell</td>
<td>605-688-6623</td>
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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