



GRASSROOTS

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VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2013

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New Beginnings

Sandy Smart

The New Year brings ideas about hope and starting over. We all had concerns about last summer's drought and unfortunately that persisted into the fall and winter. The January-March forecast shows equal chances for below, normal, and above normal precipitation for our region. Hopefully the spring (April-June) forecast will look better.

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition has made some new changes to their board of directors. Lyle Perman stepped down after serving on the board for 8 years. We greatly appreciate all your hard work and commitment to serving as a voice for grasslands in South Dakota. We wish you well as you spend more time helping your family ranch make the transition to support the next generation. In addition, Dale Paulson also stepped down after serving since 2011. We thank you for your contribution and wish you well as you spend more time with family. The board added two new directors, Doug Sieck from Selby and Bill Slovek from Philip. You can read more about these new directors in the new board member spotlight in this issue and ones to come.

The Coalition also has made a change to their coordinator position. Kyle Schell served as the coordinator for 5 years while he was employed at SDSU. In June, Kyle resigned from SDSU to take up ranching full time. Thank you Kyle for your service to the Coalition, your hard work and dedication were much appreciated. Since then, Dr. Sandy Smart from SDSU has served as the interim editor of "Grassroots" and with assistance from Dave Ollila and Judge Jessop they kept the Coalition activities going after Kyle's departure. We owe a great deal of gratitude to them, especially to Judge.

For more information or other events the **SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION** is involved with please feel free to contact Sandy Smart or visit the website: <http://sdgrass.org>.

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In fall of 2012, Sandy Smart worked with the Coalition and SDSU extension to develop a new plan to coordinate the Coalition's annual activities. This new plan was agreed to by SDSU extension last December and was officially approved by the board in January. The new plan includes more involvement from extension field specialists, NRCS, and other partners to assist the board of directors in implementing Coalition outreach activities. Sandy Smart will serve as the information coordinator and will work closely with Judge Jessop. Everyone agreed that this new approach strengthens the Coalition's true partnership with SDSU, state and federal agencies, non-governmental groups, and individuals across the state interested in protecting South Dakota grasslands and helping ranchers be more profitable. We hope this plan pays dividends in the coming year and we will evaluate it toward the end of this year.

Dave Steffen Recognition

The SDCG presented Dave Steffen with a plaque honoring him of his years of dedicated service at the Rancher's Workshop in White River, SD on January 15, 2013.



Dave Steffen (left) and Dan Rasmussen (right)

Dave has tirelessly served the SDGC since its inception. Dave was one of many early partners that helped form the Coalition. Dave has helped at SD Grazing School, the Bird Tour, and the Grazing Planning and Implementation Project, besides numerous ranching workshops and

pasture tours. Let's thank Dave along with the Board of Directors for this much deserved award.

New Board Member Spotlight

Doug Sieck



I grew up on a grain and livestock operation started by my great grandfather. The home place is a few miles west of Selby, SD. Meri and I live about ten miles south of Selby. My parents moved to Selby a few years ago but continue to offer advice and support. Daughter Danielle recently graduated

from USD and is a Deputy Clerk of Courts in Sioux Falls.

We run stock cows and yearlings as well as raising row crops and small grains. We like how the cattle and grain complement each other. The cow herd is mostly a black Angus base. The last couple of years the calves have spent the winter with their mothers and have been run on grass when yearlings. Both the stock cows and yearlings spend part of the summer grazing full season cover crops and winter on corn stalks. I started converting cropland back to grass and doing basic rotational grazing in 2002. Doses of grass management information from sources such as the Youth Range Camp in Sturgis while in high school and SDSU sponsored range tours in my neighborhood led me to attend the SDGC three day grazing school in Oacoma in 2007. A couple of years later an article in the coalition newsletter prompted me to attend a multi day HMI workshop in Chamberlain taught by Ian Mitchell-Innes. Since then I have been moving cattle every one to five days and putting up less hay.

Information I learned from individuals such as Terry Gompert, Jim Gerrish, Bud Williams, Dr. Tom Noffsinger, Allan Savory, members of

Kit Pharo's discussion group, the crew at Burleigh County Conservation district in Bismarck and a host of others continues to influence my decisions. The intensive grazing style learned at the HMI school has been the biggest leap toward making it profitable to graze former cropland. I believe by improving grasslands management we can increase beef production per acre similar to how crop production per acre has doubled compared to 25 years ago. As I continue using long rest periods and brief, intensive grazing periods, plant diversity is increasing and the cattle are eating plants they used to walk past. It seems this plant diversity creates a synergy which results in the plants feeding each other as well as the cattle. Native species are increasing. The soil is opening up more and allowing rain to infiltrate rather than run down the creek.

I am indebted to the SDGC for facilitating and sponsoring many of the speakers, schools, and workshops which have significantly changed how I manage livestock forage and wildlife habitat. When I was asked to consider being on the board I viewed it as an opportunity to partially repay the coalition. Somewhere down the road I will be looking back and telling folks how much I learned while serving.

Becoming a member of the SDGC will help the coalition continue to bring outreach and educational opportunities to you and your neighbors. Being a member also enables you to influence policy and regulation in Pierre and Washington to help insure our grasslands are preserved and improved for the next generation. Membership also enables me to network with others who share my views and concerns with respect to forage management.

New SDSU Range Faculty

Dr. Lora Perkins



I grew up in southern New Mexico about 40 miles from the Mexico border in the Chihuahuan Desert. I don't come from a ranch, but I grew up on the edge of town. I spent a good deal of my childhood out 'exploring' the desert on horseback and mostly on foot. My 'fort' was under a mesquite bush. My favorite time of year was late summer after the monsoon rains when the spadefoot toads would be around.

I am married with two kids. Brookings is a great place to live and raise a family. I obtained my B.S. degree in Environmental Science at New Mexico State Univ., M.S. degree in Botany and Plant Pathology from Oregon State Univ., and my Ph.D. in Natural Resource Management from Univ. of Nevada-Reno.

My responsibilities at SDSU are 50% teaching and 50% research. A portion of my research focuses on weeds. I am interested in how some plants can become so weedy or 'invasive' and dominate a site and other plants just poke along happy to be part of the community. If we can understand how some plants become so weedy, then we are much closer to figuring out how to prevent and control invasions.

I think that I am enthusiastic (a.k.a. goofy) enough to engage a freshman level class. I am working on getting our Introduction to Range Management a class that a student from any major can take for credit. This class is an overview of the ecology and management of our natural lands. The more that we get people to think about and appreciate natural areas, the better! By opening the class up to all majors, we

might be able to pull in students that otherwise might not ever be exposed to this sort of thing.

I am from areas where we are lucky to have 20% plant cover with a species richness of 4 species per square yard. I am amazed by how full and lush the SD grasslands are and I've only been here in a drought year! The diversity of species is especially interesting to me. I am excited to begin learning about and performing research in SD grasslands.

Pete Bauman



I was raised near Delano, MN on a small beef farm. I will have been married to Bridget for 15 years this July. We have four wonderful kids (Jake 12, Connor 9, Charlie 7, Avery 4). My dad is a 5th generation farmer from German descent. I come

from a very large 'clan' of Baumans in that region (86 first cousins and nearly 300 second cousins, and counting on my father's side). My Grandpa on my Mom's side was an orphan train kid, shipped out from inner city New York and landed with a few farm families in northern MN. Lots of hard work 'heritage' in my family. My parents taught us great values of discipline, respect, and being satisfied with what you've been blessed with. I hung around the local sportsmen's club a lot when I was a kid, and outside of working on our farm and that of relatives, this was my first real job. I was the 'setter' meaning I was the guy who had to put the clay pigeons on the throwing machine. You had to be organized, quick...and lucky if you wanted to keep your fingers. I still have my fingers, and I work every day to keep them!!

I attended SDSU beginning in 1992. Originally was attracted to Park Management and Environmental Management, but then quickly moved over to Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

From 1996 to 1998, I worked under Dr. Jon Jenks at SDSU and obtained a Master's in Large Mammal Ecology. My project dealt with the Wind Cave National Park elk herd.

My primary job responsibilities center on range management in eastern South Dakota. Nested within that is the responsibility to help rangeland owners and managers continue to find value in protection, use, and sustainability of our native rangelands as well as to find incentive to restore additional grasslands/rangelands. Outreach on range use and management is a key need here in the east. We actually have a fair amount of range, but we need to ensure its value to our culture and economic future. Beyond that, my vision is to work with all interested partners, regardless of historical relationships, to advance our knowledge and understanding of the value of South Dakota's grasslands. From a technical perspective, I'm able to bring some level of experience in regard to sustainable stocking rates, pasture production assessments, prescribed fire use, and native species restoration.

I am a passionate hunter, outdoorsman, and someone who respects the land. I'm firm in my belief that we have to respect and protect our natural resource assets. Of course we have to utilize them, but through this utilization, our key goal should be propagation and improvement....not degradation. The great thing about range management is that once the key drivers of health are identified.....conservation and profit fit nicely together. When conservation and profit fit, then we reap the benefits of a higher quality of life for ourselves and our kids.

Pete is a Range Extension Field Specialist in the Watertown Regional Center, 1910 West Kemp Ave, Watertown, SD 57201. He can be reached at 605-882-5140.

Value of Snow for Pasture and Rangelands

By Pete Bauman

The value of snow to your pasture and range management might not always be obvious, and for producers with year-round grazing objectives, deep snow can be a challenge. But during most years....and especially in a dry period such as this recent drought.... it's fairly easy to make the argument for the value of snow.

The obvious benefit of snow is the potential for liquid water. Most sources equate roughly 10 inches of 'normal' snow to about 1 inch of liquid water. The value of this water is dependent on when, where, and how the snow falls. Early or late season wet snows with moderate temperatures tends to be more available for soil infiltration that do the dry snows in the depth of winter.

When considering the value of snow in pastures, the key component is managing the vegetation to be able to take advantage of capturing blowing snow. To do this one must leave some residual cover/structure in the form of standing grass (see photo below).



Photo taken near Murdo, SD. To the left of the snow line is an area that burned in an August 2012 wildfire. To the right, grazed pasture with residual grass cover.

The residual vegetation and associated 'duff' layer will improve capture of early snow, leading to the snow and vegetation forming a layer of insulation for the soils, roots, insects, and microbial life that continues to function below ground. Also, if captured, these early snows may add a bit of soil moisture, preventing the deep freezing that can occur in dryer soils which can stress root systems. I was reminded of these points last week while attempting to pound t-posts. The areas that were heavily grazed or hayed in the fall had no grass to capture snow. These areas were barren and hard-froze and driving a t-post was difficult. Conversely, the areas with residual duff and grass had ample snow catch and the soils were noticeably softer, making driving the post much easier. These same areas will be more accepting of early spring melt water infiltration – a valuable asset to early season grass growth.

Aside from its insulation and plant growth benefits, maximizing your snow catch can pay dividends in pasture systems dependent on wetlands, dugouts, and dams for livestock water. How many pastures do we see where there has been an investment into the structure to hold water but little thought in regard to maximizing the potential for the water to make it the structure? Maximizing snow catch can add a significant amount of water to your livestock water systems.

Finally, snow can add to the overall health of the diversity of life in the pasture. Small mammals, insects, and plant life benefit from the blanket snow forms. In turn, supporting this diversity adds to the health of the pasture. If you've utilized spurge beetles in your operation, you'll want to critically think about maximizing your ability to retain adequate snow cover in order to insulate your beetle larvae from deep penetrating cold. This type of management can leave more money in your pocket come June because you'll have ensured the best chance of survival of your beetle population and can limit or eliminate your spray costs.

Last year was tough for many producers, and our pastures were definitely over-utilized. It's too late to do much to improve your current snow catch, but planning for snow catch can be another indicator that can help you determine when to move cattle off the range next year. If we stay dry next season, producers will need to consider the long-term impacts that their mid and late season grazing practices can have. Planning for snow catch can help you make the appropriate grazing decisions.

To learn more about overall water management, plan to join us at the **Watertown Winter Farm Show on February 5th at 10am** for a free seminar on pasture water management, alternative livestock water systems, and program options for cost shares and support. Contact Pete Bauman at 882-5140 for details.

5th National GLCI Conference

By Garnet Perman

The 5th National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Conference was held December 9-13 at Orlando Florida. Attending from SD were Lyle and Garnet Perman, Pat Guptill, LaVerne and Sue Koch, Stan Boltz, and Rod and Sharon Baumberger.

What or who is GLCI? The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) provides technical assistance on privately owned grazing lands and promotes the importance of grazing land resources. Established in 1991, GLCI is carried out through coalitions of individuals and organizations functioning at the local, state, regional and national levels. The South Dakota Grassland Coalition is a member of the consortium. A national conference is held every third year. Approximately 1,000 people from 38 states attended the conference in Orlando. The Floridians proudly explained that the U.S. beef industry started when Ponce de Leon landed on the Florida coast in 1521!

Keynote speakers included Dr. Temple Grandin, Dr. Fred Provenza, Colorado cattleman, Kit Pharo and Congressman Frank Lucas (OK), chairman of the House Ag Committee.

Grandin is well known for designing animal handling facilities. She is listed as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. She was diagnosed with severe autism as a preschooler and is a spokesperson for the Autism Society. She spoke about public perception of the animal industry and the importance of low stress handling. She stated, "Beef gets a bad rap. Dairy is much worse regarding handling than beef." She emphasized the importance of keeping noise, shadows and reflections to a minimum while handling animals.

Rep. Lucas explained that 23 of the 46 people on the Ag Committee have not worked on a farm bill before, making consensus difficult. Only 20% of the bill is concerned with production and conservation. With the national debt near 17 trillion and expected budget cuts, his main concern with the new Farm Bill is to maintain infrastructure to deliver programs when the economy picks up. He emphasized the importance of individuals and organizations developing relationships with their congressmen *and* their staffers.

Kit Pharo raises registered cattle in eastern Colorado. His mantra is sustainability via lower inputs. According to Pharo, for the past 40 years input costs have risen 5 times faster than cattle prices. He said, "Those that are quickest to adapt and change will be in the driver's seat. Those that will fail are too "busy" to come to meetings like this." He noted that in most industries innovation is accepted and implemented in 17-24 months. In the cow/calf business it takes 17-24 YEARS. His three keys to profitability include 1) planned rotational grazing, 2) matching the production cycle to forage resources and 3) matching cow size to forage resources. More information is available at www.pharocattle.com.

Dr. Fred Provenza is professor of animal behavior and management at Utah State University. He is internationally known for his studies on animal grazing behavior.

He spoke twice on “The Web of Life: How Behavior Links Soil and Plants with Herbivores and Human Beings”. Part of the presentation was about epigenetics, how expressed genes are influenced by environment, which he related to people and animals and eating choices. He said, “ A developing organism's prenatal experiences influence food and habitat preferences in many taxa from earthworms to humans. His presentation was very technical, but very interesting and worth learning more about.

Concurrent sessions of workshops were offered for two days. Lyle Perman presented “Managing Three Billion Gallons of Water” about water management at one session for the Central states. Lyle and I also gave a presentation on the SDGC mentorship program. The other workshops we attended offered much food for thought and included lively question and answer segments.

The SDGC sponsored a booth with information about the organization. The Grassland Conservation Planner for 2013 and hot pink grazing sticks were much in demand!

Several posters from SD were displayed: Stan Boltz, *Impact of Management and Invasive Species on Dynamic Soil Properties*, Pat Guptill, *Management of Intensive Grazing Solution in SD*, Mindy Hubert, *Natural Resource Management Training for Real Estate Agents*, and Lyle Perman, *Birds at Home on the Range: The SDGC Bird Watching Tour*.

One highlight was an optional tour to Forever Florida, a family owned and operated 4700 acre ranch and wildlife preserve in Central FL. The ranch raises Charolais and traditional Florida “Cracker” cattle and horses on 1200 acres. The rest of the land is an ecopark with alligators, snakes, wild pigs and native grassland and palm

and pine forests. An equine educational center located at the ranch uses the Cracker horses for equine-assisted psychotherapy and to teach other groups such as corporate leadership groups or athletic teams about decision making and interaction styles.

The conference was well organized, educational and a great opportunity to share ideas with other ranchers and land managers from across the U.S.!

December 2013 Road Show/Annual Meeting

We are looking for ideas from you about what speaker(s) and/or topic you would like to see us have in our December 2013 Road Show/Annual meeting.

Please contact any board member, Sandy Smart or myself with your suggestions. Thanks.



Sandy Smart
Box 2170, ASC 219, SDSU
Brookings, SD 57007

Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Watertown Winter Farm Show	Feb 5	Watertown, SD	Pete Bauman	605-882-5140
HRM Workshop/ Josh Dukart	Feb 27-28	Pierre, SD	Ruth Beck	605-773-8120
NRCS State Technical Meeting	Feb 12	Huron, SD	Kathy Irving	605-352-1205
Bird Tour	June 14-15	Montrose, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
SD Grazing School	Sep 10-12	Oacoma, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Sandy Smart, SDSU Box 2170, Brookings SD 57007, alexander.smart@sdstate.edu, (605) 688-4017