



GRASSROOTS

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Grassland Coalition Update

There has been a lot happening with the South Dakota Grassland Coalition and its members since the last time this newsletter went out. First of all we had our Jim Gerrish workshop series across the northern half of South Dakota. This was an excellent event and we had the opportunity to see a lot of you guys out there. Thank you for coming and we hope you enjoyed that workshop series. The Board of Directors was so satisfied with that event that they would like to do another one just like it next year and change the speaker and locations. If anyone has any suggestions for speakers next winter, please contact me (Kyle Schell) with them. I also wanted to let all of you know that I have taken a different position within the SD Cooperative Extension Service. I am the Range Field Specialist out of Rapid City. My responsibilities with this new job will be similar to my old job so I will continue to serve as the coordinator SDGC. Lastly I wanted to let you know that during our annual meeting in December, we had one of the founding members of the SDGC retire. Lavern Koch was involved in the development of the SDGC in 1998 and has served on the board ever since. He served as the president for a number of years during that time as well. Thank you Lavern for all you have done for this organization! Lavern's vacant seat on the board was filled by Dale Boydston of New Underwood. I look forward to working with Dale and the rest of the Board this year.

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>

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Setting Goals/Decision Making

By: Garnet Perman

Now is the time to research and plan for changes you might like to make in your operation this year. We asked several of the mentors listed under Setting Goals/Decision Making for their top five bits of advice and compiled this list.

#1. A mission statement gives focus to the planning process. All short and long term goals should reflect that statement. The people that have one feel this is most important. Jim Faulstich thought the idea was silly to begin with, but strongly advocates having one now. "It keeps you from getting caught up in short term trends," he said.

If your operation doesn't have a mission or vision statement, Dave Steffen recommended answering the questions, what do you want your land, family and finances to look like long term? "Answer all three and you have a vision statement," said Steffen.

#2. Record keeping is the workhorse of the planning process. Lyle Perman runs a financial balance sheet every January 1. He said, "We've been slow in agriculture to adopt business practices that most large businesses use." Debt to asset ratios, net return on assets and the amount of working capital available show the success or failure of your decision making.

Ed Blair tracks around 20 facets of their family Angus enterprise such as haying, machinery, bull sales, family living, etc. "Over time, it establishes a trend line, so you can see losses or gains," he said. He uses that information to establish a budget for each category. Both Blair and Perman use Quicken to track and analyze financial data.

Production data is also important. Blair's son uses Excel to keep production records on their cattle herd. Steffen keeps pasture monitoring and grazing records and reviews them as well as the COCORAHs rainfall records early in the year to determine what should happen in certain pastures. He recently starting using the DIMA database for tracking transects, clipping data and utilization rates. The program down loads to Microsoft Word and is supported by USDA and Dept. of Interior agencies. Contact your NRCS for more information.

#3. Once armed with the pertinent information, start setting goals, both short and long term. Write them down in detail. Ask yourself, do I have the time, money and resources to do this? Does it fit with our vision?

Steffen builds a grazing plan on an Excel spreadsheet, and then marks the calendar when he wants to implement certain goals, such as checking a pasture that had a Canada thistle problem last year.

#4. COMMUNICATE with family, hired help and business associates. Blair Brothers includes two brothers, their sons and four wives. The men talk on a daily basis, but meet intentionally on at least a weekly basis. Several times a year, the wives are also included in a formal business meeting. Faulstich emphasized the importance of making sure the people you do business with such as the banker, vet, mineral consultant, etc. understand and approve of your vision.

#5. Educate yourself. Perman noted that many occupations mandate continuing education. Read the GC newsletter. Go on a bus tour or to a seminar. Travel on your own and be sure to take your wife! Talk to your neighbors. Pay attention to consumer trends. Bill Aeschlimann and his son started their certified natural lamb program after realizing that the diversity in nearby Sioux Falls provided an upscale market.

Check out the resources. Your local NRSC has a number of tools and programs available to help you improve your land management. SDSU Extension is another good resource. Ask other producers what they find helpful.

Embrace technology. Learn how to run computer programs and find information on the Internet. Smart phones help Blair Angus use their time wisely. Ed uses his to look for machinery and parts. Chad has the herd records on his. Aeschlimann's market bum lambs on Craig's List.

In addition to Lyle Perman (649-7629), Dave Steffen (775-9112), Bill Aeschlimann (238-5869), Jim Faulstich(852-2622) and Ed Blair(347-1180), other mentors for Goal Setting and Decision Making include Dan Rasmussen (344-2250), and Larry Wagner (894-4448).

Leopold Award Nominations Open

Sand County Foundation, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition are accepting applications for the \$10,000 Leopold Conservation Award, which honors South Dakota landowners who demonstrate responsible stewardship and management of natural resources.

"The past two award recipients, the Doud and Mortenson families, have built a strong tradition of sustainable agriculture, but they aren't the only

families doing exceptional work for natural resources in South Dakota,” said Brent Haglund, president of Sand County Foundation. “We look forward to honoring more innovative farmers and ranchers, like the Douds and Mortensons, who are committed to the enhancement of South Dakota’s landscape.”

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.”

For application information, please visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org. Nominations must be postmarked by March 9, 2012 and mailed to SDCA at 215 E. Prospect, Pierre, SD 57501. The 2012 Leopold Conservation Award recipient will be announced at the South Dakota Cattlemen’s Association’s Annual Convention in December.

Janet Ortley Retires! Congratulations!

Janet L. Ortley, State Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) retired on December 31, 2011, after more than 32 years service. She began her career in 1979 working as a soil scientist in several locations throughout South Dakota. She was promoted to area soil scientist for the Mason-Dixon target area in Maryland, then, to district conservationist in Indiana. While there, she was promoted to area conservationist where she served for several years before returning in March of 1995 to lead NRCS in her native state of Pennsylvania. In 2001, she was appointed State Conservationist for South Dakota.

Ortley served her entire Federal Civil Service career with the NRCS. She worked with many partners, conservation groups, state and federal agencies, universities, and private land owners to help improve and protect our natural resources. She has been recognized with numerous awards during her career; including Outstanding Performance Awards, Special Achievement Awards, and was featured in a national magazine called “Women in Natural Resources.”

Ortley received a USDA Individual Honor Award “For public service in leading and promoting

partnerships that support USDA cost-cutting initiatives and natural resource management,” and a USDA Team Honor Award for supporting the President’s Management Agenda. Most recently, several conservation partners in South Dakota honored Ortley for improving communications and her commitment to working with partners through a Gubernatorial Proclamation declaring December 31, 2011, as Janet Ortley Day in South Dakota.

Ortley stated, “South Dakota is blessed with a very strong conservation partnership. “ She wishes their continued success as they work with South Dakota producers and landowners to conserve our abundant natural resources; keeping our agricultural industry strong and viable long into the future.”

Note from Newest Director: Dale Boydston

As mentioned earlier Dale Boydston of New Underwood, SD is the newest director on the board of directors filling Lavern Koch seat. I asked Dale to write a note that we could put newsletter introducing him to the rest of the membership. – *We currently manage the ground I grew up on north and south of New Underwood. Our goal is to be the best stewards we can be, and to help ensure the success of generations to follow. For the past fifteen years we have been busy converting a successful dairy and grain farm into a rotationally grazed beef operation. We started by installing pipelines and water tanks throughout the entire place, and planting back all of the farm ground. Geography dictates that the pastures be managed as three different cells. We rotate through a total of 27 different pastures, which are further reduced with electric wire depending upon time of year, class of livestock, forage need and availability. Several years ago, our neighbors to the east, Lavern and Sue Koch, invited us to attend a local Bootstraps meeting. Our involvement with the Bootstraps Program opened up many avenues of information sharing with fellow members across western South Dakota and the staff from SDSU and NRCS. We currently are enrolled with the Conservation Stewardship Program and have benefitted from EQIP programs as well. Having been involved in the Grassland Coalition since its inception as a member, I am looking forward to contributing to its continued success. My goal is to continue to reach out to grass managers and to help strengthen the organization through new memberships.*



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Calendar of events:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
Range Camp	June 4-6	Sturgis, SD	Tate Lantz	605-343-1643

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Kyle Schell, SDSU-WRAC 1905 Plaza Blvd, Rapid City, SD 57702, kyle.schell@sdstate.edu, (605) 394-2236