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Grassroots: The Other Side of Disaster Follow Up

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 3

APRIL 2014

The Other Side of Disaster: A Huge Thank You by Jim Faulstich

Every time the weather forecast predicts snow moving into the area, I think back to early October, 2013, and the devastating storm, Atlas, that rocked western South Dakota. Sure, we've seen weather events, such as the 2012 drought move into South Dakota and cause more dollars of damage in its wake than Atlas did, but I've never seen anything so short-term be as brutal for those producers that were affected.



Jim Faulstich, Chair SDGC

It's rather difficult to see the silver lining around a dark cloud like Atlas, and yet, look at the tremendous outpouring of contributions and assistance that were made in a time of need. The South Dakota Grassland Coalition (SDGC) board of directors searched for a way that the coalition could help. The concern was, that we wanted to offer some long-term direction to help people stay on the land, in business, and hopefully keep their business as well as the grass they manage right side up. Because of the value that a number of the SDGC board of directors received from taking the Ranching For Profit School, the obvious choice was a presentation from David Pratt with Ranch Management Consultants, IF WE COULD RAISE THE FUNDS!??

Here's where the "THANK YOUS" start, and I hope I don't forget too many. The first one goes to Dave Pratt, who obviously shared our concern and donated his speaking fees, as did the people from his Executive Link group that assisted him. What a generous step forward to help people in need by Dave and the people that assisted him. One of our goals was to put the seminar on free of charge. And, thanks to fantastic support, and generosity by businesses and individuals from across the state that donated funds, we were able to furnish everything, including meals, for the event. These sponsors are recognized in this newsletter. Please thank them when you have the opportunity. Of course, thank you to the participants for attending and we hope you were able to go home with a sense of direction, new ideas, and confidence to go forward. And last but not least, thanks to the board, coordinators, and partners of the SDGC, for the many hours and effort it took to make the event a success. My hat goes off to each and everyone that contributed in any way. I have to tell you, I'm proud to chair an organization that was dedicated to making a needed event such a success.

Thank You Continued on Page 2

Thank You continued

This newsletter is a tribute and a thank you to the people that endured Atlas, and those that helped. We hope you enjoy the follow up to the event, and hope you have a successful 2014. We also invite you to become a member of the SDGC and join us in moving an organization forward that is concerned with the “big picture” of what takes place on the landscape of South Dakota.

On behalf of the board of the SDGC
Jim Faulstich, Chairman

Thank You from the Entire Board

Dear Sponsors

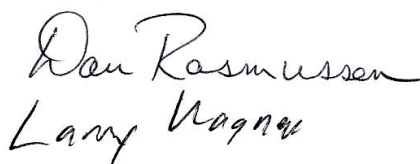
The South Dakota Grassland Coalition wishes to express its sincere gratitude for your generosity in helping to sponsor our latest seminar “The Other Side of Disaster” by Dave Pratt.

The activities of the coalition would not be possible without your support. Your donation allowed the coalition to provide over 150 attendees with thought provoking, real life solutions for their individual operations. Our belief is that this information could very well mean the difference between selling out and being able to continue to farm and ranch in western South Dakota.

It is important for you to know that your donation made a difference. Thank you

Sincerely,

South Dakota Grassland Coalition Board of Directors



Dave Pratt on “The Other Side of Disaster”

by Garnet Perman

David Pratt is CEO of Ranch Management Consultants which developed the Ranching for Profit School. The principles guiding RMC were developed by Stan Parsons and Allan Savory as they worked with clients in South Africa. Their ‘holistic’ approach to ranch management combined grazing management and animal husbandry with business management. Parsons started Ranch Management Consultants in 1983. Pratt, who has a background in extension, started teaching RFP in 1992. He and his wife purchased Ranch Management Consultants in 2001. He is considered a leading US authority on holistic ranch management.

The South Dakota Grasslands Coalition invited Pratt to do a program aimed at helping the ranchers who were impacted by the early season blizzard last October. The two day seminar was free to the first 200 registrants. Pratt said, “I was flattered to be asked. It was an honor to work with the participants.” Pratt asked several Ranching for Profit alumni from four different states to help facilitate the program. “Everyone I asked jumped at the opportunity to help the ranchers attending the workshop. Some of them traveled for several hundred miles at their own expense to help. It was a nice reminder of just how good some people can be.

Pratt and his team presided over a two day seminar, a much shorter time frame than his usual week long Ranching for Profit school. Underlying emotion related to the storm was also a departure from the norm for him, but he was impressed with people’s attitudes. “It was clear that participants were ready to roll up their sleeves and get on with rebuilding,” he said. “One young couple who had lost nearly all of their cattle in the storm told me, “We just need to figure out our next step.” Pratt wrote in his RFP blog, “Failing to plan is planning to fail. It is not enough to react in the moment. We need a plan to prepare for, respond to and recover from the significant risks we face.” The first day of the seminar Pratt presented risk management strategies and tactics built around those three basic themes. How each area affects the land, animals, money and people involved in a ranching operation is considered. Having a proactive plan in place with specific triggers and actions for the perils ranchers will inevitably face is a constructive way to deal with disaster.

The second day, the attendees were divided into groups called peer advisory boards. Pratt figures the audience represented over 5000 years of collective wisdom and experience. Ranchers, Extension, NRCS and other industry people were part of each board. Each board spent time analyzing the individual ranches represented at the table with the end goal being an action plan that they could take home and implement.

Disasters as widespread as Atlas are rare. The most similar situation Pratt had previous experience with was major flooding that affected a number of ranches near his California home. In visiting with climate scientists, Pratt has been told that the unusual is becoming more usual. “Whether it is fire, drought, floods or storms, they are saying to expect the unexpected. I think that is very good advice,” said Pratt.

In part due to the response from the After the Disaster seminar, a Ranching for Profit school has been scheduled in Rapid City for January 18-24, 2015. Registration information is available at www.ranchmanagement.com.



Ranching for Profit Administrative Staff
Top row: Kathy and Dave Pratt, Sally Silvia
Bottom row: Judy Katona and Robyn Diles

Garnet Perman is a freelance writer and ranches with her husband, Lyle, near Lowry, SD

Reactions from Attendees by Garnet Perman



Attendees at the Dave Pratt workshop (Photo by Pete Bauman)

One hundred twenty producers plus people from the industry attended the “Other Side of the Disaster” seminar. In addition to Pratt’s presentation, producers were able to participate in a brainstorming sessions with other producers. The goal of the seminar was for those who attended to complete action plans that will help them move forward in their operation.

Most of those attending were from western South Dakota. Many were impacted by some degree by the monster blizzard that swept through the area last October. Even those who didn’t lose livestock were able to take home something to use in their operation.

Dave and Lisa Neuharth and their son and daughter-in-law, Levi and Crystal Neuharth of Ft. Pierre fared well through the storm, but are in the process of working through a generational transition, which was one of the topics addressed in the seminar. They went home with ideas gleaned from other producers dealing with transition as well as some specific questions for their attorney. Since the seminar, they have had weekly family meetings that keep everybody communicating and aware of what’s happening in the operation. “It was a good family experience,” said Dave.

Al Wind of Newell is no stranger to Pratt’s sustainable ranching philosophy having worked on ranches that implemented the Ranching for Profit model and twice attending the school himself. He and his wife, Simone, experienced “minimal” losses from Atlas because they implemented some of what they learned during a November 2008 blizzard. While much of Pratt’s presentation was familiar, the moisture chart intrigued him and he always finds the group brainstorming sessions worthwhile. “The type of land manager that type of meeting attracts is always a positive. There are some smart people there,” he said.

Jill and Hewey Clemmons started ranching near Owanka in 2010. Atlas dealt these beginning ranchers a tough blow, as they lost 40% of their registered herd. Jill took home some more communication techniques to add to what is already one of their operation’s strengths. She also gained some new insights from the group analysis of their operation. “Just lots of input from unbiased, experienced industry people,” she said. Clemmons is finding more good ideas in Pratt’s book, *Healthy Land, Happy Families and Profitable Businesses*, which was given to each participant. “It was a great seminar. I’m glad I went,” she said.

Garnet Perman is a freelance writer and ranches with her husband, Lyle, near Lowry, SD

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Food Donations

Extra food from the Two-day Pratt workshop did not go unused. Dale Boydston, SDGC Board Director, made sure that the extra food could be donated. Dale worked on donating the food to three charity organizations in the Rapid City area. These included: Working Against Violence, Inc. (Women's and their children shelter), Pennington County Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center, and Cornerstone Rescue Mission.





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

Calendar of Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact Person	Phone
Ag Day Festival	March 22	Sioux Falls	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Range Camp	June 3-5	Sturgis	Tate Lantz	605-390-8049
			Dave Ollila	605-394-1722
Bird Tour	June 13-14	Union Center	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Rangeland and Soils Days	June 24-25	Chamberlain	Tina DeHaa	605-734-5953 ext 3
			Dave Ollila	605-394-1722

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