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Grassroots

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New Board Member Spotlight: Bart Carmichael

I grew up in New Underwood, SD. I spent most of my youth there as my Dad was in the Air Force and stationed at Ellsworth AFB. When Dad retired from the Air Force he bought a dairy. I didn't like it much, but I learned a great deal about animal genetics.

I am married to Shannon and we have four children – Kenny works in building construction and lives in Brookings, Karisa is a freshman at Dakota Wesleyan, Kaeli is a junior at Faith High School, and Kyler is a freshman at Faith High School.



Bart Carmichael, Faith, SD.

I moved to Faith onto my grandparents place as soon as I graduated from high school and married shortly after that. Our ranching operation purpose is to raise low input Angus seedstock, use cell grazing to improve the land and give cattle consistent nutrition. We have a year round grazing plan.

Genetics are key. I saw how my dad would not accept fixing problems, instead breeding them out. I have relied on local expertise from the NRCS office to help refine our grazing plan. I also have learned a great deal about the importance of grazing from different speakers and workshops that the Coalition has put on over the years. Monte Howrey helped me build my genetics, not just cull. Wayne Berry had a very positive influence on helping me understand grazing better. Our family relies on what God has put in place and we are discovering ways to steward those resources that build our ranch business and serve our customers.

I believe that the grasslands of South Dakota are our biggest asset in the cattle industry. The best cattle in the nation come from this region and it's because of our high quality grass and soil. I decided that I wanted to become a board member of the SDGC because of the positive role that the Coalition played in my own education as well as that of many others. The SDGC is well rounded. Membership is very important because of what the Coalition is doing. We all can learn together to help spread the message of conservation and preserve our future in grassland agriculture.

A Short History of the SDGC by Garnet Perman

Government policy drives trends in agriculture. Did you know the push to manage grazing lands nationwide started as a response to the 1985 Farm Bill? That bill provided little in the way of technical assistance and education for owners and managers of non-federal grazing lands. Range specialists with the Soil Conservation Service (now the NRCS) and producers met for the first time in Texas in 1988. The National Grazing Lands Initiative was established after a second meeting was held in Montana in 1991.

South Dakota got on board with organizational meetings in May and Sept of 1997. The Bootstraps program had already generated interest in range management and provided impetus for a state wide grazing organization. The national GLCI model had representatives from different ag organizations and government agencies on the board. South Dakota decided early to be grassroots producer led and driven, which has proved to be a plus for the organization. In January 1998 a joint meeting with the new Grassland Coalition and SDNRCS personnel set the course for the new organization. The initial board members, all producers passionate about grassland management shepherded the new SD Grassland Coalition through those first years. Serving on that first board were Lavern Koch, New Underwood; Odeen "Skee" Rassmussen, Belvidere; Ron Ogren, Wessington Springs; Mark Sip, Geddes; Dave Fischbach, Faith; Larry Stomprud, Mud Butte; and Ron Mackaben, New Underwood. Agency personnel who were instrumental in helping the start-up were Rod Baumberger, Dave Schmidt, Wayne Vandervorst, Dave Steffen (all NRCS) and Kurt Buer, Black Hills RC&D. The board expanded to nine members in 2015 and still consists of volunteer producers. Coalition membership is 540 as of Dec. 31, 2015.

Membership recruitment and funding were perpetual problems in those first years. Solutions came in the form of an EPA Section 319 Clean Water Act grant and partnerships with conservation oriented organizations. The SDNRCS has been a strong partner from the beginning. Working relationships with the Society for Range Management and SD Cattlemen's are also original to the SDGC. Other governmental, educational, agricultural, wildlife and environmental groups and businesses have since joined the SDGC in sponsoring various activities with the goal of keeping livestock on the landscape.

As educational opportunities increased, so did membership. A newsletter was initiated, a WEB presence established, and pasture walks and tours implemented early on. The 319 grant funds the SD Grazing Management and Planning Project (GMPP). First received in 2001, it focuses on improving South Dakota's grasslands for grazing, wildlife, water quality and research purposes. Judge Jessop became project coordinator at that time. The program offers help in planning grazing strategy for individual producers and promotes conservation education for producers and the public. The first grazing school was held in 2003. The first Birds: At Home on the Range tour was held in 2007, although other informal bird tours were organized earlier. Well-known speakers and innovative grass managers have been brought in. The SDGC was instrumental in bringing the Aldo Leopold Conservation Award to SD, with Rick and Marlis Doud the first recipients in 2010.

SDGC History Continued on Page 3

SDGC History Continued by Garnet Perman

At first, the annual meeting was held in conjunction with the SD Cattlemen's annual meeting. Eventually the Coalition brought a speaker in for their own event to help attract members. The Winter Road Tour which starts at the annual meeting and progresses through the state began in 2011. A "Friend of the Prairie" award to recognize those working in public roles to ensure stewardship of the state's natural resources was established in 2014. The work done by the SDGC was recognized with the 2006 EPA Region 5 Environmental Achievement Award. In 2007 the USDA-NRCS presented the SDGC with the Excellence in Conservation Award.

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

Jim Faulstich honored with Grassland Legacies Award by Garnet Perman



Jim Faulstich received a bronze sculpture in honor of his work for conservation at the annual meeting of the SD Grassland Coalition on December 17. Faulstich has been on the board since 2000, and has been chairman for a number of those years. His determined encouragement and efforts to develop relationships between private and public entities has helped the SDGC become a respected voice in agricultural and conservation conversations within SD and beyond.

Pictured (left to right) are Jeff Zimprich (State Conservationist, NRCS), Barry Dunn (Dean of the College of Ag & Bio, SDSU), Carol Faulstich, Jim Faulstich, Lyle Perman, and Heather Johnson (Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, USFWS).

The sculpture "Grassland Legacies" was commissioned to sculptor Verne Friesen of Henderson, NE, who designed the sculpture received by the national winner of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's Environmental Stewardship Award. It features a man and two children inspecting plants commonly found on native prairie. A pull out inscription reads "To Jim Faulstich and Daybreak Ranch for their tireless efforts supporting grassland stewardship and a conservation legacy for future generations."

Lyle Perman presented a very surprised Faulstich with the award. On hand for the presentation were Heather Johnson, Regional Coordinator Partners for Fish and Wildlife; Jeff Zimprich, SD Natural Resources Conservation Service; Dr. Barry Dunn, Dean of Agriculture at SDSU, and Jim's wife, Carol. Faulstich said, "I appreciate being recognized, but the fact is that I don't do this myself. Partners both from organizations and individuals make things happen." Befitting Faulstich's emphasis on forging partnerships, several of those partners and friends helped sponsor the award.

Dave Pratt Highlights 2015 Annual Meeting and Road Show by Pete Bauman

The South Dakota Grassland Coalition has a history of bringing in some great regional and national speakers. The 2015 Annual Meeting and Road Show was no exception, held during the week of December 14th – 19th. This year's platform featured Dave Pratt, owner of Ranch Management Consultants and coordinator of the popular 'Ranching For Profit' school and 'Executive Link' program. Throughout the week, Pratt delivered his '3 Secrets of Profitability' to nearly 200 attendees in audiences in Belle Fourche, Watertown, Ipswich, and Bison. The annual meeting was held on Thursday, December 17th at the AmericInn in Chamberlain with over 100 attendees. Pratt shifted his focus to discussing the realities of managing family as an integral part of the ranch business. Throughout the week, Pratt challenged his audiences to think critically about their assumptions on what the true measures of success and profitability really are. He discussed the need for every person in the operation to have a role, expectations, accountability, and input as well as the need for the operation to design itself around sound business practices. Pratt stressed throughout the importance of ensuring the operation is profitable with measures such as the true cost of family-employee wages, land costs, and other tidbits on sound business management.

Pratt's style is fairly unique, and he strives to create the correct learning environment to ensure his message is well received and to create the desired impact. As a testament to his dedication to the message, he completely re-arranged the audience seating both in Chamberlain and Watertown to better facilitate audience interaction. Unique communication used to engage the Chamberlain audience caught some off guard, but proved their value as Pratt discussed the need for everyone in the family business to learn how truly listen.

John Moes of Florence, South Dakota attended the Watertown event. Moes had not been a member of the Coalition prior and wasn't certain what kind of message Pratt would deliver. At the first break Moes commented on the morning session saying, "If I would have known it was going to be this good, I'd have brought my sons and my hired men along!!". Other attendees shared similar comments, stating how useful, practical, and applicable the information was. Shortly thereafter, Moes and his daughter signed up for Pratt's full 'Ranching For Profit' school to be held in Rapid City the week of January 17-23.

Pratt also recognized Coalition Coordinator Judge Jessop for his tireless work in organizing all the details of the road show, especially in the midst of the mid-week snowstorm that forced postponement of the Bison and Ipswich stops to Saturday. Pratt presented Jessop with a pocket knife to show his gratitude for all the work.

Pete Bauman is an Extension Range Field Specialist in Watertown, SD.

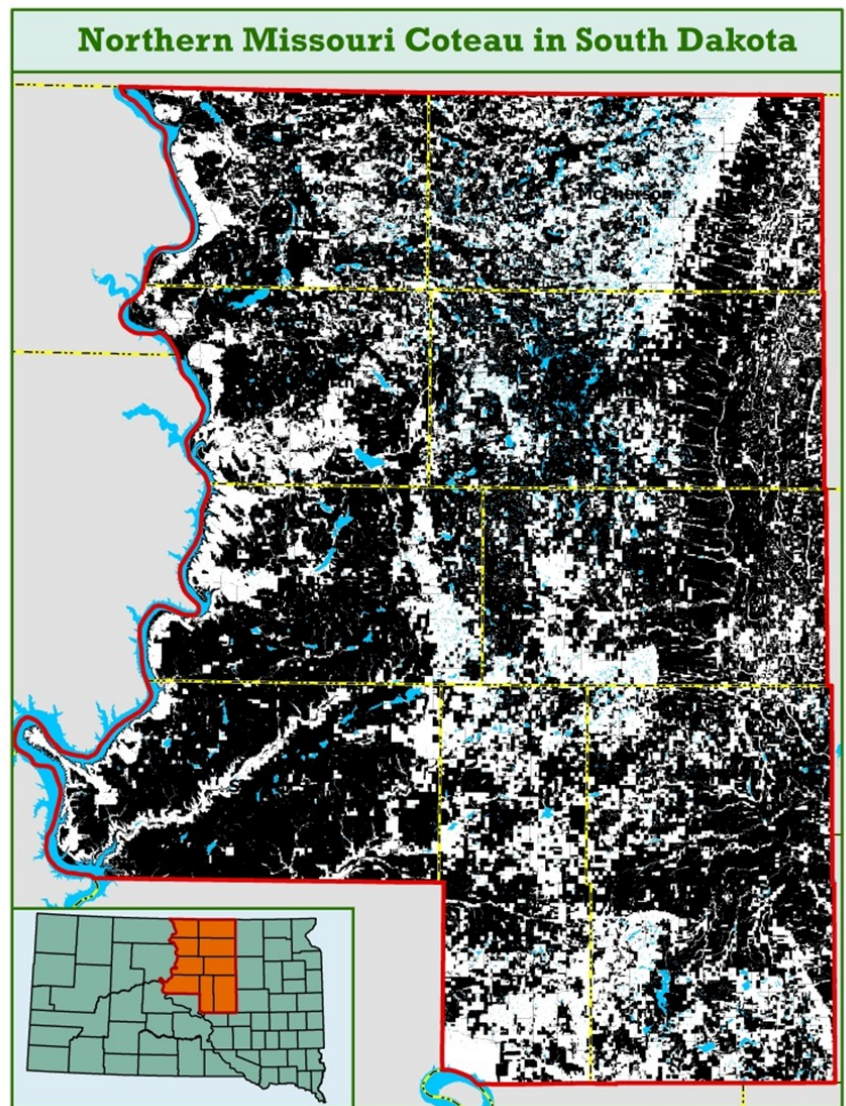


The Green Side UP - Native Grasslands: Where are they and why do they matter by Pete Bauman

You cannot be a member of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition for long without being exposed to the importance of grasslands. Grasslands are at the core of the organization, and healthy native grasslands are arguably the most important component of the entire grassland matrix. Similarly, you cannot be involved in any aspect of South Dakota's agriculture without exposure to the ongoing concerns regarding the reduction of grassland acres within our borders. Again, of all our grassland types, loss of our native grasslands strikes the most sensitive nerve among ranchers and conservationist alike.

While the grassland conversion debate rolls on, we here at SDSU have undertaken a project aimed at inventorying our remaining native grasslands. With the tremendous support of conservation-minded partner organizations such as the SD Grassland Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, SD Game, Fish, and Parks, SD NRCS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, and others, we hope to complete our work by the end of 2016.

What we find may or may not surprise us. To date, we have nearly completed the entirety of eastern South Dakota and a portion of western MN. At the time of press for this article, we have not yet completed final data cleanup for all landscapes, but we can report on a couple of key areas. Here's what we have found so far: Across 14 counties (approximately 5 million acres) of southwest Minnesota, roughly 400,000 acres of potentially native grasslands and woodlands remain equaling only about 8% of the entire area. Moving into South Dakota's 17-county Prairie Coteau region, we surveyed 5.5 million acres and found roughly 1.1 million acres of potentially native grasslands and woodlands remaining, representing only about 20% of the survey area. Within the 9 county Missouri Coteau region from Campbell and McPherson down to Sully, Hyde, and Hand counties we surveyed nearly 6 million acres and found slightly more than 2 million acres were potentially native grasslands, or about 35% of the region.



Extent of lands with no record of tillage history (white) compared with land with some type of proven disturbance (black) in South Dakota's Missouri Coteau region (Pete Bauman).

Native Grasslands Mapping Continued by Pete Bauman

How this data gets interpreted will be interesting. On one hand it's important to recognize that some regions appear to be in relatively better or worse shape relative to neighboring areas – this is not surprising. The worst example we found was Nobles County, MN where only 3.8% of the land remains as potentially native. The best was Roberts County, SD at 58.3%. However, the threat of native grassland loss is still present everywhere. For instance, Hyde County has about 50% of its native grasslands remaining, ranking it among the best we inventoried. But it is also speculated that Hyde County has suffered a greater percentage of native grassland loss over the last 15 years than most other counties in that region. Further, in the Minnesota example, only 26% of remaining potentially native lands are legally protected from future conversion. That sounds dismal, but we are not much better off in South Dakota, where only 25% of the Prairie Coteau's potentially native acres are protected along with only 24% of the Missouri Coteau. This is a stark reminder that the majority of the native grassland landscape remains at risk of future conversion to other uses. Therefore, private landowners and organizations like the South Dakota Grassland Coalition must continue to champion the importance of healthy native grasslands in South Dakota's agricultural economy.

As we continue to work our way across the state, we'll provide a full report on the status of acres on a county by county basis. Look for the next project update in the March issue of *Grassroots*.

Pete Bauman is an Extension Range Field Specialist in Watertown, SD.



Jim Gerrish Road Show Coming to South Dakota in February

The Coalition is kicking off 2016 in much the same way 2015 ended with yet another Road Show. Jim Gerrish will be coming to South Dakota the week of February 15th -18th. Gerrish is well known for his work on grazing and fencing systems and has a unique personality that always entertains and challenges audiences to think critically about their ranch operation. The February road show schedule is as follows: All days will run from 10 am – 3 pm. Free to members, \$30 for non-members. Lunch included. More to come.



Jim Gerrish,
American Grazinglands
Services LLC.

Gerrish Road Show Calendar:

Monday, February 15, Watertown, SD @ the Watertown Event Center/Ramkota
 Tuesday, February 16, Yankton, SD @ JoDean's Restaurant
 Wednesday, February 17, Ft. Pierre, SD @ AmercInn motel
 Thursday, February 18, New Underwood, SD @ New Underwood Community Center.

SDSU Research Update: Extending the Grazing Season by Sandy Smart

The soil health movement has really picked up steam over the past few years. A couple of key ideas central to the movement is keeping the soil covered, increasing plant diversity, and integrating livestock. You may have watched the recent SDSU Extension “Contours” show on South Dakota Public TV that featured Anthony Bly, Barry Dunn, Al Miron, Doug Sieck, and Jeff Zimprich speaking about soil health. If you missed it you can find it on iGrow.

The increased attention to soil health has brought in new interest in research funding. Dr. Derek Brake (Department of Animal Science) and I have started advising two new graduate students to work on questions related to cattle grazing cover crops and crop residues to extend the grazing season. Brooke Brunsvig just finished a trial in Brookings where we used weaned heifers to graze a mixture of annual grasses and brassicas (see photo to right). This work was supported in part by a graduate student SARE grant that Brooke received under Dr. Elaine Grings’ guidance (now with USA-AID).



Graduate student Brooke Brunsvig and Dr. Elaine Grings standing in a fall cover crop in Brookings (Photo A. Smart).

In the fall cover crop grazing trial we set up three stocking rates to test the effects of diet selection and animal performance. The heifers on the low, moderate, and high stocking rate gained 1.50, 1.33, and 1.27 lbs per day over the 48 day trial. The preliminary animal performance results suggest that pushing animals to consume most of the vegetation will hurt their performance and leaves less residue on the surface. The diet sampling and nitrogen cycling data are yet to be analyzed. Further questions regarding how the next year’s crop yields based on these levels of grazing will be interesting to evaluate.

Another graduate student that Derek Brake, Dwayne Beck and I are advising is Erin Beck (no relation). We are evaluating the concept of how stocking density affects diet selection and animal performance grazing crop residues. Dwayne Beck is developing an automated cell grazing system, using the Howard Buffet Foundation grant, to make grazing simpler for crop producers. We just finished a fall/winter corn stalk grazing trial comparing strip grazing cows every three days to cows that had access to the entire field. We weighed and body condition scored the cows and took fecal samples to analyze diet quality. We don’t have the data analyzed yet but it was interesting to note that you could see evidence of corn in the fecal patties from the cows that striped grazed throughout the entire trial and no corn in the cows that don’t get moved toward the end of the trial.



Graduate Erin Beck weighing cows at Dakota Lakes Research Farm near Pierre (Photo A. Smart).

Future research questions will focus on evaluating animal performance, energy expenditures, diet selection, nutrient cycling, and impacts on future crop yields. This is an exciting time as we see the need for collaborative efforts between scientists in animal, range, soil, and agronomy disciplines.

Sandy Smart is a Rangeland Management Extension Specialist and Professor in the Department of Natural Resource Management at SDSU. He coordinates the USDA-SARE program for South Dakota.



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

Calendar of Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact Person	Phone
Society for Range Management	Jan 30 - Feb 4	Corpus Christi, TX	Sandy Smart	605-688-4017
Jim Gerrish Road Show	Feb 15-20	TBD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
NRCS State Tech Meeting	Feb 17	Huron	Kathy Irving	605-352-1205

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