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(not so) New Board Member Spotlight By Jeff Zimprich

I was raised on a small farm just south of Brandon, South Dakota. I have been married to my beautiful wife Kim for 38 years. We have three children, a son Zach and twin daughters; Alexandra and Andrea. All are married and they have blessed Kim and I with six amazing grandchildren, ranging from 8 years old to 9 months. Agriculture was a strong part of both Kim and my upbringing. I had a cousin, Tony DeToy, who taught me a lot about nature and I followed him into a career in conservation.



Jeff Zimprich joined the SDGC Board of Directors in January of 2021.

As stated earlier, the family farm is near Brandon SD. It is diverse with grasslands, some of which are native and never been broken, others restored, some cropland and natural areas along Beaver Creek that flows through the farm. The farm is being transitioned to a "healthier" operation from the grasslands to the soil. We are learning along the way and hope to share that journey with others.

I had an amazing 39 year conservation career with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. This career took me across the country on many farms and ranches who were on conservation journeys as well. I watched and observed them and learned so much from hundreds of conservation professionals and partners I was able to cross paths with. My guiding conservation principles are simple and easy to say but are very dynamic. "Take care of your natural resources, and they will take care of you". "The best answers to care for our resources, exist in natural landscapes and ecosystems"

Our grasslands are South Dakota's main ecosystem. We are a grassland state. These grasslands are part of the most threatened ecosystem in North America and likely in the world. These grasslands are what we need to observe and learn from, to regenerate our natural resources. They developed in our climate and formed our soils. They hold many of the answers we need to figure out. The importance of our grasslands make the mission of SDGC critical for all of us that live in and love South Dakota. I want to help continue this mission. SDGC has helped many land owners and land managers over it's 20 plus years it has existed. I believe all South Dakotans must know the value of our grasslands and why we need to protect and care for them. They provide us many benefits in return. If you live in South Dakota and understand the importance of grasslands to our state, you should want to be a member of this organization. It is not just for people who currently own or operate grasslands today. Grasslands need to be protected and cared for. That is what SDGC is about. Remember, the grasslands will repay us many fold.

The Green Side Up by Pete Bauman



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Partner Commitments are Key to Coalition's Expansion of Education Opportunities

The SD Grassland Coalition has grown substantially over the last decade with the generous support of partner organizations that share in the mission and vision of the Coalition. There have been many points of growth, but some key milestones are expansion of the board from 7 to 9 active producers, expansion of the staff from a single Coordinator (Judge Jessop) to the addition of an Education Coordinator (Dan Rasmussen) and a Communications Director (open at present), as well as expanded use of specialty contractors to assist with various grants, field events, and media promotions such as the annual planner and Amazing Grassland series.

Partner organizations have always supported the Coalition both financially and with staff time, but in recent year these partners have substantially increased their contributions on both fronts. For example, the NRCS has committed substantial financial and human resources to the Coalition's education efforts in recent years, supporting everything from grant funding to new staff to the annual planner to videos to expansion of education courses like the new Prescribed Fire Schools, Grassland Management School and the popular Ranch Consultants Follow-up program. There are many such examples involving other Coalition programs that rely heavily on partner staff time to enrich the Coalition's ability to deliver meaningful education opportunities.

Recent examples of partner organizations supporting the Coalition's mission are the new efforts in fire, grazing, and the ranch follow up and young producer education programs. Some of these programs are co-developed by board members working with agency staff while others rely on outside expert instruction. Still others rely heavily on partner agency staff persons to develop the curriculum and deliver the programs.

This year we were able to offer 2 prescribed fire trainings. The first was hosted by Doug Hansen at his ranch near Mitchell. This was the first time we'd taken the fire training onto private land. Although there were some logistical challenges, the school went very well and was mutually beneficial to both the students and our host, as our live fire exercises supported his range management objectives. The second school was held at the SDSU Oak Lake Field station in Brookings County.

In addition to the new fire schools, we also developed and hosted an Eastern Grazing School which was formatted after the traditional Grazing Schools but incorporated some key aspects of grazing management unique to the eastern part of the state. Our annual grassland restoration field tours associated with the Grassland Management School highlight ongoing learning over time as we re-visit sites that are going through the process of grassland recovery. On such site is the Carolyn Eck site near Garden City. This also has been an opportunity for partner organizations to step up and step in to the Coalition's educational platform.

It is important to take the time to recognize the individual staffers from these organizations and their personal contributions. So if you see staffers from NRCS, SD GFP, Audubon Dakota, US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, or other organization affiliated with the Coalition, don't forget to thank them for their service, as it often goes above and beyond what they are called to do under their normal job duties!!

SD Grassland Coalition's Nominee Wins 2022 Leopold Conservation Award

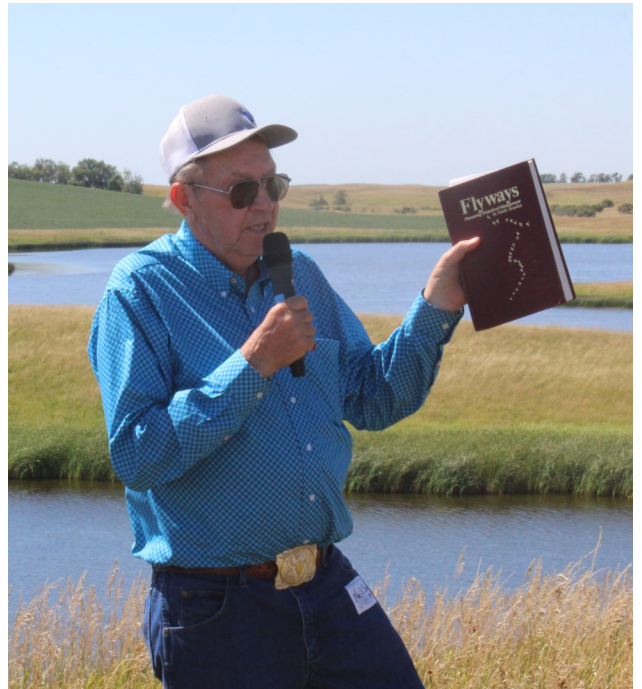
by Pete Bauman

The SD Grassland Coalition is responsible for coordinating the majority of the logistics for the annual SD Leopold Conservation Award winner's tour. While always enjoyable and informative, this year's tour was special because the Neil and Muriel Bien family were nominated by the SD Grassland Coalition!!

Jim Faulstich, current Vice-Chairman and former Chairman of the Coalition currently serves as the chairman for the Coalition's Leopold Award committee and has played an active role in bringing this award to SD over twelve years ago. At that time he challenged all conservation organizations in South Dakota to consider putting forth a deserving nominee for this prestigious annual award. Since that time, the Coalition has been active in all aspects of the award process, and occasionally the winners have been the Coalition's nominee.

The Bien Ranch nomination was a bit unique in that it was co-sponsored between the Coalition and the Society for Range Management. Dual nominations are not the norm, but in the case of the Bien Ranch, a co-nomination by these two organizations made great sense considering the long history of the Bien's with both organizations.

The Bien Ranch occupies a special place in eastern SD, lying at the northern tip of the Prairie Coteau with vistas several hundred feet higher than the surrounding prairie landscapes, offering spectacular views of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. With visits and stories highlighting iconic and captivating spots on the ranch with labels like 'Pleasant Peak', 'Devils Kitchen', and the "Legendary Wetlands", the tour guests were also continuously entertained by Neil Bien's stories of ranch life on the Coteau.



Neil Bien, presenting at the Leopold Ranch Tour. (Photo courtesy of Pete Bauman).



Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*) on the Bien Ranch located on the northern edge of the Prairie Coteau near Veblen,

Every Acre Counts by Cristin Weber



Devoting resources, creating new partnerships, and recognizing the potential impact on marginal lands across the state of South Dakota is what created the Every Acre Counts Program. South Dakota State University, Second Century Habitat Fund, Pheasants Forever, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, South Dakota Corn, and Purina are the key founders of the program. Though the core focus of each group varies, all have in common the goal of land stewardship.

Every Acre Counts goal is to improve the farm profitability, diversity, and ecosystem benefits of agriculture by using precision technologies to empower producers to help make informed management decisions for every acre of their operations. To achieve that, the precision data from the grower is transferred to a profitability software along with the production input costs, crop market price, and variable rate fertilizer or seeding maps available. When all the data is collected, a report is generated to show the producer the profitability throughout the field and see it as an acre-by-acre profit/loss map instead of an averaged field-by-field representation. When marginal land, such as saline soils is prevalent, conservation program examples are created to show what could happen to the field's profit, expense reduction, and ROI if the marginal lands were removed from crop production and enrolled into CRP or the Soil Health and Habitat Program (see photos below).



The left picture shows an entire field planted to soybeans in 2021 and the right picture shows the same field in 2022 with the saline affected soils planted to an alfalfa/intermediate wheatgrass mix (green) and the remainder planted to rye (tan/brown). These acres were losing approximately \$50/acre and now are producing \$50/acre for a net \$100/acre difference. (Photos courtesy of Cristin Weber).

Every Acre Counts is now in its second year. To date there has been over 50,000 acres enrolled for the profitability analysis. The conversations in the field have been exciting to see and hear what producers are planning to do for soil health improvements of adding in cover crops, incorporating livestock, and putting small grains back into their rotations. By removing marginal land from crop production, it is reducing expenses, increasing yield on remaining crop production acres, and maximizing profit. Making a change on the landscape provides the opportunity to provide nesting, brood rearing, and cover for wildlife. Not only is it about habitat, but building soil health, increasing water quality, and improving sustainability. Every Acre Counts is successful because of the collaboration of our partners visions to provide the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota a new way of utilizing their precision data to make an impact on their operation and improve the natural resources across the state, showing how conservation and agriculture work together.

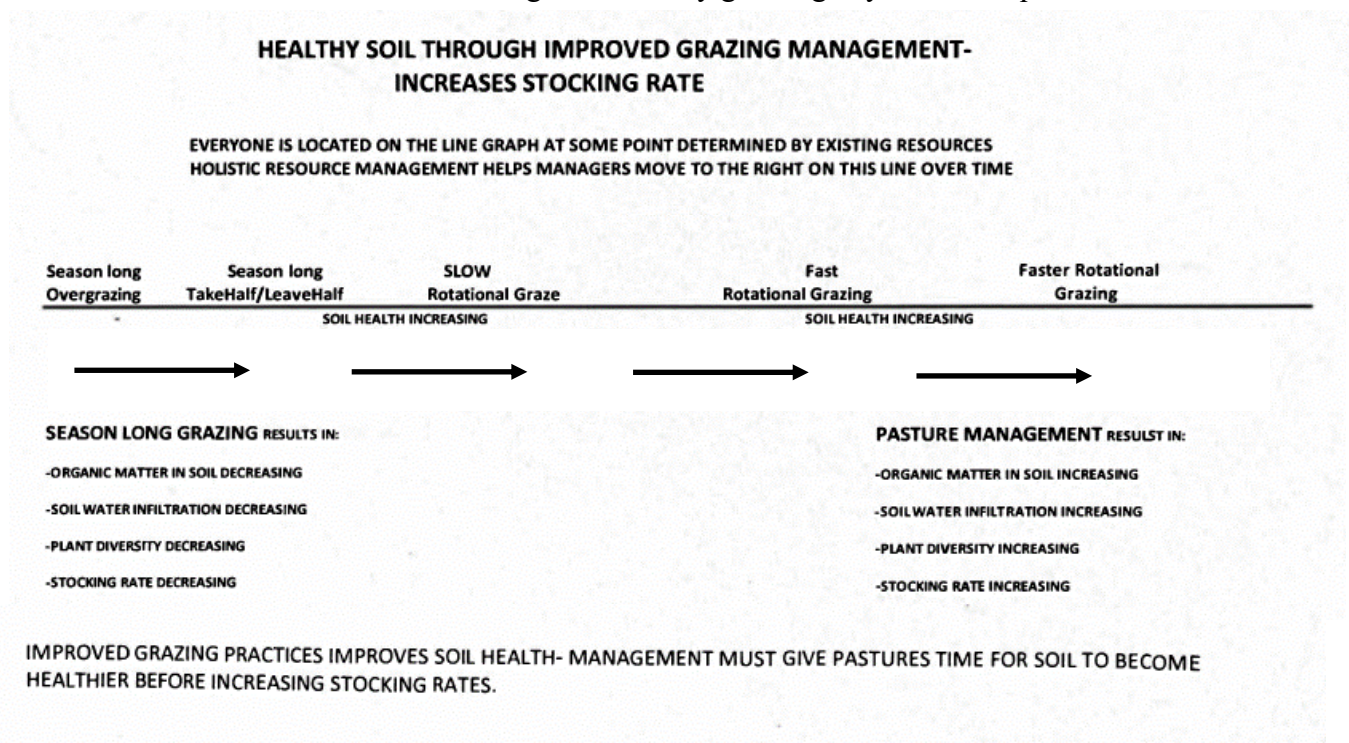
Cristin Weber is a Precision Ag and Conservation Specialist with Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever

Three Grazing Schools in South Dakota Focus on Nurturing the Land and the People

by Dan Rasmussen

It turns out, that in order to thrive, everything needs rest and recovery. The Grassland Coalition believes that proper range management makes it possible to nurture the land and the environment and maximize the economic opportunities created by healthy grasslands. This year's focus during our three grazing schools was a better understanding of the relationship between the different types of grazing plans and the opportunity for the rest and recovery that grasslands need to thrive.

The graph shows the relationship between soil health and different levels of management. As you read the line graph from left to right, think about REST and RECOVERY for each management style. REST being measured on a calendar and RECOVERY being measured by growing days with adequate moisture.



Consider the following:

SEASON LONG GRAZING MANAGEMENT- Livestock left in a pasture with adequate forage for 3 to 6 months will select for the most palatable plants every day. Often these are plants that were previously grazed and have begun to regrow. The regrowth is palatable to the cow but if re-bit, it is detrimental to the grass plant. This plant begins to lose its competitive edge with the plants around it. Many of these palatable plants will eventually go away under this management. If half of the standing forage is left at the end of the grazing season, many plants will still have been severely overgrazed and damaged during the summer.

REST- The pasture grazed for 6 months in the summer will have 6 months rest during the winter.

RECOVERY- Season long grazing during the summer, from a plants point of view, has very few growing days to rebuild energy to grow again next year. Plants go into dormancy during winter months, those plants continuously grazed all summer will not adequately recover in the winter and spring. Many of the most nutritious plants will be weakened.

Grazing Schools Continued on Page 6

Grazing Schools Continued by Dan Rasmussen

SLOW ROTATION- The livestock are moved every 4 to 8 weeks under this management style. Grazed plants will begin to regrow in approximately 7 to 10 days. This management style allows the livestock to re-graze plants after regrowth. These plants will have to shut down growth in order to rebuild roots. Their competitiveness will be somewhat decreased. However, this will be an improvement over season long grazing especially if the pastures are grazed at different times in future years.

REST- The plants could have 10 months* rest.

RECOVERY- The plants could have 120 or more growing days to rebuild.

MEDIUM ROTATION- The livestock are moved every 2-4 weeks. Some grazed plants will be re-bit, the regrowth would be minimal so damage is slight. Old plant matter is allowed to build up on the ground. This will protect the soil from heat and holds moisture in the soil. Plants that were “grazed out” in season long management will begin to return.

REST- The plants have no livestock grazing for 50 weeks*.

RECOVERY- The plants have almost a full growing season to recover.

FAST ROTATION- The livestock are in the pasture for one to ten days.

REST- The plants are rested 355 to 364 days*.

RECOVERY- The plants have 170 to 190 days to regrow. The pastures will be small. Soil amour “litter” will be protecting the ground from heat and preserving soil moisture. Livestock will graze plants they normally avoid in season long management. The result is even utilization. The number of grass plants per square foot will be increasing. Plants that were “grazed out” during season long management will start showing up in large numbers.

SUMMARY

Pastures need livestock grazing to maintain plant health. By managing the recovery of these plants through rotational grazing, soil and plant health improves leading eventually to higher stocking rates. Each ranch has unique resources. By applying adaptive management learned at the grazing school a grazing plan can be developed to improve pasture health. Upon graduation participants are eligible for the Grazing School Follow-Up Program. A consultant will come to your ranch to help you implement grazing practices learned at the Grazing School.

Creating drought resilient pastures can be done through managed grazing practices. These practices are taught at the grazing schools in the Wall, Chamberlain and Watertown area every June , August and September. Sign up early as the schools fill up fast. More info at sdgrass.org. To register call Judge Jessop at 605 280-0127.

*These numbers are estimates since the pastures will be grazed at a different time each year.

Dan is a third-generation cattle rancher living in south central South Dakota. Dan served on the board of the Grassland Coalition for 18 years and currently manages the Grazing School Follow-Up Consulting for the Coalition.

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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management
SD Section Annual Meeting by Jamie Brennan

The South Dakota Section of the Society for Range Management will hold its annual chapter meeting

When: Wednesday October 12th 8:30 am registration

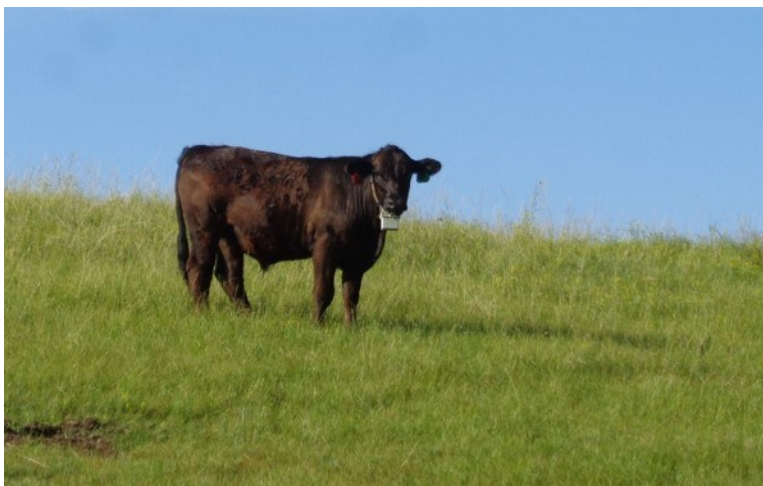
Where: Meet at Best Western Parking lot, Wall, SD

What: Morning tour of the SDSU Cottonwood Field Station and discuss latest precision livestock research and riparian restoration using beaver dam analogs

Lunch will be served on-site

Afternoon travel back to Wall where we will hold our annual business meeting followed by social, awards banquet, and crazy auction

The meeting will be a great time to meet together in person after hosting virtual online meetings the past two years. The day will begin with registration and gathering at the Best Western parking lot in Wall at 8:30. The group will then depart to the South Dakota State University Cottonwood Field Station located in Cottonwood, SD (12 miles east of Wall). The tour highlights will include ongoing research projects at the station such as riparian restoration using beaver dam analogs, precision livestock management technology, and virtual fencing. Lunch will be provided on-site. Following the tour we will meet back in Wall in the afternoon for the business meeting and strategic planning meeting. Starting at 5:30 that evening we will host a social event, awards banquet, and Crazy Auction at the 3 Amigos Cantina.



Steer with virtual fence technology collar at the SDSU Cottonwood Field Station (Photo courtesy of Jamie Brennan).

This is sure to be a fun event and a wonderful opportunity to gather, share ideas, and honor this years Excellence in Range Management award winners. Registration is \$70 per person and can be paid on site, online, or by mail.

All attendees are asked to RSVP for the events for food count to Jamie Brennan (Jameson.brennan@sdstate.edu). Additional information about registrations, lodging, and agenda can be found on the South Dakota Section SRM webpage. We look forward to seeing everyone in a few weeks.

Jamie Brennan is an SDSU Assistant Professor in Animal Science located at the Wester River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City.



Sandy Smart
Box 2207D, 132 Berg Hall,
SDSU
Brookings, SD 57007

Calendar of Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact Person	Phone/email
SD SRM Annual Meeting	Oct 12	Wall, SD	Jamie Brennan	Jameson.brennan@sdstate.edu
Finding Fairness in Farm & Ranch Transition—Elaine Froese	Dec 7	Norfolk, NE	Angela Redman	negrazinglands@gmail.com
SDGC Annual Meeting	Dec 8	Oacoma, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Finding Fairness in Farm & Ranch Transition—Elaine Froese	Dec 8	Oacoma, SD	Judge Jessop	605-280-0127
Finding Fairness in Farm & Ranch Transition—Elaine Froese	Dec 9	Rapid City, SD	Lowell Mesman	Lowell@sdfbf.org
Leopold Award Presentation @ SD Cattlemens	Dec 13	Pierre, SD	Taya Runyan	605-945-2333

Please remit any comments, suggestions, or topics deemed necessary for further review to: Sandy Smart, SDSU Box 2207D, Brookings, SD 57007, alexander.smart@sdstate.edu, (605) 688-4940

