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Grazing Exchange by Sandy Smart and Cindy Zenk

One of the great partnerships we've had is with the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition (SDSHC). The Grazing Exchange, initiated by the SDSHC, is a way to get livestock integrated into cropland and providing rest to grasslands. In addition, it also is a way to connect people who have grass but don't have livestock. This program promotes sustainable linkages between our two organizations.

The Grazing Exchange <https://sdgrazingexchange.com/> allows folks to register what resource they have (livestock, cover crops, crop residue, pasture, or bales) and places that information on a dynamic map (see below).



A screen shot of the Grazing Map of the Grazing Exchange. Icons represent the type of available resources users have registered.

The benefits to getting livestock onto cropland:

- Increases nutrient cycling and reduces fertilizer inputs
- Aids in reducing crop residue for no-till seeding
- Gives perennial pastures a rest in the fall to improve pasture health

Ways to do it:

- Fall and winter grazing of cover crops and crop residues
- Summer grazing full-season cover crops
- Winter feeding hay on cropland and hayland by either rolling out bales or bale grazing

Holistic Resource Management (HRM) - The Silver Bullet in Ranching

by Dan Rasmussen



Branding calves on the 33 Ranch, Mellette county, SD. Keeping families on the land is a part of the ranching culture we want to preserve.

If there is a “silver bullet” in ranching, it is building and maintaining healthy soil in rangeland. Healthy soil in pastures drives profit, holds water around plant roots, increases grass plant populations, increases plant diversity, increases root growth and much more. Our ranching culture should be focused on improving soil health in our pastures. Holistic Resource Management (HRM) will make this happen on your ranch.

Holistic Resource Management is an approach to managing resources. HRM is a decision making framework for regenerative management on ranchland. HRM helps you see opportunities on your ranch. HRM challenges the traditions that lead us away from a goal of healthy soil, healthy family, healthy lifestyle and healthy community. A simple way to describe HRM is that instead of bringing a plan to the ranch, you analyze the resource and design your business around these resources.

With soil health being our goal the parts of ranching culture we want to save are the ones contributing to our goal. Some examples would be: subdividing pastures to give grass plants more recovery time, changing calving date to May so pastures are grazed a different time each year. Purchase hay instead of making your own so moving cattle regularly is possible through the summer. Extend the grazing season to include much of the winter. Graze hayfields leaving armor on the ground to promote soil health leading to an increase in production and profit which helps keep families on the land.

With soil health being our goal, the parts of ranching culture we want to change are the ones not contributing to our goal. Some examples of a change to improve pasture health would be: subdividing pastures so as to stop season long grazing. Move the calving date to early summer so any pasture is a potential calving pasture. Start grazing hay ground to improve the soil. Reduce labor by grazing longer in the winter.

The part of the ranch management plan we want to change is the part that is using resources that are not allowing the soil to be productive. If done in a strategic way, soil health on rangeland translates into ranch profit.

The beauty of Nature is that Nature designed grasslands to create its own fertility and resilience. With proper management and biodiversity, those pastures can handle many challenges and remain healthy. The natural world is amazing, and there is no end to learning more about how it works.

Ice Woes by Garnet Perman

Raising livestock in the Northern Plains has been a bit of a challenge since Christmas. Ice storms in December are rare. Usually a coating of ice is fairly short lived but not this year. Many producers had cattle on cornstalks when the storm hit. For the area between Pierre and Bismarck several inches of snow followed by freezing rain and weeks of cloudy weather put an end to utilizing that resource. Recent extreme cold just added to the misery.

I visited with a couple of producers that still had cattle grazing. Just over the border in South Central ND, Jerry Doan and his sons at Blackleg Ranch have cattle on cover crops. Their goal with cover crops is to provide grazing, hunting habitat and increased soil biology. They plant a mix of brassicas, several types of millet, collards plus odds and ends of oats and legumes. Fall rains encouraged a good stand. Even though they had 3-4 inches of snow and about a half inch of ice, the brassicas withstood the weight and were still standing tall. Doan reported that the coating of ice didn't seem to bother the cattle. "maybe they don't drink as much water," he said.



Cows grazing cover crops. (Photo courtesy of SD NRCS Flickr page).

Their worst problems aren't feeding cattle, but trying to negotiate slippery ground on foot and with their front wheel assist tractor. "It's no fun sorting buffalo," said Doan. They are just glad they aren't fighting the 100 inches of snow they had last year.

Roy Thompson of Akaska, SD decided to try disking the corn field he wanted to graze. He also was dealing with about 4 inches of snow and 1/4-1/2 inch of ice. Even though the operation has been no-till for 25 years, they keep an old disk around for working up tree rows and other odd jobs. Roy hooked it up and disked about 10 acres of cornstalks. "It worked really well!" he said, so he continued to work another 10 acres every other day. He found it knocked the ice into pieces best where he could hit the ground. Stalks got knocked down, so he left strips between each section. The disk also pulled up an occasional stalk, but the cows ate them. As the cattle trampled the disked section, they knocked off more ice, opening up more grazing. He figures he gained 10-14 days of grazing before the recent extreme cold necessitated supplementing with hay.

The biggest problem he encountered was a couple of flat tires on the disk.

The idea was one his father and brother had considered in similar situations in the past but for one reason or another couldn't implement. "Conditions have to be right," said Thompson. For him, that meant that he didn't have to travel far to the field and the snow wasn't too deep.

Thompson also checked with his landlord before starting. The ability to graze cornstalks can impact germination rates in the spring as more residue keeps the ground cooler longer.

A mid-winter thaw can't come soon enough!

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

Holistic Resource Management Continued by Dan Rasmussen

In conclusion, HRM is the way to preserve our rural ranching culture, keeping grasslands away from the plow and our families on the land supporting strong communities. Three day HRM courses are currently being planned and will soon be on the Grassland Coalition calendar for 2024. Check the Grassland Coalition website at: sdgrass.org for dates and locations.

Dan is a third-generation cattle rancher living in south central South Dakota. Dan served as a past board member of the Grassland Coalition and is currently the Grazing School Follow-up Ranch Consulting Coordinator for the Coalition.

The Green Side Up by Pete Bauman



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Grassland Initiative and Summit Offer Rare Opportunity to Shape the Future of South Dakota Grasslands

As a member of the SD Grassland Coalition, I'm proud of what this organization has accomplished over the last 25-plus years. I don't have the exact numbers, but I know there's been at least a few dozen board members and just as many dedicated staff persons who have kept this organization moving forward. Hundreds have benefited from the Coalitions education, outreach, and influence. Please read the following paragraph as to how we came to be.....it will help us understand where we need to go.

Abbreviated History (from NatGLC): In June of 1991 the National Grazing Lands Coalition was established at a meeting called by representatives of state and national agricultural, conservation, wildlife, and scientific organizations that were concerned about the declining level of technical assistance being provided by the NRCS to owners and managers of grazing lands. They believed that NRCS resources had been diverted from grazing lands to programs established in the 1985 farm bill. During this first organizational meeting, six national organizations agreed to sponsor the NatGLC. They were the [American Farm Bureau Federation](#) (AFBF), [American Forage and Grassland Council](#) (AFGC), [American Sheep Industry Association](#) (ASI), [National Association of Conservation Districts](#) (NACD), [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) (NCBA), and the [Society for Range Management](#) (SRM). Organizations appoint members to the National Steering Committee, and are respected leaders and producers.

Many states organized 'Grazing' Coalitions. Our founders intentionally chose the words '**Grassland**' Coalition. This foresight has allowed our organization to flourish and establish itself as a national model of bold, honest, and forward-thinking service to our state's grassland interests, including strong private, state, federal, tribal, and NGOs partnerships. Your board and the partner staffers working behind the scenes represent every interest group listed above.

The Green Side Up Continued Page 5

The Green Side Up Continued by Pete Bauman

You will see in this newsletter an invitation to the upcoming **GRASSLAND SUMMIT** to be held **March 18-19th at Cedar Shores in Chamberlain**. Your volunteer board of ranchers had the vision to create the **Grassland Initiative** as the next chapter in the Coalition's rich history. The initiative is not an organization, rather it is an idea, or a concept, that we can go further in ensuring our grassland future by embracing complex partnerships in South Dakota. It won't be easy, but is absolutely essential if we expect our grassland economy to remain. So, on behalf of your volunteer board, your employees, and your partners, I ask you to please consider attending the Summit. We are at a critical time in South Dakota's history. Will our state remain grass and livestock friendly; bringing along all the goods that healthy grasslands create? Goods and services such as healthy meat products, clean air, clean water, less chemicals, recreation, tourism, and healthy living. Or will we be something different and less desirable?

Just like that meeting in 1991 that recognized an opportunity to participate in the future, so too does this Grassland Summit offer an opportunity to understand what might impact our grassland heritage, and where the opportunities might lie to correct the course if necessary. Please join the conversation in March, and ensure that your input is counted among the other important voices in the room. ***YOUR voice is important and necessary as well!!***

SD Grassland Initiative by Laura Kahler

Since its launch last fall, the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative has made strides in defining its purpose, and bringing partners together for networking & communication opportunities, as well as projects to collectively support the grasslands.

The South Dakota Grasslands Initiative (SDGI) is not an organization itself, but rather a collaborative network of diverse organizations, agencies, and individuals who support grasslands as a means of retaining prairie ecosystems, both native and restored, while sustaining rural economies and healthy communities.

South Dakota Grasslands Initiative welcomes partners from all facets of South Dakota, including those with a focus on our agricultural, environmental, economic, and social components. SDGI Partners are anyone who supports the mission of promoting South Dakota grasslands by elevating public awareness and through supporting those who want to make an impact for the benefit of current and future generations.

The core values of the grassland initiative are 1) Retention of South Dakota's native prairie ecosystem, 2) Science-based education and decision making, 3) Acknowledgement of traditional knowledge, 4) Discussion that honors opposing viewpoints and perspectives, 5) Support for producers & landowners who want to improve grasslands, and 6) Recognition that diversified income streams are essential to sustainable agricultural operations for the benefit of all South Dakotans. If you're familiar with the Central Grasslands Roadmap, you may notice some similarities between the core principles of their work, as the Initiative intends to be mindful



South Dakota
GRASSLANDS INITIATIVE

SD Grassland Initiative Continued by Laura Kahler

of how the roadmap can be supported in South Dakota.

The Central Grasslands Roadmap looks at a broad scale of collaboration- including Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Within those countries, agencies, industry, academia, landowners & land managers, organizations and more are asked to collaborate for resilient & sustainable grasslands and human communities.

The goals of the roadmap's work include grasslands managed for resilience, stabilizing grassland bird populations, increasing aquifers, reducing grassland conversions and legislation to support grassland conservation.

As a state, we can recognize the value of these goals, as well as recognizing that our methods of supporting the grasslands needs to be developed specific to our state's challenges and opportunities.

In October, the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative took a first step in collaboration with our quarterly partner meeting. During this virtual call, partners learned more about the Grasslands Initiative, the Central Grasslands Roadmap, and their fellow partners. In January, quarterly partner meetings took this networking one step further by beginning to discuss what opportunities exist for partnership through the Initiative.

If you are interested in supporting the Grasslands Initiative, or simply would like to be more informed on its efforts, please complete the SDGI Interest form. Filing out this form will assure you will be notified of details of the next quarterly partner meeting, to be held in January at four locations around the state. Remember, anyone- an organization or individual, who supports the mission of the SD Grasslands Initiative is welcome to join us to increase our impact on grasslands through collaboration.

Among the work that partners are working together on through the initiative, perhaps the largest area of focus is the upcoming South Dakota Grasslands Summit. This event will be a new opportunity to gather with others around the state for the sole purpose of focusing on our grasslands. Taking place in Oacoma on March 18th & 19th, Monday's speakers will address the status of South Dakota's grasslands in relation to ecology, economics, market forces, social value, and Tuesday will build off ideas shared on day one and at the January quarterly partner meetings. The Grasslands Summit is designed for anyone with an interest or interaction with the grasslands of South Dakota, including partner agencies & organizations, individuals, land owners, land managers, and agriculture lenders. Watch your email for more details, and check our website for a final schedule and registration as they become available: SDGrassInitiative.org

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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management
Mitch Faulkner Update provided by Jeff Vander Wilt

Dear Society for Range Management, South Dakota Section:

I want to extend my sincere thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness for benefiting me through the silent auction during the 2023 South Dakota section meeting. I am humbled and honored by your consideration for this benefit.

I am currently a week out from my bone marrow transplant that I received on December 22nd. I am fully on schedule with my post-transplant recovery and my hope is I can be discharged from the hospital in mid-January. At that time I will remain in the Denver area for several weeks where the medical staff can continue to monitor me to ensure the transplant is taking hold and that my body is accepting the new bone marrow. I will require near continuous home care and observation during that time. The assistance you have provided us will greatly help my family with continued travel costs to Denver to aid in my care, and will help defer medical expenses.

I cannot thank you enough for your thoughtfulness and generosity. My family and I are truly grateful.

Sincerely,

Mitch Faulkner

I hope all is well. Happy New Year, I miss you guys and can't wait to get back into the mix again.

If you would like to send Mitch a note please address it to ...

Mitch Faulkner
8281 Johnson Street
Arvada, CO 80005





Sandy Smart
Box 2207D, 114 Berg Hall,
SDSU
Brookings, SD 57007

Calendar of Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact Person	Phone/email
SD Grassland Summit	March 18-19	Oacoma, SD	Laura Kahler	laura.grass@sdconservation.net

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

