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Jim Faulstich Receives Honorary Doctorate from SDSU by Sandy Smart



At the 138th SDSU commencement on May 4, 2024, Jim Faulstich was recognized by the Board of Regents and the University with the highest honor, an honorary doctorate. So, I thought it fitting to share my nomination letter with you all.

“South Dakota State University Extension supports the nomination of Jim Faulstich to receive an honorary doctorate from South Dakota State University at the 2024 graduation ceremony from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. I have personally known Jim for over 20 years and I can attest to his honor, integrity, and most of all his courageous tenacity for grassland conservation. Jim has been a constant force in conservation leadership at the state, regional, and national levels. He has served on the Board of Directors of the South Dakota Grassland Coalition for more than 20 years. He has served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the organization. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the national conservation group, PartnerScapes. His ranch has been the subject of many documentary videos and even won the SD Section of SRM “Excellence in Range Management Award” in 1998 and the Environmental stewardship award for Region VII in 2009. Jim has hosted many tours for policy makers, state and federal agencies, and the general public for educational outreach.

Jim was instrumental in establishing the Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota. Together with the SD Cattlemen’s organization and many partners, he was able to bring this prestigious conservation award to our great state. Recently, Jim with the help of other great leaders, established the South Dakota Ag Land Trust. This trust celebrated its first easement last year. Protecting grasslands and working landscapes is at the heart of Jim’s personal mission. In addition, Jim with the help of others, launched the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition back in 2015. Jim is a true visionary and a dynamic leader.

Jim has been a great partner with SDSU. He has helped the SDSU Range program in research, teaching, and extension. I personally brought several of my classes on field trips to Jim’s ranch to see first-hand how he stewards our natural resources. Jim has allowed my lab group to conduct valuable on-farm research. In fact, a group of scientists from SDSU have a current project to examine forage productivity and quality in near real-time using satellite derived remote sensing techniques. This research and extension project will advance precision agriculture on rangelands well into the future.

Faulstich Honorary Doctorate Continued on Page 2

Faulstich Continued by Sandy Smart

Jim poured his energies into helping Pete Bauman, an Extension Range Field Specialist, find the funding for his native prairie mapping project. This is the first of its kind in identifying the remaining native prairies in South Dakota and is a blueprint for the rest of the county to follow.

Lastly, Jim is a true friend and mentor. I have personally benefitted from knowing such a great conservationist and producer, who was willing to take the time to invest in my career. I have benefited by Jim's knowledge of the political landscape and his ties to the non-governmental organization world. His connections have allowed me to network with these folks, broadened my impact, and helped me grow in my leadership position in Extension. I am truly indebted to Jim. South Dakota State University would be doing themselves a great honor by bestowing Jim Faulstich with an honorary doctorate for his life's accomplishments in conservation, mentoring SDSU faculty and staff, and helping students learn real-world conservation experiences from this great man."

Alexander "Sandy" Smart, Ph.D.

Professor and Agriculture and Natural Resources Senior Program Leader, SDSU Extension

CREATING HEALTHY PASTURES: PART 3 by Dan Rasmussen



WHAT ARE YOUR OBSTACLES TO IMPROVING YOUR RANGELAND?

Part 1 of the Creating Healthy Pastures series, covered the value of a rotational grazing plan in improving pasture health.

A multi-pasture rotation allows the grasses and forbs to adequately recover before being grazed again.

Part 2 of the Creating Healthy Pastures series, covered the differences in managing a native pasture rotation and a tame

grass rotation, and how important recovery time is to creating healthy pastures.

Part 3 covers overcoming personal obstacles that are keeping you from achieving your ranch goals.

It is important to note that ranch goals are an important part of grazing planning. Holistic Resource Management training is helpful in refining your goals.

WHAT ARE YOUR OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING RANCH GOALS?

Once you have refined your goals it is helpful to make a list of the obstacles keeping you from achieving these goals. Examples of common obstacles are: Water quantity, moving water to

Creating Healthy Pastures Continued on Page 4

Grassland CRP: A Tool in the Financial Box by Garnet Perman

One of the issues contributing to keeping grass right side up is the unbalanced grassland vs. cropland revenue competition. Most producers are familiar with the Conservation Reserve Program. There are several types of CRP programs. The Grassland Conservation Reserve Program is specifically aimed at livestock producers who want to use the land for grazing and enhancing biodiversity. For qualifying producers, the payments may help level the income playing field. According to Owen Fagerhaug, South Dakota's Farm Service Agency conservation program manager, this year's program sign up has not been announced. Rules for the 206 program will be published at that time. Because the sign up is yet to be announced, now is a good time to consider if Grassland CRP could benefit your operation.

Grassland CRP has a yearly sign up period. The period of the contract can be for 10 or 15 years. The current cap on payments is \$50,000 which has been in effect since 1985. Sen. Thune and others have attempted to have that payment amount raised to better reflect current land values but it is currently at the historical limit. The \$50,000 cap is cumulative across the various CRP programs, so if a producer is already getting a different CRP payment, enrollment in Grassland CRP can only be as much as is allowed by the \$50,000 cap. Payment is based on 75% of National Agriculture Statistics Service rental rates. The floor across South Dakota is \$15/acre although counties with higher land values allow higher payments.

The number of applicants can exceed the available money so a ranking system determines who will receive contracts. The current ranking criteria set by the 205 contract include:

- The existence of expiring CRP or expiring GRP contracts counts towards ranking points.
- Size of operation. Small scale livestock operations with under 100 animal units (1 unit= 1 cow) can enroll up to 200 acres, or as many as fit the \$50,000 limit.
- Diversity matters. The land must be in existing perennial grass cover. Diverse native stands rank higher than tame grasses. Be aware that participation in NRCS programs such as EQIP or CSP may negate Grassland CRP participation. Grassland CRP does offer some cost share for water development and fencing that is in addition to the \$50,000 limit. The county FSA office can help producers make decisions about which program is of greater benefit.
- Location matters. In SD, several counties east of the Missouri have been identified as a state focus area. This is determined by a state technical committee comprised of FSA and NRCS personnel, landowners and conservation partners such as Pheasants Forever. Your local FSA office will know if your land is in a focus area.
- Who you are matters. Beginning farmer/ranchers, veterans, and socially disadvantaged groups such as women or minorities will tally more points.
- Time and ownership matters. The proposed acreage must have been owned by the applicant for a minimum of 12 months prior to that year's closing period.
- A participant can offer less than the NASS pasture rent value in order to get additional points.
- Other rules determined by FSA may also apply.

More information regarding Grassland CRP can be found at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/crp-grasslands-signup-overview/index> or google Grassland CRP 205. Information specific to a given county can be obtained by visiting the county FSA office.

If you think Grassland CRP might be an option for you, be on alert for when the 206 signup and rules are released!

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

CREATING HEALTHY PASTURES: PART 3 Continued by Dan Rasmussen

your new smaller internal pastures, electric fence issues and paying for fencing and water development.

Water quantity can be addressed with storage. There are many current options for water storage. A storage tank fills at night when the cattle are not drinking so there is adequate water delivery during the heat of the day.

Water distribution can be addressed with a combination of PE pipe laid on top of the ground and buried.

Fencing. If working with electric fence is new to you, it would be helpful to attend an electric fence workshop or find a mentor. Once you get past the learning phase the advantages of internal 12 gauge single strand high tensile wire are many. A few examples being:

- Electric fences resist high snow loads much better than barb wire,
- Dry and wet creek crossings are cheap and easy to maintain,
- Lower overall maintenance,
- Cost of installing is 20% or less of barb wire.

Paying for Developments. Cost share opportunities are available from numerous sources. Most are intended to help both the landowner and habitat for wildlife. Keeping ranch/farm families on the land are a priority for most of these donors.

Rotational grazing will create healthy pastures if the plants have adequate recovery time. Once you have attended a grazing school you are eligible to sign up for the Follow-up Range Consulting Program. A range consultant will visit your ranch and help you with your grazing planning. The Follow-up Program is free of charge thanks to generous donors.

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.

Remembering Mitch Faulkner: A Life of Dedication by Krista Ehlert

Mitch Faulkner had been - and will continue to be - a constant presence for those of us that live and work within this conservation world. The world we exist in “where the good things grow” and even on the toughest days at work or on the ranch, we end the day doing what we love - striving for a better world, where working lands matter and the conservation of them is at the forefront of everyone’s minds.

Those of us that knew Mitch found him to be the utmost advocate for grasslands and conservation. I was texting with him the Thursday before he passed, and he told me how he found his old notes and class materials from his range classes. Mitch then promptly declared that “the history and basics of our profession sometimes aren’t well understood” and need to be taught to the younger generation of range specialists coming on board. That things like “learning where range condition comes from and the grazing optimization hypothesis...shouldn’t die in a dumpster.”...Mitch was the epitome of what it means to be an enthusiastic teacher and mentor and a die-hard “range nerd.” Unlike green grass in a drought year, we will never lack in our stories of Mitch.



Mitch (on the right) discussing soil formation with Jake Disney (NRCS). (Photo by K. Ehlert).

My own remembrance of Mitch is that from day 1 of my start with SDSU, Mitch welcomed me into the fold of the greatest colleagues and partners a woman could ask for! Mitch was not only a friend and colleague, but mentor. He was a sounding board and lifted me up when I questioned my abilities. Mitch had a knack for reacting to news with some quick wit and a dry sense of humor. This was so true that when he called me on March 20 and told me “well, I have over a year of sick leave left, and good thing for the federal government, I won’t have to take it all”, that it took me 15 minutes to realize that he was telling me he was dying. Get to the point, Mitch! When his obituary came out, I realized that March 20 was his birthday, which further underscores two things about this man: 1) he lived a life so selfless that he always put other people first, and 2) he missed a really great opportunity to joke about sneaking one more birthday in!

Sentiments from colleagues and friends range from thoughtful to off-the-cuff funny - just like Mitch himself:

- “If I ever met a person who lived their faith for the world to see, it was Mitch...it was always there for anyone to see.” - Tanse Herrmann, NRCS
- “Mitch (with his glasses pulled down to the end of this nose) explained the how, where, and why, of the plants and soil.” - Judge Jessop, SDGC
- “Mitch was a friend to everyone that he met...he could talk to anyone. The rancher, the farmer, college student, high school student, and even the city slicker.” - Tate Lantz, NRCS
- “Mitch’s passion and enthusiasm for the conservation and enhancement of natural resources was much like COVID; it infected nearly everyone he came in contact with.” - Matt Scott, USFS

Final thoughts: Mitch left an enduring imprint on all of us. We will often think of his legacy associated with conservation - but he left a legacy with his wife, Angie, and their three children Jack, Maggie, and Libby. How often do we ask each other about our families? Hobbies? Hopes, dreams, bucket lists? I encourage you to reach out to your colleagues, other producers, and ask about their legacy outside of work - I would argue, it is the most important one we have. For example, in July 2023 my husband and I saw Mitch and his girls in downtown Spearfish - they had just gotten back from a “bucket list trip” to California where Mitch was able to see the bristle cone pine. He talked about this pine cone for 20 minutes - I had no idea that man was over-the-moon in love with the bristle cone pine, ha! (Look it up!) Another call - I was so thankful when Mitch passed that I had some photos of him “in action.” Take the picture - you’ll be thrilled to have them some day. Here’s to the time we all meet Mitch again and can gather in a big circle and talk about grass, soil, and the place we live and work in, “where the good things grow.”



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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management 2024 National Range Judging Contest by Sandy Smart

The National Range Judging Contest was held in El Reno, Oklahoma on May 2. Four 4-H and three FFA teams from South Dakota participated in the competition. Tyler Swan (NRCS) and Sandy Smart (SDSU Extension) assisted in helping the high school ag teachers and their students practice for the contest. South Dakota students are at a distinct disadvantage as the contest is held around the Oklahoma City area each year. The students need to be able to identify 130 plants (39 grasses, 19 legumes, 41 forbs, and 31 trees/woodies) of which the vast majority are not found in South Dakota. For example, there are 6 bluestems to identify (big bluestem, broomsedge bluestem, old world bluestem, little bluestem, silver bluestem, and splitbeard bluestem) of which we have only 2 species in common (big bluestem and little bluestem). They also need to learn/memorize each plant's characteristics (life history, season of growth, origin, desirability for bobwhite quail food, cover, and cattle food). Let me tell you, it is a lot of work! I have attended the trip the last 6 times and I am finally learning how to tell these plants apart.

The South Dakota teams typically arrive on Saturday and practice Sunday-Wednesday with the contest held on Thursday morning. When not studying the students get to tour some of the interesting sites, museums, and of course a perennial favorite Braum's. If you haven't had Braum's ice cream you need to make the trip! We typically start at 7 am and arrive back at the hotel by 9 pm each day, so the ice cream is a nice reward for the long days we put in.

The contest is split into two categories: 4-H and FFA. Teams from each state had to win their respective regions to qualify for the national contest. SD SRM provides partial financial support to FFA teams. Tyler and I had a great time teaching these young folks and interacting with the Ag teachers. We appreciate the support from SD SRM and SDSU Extension.

4-H Range



Haakon-Bennett County 4-H Range team placed 1st out of 12 teams. From left to right team members included Emily Zickrick, Colden Kramer, Ashley Schriever, and Tara Schofield. Tyler Swan (NRCS) supported Reed Johnson (coach). Emily Zickrick placed 1st, Colden Kramer placed 5th and Ashley Schriever placed 10th out of 43 national competitors.



Day County 4-H Range team placed 3rd out of 12 teams. From left to right team members included Caleb Gaikowski, Bobbi Eidie, Tigh Gaikowski, Caleb Weyh, and Fred Zenk (coach). Bobbi Eide placed 4th and Caleb Gaikowski placed 7th out of 43 national competitors.

2024 National Range Judging Contest Continued on Page 7

2024 National Range Judging Contest Continued by Sandy Smart



Lemmon County 4-H Range team placed 5th out of 12 teams. From left to right team members included Shannon Gebhart, Katelyn Gebhart, Blake Drayton and Sam Weishaar. They were coached by Renae Gebhart. Katelyn Gebhart placed 11th and Shannon Gebhart placed 17th out of 43 national competitors.



West Central Ag 4-H Range team placed 8th out of 12 teams. From left to right team members included Linda Petersen (coach), Sam Handberg, Alex Siemonsma, Stella Siemonsma, and Kenasyn Johnson. Alex Siemonsma placed 15th out of 43 national competitors.

FFA Range



Webster FFA Range team placed 13th out of 24 teams. From left to right team members included Fred Zenk (coach), Tevin Howder, Dylan Carlson, and Brayden Aadland.



Kadoka FFA Range team placed 15th out of 24 teams. From left to right team members included Kole Hermann, Tance VanderMay, Ayden Amiotte, and Shaylee Porch. They were coached by Kade Bonenberger.

Wolsey-Wessington FFA Range team placed 17th out of 24 teams. From left to right team members included Harley Roberts, Kate Hamilton, Jett Kleinsasser, and Ethan Rearick. They were coached by Andrew Boersma.





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Calendar of Events

| Event | Date | Location | Contact Person | Phone/email |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| SDGC Bird Tour | June 3-4 | Rapid City | Judge Jessop | 605-280-0127 |
| West River Grazing School | June 11-13 | Wall | Judge Jessop | 605-280-0127 |
| Good, Bad, and Invasive Plant Tour | June 12 | Estelline | Joe Blastick | 605-880-6541 |
| Rangeland Days | June 12-13 | Watertown | Krista Ehlert | 605-394-2236 |
| Pasture Walk-Rock Hills Ranch | June 25 | Lowry | Judge Jessop | 605-280-0127 |
| East River Grazing School | July 23-25 | Summit | Judge Jessop | 605-280-0127 |
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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

