

## Board of Directors

Mike McKernan, Chair | Jim Faulstich, Vice Chair | Larry Wagner, Secretary | Jeff Zimprich, Treasurer  
Drew Anderson | Wacey Kirkpatrick | Riley Kammerer | AJ Munger | Jori Smiley



## Thank You, Sandy!

After years of dedicated service, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Sandy Smart for his incredible contributions to our newsletter.

Sandy has been the quiet force behind the scenes — not only writing insightful, science-based articles that helped educate and inspire, but also serving as editor, organizer, and coordinator of the newsletter itself. His work connected readers to timely grazing strategies, research-based tools, and stories of stewardship from across the state.

Whether he was breaking down the benefits of prescribed fire, analyzing long-term grazing impacts, or sharing practical advice for producers, Sandy brought clarity, depth, and a deep respect for the land to every piece he wrote. His commitment to both the Coalition and to grassland conservation has helped shape the voice of this publication.

As Sandy steps back from his newsletter responsibilities, we offer our sincere gratitude. His impact will continue to be felt through the knowledge he's shared, the conversations he's sparked, and the clear, steady voice he brought to our work.

Thank you, Sandy, for your years of service, your steady leadership, and your unwavering commitment to the grasslands we all care so deeply about.

From the SD Grassland Coalition board of directors:

*Jeff Zimprich* *Riley Kammerer* *Jim Faulstich* *Jori Smiley*  
*Mike McKernan* *Larry Wagner* *Drew Anderson*  
*Wacey Kirkpatrick*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Aug 9, Wallace**  
Adam Grimm Federal Duck Stamp  
Hometown Celebration

**Aug 11, Mud Butte**  
Leopold Conservation Award Winner Tour

**Sept 3-5, Huron**  
Soil Health School

**Sept 9-11, Chamberlain**  
Chamberlain Grazing School

## Leopold Award Recipient Tour by Briana Rupp

**See the Change: Leopold Tour Highlights the Power of Rotational Grazing**

***Join us August 11 at the Stomprud Angus Ranch in Mud Butte, SD***



*The Stomprud Family*

Each year, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition hosts a tour to showcase the recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award—an opportunity for producers, partners, and community members to see first-hand how stewardship and profitability can go hand-in-hand. This year's tour will take place on August 11 at the Stomprud Angus Ranch near Mud Butte, where Larry Stomprud and his family have spent decades perfecting the art of rotational grazing and improving the health of their land.

Larry's journey is a story of quiet transformation—marked not by sweeping, dramatic changes, but by steady, intentional improvements year after year. With a strong foundation built by his father, who had already begun subdividing pastures to increase stock density, Larry continued refining their grazing system with help from the SD Grassland Coalition's Grazing School and mentors like the late Dave Steffen. Over time, he shifted toward adaptive rotational grazing, setting clear goals to increase productivity while caring for the land.

"It's been a gradual thing," Larry says, pointing to noticeable changes in the composition of his pastures. Where there was once mostly short Bluegrass and Buffalo Grass, there is now more Western Wheatgrass, Green Needlegrass, and Big Bluestem in overflow areas—clear signs of improved range health. Alongside the changes in grass composition, the carrying capacity of the ranch has steadily increased, allowing the family to do more with what they have, rather than expanding their footprint.

Of course, progress didn't come without hurdles. Infrastructure improvements like fencing and water systems required both patience and persistence. One of the biggest turning points came in 2005 when Larry drilled a deep well to ensure reliable water access across more of the ranch. He also transitioned to one-wire electric fencing for cross-fencing, a move that made it easier to rotate cattle more frequently without sacrificing too much time or energy. With each improvement, the ranch became more resilient—not just to drought, but to the many variables that affect the day-to-day realities of ranch life.





## Leopold Award Recipient Tour Continued...

### Why Attend the Leopold Tour?

What makes the Leopold Tour especially valuable is that it gives visitors a real-world look at the long-term impact of management changes. Larry doesn't claim overnight success or a perfectly linear path. Instead, he offers a lived example of how persistence, education, and adaptive management can combine to build a more productive and balanced operation over time.

Tour attendees will have the chance to hear directly from the Stomprud family, walk the pastures, and see how even small shifts in management can create lasting benefits. Whether you're new to rotational grazing or have years of experience, the Leopold Tour is a great opportunity to connect with other producers, ask questions, and walk away with ideas to apply back home.

Join us on Monday, August 11 for this special event. The tour is free to attend and open to all—landowners, partners, and anyone interested in the future of South Dakota's grasslands. Additional details including directions and start time can be found at [sdgrass.org](http://sdgrass.org).

Come see what's possible when producers lead the way in land stewardship. We look forward to seeing you there.



## Partners on the Prairie Podcast Series: Exploring the Entities Behind South Dakota's Grasslands

by Laura Kahler

South Dakota's grasslands thrive thanks to a strong network of dedicated partners. While each organization brings its own mission and expertise, they share a common goal—supporting our grasslands and the producers who depend on them. To highlight these collaborative efforts, the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative has launched the Partners on the Prairie podcast series.

These 20–30 minute episodes offer listeners a quick and informative look into the organizations involved, how they engage with grassland conservation, and how others can support their work. The power of this initiative lies in partnership—bringing together diverse perspectives, resources, and skills. By understanding one another, we strengthen our collective impact.

You can listen to Partners on the Prairie wherever you get your podcasts, including Apple Podcasts and Spotify. You can also stream episodes directly from your computer by visiting [Spotify.com](https://www.spotify.com) and searching for Partners on the Prairie.

With 25 episodes currently available, the series showcases a wide range of organizations that value and actively support South Dakota's grasslands. Current episodes include:



# Partners on the Prairie Podcast Series: Exploring the Entities Behind South Dakota's Grasslands Continued...



## EP 1: PRESENTATION SISTERS – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY MINISTRY

Jamie Risse and Jared Hohn share how the Presentation Sisters restore native grasslands and promote education through their ecological ministry.

## EP 2: SOUTH DAKOTA USDA-NRCS

Tanse Herrmann discusses NRCS programs and how the Rainfall Simulator teaches soil health principles.

## EP 3: NORTHERN PRAIRIE LAND TRUST

Travis Entenman explains how voluntary conservation easements help landowners conserve prairie landscapes.

## EP 4: DUCKS UNLIMITED

Bruce Toay highlights Ducks Unlimited's hands-on conservation work across South Dakota.

## EP 5: AUDUBON GREAT PLAINS

Josh Lefers talks about efforts to protect grassland bird habitats through Audubon's programs in South Dakota.

## EP 6: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Lori Brown and Joe Blastic share TNC's conservation strategies focused on riparian and prairie ecosystems.

## EP 7: NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS JOINT VENTURE

Catherine Wightman discusses how the Joint Venture supports communities and ecosystems that depend on healthy grasslands.

## EP 8: NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

Clayton Lenk describes how NWTFF conserves habitat for wild turkeys and many other wildlife species.

## EP 9: SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH & PARKS

Mark Norton and Eric Magedanz outline GFP's habitat programs and opportunities for landowners.

## EP 10: SOUTH DAKOTA SOIL HEALTH COALITION

Cindy Zenk, Shawn Freeland, and Doug Sieck talk about this producer-led nonprofit's efforts to promote better soil health.

## EP 11: USFWS PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE

Kurt Forman shares how USFWS provides technical and financial support for improving wildlife habitat on private lands.

## EP 12: KATERI

James Hunt explains how Kateri helps producers earn carbon credits through sustainable grassland management.

## EP 13: BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES

Angela Dwyer and Kristin May highlight how managing land for livestock also benefits bird conservation.

## EP 14: XERCES SOCIETY

This episode covers Xerces' pollinator initiatives and how native forbs support both insects and livestock.

## EP 15: SOUTH DAKOTA GRASSLAND COALITION

Rod Baumberger, Bart Carmichael, and Judge Jessop discuss the Coalition's origins and ongoing support for sustainable grassland management.

## EP 16: SOUTH DAKOTA AG LAND TRUST

Tony Leif discusses how this nonprofit works with producers to conserve working lands through voluntary conservation efforts.

## EP 17: ECDYSIS AND BLUE DASHER FARM

Jonathan Lundgren shares Ecdysis' research on regenerative agriculture and the 1,000 Farms Initiative.

## EP 18: SNAPLANDS

Ryan White explains how Snaplands helps producers improve land health, productivity, and record-keeping.

## EP 19: PRAIRIE POTHOLE JOINT VENTURE

Lauri Hanauska-Brown discusses PPJV's approach to bird habitat and grassland conservation in South Dakota.

## EP 20: SD SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

Jeff Vander Wilt shares how the Society connects professionals working to sustain and study rangelands.

## EP 21: SD CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Mandy Pearson discusses how the chapter supports wildlife professionals and conservation science in the state.

## EP 22: EARTH OPTICS

Ryan Dierking explores how soil data mapping helps producers make informed land management decisions.

## EP 23: PHEASANTS FOREVER

Matt Gottlob and Tom Zinter talk about habitat improvement and public access efforts in South Dakota.

## EP 24: DAKOTA TERRITORY BUFFALO ASSOCIATION

Alex Sleep and Lindsey Hester explain how the association supports bison producers and market access.

## EP 25: AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

Kevin Ellison and Steve Riley highlight collaborative efforts to conserve grassland birds and habitats.





## Recovery and Rest: Rethinking What Our Pastures Really Need

by Jenita Derga, Ranch and Grazing Consultant- Wild Prairie Solutions

In grazing management, the phrase “rest and recovery” is used often—but it might be time to flip that around. In fact, we’d do better to talk about recovery and rest. Why? Because a plant doesn’t actually rest until it has recovered. While a pasture may be “rested” from grazing activity, the plants within it are often hard at work rebuilding what was lost.

Rest is not recovery. And if we confuse the two, we risk setting back the very forage base we depend on.

### THE PARADIGM OF “REST”

For generations, many of us have been taught to give pastures “rest”—meaning time without animals on them. But here’s the trap: just because a pasture has been rested for 30, 60, or even 90 days doesn’t mean it has recovered.

Recovery is a biological process, not a time period. A plant begins working the moment it’s bitten. It draws on root reserves, initiates regrowth, and works to reestablish photosynthetic capacity. During this time, it’s anything but idle. That’s why we should think in terms of recovery and rest—because until that recovery is complete, rest hasn’t really begun.

The old paradigm assumes that time off is the fix. But recovery depends on conditions: season, moisture, past grazing severity, plant type, and more. A rigid rest period may not match what the plant truly needs to bounce back.

### WHAT DOES TRUE RECOVERY LOOK LIKE?

If we want to graze pastures at their most productive and resilient state, we need to observe the plant community for full recovery—not just count days on the calendar.

Indicators of plant recovery include:

- New tillers or basal shoots indicating regrowth initiation
- Erect, turgid posture, signaling recharged energy reserves
- Minimal signs of grazing scars and full canopy regrowth
- Increased plant density or bunch size, especially noticeable in native bunchgrasses

True recovery also implies that roots have regrown, though we may not see this aboveground. We can use indicators like plant vigor, color, and responsiveness to moisture, to infer that roots have sufficiently regrown. The timeline varies, but if we graze before full recovery, we set plants back further than the first graze ever did.

# Recovery and Rest Continued...

## WHY RECOVERY AND REST MATTER

Plants that are grazed before recovering experience compounding stress. Their root systems weaken, their nutrient uptake declines, and their ability to compete with less desirable plants drops. This isn't just a pasture health issue—it's an economic one.

Here's what you're risking by skipping true recovery:

- Lower forage production, leading to fewer grazing days
- Decreased drought resilience, making you more feed-dependent
- Less Desirable plant invasion, due to open canopy gaps
- Lower forage quality and palatability
- Higher input costs and reduced livestock performance

On the other hand, giving plants time to recover and rest leads to deeper roots, denser stands, and higher production. It's the cheapest investment you can make in your grazing system.

## SHIFTING YOUR MANAGEMENT MINDSET

If you're still managing by set rest intervals or convenience, consider moving to a recovery-based system. This means:

- Monitoring pastures for plant condition, not just offering them “time off”
- Varying recovery periods by season, severity, and species
- Letting go of rigid schedules and practicing adaptive management

You might graze a pasture for three days and not return for six months. Or you might graze lightly and come back in 90 days. But each decision is based on what the plant is telling you—not what your rotation plan says on paper.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The most profitable grazing systems are built around the biological realities of the plant—not the calendar or the convenience of the operator. True recovery, not just rest, is what keeps your pastures productive, resilient, and ready to support your livestock and your bottom line.

Let's challenge the paradigm. Don't ask how long it's been since you grazed a pasture. Ask whether it's truly recovered. Your grass—and your wallet—will thank you.

**Something for Everyone at  
the 2025 Annual Conference**

December 4-5, 2025

This year's conference will include two days absolutely PACKED with value, including outstanding presenters, breakout sessions, and plenty of time for socializing. You do not want to miss this, so mark your calendar today!

The conference will be held in Rapid City and will feature Burke Teichert, Jerry Doan, Jolene Brown, and as an incredible bonus - back by popular demand - Dr. Tom Noffsinger.

C  
O

RNER

- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management

## 2025 Rangeland and Soil Days Contest Hosts 133 Youth

BROOKINGS, S.D. – South Dakota State University Extension is pleased to announce that 133 youth participated in the 41st annual Rangeland and 20th annual Soil Days contests on June 10-11, 2025, in Belle Fourche.

A joint effort between SDSU Extension, South Dakota Society for Range Management, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Butte/Lawrence Conservation Districts, Rangeland and Soil Days gave youth an opportunity to compete through displays, presentations, a land and homesite judging contest and a rangeland judging contest.

There are four divisions in the rangeland contest: New Rangers (ages 8-10), Wranglers (ages 11-13), Scouts (ages 14-18) and Go-Getters (ages 14-18 4-H or FFA). By participating in this contest, students learn how to identify ecological sites, determine cattle carrying capacity, evaluate prairie grouse habitat, plant identification and provide management recommendations.

Katelyn Gebhart, of Meadow, won the Top Hand award in the Go-Getter division of the Rangeland Days contest. To be eligible for the top hand award, participants must compete in all three contest categories (display, speech and judging). Gebhart placed first in her display and speech and earned the top score individually in the judging contest.

Winners of the top hand award for each division receive a custom belt buckle. Katy Scott, of Whitewood, won the Top Hand Award in the Wrangler division (age 11-13) and Della Scott, of Whitewood, won the Top Hand Award in the New Ranger division (age 8-10).

Gebhart also received a traveling trophy that will be hers until next year's event. Additionally, for winning first place in the speech contest, Gebhart will represent South Dakota at the National Society for Range Management meeting on Feb. 7–11, 2026, in Monterey, California. She will participate and compete among other high school students from all states in the High School Youth Forum.

Haakon/Corson County was the top Rangeland Contest Go-Getter 4-H team, whose members were Katelyn Gebhart, Darla Barnes, Mackenzie Hovland and Molly Harty. They will represent South Dakota at the National Land and Range Judging Contest in 2026 in Yukon, Oklahoma.

The top Rangeland Contest Go-Getter FFA team was Sturgis FFA, whose members were Ellie Storm, Larie Cichosz, Aydan Rhodes and Quintin Kelly.



*Top Hand Winners (from left to right): Katelyn Gebhart, Katy Scott and Della Scott.*





Judge Jessop  
221 N Main  
Box 401  
Presho, SD 57568

CONTACT US ANY TIME WITH  
QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS

Phone: 605-280-0127  
Email: [communications@sdgrass.org](mailto:communications@sdgrass.org)  
Website: [sdgrass.org](http://sdgrass.org)



#### **A SPECIAL NOTE TO OUR VALUED MEMBERS**

Your support helps keep this work moving forward. The future of South Dakota's grasslands, ranches, and rural communities depends on continued care, collaboration, and commitment—and we're grateful to have you with us on that journey. We welcome your feedback and invite you to reach out anytime—whether you're looking for more information, want to suggest a topic, or just have ideas to share. And as always, we encourage you to stay involved, spread the word, and help others connect with our work.