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Nebraska Section Society for Range Management Newsletter



President's Corner by Kyle Schumacher, President

Happy spring to all of the folks out on Nebraska's rangelands and I hope your winter went well. I know that there is always a to-do list regardless of the time of year, but for me the winter seems to be the time for the most planning to be done. As an agency employee it seems that there's two conferences a week from January thru March. I was fortunate to see many of our members in-person or at least over a video call through that time. The conferences and travel can make for long days, but the planning and coordination that results from these is I think some of the most impactful (and usually gradual) nudges toward a greater end product for what we are all trying to achieve with our rangelands.

I want to offer my congratulations to all of the award recipients from SRM's annual meeting in Spokane in February. I want to extend a special congratulations to Lisa McMillan for receiving the Outstanding Achievement in Land Stewardship Award. We all know how instrumental Lisa is in advancing the range science in Nebraska from promoting prescribed burning, leading so much of the state's youth range activities, and dedicating her entire career toward mentoring her peers and the ranchers in her area. It was great for our section to share how much she means to us to the parent society as well.

We had an incredible attendance of students from UNL and Chadron State and with the High School Youth Forum who all competed well and have me very optimistic for their futures. Congrats to UNL for receiving 2nd High Team Score on the URME and 3rd Place in the Rangeland Cup. Finally, congrats to Clara Freese for receiving Individual 3rd Place on the URME.

We were also excited to be selected (or reselected?) at the annual meeting as co-hosts with Kansas and Oklahoma Sections for the 2027 Parent Society in Meeting planned to be in Wichita, Kansas. I think we all can look forward to having SRM back in the Great Plains. While we were hoping for Omaha as a host, a little



President's Corner Continued...

further south will still provide a great opportunity for our section. Thank you for everyone's enthusiasm with this to date!

In closing for this edition, we have accomplished great things on our rangelands this year already and many folks have had a really productive spring. May that momentum carry you all into the summer and I hope each of you are able to pause for a moment under our beautiful Nebraska skies and take in all that our rangelands mean to you.

Kyle Schumacher
NESRM President



SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT – NEBRASKA NATURAL LEGACY JOINT CONFERENCE



*Forging a Path Forward: Strengthening Nebraska's
Natural Legacy through Range Management*

Oct. 7-9, 2025

East Campus, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska

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UNL Summer Happenings By: Cheryl Dunn, Council Member

Dr. Gwendwr Meredith is currently working on a UNL Grand Challenges grant focused on understanding how ranchers and agricultural stakeholders perceive and adopt regenerative practices across Nebraska's working rangelands. Her work examines the social dimensions of adoption, including trust, information networks, and place-based values, to support resilient and adaptive management strategies in the face of ecological and economic challenges. This summer, she will be conducting interviews with ranchers within the Sandhills.

Dr. Dan Uden is engaged in a variety of collaborative, interdisciplinary projects focused on rangeland and agricultural systems across Nebraska and beyond. At Barta Brothers Ranch, his team is entering the fourth year of a collaborative adaptive management project comparing patch-burn and deferred rotational grazing, with contributions from graduate students studying topics ranging from cattle diets to remote sensing. As part of the ADAPT initiative, they are monitoring ecosystem services across three UNL sites to evaluate sustainability and resilience in beef production systems. Additional efforts include developing satellite-based tools to detect grassland disturbances for pheasant habitat prioritization, assessing the hydrologic outcomes of conservation programs like CRP, and mapping early warning indicators of rangeland state transitions. We are also involved in projects addressing oak savanna fire management, maize yield modeling, and ecosystem service outcomes in conservation agriculture in Rwanda.

Dr. Nic McMillan is engaged in multiple research projects aimed at advancing rangeland ecology and informing management practices in Nebraska. His team is developing management strategies aimed at enhancing grassland heterogeneity and resilience and employing remote sensing technologies to monitor biodiversity. For example, one of his undergraduate researchers, funded by the Cabela's Apprenticeship Program and in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, is exploring how rangeland heterogeneity benefits small mammals. Additionally, they are investigating how mowing and grazing affect forage quality and herbivore movement to optimize livestock production. These efforts aim to provide practical recommendations for rangeland managers to improve biodiversity, livestock productivity, and ecosystem resilience in Nebraska.

Range Club Update By: Cheryl Dunn, Council Member

Students from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln brought home several honors from the Society for Range Management's annual meeting, held February 10 in Spokane, Washington. The team earned 2nd place in the Undergraduate Range Management Exam (URME) and secured 3rd in the Rangeland Cup competition, as well as 7th in the Plant ID contest.

The Nebraska URME team was made up of students from a variety of academic backgrounds, including grassland systems majors Joseph Barenberg, Clara Freese, Cassidy Maricle, Sam Morrow, and Sheridan Wilson. They were joined by Bobbi Guggenmos, studying agricultural leadership, education, and communication, and Abby Hirschman, an animal science major. Among them, Clara and Sheridan stood out individually, placing 3rd and 9th, respectively, in the overall competition.

The Rangeland Cup Team consisted of Bobbi, Clara, and Sam. Their poster emphasized a collaborative, adaptive management strategy aimed at preserving biodiversity and ecological health. Their five-step framework outlined how to identify threats, engage stakeholders, implement targeted actions, evaluate outcomes, and update management tactics over time. Key focus areas included invasive species control, restoring natural fire intervals across 100 management units, and using tools like prescribed grazing and herbicide applications to support vegetation goals.

Nebraska's teams were guided by a dedicated group of coaches: Aisha Sams, who led preparation for the URME; Cheryl Dunn, who coached the Plant ID team; and Nic McMillan, who provided mentorship for the Rangeland Cup competition.



High School Youth Forum in Spokane By: Lisa McMillan, Student Affairs Committee Chair

Mary Reece and Lisa McMillan (NRCS) accompanied three Nebraska delegates to Spokane, WA on Saturday February 8, 2025, to participate in the International SRM Meeting and High School Youth Forum (HSYF). They included Leah Christen, Steinauer, Eli Rogers, Dunning, and Aidan Choat, St. Edward. On Sunday morning they scoped out the home room, presentation room, and the conference center and did a quick walking tour of the downtown area to find lunch and supper venues that would hold 30 (students and sub-committee adults). Sunday evening was the opening night, and the HSYF orientation for the students to get acquainted with a short slide show about themselves and games lead by Leah Christen (2024 HSYF President), this was followed by practicing their 6-to-8-minute range related presentations.

Monday was the ecological tour with sights and several stops on the Turnbull Wildlife Refuge. The weather was cold and snow on the ground made it less than comfortable, but it still was a great learning experience for everyone. The HSYF delegate from Hawaii especially enjoyed the snow and icicle's and at the end of the tour promptly made a snow angle an experience he couldn't wait to tell his family about. We returned to Spokane Convention Center and had a chance to attend the Trade Show, where Universities and Colleges were recruiting students for their programs, and businesses and agencies were showcasing their products. That evening all attended the "Professional Interaction" night at a local eatery. During supper the students were introduced to five professionals that rotated around tables and visited with them regarding the paths they took through their education and into their current career. Our own Kyle Schumacher was in attendance and provided us with the education path and experience that took him to his current position as a Wildlife Biologist with the Nebraska Game and Parks.

Tuesday was a full day of presentations, with Eli Rogers presentation titled "Sustaining the Sandhills -The Tale of a Dusty Trail Hand", and Aidan Choat's talk titled "Maintain the Range". After presentations all were able to relax and unwind at the SRM Dance. Wednesday, we assembled for a late breakfast followed by the HSYF business meeting and a workshop on "Interpreting Ecological Site Descriptions and State and Transition Models", and the election of Eli Rogers of Dunning, NE as the 2025 HSYF President! He will be attending the SRM meeting in Monterey, CA (January 2026) to conduct the meeting, act as emcee of all the high school events, and present the awards to next year's HSYF winners.

All 3 delegates and Mary and Lisa attended our "Section Supper" which President - Kyle Schumacher arranged at a local eatery. We grazed on a variety of pizzas and sides. It was good to see and visit with several Nebraska section members, from high school, to college, to professionals and learn a little bit about them on a personal level.

After the end of the awards ceremony, the students changed clothes and the HSYF business meeting resumed, with graduation certificates for 18 attendees representing 8 sections, and the five HSYF Sub-Committee members in attendance, (which included Mary and Lisa too). The "Trinket Exchange" is always a highlight of the forum, and this years did not disappoint. This is the final time these high schoolers will be all together and exchanging a small gift/token showcasing their town, state, livelihood, or etc., will act as a reminder of their friendship and the amazing time they all had at the International SRM meeting and HSYF in Spokane, WA.

The return trip on Thursday started very early with the students in a big rush to pack after oversleeping, leaving luggage in the hotel room, and etc., we finally left the hotel around 3:00 am for our 5:00 am flight. Everything was smooth and all returned tired but proud of our accomplishments. Thank you to the Nebraska Section members and board for their support of the youth in this state.



Left to Right: Leah, Eli & Aidan



Left to Right: Lisa, Aidan, Eli, Leah, and Mary

Thank you so much for sponsoring the High School Youth Forum. It was an amazing opportunity that I wish I can do again and again. I was able to meet so many different people and learn how they view certain range topics. It was a very educational event. I was able to learn about different ecological sites and how vastly different they are from Nebraska. Every day was filled with something interesting - speeches, a tour, and group gatherings. While in Spokane, I learned so much that I was able to bring home that information and share it with my friends and family. Once again, thank you so much for sponsoring the High School Youth Forum.

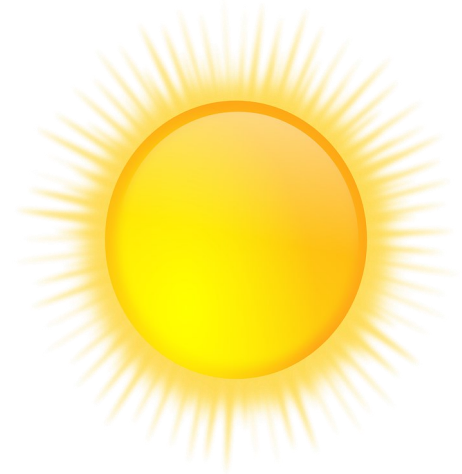
Aidan Choat, St. Edward, NE

Thank you to the entire Nebraska SRM section for allowing me to return to the High School Youth Forum as president. I didn't think it was possible, but this year was even better than last! Traveling to Spokane, Washington, was an incredible experience, especially since this was only my second time flying (with last year's HSYF being my first).

I'm especially grateful to Mary Reece and Lisa McMillan for making the entire process easy to navigate. From meeting delegates from across the country to interacting with professionals in various settings, the HSYF has had a huge impact on me. I hope to continue attending the annual SRM meeting, competing at the collegiate level, and maybe even helping with HSYF in the future.

Thank you again for this amazing opportunity!

Leah M. Christen, Steinauer, NE



*Thank
You!*



A Message to our Members...

The Nebraska Section of the Society for Range Management has for our entire existence viewed Nebraska's rangelands as lab for learning. Many of our section's 51 founding members almost certainly held that view long before our section was incorporated. With that, most of our membership gets to use our rangelands to learn about cattle performance, plant physiology, ecosystem dynamics, economics, or something similar.

Over the past few months, we have been challenged to more fully realize the importance of people on our rangelands. Our rangelands thrive when knowledge, trust, honesty, and human kindness flow freely through a network that includes the rancher, the agency range specialist, the university researcher, the biologist, the outside visitor, and beyond. We all thrive when that same network includes young and old, diverse interests and upbringings, and our neighbors that might just look, dress or do things a little different. Our best examples of healthy rangelands don't factor in wealth or political affiliation or any other vice intended to divide and isolate us.

Our society and our section hold great value to this grand but delicate network. Life on rangelands is hard, and life has been much harder recently for many of our members across Nebraska and our society. For these people, Nebraska SRM wants to reinforce: You are valued in our rangelands far beyond any position or job title. It is your personality, your knowledge, and your passion and fascination for Nebraska's greatest resource—our rangelands—that make you a valuable person to our section. These characteristics can never be stripped of you.

One principle of rangeland management is that there will always be a drought but that all droughts come to an end. How we respond to both is what makes us successful and stronger into the future.

With great sincerity and appreciation,

The Nebraska Section of the Society for Range Management



On the Nebraska Section SRM Council Board!

If you are interested in joining the Nebraska SRM Section Council Board, please contact Committee Chairman, Bob Broweleit, at (308) 240-0420 or bentbarc@gmail.com.