



NE Section Council

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Photo (bottom right) Courtesy of
Amanda Hefner

Nebraska Section Society for Range Management Newsletter



Message from the President

Welcome to spring? At least up here in Chadron we've kind of went from a drawn out winter to summer in a blink of an eye. Regardless of if you actually were blessed with spring rains or just more snow, much of the state is looking pretty good (moisture wise) going in to the summer. Let's hope that means a good start to growing grass for most of you.

We did get our membership report recently from the parent society; it looks like many of the hiccups with the change in membership formatting are starting to subside. I will say, I was a little surprised to see some familiar names not on the list. So, if you know of some of our members who have let their memberships lapse please remind them that we still appreciate their contributions to the NE SRM. I was also surprised by the number of people I interact with who aren't members but would benefit from our

network of people and would also help build our section into a large and diverse community of rangeland professionals. Recently, I had an interesting meeting with the CSC president, Dr. Rhine, and Vice Chancellor Boehm; and in the conversation we continually (mostly they since I was the little fish in the pond) came back to a couple different concepts. First, that collaborative efforts are generally a good thing. Second, having a diversity of ideas and approaches presented is a good thing (not unlike rangeland communities and management). And third, that Nebraska is a large and diverse state. As a section we need to continue to reach out to those in the state who have a vested interest in the management and conservation of Nebraska's rangeland resources, because when we grow our membership we grow the network which we can collaborate and exchange

knowledge within.

Lastly, I want to say congratulations to Dr. Jim O'Rourke and family for being recognized by the Sand County Foundation with the 2018 Leopold Conservation Award. Their work on their RuJoDen Ranch is well deserving of the recognition. If you get a chance to come out and see their place I'd strongly recommend it.

Have a great summer. Hopefully, we'll cross paths between now and the annual meeting in October.

Cheers,

Anthony Perlinski, NE
Section President



O'Rourke Family Receives 2018 Leopold Conservation Award

Governor Pete Ricketts joined Sand County Foundation, the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska (AFAN), Cargill, and the Nebraska Environmental Trust to announce the O'Rourke Family's RuJoDen Ranch as the recipient of the 2018 Nebraska Leopold Conservation Award®. The annual award honors Nebraska landowner achievement in voluntary stewardship and management of natural resources.

"Nebraska's farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists," said Governor Ricketts. "Congratulations to the O'Rourke family on this great honor. Their work at the RuJoDen Ranch demonstrates how private land owners consistently help feed the world while caring for and conserving the land and habitat they utilize every year. People like the O'Rourke family are helping set the standard for farmers and ranchers across our state and the nation."



Gov. Ricketts and the O'Rourke Family

ABOUT THE O'ROURKE FAMILY'S RANCH NEAR CHADRON

Jim O'Rourke's grandparents, Frank and Jerene, became the second family to steward this land along the Pine Ridge south of Chadron in northwestern Nebraska in 1950. A sign they erected, which reads, "O'Rourke – RuJoDen Ranch – Wildlife Habitat," reflects the family's commitment to a land conservation ethic.

Previously cultivated fields have been seeded with perennial grasses to stabilize and rebuild soil health. Grazing management along the riparian areas of Chadron Creek, has resulted in a multi-age class of hardwoods as well as increased tree and shrub diversity, ideal for a variety of wildlife.

Stable banks, overhangs and shady, cool water provides for good fish habitat. Invasive cedar trees were removed from the riparian areas and uplands to further improve wildlife habitat. The ponderosa pine forest was thinned to improve tree health and reduce fuel loads, which proved effective in saving the majority of the timber stand during the 2012 wildfire.

The O'Rourke family realizes the increasing number of smaller acreage ranches need to be diversified to be sustainable and have implemented a myriad of practices including, beekeeping, pasture raised poultry, deer and turkey hunting, a horse-motel and an agro-tourism endeavor. Guests have the opportunity to stay in historic sheep herder wagons and hunt, fish, hike or simply "un-plug" from the modern world.

Through multiple generations, the O'Rourke family continues to carry on a traditional land ethic which is guided by a wisdom that all systems are connected and must work together to achieve true land conservation.

The Leopold Conservation Award is presented in honor of renowned conservationist and author Aldo Leopold, who called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage. Award applicants are judged based on their demonstration of improved resource conditions, innovation, long-term commitment to stewardship, sustained economic viability, community and civic leadership, and multiple use benefits.



Gov. Ricketts and the O'Rourke Family

"Governor Ricketts understands that Nebraska's farmers and ranchers are integral to the health of the state's natural resources," said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President.

"We appreciate the Governor's continued participation in this important celebration of sustainable agriculture on private lands."

"AFAN is proud to support the Leopold Conservation Award and we are excited that the O'Rourke family from the Pine Ridge area is joining the ranks of many Nebraska landowners who have won this prestigious award," said Emily Skillett, AFAN livestock programming coordinator.

"Conservation on private land is alive and well in all sectors of agriculture. The O'Rourke family has used conservation practices to protect their land and to create sustainable wildlife habitat."

"The Nebraska Environmental Trust is proud to be part of the annual Leopold Conservation Award in Nebraska recognizing families that do so much for conservation like the O'Rourkes," said Mark Brohman, Nebraska Environmental Trust Executive Director. "The O'Rourkes have educated so many people not only in the classroom and on their property, but all over the Midwest and even internationally. From forest thinning to reduce fire danger, reseeded past fields, promoting wildlife and showcasing diversity to be sustainable, they have done so much and are very deserving of the Leopold Award."

"Cargill applauds Jim and Lora O'Rourke for their life long devotion to conservation and agriculture," said Sammy Renteria, general manager of Cargill in Schuyler. "Like many other Nebraskans, the O'Rourke's have cultivated a conservation ethic handed down to them by their family. They not only implement it on their land but work tirelessly to educate others on how to do the same. We are proud to support the recognition of such a deserving family."

The Leopold Conservation Award in Nebraska is made possible thanks to the generous contributions from Cargill, Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska, Farm Credit Services of America, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nebraska Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, Green Cover Seed, Nebraska Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska

O'Rourke Family...continued

Game & Parks Commission, Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Sandhills Task Force, Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assoc. and the World Wildlife Fund.

Article written by Nebraska Rural Radio Association



O'Rourke Family at their ranch near Chadron, Neb.



2018 Range Judging by Kristin Dickinson

We have wrapped up the 63rd year of range judging in Nebraska. This year, we reached 1234 participants through Area Contests and had the largest contest every held, with 536 participants at the State Contest held in Keith County.

The top senior individual was Wesley Wach from Hayes Center and the top junior and overall champion individual was Sheridan Wilson from Arthur County. The top senior team and overall champion was from West Holt. Members were Mason Hale, Casey Coburn, Emily Burke, and Caitlin Butterfield. The top junior team was from Hayes Center and had members Aston Erickson, Jakob Anderjaska, Jaycee Lapp, and Avery Johnson.

Nebraska was host to the Old West Regional contest this year as well. We had 180 participants from 16 schools. Unfortunately, no teams from out-of-state participated. The champion individual was Sheridan Wilson

from Arthur County and the champion team was the Ainsworth team consisting of Maria Harthoorn, Rebecca Taylor, Henry Beel, and Sam Wilkins.

A huge thank you goes to the State Committee members and all of the local contest committees for putting together some outstanding contests! If we didn't have the great volunteers in Nebraska, we wouldn't have such a strong program.

We also honored Daryl Cisney for his 32 years of service to the state range judging committee. Daryl has been instrumental in many of the handbook changes over the years, has set up way more contests than anyone I know, and served as the state committee chair for 5 years. Thank you, Daryl, for all of you service to range judging in Nebraska!

Invitations to host area and state contests for 2018 have been sent out. Several counties have formed local committees and have set dates, but a few are left to make that final

commitment.

It continues to be a great time for educating youth in Nebraska about the rangeland resource! Thank you to all that have assisted in one way or another with a contest or contests or helping schools to prepare for contests.



On the Nebraska SRM Section Council board!

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

Historians Report by Jeff Nichols

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IN THE NEBRASKA SECTION.....

Five Years Ago (2013)

The Nebraska Section officers were: Jon Soper, President; Curtis Talbot, Past President; Bob Browleit, President Elect; Angie Petersen, Secretary/Treasurer; Kristin Dickenson (Miller), Newsletter Editor; Cindy Tusler and Karla Jenkins were Council Members.

Plans were being made for the 50th Anniversary of the NE Range Youth Camp celebration to be held August 24, 2013.

Ten Years Ago (2008)

The Nebraska Section officers were: Dana Larsen, President; Jerry Volesky, Past President; Mary Reece, President Elect; Leslie Stewart-Phelps, Secretary/Treasurer; Jamie Hornickel, Newsletter Editor; Doug Whisenhunt and Michael Croxen were Council Members.

Dana Larsen reported on a project initiated by the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition (NGLC) in which they were utilizing a grant received by the Nebraska Environmental Trust to start eight rancher steward networks across Nebraska. The focus of these rancher led networks was to consult with other ranchers on range resource problems in a peer to peer format. The goal was to bridge the gap between agency and institute driven education efforts for invasive plant control along with other ranch management issues. The responsibility of promoting and adopting grassland conservation practices by land managers, to land managers was the focus of the project.

Twenty Years Ago (1998)

The Nebraska Section Officers were: Daryl Cisney, President; Terry Enfield, President Elect; Dave Cook, Past President; Bob Sprentall, Secretary-Treasurer; Sherry Preston (Connot), Newsletter Editor; Bob Masters and Lora O'Rourke were Council Members.

Leonard John, SCS/NRCS Range Conservationist at Rushville retired. He was very active in the range judging program in NE for many years.

The NE Section was ramping up planning for the 1999 International SRM meeting to be held in Omaha the following February. Jim O'Rourke had a steady schedule of planning meetings on the slate for the months leading up to the "BIG baby" as he termed it. He equated the nine months leading up to the meeting as a gestational period needing "high nutrition and tender loving care, all in hopes of a natural birth rather than an emergency C-section".

The 4th annual Family Range Camp was scheduled for June 11th - 13th at Parks, NE. The focus of the camp was the basics of soils, plants and wildlife. They were planning a tour of the Rock Creek fish hatchery as well.

Lonard Thye, SCS/NRCS Range Conservationist at Valentine, Scottsbluff, North Platte and Ogallala, passed away from an apparent heart attack at the age of 55 years old. Leonard had retired from NRCS in 1994. He was the Nebraska Section President in 1978, Newsletter editor in 1974 and assisted with Range Camp and Range Judging.

Thirty Years Ago (1988)

The Nebraska Section Officers were : Susan Oldfather (Schuckert), President; Sid Salzman, President Elect; Brent Lathrop, Past President; Daryl Cisney, Secretary/Treasurer; Scott Gall, Newsletter Editor; Cal Schulz and Al Steuter were Council members.

The UNL Range Management Club held their eighth annual symposium called "The Conservation Reserve Program in Ten Years - What Will it be Like?" LaRene Mansfield (Monahan) was the principal organizer of the event.

The NE range Shortcourse was held at Chadron. The cost to attend was \$45 and limited to 45 applicants. Dr. Lowell Moser was the chairman for organizing the course.

The Section Summer Range Tour was planned for the Loup City area on August 12, 1988. The late Bill Wester was the tour committee chair.

Mary Raymer (Reece) took over the duties of NE Section Newsletter Editor. She served as newsletter editor until August of 1990.

Forty Years Ago (1978)

The Nebraska Section Officers were: Leonard Thye, President; Paul Seevers, President Elect; Lowell Moser, Past President; James Stubbendieck, Secretary-Treasurer; Dan Bose, Newsletter Editor; Peter Jensen, Historian; Dave Hamilton and Meritt A. Plantz were Council Members.

The NE Section had 110 members.

The NE Range Shortcourse was planned for June 26-30, 1978 at the University of NE Panhandle Station in Scottsbluff. It was limited to the first 30 applicants. Dan Bose was the coordinator for the course.

The NE Range Youth Camp was being planned for June 12-16th. One of the highlights of the week was to be the tour of the Reed and Dave Hamilton Ranch north of Thedford. The fee for attending the camp was \$55 for each participant. Dan Bose was the camp director.



A grasshopper swallow nest hidden in the prairie (above) and Spiderwort (below). Photos Courtesy of Amanda Hefner.



NEBRASKA RANGE JUDGING
CONTEST LOCATIONS

2018 NE Range Judging Schedule

	AREA 1	AREA 2	AREA 3	AREA 4
2018 Host NRD DATE	Morrill North Platte NRD 9/12/2018	Blaine Upper Loup NRD 9/19/2018	Gosper Tri Basin NRD 9/18/2018	Hall Central Platte NRD 9/20/2018
CONTACT for contest info	Dave Wolf North Platte NRD 308-632-2749 dwolf@nprnd.org	Bethany Johnston UNL 308-645-2267 bjohnston3@unl.edu	Nicole Salisbury Tri Basin NRD 308-995-6688 nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org	Marcia Lee Central Platte NRD 308-385-6282 lee@cpnrnd.org
State Committee	Karla Jenkins UNL 308-632-1245 kjenkins2@unl.edu	Bethany Johnston UNL 308-645-2267 bjohnston3@unl.edu	Jeff Nichols NRCS 308-534-2360 x. 3 jeffrey.nichols@ne.usda.gov	Jess Milby UNL 308-696-6720 jess.milby@unl.edu

	AREA 5	AREA 6	STATE	OLD WEST REGIONAL
2018 Host NRD DATE	Antelope Upper Elkhorn NRD 9/11/2018	Seward Upper Big Blue 9/19/2018	Chase Upper Republican NRD 9/25-26/18	WYOMING
CONTACT for contest info	Amy Timmerman Holt County Extension 402-336-2760 atimmerman2@unl.edu	Scott Snell Upper Big Blue 402-362-6601 ssnell@upperbigblue.org	Danielle Haarberg Upper Republican NRD 308-882-5173 dfranck@urnrd.org	Marji Patz NRCS - Powell WY 307-271-3130 marji.patz@wy.usda.gov
State Committee	Tad Judge NRCS 402-340-6839 tad.judge@nebraska.gov	Anna Ferguson NRCS 402-335-3316 x. 3 anna.ferguson@ne.usda.gov	Nadine Bishop NRCS 308-882-4346 x.3 nadine.bishop@ne.usda.gov	

Award Nominations by Jeff Nichols

Nebraska Section SRM Awards

Please consider recognizing someone who is contributing significantly to the wise use and management of our rangelands by nominating them for one of the awards sponsored by the NE Section SRM. The potential awards are as follows:

Range Management Service Award – This award recognizes professionals who are members of the Nebraska Section and are contributing significantly to the furtherance of the activities of the Section through time, dedication and commitment to the wise use of Nebraska’s rangeland resources. We have many members worthy of this recognition.

Rangeman’s Award – This award recognizes operations (individuals, families or groups) who are exemplifying excellence in their stewardship of the rangeland resource through their management skills and commitment. The nominees do not have to be members of the NE Section. Everyone should know sev-

eral people who are doing exceptional work in managing their rangeland resource. Get them recognized.

“Special Award” – The NE Section occasionally recognizes one of its members for outstanding work on a certain activity or project, or sustained dedicated service. This is a nice way to recognize our members who may have previously received the Service Award and continue to contribute at a high level, or a member who excels at a rangeland related project or activity. Look for individuals who deserve a special recognition among their peers!

NEW – NEW –NEW! – “Outstanding Young Range Professional Award” This award will target our younger members (40 or younger), who are contributing at a high level to the range profession in NE. Include in your nomination the following: Name, address, education (where & degree(s)), training, experience, professional potential, leadership

skills and examples, SRM or range activities, community involvement and any other pertinent info to their accomplishments. Include your name, phone number and e-mail address as the nominating individual(s).

We are blessed to live in a state where rangelands and the many benefits they provide prevail. We also are blessed to have a large cadre of individuals who do an excellent job of caring for the rangeland resource in one capacity or another. Take a few minutes and reflect on your experiences over the past year and identify at least one place or individual that needs to be recognized for their good work. Get them nominated for a NE Section SRM award today! **Nominations due to me by September 1, 2018.**

By: Jeff Nichols, 2018 SRM Awards Committee Chair,
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