

Wyoming Section Society for Range Management



Inside This Issue:

President's Message	1-2
SRM Denver Re-cap	3-4
Range practicum	5-7
NW Council Rep article	8
NIRS Fecal Analysis9	-11
Stock Growers Land Trust	.12

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SRM Newsletter President's Article

Spring is upon us and winter has not been too bad. We enjoyed some nice warm days over the weekend and I stare out the window at 3-5 inches of fresh snow on April 2nd. As one permittee said we need spring moisture but don't always appreciate it as much when it is blowing snow with 8 degrees during calving season. It won't be long and things will really be greening up out on the range and hopefully you all will get time to enjoy a wonderful field season of range monitoring and research.

I want to thank everyone that helped in some way with SRM 2020 in Denver. Other articles will cover that event and I have to say it was an experience and opportunity that I will not soon forget.

We are in uncharted territories as many of us work from home or remote locations during the global COVID-19 outbreak that we are dealing with. Thankfully we are moving toward field season where we can get out and keep our social distance in the wide open rangelands of Wyoming. Some exciting things that I am working on here on the Powder River Ranger District of the Bighorn National Forest include diverse ways of accomplishing our summer range workload.

We are able to bring on retirees through the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) program. The ACES program was authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and allows the Forest to use the services of individuals age 55+ with a process that is simple, efficient, and promptly executed. These individuals do not have to be federal retirees; rather anybody 55+ who is qualified to do the work. We are using this authority to get some additional range monitoring work completed on our Forest this season which is an opportunity to use skills and knowledge of the area and past monitoring methods.

In addition to this opportunity I am lucky enough to be part of a pilot program where we are working with Wyoming Department of Agriculture to hire young budding range professionals with an interest in agriculture as contract employees for three forests in Wyoming including the Bighorn NF. Here we will be bringing on young college aged students to give them an opportunity to learn about range management and how the Forest Service works with agriculture producers on land management and livestock grazing. So on our District we will have someone coming in that is new to range management just starting to learn about the profession, a couple of mid-career level range specialists sharing their knowledge and skills, and a retiree who worked on the Forest for over 20 years sharing their knowledge with all of us at one time. I expect great things to come from this learning opportunity for all involved.

If you are a retiree looking for ways to continue range monitoring I encourage you to visit with a Forest Service range specialist to see if there is an opportunity to complete some range work through the ACES program. Some websites for additional information include the following: https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/aces-program, https://www.nowcc.org/programs/aces-programs/aces-program-nrcs/. It appears there may be opportunities with NRCS as well. See the following website for more information: https://www.nowcc.org/programs/aces-program-nrcs/

Back to SRM and what we are trying to accomplish here in Wyoming at this time. We will be looking toward SRM nominations in the coming months and I encourage you to seek candidates for the following positions that we will be electing this fall. President-Elect is a critical position and we often look to past and current council members to fill this position so if you fit this criteria and are interested please share this with the election committee. We will also be filling the southwest and northeast council positions this fall so if you are located in these areas and interested in serving Wyoming Section SRM I encourage you to also contact the election committee or someone within SRM leadership that you know.

Jake Powell has put together a great synopsis of Wyoming SRM History dating back to around 2004. We will be placing this on the Wyoming SRM website and it will be kept up to date so folks can easily identify who held SRM section officer and council positions as well as identify who has received SRM section awards over the last few years. I strongly encourage you all to review this document and think about those deserving folks that you could nominate for awards this year. Additional information on awards can be found at https://www.wyomingrangelands.org/awards or by contacting Clay Wood.

We are still trying to finalize Handbook edits and committee structure review. Hopefully we can finalize these items now that we have completed the planning of SRM 2020. I would also like to share with folks that I learned at SRM in Denver that anyone who is interested in an open committee for the parent society can get involved in that committee. These committees are not restricted to SRM officers in any way and more information on the committees can be found at https://rangelands.org/committee-directory/. So stay tuned and reach out to your SRM section officers or council members with any questions you might have about SRM activities or committees.

Sincerely,

Thad Berrett
Wyoming Section SRM President



Way back in 2016 when this guy and his then graduate student Hailey



suggested taking the wheels off the bus that has always been the SRM Annual Meetings a lot of people thought it would end up like this.



Well because of a lot of people in the Colorado and Wyoming sections they got this!



The Wyoming and Colorado Sections of the SRM have set a new standard for the annual meetings and trainings. Thank you to the many many people that helped put these meetings on. In 2016 our sections took off on a cooperative effort to put on these meetings. Numerous folks dedicated 4 years of their lives to this effort. I would like to acknowledge my

co-chair from Colorado, Julie Elliott. Julie was the organized one that kept us all on track and heading towards the goal. Then there was Chuck that just kept driving a post where needed or checking the soil stability of the SRM BOD as we forged ahead.

This meeting broke new ground with the trainings at the Range Practicum. The podding of the posters so that people could cluster around like-minded folks. The daily plenaries with the awards embedded. Plenaries to make people think. And what about that tradeshow????? According to one of the very long-time participants it was the best ever for getting people into the trade show! But he did think it went a day too long. And all of this happened while the hotel was undergoing renovations which created a few issues, but thanks to Kim Stine and a few really good hotel staff members it all worked out well.

Looks like we ended up just barely under (1,353) our golden ticket number of 1400 registrants, with an income of somewhere in the MLRA of \$443,000. Our Ministers of Finance and Kelly Fogerty (thanks for all you do Kelly) are still sorting out the bills. It took us a bit to get to a final bill with the hotel, but with a final few tweaks we should be there.

The Range Practicum was absolutely amazing. For too long we have watched videos of Low Stress Animal Handling, this year people got hands on training from Whit Hibbard. The Region 2 & 4 Forest Service packers enhanced many students opportunity for employment. The BLM and Forest Service wild horse teams along with the Mantle Ranch provided demonstrations on how to begin the training of wild horses. The BLM and NRCS teamed up to provide hands-on trainings on vegetation monitoring and soils horizonation. Women in Ranching were featured in the producer's forum, with Wyoming's Mary Flitner being one of the speakers. Folks put some fire on the ground and featured Wyoming ranchers that have their own prescribed fire programs.

New as well were the Campfire talks, intended to tap the membership of the SRM to help guide rangeland policy, science, and progress. New too were Ignite talks, intended to allow quick information delivery while providing time for many people to be able to interact with presenters rather than a few. Bridging the Gap returned to link students, young professionals and older professionals.

The Trade Show was the centerpiece for collaboration, knowledge sharing and connecting. Trade Show food was really good and as normal disappeared pretty quickly (did anyone other than me miss out on the tacos?). Entertainment was provided by Wyoming's own Tris Munsick and the Innocents.

Overall the Wyoming and Colorado Sections hit it out of the park for SRM meetings. A lot of good friendships were formed between the two sections, and we should do this again. A big thank you to many people that I would be glad to put an individual shout out to, but then I would miss someone. So, in general I just want to say thank you to everyone involved in this adventure to Transform and Translate the science to rangeland management. Let's plan on doing this again in 10 years when I can be a meeting consultant rather than a Co-Chair. Julie is already looking forward to it!



The inaugural Range Practicum: A Hands-on Land and Livestock Training

The inaugural Range Practicum brought lifelong learners from around the West to develop hands-on land and livestock skills at the National Western Complex in Denver on February 20. Ranchers, range managers, scientists, conservationists, and students tried their hand at low-stress livestock handling, horse and mule packing, and prescribed burning. They observed a wild horse demonstration, showing how mustangs are humanely corralled and given their first training. They observed state-of-the-art reclamation equipment and learned to calibrate a pesticide sprayer. They learned a federal land management agency's latest range monitoring methods. They compared soil cores and learned to texture soils.

"Our dedicated team spent almost two years in preparation, and to see the results unfold before our eyes with 200 plus engaged range professionals from students to producers to land managers gaining take-home, on-the-ground knowledge made the effort more than worthwhile," said Practicum co-chair Randy Reichert, of T&R Ranch LLC in Colorado.

The event, the first of its kind, was part of the Society for Range Management annual meeting, held in Denver this year. The Practicum was the culmination of an overtly re-envisioned conference themed "Transformation and Translation," designed to be both more ground-breaking and more directly applicable by land managers, while continuing its longstanding history of leading-edge applied science. "The Range Practicum was one of the flagships of how we were transforming the SRM meeting by providing hands on, practical training that people could take home and use," said annual meeting co-chair Julie Elliott, a rangeland management specialist in northeastern Colorado.

"I firmly believe we have created a new, valuable tool for fulfilling the SRM mission of equipping range professionals with the knowledge and skills to utilize and preserve that vast resource: the American rangelands," said Reichert.

"The hands-on portion of the range practicum allowed participants a chance to really engage with the presenters," said Practicum co-chair Thad Berrett, a rangeland management specialist on the Bighorn National Forest and president of the Wyoming Section SRM. "Attendees lined up for a chance to tie a manty and load it onto a live mule or to step into the Bud Box and put in place the skills of low-stress livestock handling they just learned from Whit Hibbard."

"It's well-recognized that cattle can be an excellent range management tool. But what if that tool is difficult to manage and ill-behaved?" said Hibbard, a fourth-generation rancher, as well as founder and editor of the *Stockmanship Journal*. "What is *not* well-recognized is that to successfully implement a range management plan, we need manageable cattle that we can easily gather, drive and settle anywhere we want as a herd, that will stay where we put them, and that don't hang in the lowlands and grub out the riparian areas. This requires a high degree of stockmanship skill. Furthermore, if we elevate our stockmanship skill and train more manageable cattle, the easier it is implement some form of intensive grazing management and, consequently, the more likely we are to do it, and the more likely it will be successful."

The hands-on session followed the fourth Stockmanship Symposium, a series in which the SRM brought together leading practitioners and instructors to teach the method, show how low-stress is not just a quieter version of conventional livestock handling, and explore applications of low-stress herding, including improving livestock performance, improving grazing distribution, and preventing predation.

The horse and mule packing was a clear favorite of participants. The stock in the workshop came from the Shoshone National Forest, which is known within the agency as "the Horse Forest" because of its pack string and the many days its employees spend riding the rugged Absaroka and Wind River Ranges of northwestern Wyoming. Participants became familiar with stock, equipment and tack, and essential knots. The Shoshone range staff taught how to make and balance loads with both panniers and manties—the large pieces of canvas that packers use to wrap their cargo, and which also become tents and bedrolls. They also covered break-aways and tying animals together for safety on the trail. "It was a great opportunity to gain knowledge and hands-on skills in field and backcountry tasks related to rangeland management," said instructor Jason Brengle, a rangeland management specialist on the Shoshone. "Many of these traditional skills such as packing stock are slowly being lost."

The Wild Horse Demonstration featured humane methods for getting feral horses from the range to training and adoption. Sean Kelly and Megan Print from the Carson National Forest demonstrated their bait mare wild horse trap design and how its doughnut shape works for loading horses after they are caught.

The team from the Mantle Ranch Adoption and Training Facility in Wyoming spent the rest of the day demonstrating initial training methods. They began with an untouched horse, demonstrating the first steps in gaining trust, and respect, while showing the development of a solid bond and foundation with the horse. They showed various exercises for desensitizing, leading to the acceptance of a blanket, saddle pad and saddle.

"We actually got one of these horses adopted today," said Steve Leonard of the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program in Colorado, "and that's what it's all about."

In addition to livestock, participants also learned about the land, including soils and range monitoring. The soils training gave attendees an opportunity to look at the different soil horizons (layers) down to 7 feet below the soil surface, and to compare soil cores from several similar but different ecological sites. The discussion led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service focused on water movement below the soil surface, soil structure, and soil texture. Attendees tested their own soil texturing skills, estimating the proportions of sand, silt, and clay in several soil samples. The agency also had computers available to demonstrate the Web Soil Survey website and allow attendees to try it for themselves. Web Soil Survey allows users to obtain soil maps for a user-defined area of interest such as a ranch or pasture, along with information on the soils that includes physical, chemical, and engineering properties, as well as the suitability and limitations of those soils. Across the hall, participants learned about range monitoring, including how terrestrial core indicator data are used to understand status and trend of BLM lands in a diversity of land management scenarios.

The prescribed fire workshop attendees learned about benefits and challenges of prescribed fire, fire research in short grass prairie, equipment and crew for burning, as well as ranchers sharing burning techniques for private land. Attendees then conducted small straw bale burns in the conference parking lot to simulate real-life burn methods and effects.

The Range Practicum also featured a provocative forum on Women in Ranching, with panel including women with non-traditional backgrounds and those whose families have been in the business for several generations. The forum provided a breadth of perspectives as to what ranching is to them, and why women are critical to the mission of sustainable ranches.

"I loved having these remarkable women in one room.... Each left us with a different image of ranching borne from contemplative perspectives," said Cindy Villa, a rangeland management specialist from Colorado. "The experiences the women shared were philosophic and refreshing. Julie Sullivan's prose quieted the room in recognizing the maternal self in working with the cow herd, transporting us to the core of our vulnerability. The influence of the wealth and range of experience and diversity of ranching perspective must continue to be developed by such forums in our Society."

In addition to scientific presentations and the Range Practicum, the 2020 meeting included tours emphasizing conservation ranching at Kiowa Creek Ranch and West Bijou Bison Ranch, open space management at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, and a Healthy Grasslands Expo.

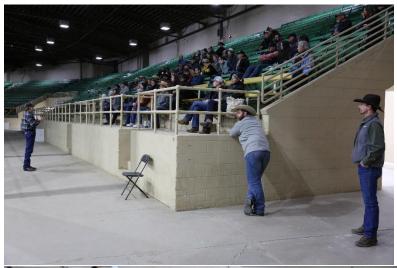
"I believe the Range Practicum is something many of us have been yearning for within SRM—redistributing conference priorities into our hands and hearts, balanced with our minds," said Villa.

"We as SRM finally matched our stated goals of changing the title of these meetings from SRM Annual Meetings to SRM Annual Meetings," said annual meeting co-chair Chuck Butterfield, of Y2 Consultants in Wyoming. "This year with the work the Range Practicum team did in developing the hands-on training, we actually hit the mark. We had attendees out there learning and doing. And to the doubters that said students wouldn't attend, we sure had a lot of students out there. I think many of the people involved and taking the Practicum would agree."

"Several students said it was the most valuable day of the SRM meeting for them and that they hope the event continues into future years as they are already looking forward to it at next year's SRM meeting," said Berrett. The annual meeting and training will be in Boise, Idaho in 2021 and Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2022.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Barnes is a rangeland scientist and conservationist, working on grazing management and coexistence between livestock and wildlife. He is a research associate with the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative, and owner of Shining Horizons Land Management. He is past president of the Colorado Section SRM, member of the Wyoming Section SRM, and co-chair of the SRM 2020 Range Practicum, along with Randy Reichert and Thad Berrett.





NW Council Representative article

As I sit here in my room, socially distanced from the world, I can't help but write a little about our current situation. There have been a lot of ups and downs in my family over the last few weeks as the reality of our daily routines have been completely re-written. It feels like our world has been turned upside-down.

But if you look closely, you may find our world is not as unstable as it feels...

One of the things that has struck me most during this COVID-19 ordeal is how little attention the natural world pays human crises. I keep a "natural history" journal in which I record my observations of the happenings of nature throughout the year. It's especially interesting to watch the changing of the seasons. The following are some of my observations from Spring 2020:

February 17th - Started getting americana eggs in the chicken yard

February 28th - First blossom opened on the orange tree in the college greenhouse

February 29th - Saw a great blue heron flying over the Clark's Fork

March 2nd - Heard a robin on my walk to work this morning, saw him eating old crab apples on

my way home for lunch

March 6th - Day lilies are emerging on the north side of the house

March 8th - First confirmed sighting of a Yellowstone grizzly bear

March 10th - Heard sandhill cranes somewhere over Powell

March 15th - Saw mountain bluebirds near Buffalo Bill Reservoir

March 17th - A flock of trumpeter swans flew north over the college Ag Pavilion

March 29th - Plants are starting to emerge on the rangelands. Many perennial grasses are showing some green and some early vetches have completely emerged

April 4th - Saw a butterfly land by the raspberries

Don't the plants and animals know we've got a crisis going on here? The world has ground to sudden halt...hasn't it?...

When you focus on the land, it's easy to forget the worldwide health and economic crisis. I know COVID-19 has had real physical, emotional, and financial implications for many of us. But, for me, these small observations of nature have been extremely reassuring. They seem to say, "life will go on. Summertime is coming. Things will change and we will get through it."

Thank goodness we live in Wyoming and we have the rangelands to keep us grounded (and socially distanced).

I hope that you and your families can take some time this Spring to get out on the rangelands and find some of the same encouraging evidence that everything will be okay.

-Will Rose

Comparison of crude protein and total digestible nutrient values from rangeland forage to that estimated in the diet of beef cattle from NIRS fecal analysis

Blaine Horn, UW Extension Area Educator

Is near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) of beef cattle fecal matter a reliable method to assess the nutritional value of grazed forage? One of the objectives of a project funded by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture was to ascertain this. The project was conducted at two Wyoming ranches; one in northeast Johnson County (Powder River Breaks) and the other in southwest Johnson/northern Natrona County. The Johnson/Natrona County ranch grazes two herds from May through December, one along the Red Wall and the other in the foothills of the southern Big Horn Mountains.

During the winter and early spring these two herds are combined and graze a transition pasture between the two fore mentioned areas.

From July 2015 to October 2018 biomass of rangeland grasses and sedges were obtained every five to six weeks from pastures of these two ranches and at the same time samples of fresh beef cow manure were obtained. The principle plants collected were the two rhizomatous wheatgrasses — western and thickspike (*Pascopyrum smithii* and *Elymus lanceolatus*), needleandthread (*Heterostipa comate*), green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudorogneria spicata*), prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), and threadleaf sedge (*Carex filifolia*). Other plants sampled when in an ample amount and utilization apparent were prairie sandreed (*Calamovlfa longifolia*), Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*), basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolis airoides*), and blue grama (*Bouteloua* gracillis). The plant samples were analyzed for their crude protein and acid detergent fiber (ADF) contents by the Texas A&M University Soil, Water, and Forage Lab and the manure samples were analyzed to assess the percent crude protein and digestible organic matter (DOM) in the cattle's diet by the Grazing Animal Nutrition Lab (GAN Lab) of Texas A&M. Percent ADF of the plants and percent DOM from the manure were used to calculate total digestible nutrient (TDN) concentration of the plants and in the cattle's diet. TDN is a measurement of available energy.

Crude protein content of all sampled grasses and sedges averaged 6.82% which was similar to the 6.89% estimated to be in the cattle's diet from NIRS analysis of their fecal matter (Prob. > F 0.88). Whereas, the 62.6% average TDN content for the plants was significantly less than the 64.3% estimated to have been in the cattle's diet (Prob. > F 0.01). Crude protein and TDN contents of the grasses and sedges as well as that estimated to be in the cattle's diet was averaged over the following periods: January through April, May and June, July, August and September, and October

through December and results are shown in the below Table. The reason for averaging over months, except for July, was due to the similarity of the quality values throughout those months.

The beef cattle's estimated dietary intake of crude protein and TDN averaged 30% and 7.8% higher, respectively, during the dormant season (Oct – Apr) compared to that of the grasses and sedges. There was no difference between dietary intake of these two quality components and that of the sampled plants during the summer months. For May and June, crude protein content of the sampled plants averaged 18% higher compared to that in the cattle's diet. It's believed that the reason for this difference was due to only current year's growth being sampled whereas the cattle most likely ingested previous year's standing crop along with new growth. However, there was no significant difference in %TDN between the cattle's diet and that of the sampled plants.

Percent crude protein and TDN amounts were generally similar among the herds for both grass and sedge laboratory values and what was estimated to be in the cattle's diet. However, estimated dietary crude protein of the Powder River Breaks herd for May through July averaged 10.0% which was greater than the 7.85% for the Foothills and Red Wall herds (Prob. > F 0.02), whereas the 67.5% TDN in the diets of the Foothills and Red Wall herds was greater than the 62.8% in the Powder River Breaks herd (Prob. > F 0.03). It's not clear why there was this discrepancy between the two regions.

The results from this project would indicate that sampling fresh beef cattle fecal matter and having it analyzed by the GAN Lab for dietary crude protein and DOM is a reliable method for obtaining these quality components. It is simpler and faster to sample fresh manure compared to clipping rangeland forage plants and results generally can be obtained more quickly. In addition, TDN values calculated from DOM amounts obtained by NIRS analysis of fecal matter may be more accurate as to what the cattle are ingesting than TDN values obtained from a forage lab. The reason is that there are numerous methods to calculate %TDN of a forage and the results vary. For this project the following method was employed: %Digestible Dry Matter (DDM) calculated from %Acid Detergent Fiber; Mega-calories per pound of Net Energy Lactation (NE_L) calculated from %DDM; %TDN calculated from NE_L. This provided the most similar results compared to those obtained from NIRS analysis of the manure. Other methods resulted in lower TDN values. There is a method (Relative Forage Quality) that involves additional forage analysis (at much greater total expense) that is believed to obtain a more accurate estimate of TDN. About one-fourth of the grass and sedge samples went through these additional analyses and the resultant TDN values were similar to those obtained by the method used and reported in

this paper.

Percent crude protein and total digestible nutrients in grasses and sedges compared to that obtained by NIRS analysis of beef cattle fecal matter.

	%Crude Protein				%Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN)					
	Jan -	May &	July	Aug &	Oct -	Jan -	May &	July	Aug &	Oct –
Nutrient	Apr	Jun		Sep	Dec	Apr	Jun		Sep	Dec
Source	Averages for all pastures									
Grass/Sedge	4.37	10.78 ¹	7.61	5.91	4.78	58.4	67.2	65.5	62.4	58.7
Cattle Diet	5.57	9.15	7.59	5.73	6.36	63.3 ¹	67.2	63.9	63.3	63.1 ¹
	Southern Big Horn Mountain Foothills pastures									
Grass/Sedge		9.87	7.84	5.68	4.13		66.0	66.0	63.0	59.0
Cattle Diet		8.32	7.60	5.74	5.80		68.6	65.6	63.7	62.3 ¹
	Red Wall pastures									
Grass/Sedge	3.30	10.36	6.21	6.14	3.39	58.1	66.4	65.4	61.8	57.2
Cattle Diet	5.30 ¹	8.44	6.46	5.51	6.03 ¹	65.5 ¹	68.7	64.4	64.3	65.9 ¹
	Powder River Breaks pastures									
Grass/Sedge	5.31	12.27 ¹	8.76	5.95	5.74	58.6	69.4	66.1 ¹	62.2	59.3
Cattle Diet	5.81	10.83	8.70	5.84	6.82	61.4	64.1	60.8	62.3	62.3 ¹

 $^{^{1}}$ Bold %crude protein and %TDN monthly grass/sedge and cattle diet values within each pasture designation are significantly greater than the corresponding non-bold value (Prob. ≥ 0.05).

Note: Jan – Apr values for the Red Wall pastures are actually from the transition pasture.



The Wyoming Stock Growers land Trust (WSGLT) is currently seeking nominations for the 2020 Kurt Bucholz Conservation Award. Nominations for individuals who meet the criteria below can be submitted at the WSGLT's website: https://wsglt.org/bucholz-award/.

- ➤ An advocate for conserving Wyoming's farms and ranches.
- A land steward or agricultural advocate who has been a participant in state, regional, or national natural resource discussions.
- A defender of the importance of water conservation and the significance of protecting Wyoming's traditional water rights.
- A proponent of hunting and wildlife protection, and a personal commitment to habitat conservation.
- ➤ Has implemented land or resource conservation practices on their property with the WSGLT or a similar organization.

The Award winner will receive tickets and be recognized at the organization's 20th Anniversary Roundup Barbeque on August 22, 2020 at The Farm at Brush Creek Ranch in Saratoga, WY. The Award winner will also receive a beautiful custom-made bronze statue from Jerry and Ann Palen.



If you have any questions, please contact Tate Smith at the WSGLT office at 307-772-8751 or tate@wsgalt.org.