



# The Range Rider

Society for Range Management – Colorado Section Newsletter

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Winter 2011

## From the President....

### Kicking off a New Year

By Scott Woodall

2010 was an amazing year for the Colorado Section. I still cannot believe we pulled off the big meeting in Denver and that it was so successful. I think our meeting will be held as a model for years to come. We also have so many members involved in both the Colorado section as well as the National organization. It's great to be a part of a group that is dedicated to the health of our Nation's rangelands.



The New Year started well, with a successful joint meeting, focusing on wildlife. We had speakers from all over, including Texas and Oregon to talk about a variety of subjects. I am very pleased, that in spite of low attendance, the section earned \$1,500 from the meeting. At the meeting we also gained two new board members: Lisa VanAmburg and Meaghan Huffman and a new Secretary/Treasurer: Shaan Bliss. I look forward to working with our new board members, along with Matt, Julie, Sheila, and our new President-Elect: Kimberly Diller.

Continued on page 4

## Excellence in Rangeland Conservation Award

### LeValley Ranch



Mark, James, and Robbie LeValley, and Julie Elliott, Awards

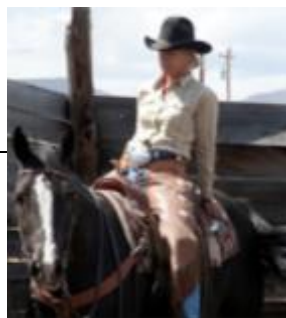
The Colorado Section of Society for Range Management (SRM) recently presented the LeValley Ranch of Hotchkiss with the Excellence in Rangeland Conservation Award. The award was presented on December 1 at the SRM annual meeting in Grand Junction.

Founded in 1914 on the Fruitland Mesa near Hotchkiss, the ranch is operated by the third generation of LeValleys. Brothers Mark and Hank, together with Marks' wife Robbie are have seen many changes in the land over the last decade. Best of all, they are teaching the fourth generation, James, Ryan and Ross to take great pride in caring for both their private and leased land.

## Past President's Article

### VIEWPOINT FROM THE CENTER

Whew. What a summer. I'm still reeling a bit and trying to adjust to the fact that my calendar really and truly says October (and days away from November). We were blessed with a glorious field season filled with a little sunshine and plenty of rain. The ideal conditions in our part of the world made for record-breaking hay crops and a chance for resources to "beef up." Here on the Pike National Forest, we rode lots of country with permittees, managers, and ranchers; talked with all sorts of people; and monitored like crazy. It was a summer of work and accomplishment. I love summers like this one. I sincerely hope that your season was just as sweet.



## Inside This Issue

1	President's Comments
1	Excellence in Rangeland Conservation
2	CSSRM Representatives
2	2010 Summer Tour
3	Election Results
4	Outgoing Officers
5-6	Why Monitor??

## CSSRM Representatives

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Part of the grassland's beauty



## *J & L Farms Partnership Summer Tour*

The Colorado Section of SRM hosted a special range tour at J&L Farms in Eads, CO. Our 2010 Excellence in Rangeland Conservation Award, The J & L Farms Partnership is a combined dryland crop farm and ranching enterprise. It was such a pleasure to meet Laura Negley and be treated to a personalized tour by this energetic and knowledgeable woman. Her husband John was out on the tractor during the tour, but it was a testament to the hard work they live by. We traveled by flatbed trailer all over the ranch while Laura and Ben Berlinger took turns discussing changes the Negley's had made on their ranch and the results they enjoyed after doing so.

Their operation is dynamic and all parts of the business seem to complement each other. Anyone that is not from their side of the state sure gained an appreciation for some of the hardship our eastern farmers and ranchers endure. We were also fortunate enough to have several special guests with us on that day. John and Mary Gunderson joined us all the way from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. On behalf of the entire section, I'd like to offer our sincere thanks to all those who worked so hard to bring us both a fun and educational day.

**THANK YOU John and Mary Gunderson**

**Laura and Ben talked about J&L Farms**



John and Mary Gunderson joined us all the way from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. After attending the tour, they sent in a generous donation to support our youth activities program. **Our thanks go to you!**

# The Results are in....

Elections are upon us! While our section elections may not be as exciting as our local and national decisions are, they are important none-the-less. Tim Steffens did just about everything in his power to encourage someone from our membership to step forward and run for office. Thank you Tim for your work in setting up the election and bringing these people forward! But really, did he have to resort to shaming people into agreeing to put their name in? From what I understand, it took some serious arm-twisting to bring these contenders to us. While I thank each of these people for stepping up, I just want to remind the membership that this section is us! We are the only folks who are going to make this group run. Please, think of some way that you can contribute to the success of the section and make a commitment to follow through on that in 2011! Everyone has something to offer. Even little things make a difference to the whole. We want to celebrate your work and successes from this past summer. If you have a special project that you were involved in, an exceptional manager you know or an interesting place you've worked – please think about featuring a story or photo essay in the newsletter. People want to hear about what their peers are doing. It can take as little as an hour of your time and be appreciated by many. Your section values you as an individual, but the sum total of all of us makes our society extraordinary. Thank you for all you do. Now we want you to tell us about it!



Kimberly Diller

## Board of Directors— 2011– 2012

### Thank you Ann Tanaka!

Sincere thanks and appreciation to Ann Tanaka for her hard work setting up the election via survey-monkey!! I couldn't of done it without you! The elections went smooth and easy! —  
Pat Hessenflow

Meaghan Huffman



Lisa VanAmburg

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The LeValley grazing rotation allows for no more than two weeks of grazing in any one pasture.



This grazing strategy is supported by 17 miles of stock water pipeline. This pipeline feeds eight water tanks across their BLM allotment. Three guzzlers were also built specifically for sage grouse. By controlling both the time and timing of livestock grazing, the LeValleys have a variety of cover heights and type across the landscape. This in turn provides for the various cover needs of the Sage Grouse. In fact, all of the LeValley lands meet or exceed the Colorado Statewide Gunnison Sage Grouse Management Plan. The

Floyd Reed (sitting down), John Murray, Hank, Mark, James, and Robbie LeValley and Julie Elliott, Awards Chair

LeValley's are deeply involved in many community and state wide organizations. They are a full partner in Homestead Meats, a USDA inspected processing plant. Big game and small game bird hunting is also part of their operation. The Excellence in Rangeland Conservation award is given annually to an individual or group by the Colorado Section of SRM. The recipients must demonstrate exceptional skill and knowledge in practicing sound management of rangelands in the State of Colorado. *By Julie Elliott*

Outgoing 2010 Officers:

Left to Right:

Sheila Lamb, President;

Tim Steffens, Past-President;

Sarah Hanlon, Secretary-Treasurer;

Jennifer Jardine (Rowe), Board Member



From the President... continued from page 1

This year we are planning a Colorado Section breakfast in Billings. This is at 6:30 am on Tuesday, Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>. We would like the range club students to come, and be honored for all the hours of hard work preparing for URME and the Plant ID contests. This is a major endeavor by our students. I would also like to take this time to hold a board meeting for the section. All membership is welcome. Also, congratulations to the LeValley ranch for winning our range management award. Floyd, Dave and John put together an excellent presentation at the banquet dinner. I am looking forward to our summer tour at the LeValley ranch. As many of you know, I have moved to Santa Fe, where I have taken a position with the NRCS to write ecological site descriptions. Even though my home base is in Santa Fe, I plan to be very active with range folks in Colorado writing ESDs that make sense for both states. I look forward to attending the ESD workshop in Billings and the various SRM sponsored ESD workshops that will be occurring in 2011. I hope lots of folks can make it to Billings. This is our year to sit back and actually enjoy the meeting.. *Scott*

## WHY MONITOR?

By Sheila Lamb

Want to get a range con to perk up their ears? Mention the word “monitoring.”

Want to put everyone else to sleep? Yep, same word. I don’t know if it’s because

of all the hype over monitoring in the past few years or if it’s the overwhelming feeling that accompanies the vision of all there is to do in this realm. In any case, I think monitoring is with us to stay and for good reason.

There are dozens of other reasons to monitor, and some of the best are offered below. The ideas below were stolen from a variety of sources, but credit for their use appears at the end of each set of bullets.



Here are some practical reasons from the Montana NRCS:

- Healthy, vigorous, and productive rangelands are essential to the survival of the livestock industry and other users.
- Important changes in rangeland health usually occur gradually and oftentimes are too subtle to notice through casual observations. Also, human memory is imperfect and tends to fade with time.
- Rangeland health that deteriorates before livestock production will indicate a problem. Livestock can compensate through preferential grazing to a point. By the time a reduction in livestock performance is noticed, it may take years for the rangeland to recover.
- Plan-Monitor-Replan. Monitoring is essential to determine if you are meeting your goals and objectives. It enables you to continually adjust your management strategies as needed.
- Monitoring can help you understand how much benefit you are getting from a change in grazing management or from investments in range improvements.
- Monitoring will help you to learn more about range plants (your crop!) and how they interact with each other and with the grazing animals.
- Monitoring can instill a sense of pride and provide encouragement. It can build confidence and provide success stories that can be shared with others.

<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/range/technotes/rangetechnoteMT29.html>

Six additional reasons come from an East African Pastoralist guide. They are as applicable here as anywhere.

For example, monitoring can help to:

- ◆ Decide whether or not the current management is affecting the land in a desirable way. (Remember, all actions – or lack of actions – are part of ‘management’).
- ◆ Compare areas that are being managed differently and test new management approaches to evaluate their effects on the land.
- ◆ Notice benefits of new management approaches (when compared to other areas) before these benefits can easily be observed.
- ◆ Notice early signs of rangeland degradation before the land becomes more degraded.
- ◆ Show development partners, community members, and other interested parties that rangeland health is changing.
- ◆ Settle disputes about which management actions are working best.

*Monitoring is an essential part of every management plan*  
Monitoring allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of your management and change your management plan if it is not leading you towards your management objectives.

[www.mpala.org/Monitoring\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.mpala.org/Monitoring_Guide.pdf)

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Continued next page

Continued from page 5

Some of my favorite reasons are taken from Paul Meiman:

- Often, the reasons not to monitor grazing lands seem to outnumber the reasons to do so.
- A common concern is that the information collected through monitoring might reveal a problem with current management. Some even ask, “Why would I put a bullet in the gun that is pointing at me?” First of all, if there are problems of that magnitude they are probably not secrets, and it is far more important to identify potential solutions to the problem. Second, the individuals who implement monitoring programs have the opportunity to identify problems and address them before others are aware of them. In doing so, managers are solidifying their commitment to effective management and good stewardship.
- The lack of time is a hurdle that can only be addressed through prioritization.
- Monitoring is a process that does require time, but the potential benefits are great.
- Most individuals who have implemented monitoring programs feel that the investment of time has been well worth it. Many of these folks agree that the best time to start monitoring was 10 years ago, but believe that the second best time is right now!

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=rangebeefcowsymp>

If you work for a government agency, you’ve likely heard the saying, “If you didn’t write it down, it didn’t happen.” In other words, documentation is the only way to capture a moment, a day, or an event in time and freeze it for later use. These records provide proof of the way things were at that point in time. We think we remember everything about a certain place or time, but the truth is, our mind is picking up all sorts of sensory and perception information and storing that too. Reality and our perception of it get mixed up into this thing we call our “memory” and the truth is; you just can’t trust it.

People from a variety of backgrounds are seeing the value in monitoring as it exists in its myriad forms. Most recently, the “Colorado Rangeland Monitoring Guide” – the Official Rangeland Monitoring Guidebook for the Colorado Resource Monitoring Initiative was produced. This book is endorsed by the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, Colorado Cattlemen’s Association, USDA Forest Service, Colorado Public Lands Council, Colorado Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Colorado State University Extension, USDI Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Board of Land Commissioners, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. In addition to the groups and agencies listed above, the following groups provided their input and expertise: Wyoming Range Service Team, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, and your own Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management. This book includes its own list of reasons to monitor rangelands and is divided into short-term and long-term monitoring sections along with appropriate forms and appendices. This book is the latest example of pushing the monitoring message and trying to get monitoring tools into the hands of many. As a section, we can applaud these efforts.

If you have yet to establish a monitoring plan, start monitoring, or continue monitoring an existing set of transects or locations, I can tell you that it is much harder to think about monitoring than it is to go out and begin. Some of my best days this past year were days spent monitoring in the field. One of the simplest ways to capture lots of information quickly is through photographs. There are all sorts of guides and information available as to how to do this in a scientific way, but they all pretty much go back to the ideas of being locatable, repeatable, and include written documentation about what was seen.

I encourage you to pick up the latest monitoring guide, put a little thought into planning this winter, then be ready to head out and monitor next year. As is often said of places for which we have no photographs or data, “The oldest photo you’ll ever have is the one you take today!”

**Have a great photo you want to share??** If you have any info or photo's you would like to submit to the website, please contact Vickie Branch, [vbranch@fs.fed.us](mailto:vbranch@fs.fed.us)

