

High School Youth Benefit from Range Management Forum in Minneapolis

By Ben Berlinger, Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management, Youth Activities Chair

The Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) was well represented at the 2019 High School Youth Forum (HSYF) held in Minneapolis on February 10-14, 2019. The HSYF is an integral part of the SRM annual meeting. This year there were 21 delegates representing 12 of the SRM Sections. During the Forum, high school youth from all part of the western United States and Canada attend an ecological field tour, and are invited to participate and interact among the various professionals and college students attending the meeting.

This year the Colorado Section SRM sponsored three delegates to Minneapolis. **Ingrid Hofmeister of Branson FFA, Josh Waller of the Hoehne FFA, and Nathan Shannon of Kim FFA** were selected to participate in the SRM Forum. (See picture). All three delegates were chosen based on their exceptional achievements in rangeland management programs, and specifically based on their high individual scores on ecological site judging & plant identification at the *Eastern Colorado State FFA rangeland judging contest*.

The goals of the HSYF are to recognize youth for outstanding accomplishments in range management activities and to provide young people the opportunity to discuss rangelands, career options, and meet with leaders in the field of range management. One requirement of the HSYF is that each delegate must write a paper and then present an illustrated talk on some aspect of rangeland conservation or grazing management.

Ingrid's presentation was titled ***The Desertification of Southeastern Colorado Rangeland***.

Ingrid talked about the causes of desertification of rangelands and what the effects have been on the rangeland and ranching industry in southeastern Colorado. She emphasized that reversing desertification will require improved grazing management consisting of proper stocking, rotational grazing strategies, and contingency planning for cases of drought and wild fire. She concluded that information about range conservation practices and educational programs such as FFA, 4-H, and environmental science classes will be important to restoring the healthy rangelands in southeastern Colorado.

Josh's presentation was titled ***Improving Water Utilization on Arid Rangeland***.

Josh talked about the why a functioning water cycle is vitally important to healthy soil and healthy rangeland. He emphasized adequate soil cover of both plants and litter, organic matter, and plant diversity are the three keys to improving water utilization on rangeland. He concluded that the research he did for his paper will help to improve the rangeland on his family's ranch near Walsenburg. Rangeland conservation begins with the better utilization of water, he concluded.

Nathan was honored with **FOURTH PLACE** in the paper presentation contest at the SRM awards ceremony for his presentation! (See picture below). His presentation was titled ***Water: The Lifeblood of the Range***.

During his presentation Nathan talked about why livestock water is important to good range management. He highlighted some of the livestock water developments implemented on his family's ranch in southeast Colorado. Nathan discussed the many ways livestock water can be developed including tank dams, windmills, wells and pipelines, solar wells, and live water (streams and springs). He concluded that without proper livestock water management, proper grazing and range management are impossible.

The **Colorado Section SRM** congratulates Ingrid, Josh, and Nathan for their outstanding achievements in range management and wishes them the best as they further pursue their ambitions in the field of natural resource management.



(Left to Right) **Ingrid Hofmeister, Nathan Shannon, and Josh Waller.** These three High School youth represented the Colorado Section SRM at the 2019 SRM High School Youth Forum held in Minneapolis on February 11-14, 2019. During the field tour activity the students learned about the ecology of the Rangelands important to Minnesota.



Nathan Shannon displays his fourth-place award for his presentation on water management and how water is being developed on his family's ranch near Kim. His plaque was presented at the awards ceremony during the conference.



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