



Volume 1 **International Mountain Section Newsletter** March 2006

*To Foster Advancement in the Science and Art of Rangeland Management*

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#### **Dates to Remember:**

November 3-4 2006  
IMS Fall Meeting  
Great Falls, Montana

February 11-16, 2007  
SRM Annual Meeting  
Reno, Nevada

June 29 – July 5, 2008  
International Grassland and  
Rangeland Congress  
Huhhot, China

#### **President's Message**

Maynard Smith

Welcome to the June edition of the International Mountain Section, SRM, newsletter. Contained in these pages you will find important information on the 2006 Summer Tour, as well as some weather reports from fellow IMS members. I will start with a short report from my stomping grounds.

The weather in SW Montana is always a good topic of conversation. In some areas (the Big Hole for instance) after years of very little snow this year snow fall amounts were above average. Many of the ranchers there had a hard time calving in late March and April. On the other hand our area and Dillon was snow free, however the mountains to the west of us have above average snow pack.

The month of May was dry with alternate cold and hot weather and the range toward the end of the month looked tough. Then on Memorial Day weekend when some folks head for the high country we had snow in the mountains and around an inch of rain elsewhere. It put a smile on the countryside and a scowl on the town folks that look forward to the first outing of the season. Now we need moisture again but as the old saying goes in Montana you are never more than 2 weeks away from a drought. To be factual the State Weather Information shows Dillon from October 1, 05 to June 1, 06 with 6.22 inches of moisture at 130 % of normal which is considerably better than the moisture in past 8 years.

Jon Siddoway (NRCS) has made arrangements to have our fall meeting at the Hampton Inn in Great Falls, Nov. 3&4 2006.

Holley and I are looking forward to the Summer get together in Big Valley Alberta.

**Society for Range Management Summer Tour**  
**July 20-22, 2006**  
**The Rumsey Block**

Rumsey refers to an area of public land that is the largest remaining representative tract of Aspen Parkland left in the world and is comprised of the Rumsey Ecological Reserve and the Rumsey Parkland South (Natural Area). The Rumsey Block is a center of debate not uncommon in range management circles.

Tradeoffs abound between production and ecology, industry and agriculture, forest and grassland, moist and dry, and urban and rural. Join fellow SRM-IMS members and local folks for a thought provoking tour and discussion of an area that is a transition zone of multiple dimensions.

**Thursday, July 20<sup>th</sup>**

6:00 – 7:00 pm Registration at the Big Valley Drop in Center.

7:30 – 8:30 pm Presentation by Barry Irving on the Evolution of the Aspen Parkland and Management Implications for Sustainability

**Friday, July 21<sup>st</sup>**

8:00 – 8:45 am Registration and coffee and muffins at Drop in Center.

8:45 am Bus Departs for Rumsey from Drop in Center

9:00-5:00 The tour will take place throughout Rumsey and include:

**Felix Gebbink** (Rangeland Management Branch, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development) will present historic and current grazing management practices as well as challenges to grazing this unique area.

We'll visit to the Ecological Reserve which is not being grazed and discuss aggressive agronomic species management.

**Barry Cole** (Land Use, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development). There is potential for oil and gas activity to continue to influence the basic ecological integrity of Rumsey Parkland South in an incremental way.

**Peggy Desserud** (Ph. D candidate, University of Alberta) on research project: Review of the Reclamation/Restoration/Remediation Program in the Rumsey Parkland South

A bag lunch and refreshments will be provided.

**6:00 pm** Supper at the Curling Rink in Big Valley and socializing

**Saturday July, 21<sup>st</sup>**

7:30 -8:30 am Breakfast at the Curling Rink in Big Valley.

9:00- 11:00 Section Business Meeting at Drop in Center.

There are some very important assignments for the Business Meeting. It is the responsibility of every IMS member to come prepared with nominations for section officers and section awards. Both of these tasks are extremely important for the future of the International Mountain Section. If you are unable to attend you can forward section officer nominations and the names of potential award nominees to:

Current Section Officers or

Dr. Art Bailey

780-487-5273

art.bailey@ualberta.ca

## Where is Big Valley?

32 km. south of Stettler, Alberta on Highway 56

60 km. north of Drumheller on Highway 56

80 km. east of Innisfail on Highway 590

204 km. southeast of Edmonton

Information on Big Valley can be found on the web at [www.villagebigvalley.ca](http://www.villagebigvalley.ca)

## Accommodations

### Camping:

Free camping at the Curling Rink in Big Valley, no services.

Tollman Bridge Campground – 45 km from Big Valley

Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park and Campground – 65 km from Big Valley

### Bed & Breakfast:

The Whistle Stop (403)876-2181

The Old Station (403)876-2132

The Wallace House (403)742-8074

### Hotels:

Big Valley Inn and Hotel- (403)876-2203

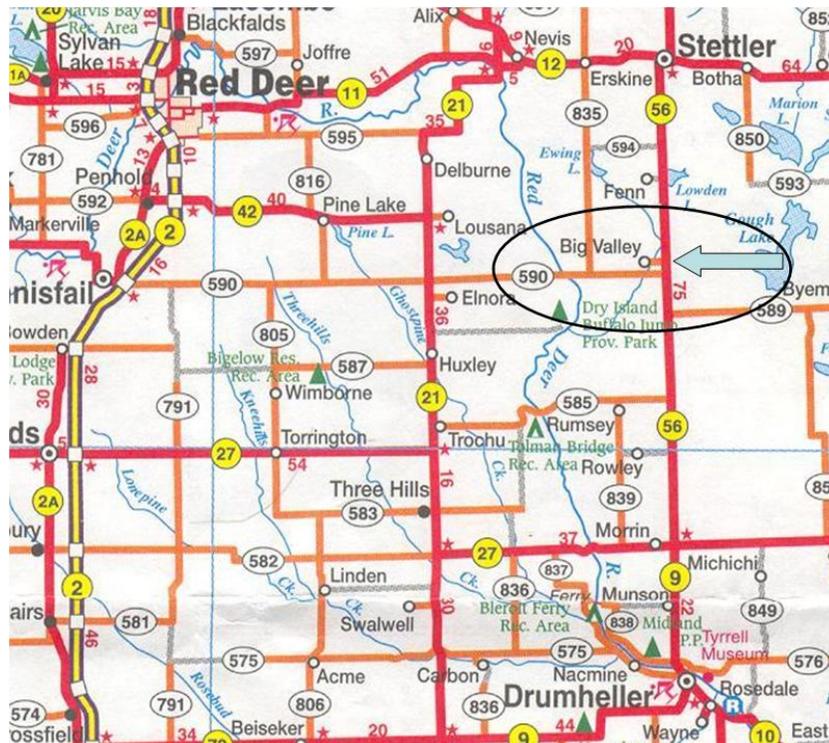
Best Western - located in Stettler. Toll free number 1-888-742-5808.

Super 8- located in Stettler. Toll free number 1-888-742-8008.

Note: Hotels book up quickly, please reserve as soon as possible.

## Highlights of Surrounding Area

Visit the badlands in Drumheller [www.dinosaurvalley.com](http://www.dinosaurvalley.com) and experience the power and excitement of some of the most remarkable fossil displays anywhere in the world, in Canada's only institution devoted entirely to paleontology, the Royal Tyrrell Museum. For more information see [www.tyrrellmuseum.com](http://www.tyrrellmuseum.com).



**Registration Form**

**Summer Field Tour  
Society for Range Management  
International Mountain Section  
July 20-22, 2005**

<b>Registrant Name</b>	<b>Mailing Address</b>	<b>Telephone/e-mail</b>

**There are two options for registration fees: please indicate which option you are choosing by placing a check mark on the corresponding line.**

<u>Options</u>	<u>Cost</u>	
Field Tour	\$35.00 (\$30 U.S.)	_____
<b>OR</b>		
Field Tour including Supper Friday and Breakfast Saturday	\$70.00 (\$65 U.S.)	_____

Please make cheques payable to the **International Mountain Section SRM (IMS)**. All cheques and registration forms can be mailed to:

Public Lands  
c/o Sheila Kraft  
Box 4304  
Ponoka, Alberta  
T4J 1R7

If you have any questions please contact Angela Burkinshaw at (403) 309-3043.

**Feature Article:** Amateur meteorologists from around the section report on weather in their local area.

**George Hirschenberger**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President reporting from NW Montana:

You know what the Fire Mgmt guys say about the summer weather (and fire season) "ask me in November". But here goes anyway. Some locations in Western MT had record PPT in the first two weeks of April...wettest on record in Missoula. Then someone turned off the spigot. We've been below normal in the second half of April and way below normal thus far in May. Long term forecasts are wish-washy. Some say to expect near normal PPT in June. That would save us from an early start on fire season. This weekend, being a three day weekend, we can certainly expect rain or snow. But so far just a light shower reached the ground early this AM.

**Tracy Kupchenko** reporting live from the Southeastern Corner of Alberta, in the Metropolis of Medicine Hat.

We've had a dry spring (generally speaking) up until 4 days ago. Many of the tame grasses (I.e. Crested wheatgrass and Ryegrass) are already headed out and some of the native flowers we normally see in June (I.e. Arnica) are already out and about. We were looking quite dry up to last week. There were reports of some of the fertilized pastures turning blue from drought stress. Since Friday (May 26) we've had approximately 3/4 inch of precipitation in the general Medicine Hat area. The amount of rain varies from region to region, but generally around 1 inch. However it's still cloudy and drizzling as I speak, with the forecast of rain showers continuing for the next couple of days. This precipitation will help us out for the next few weeks. Prior to this rain, we had a good week to week and a half of hot, windy days with temperatures exceeding +30C. I have noted Needle and Thread (*Sipa comata*) and Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*) heading out. Many of our native flowers are blooming, such as the Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon*), which is nearly done for the year. The range looks good due to our excellent rainfall last fall. Most dugouts are full and we had a nice, warm April/May for the majority of calving. It looks like its' going to be a good year but I'll just keep my fingers crossed that the rains keep coming.

**Tom Gilchrist** from a little further south, just about as far south as you get and still be in Alberta reports we have experienced the best spring for years. Good early moisture with some carry over from last fall. Warm days with little frost at night gave the range an excellent start. That growth has been halted with the recent wind and high temps. The range is now at a standstill. Some grasses are starting to head. Heavy showers produced 3/4" yesterday. Much more is needed. Pipeline trenching is producing flour that flows almost like water when being moved back into the trench. We hope for better days ahead.

And up in the Parklands, in similar areas to the site of the Summer Tour, **Harry Loonen** chimes in. It is now the morning of May 29/06 and here in Wainwright, Alberta we have had a soft rain since yesterday afternoon. Those that keep accurate rain gauges tell me that in April, Wainwright had 3 tenths of rain and now in May up until this morning the monthly total is 3.2 inches. During this past winter we had a very light covering of snow, which after the damp fall of 2005 did actually result in a little bit of runoff. Early April was fairly dry and there were a few grass fires and it was dry enough that the Municipal District put in fire bans. There have been a few warm days in the last couple of weeks and the grass is showing good spring growth. The forecast for hay is good and pastures are off to a decent start. 2005 was a year of good rainfall and we are recovering from the 2002 drought. Small and medium sized sloughs have recovered their water levels to those of the mid 1980's. Large sloughs and lakes now have their beds covered to nearly the extent of 'normal' shorelines. It will still take quite a bit more rain and snow before the large

waterbodies achieve the depth of water that they had in the early 1980's. All in all things are positive here weather wise, a week of sunshine is now on order. The drought of 2002 remains indelible in my mind and all rain remains welcome.

And from Edmonton, Alberta, and large towns to the east (Kinsella) **Barry Irving** had an easy winter of shoveling snow (open winter) until March when an entire winter worth of snow came in about 8 days. The spring was warm and dry, so dry that there were threats of shutting down permits for prescribed burning. We did execute a burn on April 13 at the University of Alberta Kinsella Ranch, receiving only 2 visits from the Viking Police. We had green-up on the burn perimeter and a cool burn, just enough intensity to kill aspen suckers, but not enough to present real control challenges, it was wetter than anyone predicted. Our captive deer herd came through the winter with less reserves than they have in the past in more severe winters. I have always wondered in open falls result in high metabolism that carries through to weight loss in the spring. If open falls result in hard springs, can hard falls result in easy springs, from a range herbivore point of view? Since spring we have had regular rains, seeding went well and crops, animals, and range are headed for a good year.

## **2006 Executive**

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