



International Mountain Section Newsletter

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Outstanding Achievement in Stewardship Awarded to the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve Association (RMFRA)

Article borrowed from the 2012 SRM Honor Awards Program.



RMFRA Representatives (Jim Lynch-Staunton, Ian Mason, Roxy Wideman) and Jack Alexander (SRM President). Photo from SRM.

The *Outstanding Achievement Award* is presented by the Society for Range Management for *outstanding achievement for eminently note-worthy contributions to the range profession* to members and other qualified individuals and groups working with rangelands.

The Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association was formed by Forest Reserve Grazing permit holders in 1998 in order to take a leadership role in the stewardship and management of the forest reserves lands in western Alberta. Membership involves voluntarily contributing \$1.00 per animal unit month of grazing to the RMFRA. The RMFRA uses these funds and any additional funds they can

access to achieve their mandate:

To ensure the sustainability of livestock grazing in the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve through:

1. *Range Inventory*
2. *Range Management Planning*
3. *Public Awareness and Education*
4. *Range Maintenance and Improvement Projects*

Since inception, the RMFRA has funded over \$400,000 of range inventory work and over \$850,000 in total investment towards enhanced range stewardship, management and knowledge development. The group recognizes the value and need for rangeland resource information in ensuring that these grazing dispositions are well managed, sustainable and consistently monitored. The knowledge gained from RMFRA initiatives has improved the management of rangelands in the Forest reserve, improved integration of grazing with other resource users and has motivated many local rangeland resource stakeholders to expand on their efforts or form their own initiatives.

Recently the RMFRA has expanded their efforts to include other resource management issues through research projects, grazing trials and policy development on such topics as livestock behavior, riparian and prescription grazing and grazing-timber integration.

For outstanding achievements and contributions to range management, the Society for Range Management proudly presents the Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association with a 2012 Outstanding Achievement Award.

Another annual meeting of the SRM undergraduate competitions has come and gone Barry Irving

2012 was another successful year for the University of Alberta Range Team on two academic competitions sponsored by the Society for Range Management. The two competitions are the Plant Identification exam (a challenging station type test that draws 100 specimens from a master list of the 200 most common rangeland species from western North America, 60 of which grow in Canada) and the

Undergraduate Range Management Exam (a comprehensive exam that encompasses any material typical of a 4 year undergraduate degree in resource management). The 2012 University of Alberta team won seven awards; two team and five individual awards.

The U of A was first place in the URME exam and 2nd place on the Plant Identification exam. The 2012 Range Team was comprised of eight individuals:

Nadine Clifton	1 st place in the combined high score category (average of the 2 academic exams)
Karen Anderson	3 rd place in the combined high score category, 2 nd place on the Plant ID Exam
Mark Lyseng	5 th place in the combined high score category
Chelsea Geiger	5 th place on the URME exam
Meaghan Dunn	
Scott Dunn	
Carly Hansen	
Jamie Walker	

This year there were 27 universities and colleges that competed; 205 undergraduates wrote the URME and 135 wrote the Plant Identification Exam.

*The flags of my behaviour
are posted in the grasslands
around me*

- murari sinha

President's Message Brian Thrift

Greetings from Pinedale, Wyoming! I've been working down here since New Year's and, thanks to the mild winter have gotten to see some great country. Pinedale is flanked by the Wind River, Gros Ventre, and Wyoming Mountain Ranges, which provide spectacular views and support headwaters of the Green River. I suspect that throughout most of our section, and unlike last year, nearly everyone is hoping for more snowfall before the growing season begins, although it has been excellent calving weather.

I was excited by how well represented the International Mountain section was at the SRM Annual Meeting, in Spokane, Washington. Dr. Barry Irving began his three-year term on the Board of Directors, Andrew Gould, the 2011 HSYF winner, gave his presentation during the awards ceremony, Morgan Klaiber represented Alberta and the IM section in the 2012 HSYF competition, and Reese and Carla Klaiber received funding from the Redd Fund to attend the meeting. I was also impressed with the outstanding attendance at our section dinner! Thank you to all who were able to attend and I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with a number of you.

A couple of items of interest to the section came up in Spokane. One is that we will be receiving \$4000.00 from the NGP section for our assistance in hosting the 2011 SRM Annual Meeting in Billings, Montana. The other regarded our bid to host the 2017 SRM Annual Meeting. The other potential host sections withdrew their bids, leaving our section as the only one willing to host the meeting. Edmonton did not submit a bid, and Calgary's lodging rates were of concern to the Advisory Council (AC), so the AC's recommendation to the Board was that we solicit bids from other sections to provide competition with Calgary's bid, which may encourage them to be more competitive. We strongly emphasized that the IM section still wishes to be considered for 2017. That's about all I know on this end. Please be sure to contact one of the directors, Kevin, Tanya, or I if there are any issues that you feel we need to address. I hope all of you are having a happy and healthy 2012 and look forward to seeing you on our summer tour in Alberta.

Editor's Note Jody Best

A mild winter and a busy year have given us many submissions to enjoy in this winter newsletter. I'm really excited by the quality and quantity of the content I receive for the newsletter. I sure hope you'll keep it coming!

If the weather holds, I will be able to do some field work this winter on some grassland areas that burnt. Southern Alberta has been experiencing a lot of

grass fires this year. Hopefully we get the moisture we need to have a green summer.

I look forward to your comments and submissions for the next newsletter. Submission deadlines are printed in the "Mark these Dates" section. Happy reading!

I like to think of landscape not as a fixed place, but as a path that is unwinding before my eyes, under my feet.

- Gretel Ehrlich

Dr. Willms Honoured by Chapline Research Award – SRM AGM 2012

Article borrowed from the 2012 SRM Honor Awards Program

The *W.R. Chapline Research Award* gives special recognition to members of the Society for *exceptional and sustained research accomplishments in range science and associated disciplines*, including biology, morphology, physiology, and the ecology of specific range species, ecosystems, relating plant environments, wildlife and domestic livestock on such lands.

The 2012 recipient of the Chapline Award for Research is Dr. Walter D. Willms, Principle Research Scientist in Rangeland Ecology and Management with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Lethbridge, Alberta. Dr. Willms is internationally recognized for his relevant and innovative research in northern temperate grassland ecology and management. Dr. Willms has amassed an exemplary track record in publishing over 100 refereed scientific journal papers, 50 other scientific publications, 71 conference proceedings and four book chapters. His research has contributed to both our fundamental understanding of the basic biology and ecology of native and tame grasslands in western Canada, as well as the development of improved management systems intended to maintain or enhance their long-term health and productivity.

For the past three decades, Walter has been regarded and revered as Canada's pre-eminent rangeland research scientist which is also reflected by his designation as Principle Research Scientist with AAFC . Walter's hallmark as a scientist has been to think independently and to not be bound by conventional wisdom. He has formulated clear and uncompromising research questions and designs and then to fastidiously pursued and completed each research program. As Walter's research program evolved he has progressively collaborated with an ever expanding network of scientists at home, in the US and abroad. His work on Foothills Fescue and Mixed Prairie grasslands has laid the framework for past, present and future management of Canadian Rangelands. Walter's research appeals to a broad audience; it encompasses basic rangeland ecology, response to disturbance, and productivity. Ranchers, conservationists, other range scientists, students and professionals who have been to any range event in the last 25 years have been exposed to Walter's research in one way or another. Walter has developed a special relationship with the Chinese and Inner Mongolian research community and has tirelessly shared his many gifts as a scientist with this fledgling range science community.

Walter is a past Associate Editor – Journal of Rangeland Ecology and Management. Dr. Willms has been recognized by the International Mountain Section with the Trail Boss Award and he also received the 2001 Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence in the category of Research and Innovation.

For his outstanding scientific achievements and personal qualities, the Society for Range Management proudly presents the 2009 W.R. Chapline Research Award to Dr. Walter D. Willms

Observations from the Ecotones Field Day, Stavely Research

Substation September 10, 2011 Ron McNeil,
LandWise Inc.

The first ever Ecotone event was held in the Porcupine Hills west of Stavely on September 10, with the theme of sustainable management of rough

fescue grasslands. This new kind of spectator event drew 90 attendees, including artists, scientists, and landowners. The warm sunny weather was ideal for the event.

The field day began at a soil profile location, with discussions provided by Dr. Rose DeClerk, Dr. Walter Willms, Barry Adams, and Ron McNeil. Ron provided a discussion on soil classification and mapping, a discipline that includes artistic and scientific components. Some soil parameters, such as consistence, structure and horizon determination, require a qualitative field assessment, while others, such as texture, colour and organic matter, rely on quantitative measures. Overall the soil profile at any location tells us a story about how the site fits into the ecological picture.

Attendees then broke into five groups with 12 leaders, to learn about range health indicators at demonstration sites in healthy and unhealthy fields. The Ecotone attendees used their eyes and hands in the health assessment process. Water flow and percolation into the soil were also demonstrated.

Ron compared and contrasted soil profile slices from the healthy and unhealthy fields. The soil from the unhealthy field is harder and more massive, has thinner topsoil, and lacks the protective organic layer called the "turfy layer". The unhealthy soil characteristics present barriers to water infiltration and root penetration. Examples of the depth of rooting of rough fescue tussocks were also provided. The healthy rough fescue plant has a root system of approximately four times longer (deeper) compared to the unhealthy system. Participants actively questioned and discussed throughout the field day.

Attendees gathered for a delicious supper of locally grown food prepared by the Royal Purple of Stavely. The event wrapped up with interesting talks provided by John Cross (a local rancher), the Southern Alberta Land Trust Society, and Cows and Fish. The Ecotones event was highly interesting to all who attended. It increased awareness regarding the value and vulnerability of our fescue grasslands, and provided insight on how groups and landowners are striving to preserve them.

Farewell to Don Bedunah Printed with permission from *The Missoulian*.

Donald Joe Bedunah, father, husband, friend, ecologist, academic, and adventurer, died suddenly Saturday, Jan. 28, 2012, at his home in Lolo. His wife Mo Gary and son Andrew were by his side. The cause of death was heart failure. He was 59 years young.

Jack and Doris Bedunah welcomed their beautiful son in Longview, Texas, on Feb. 23, 1952. Don attended and graduated from schools in Fort Worth. He received his bachelor's degree in range science from Texas A&M University in 1975 (magna cum laude), a master of science in range science from Colorado State University in 1977 and a range management Ph.D. from Texas Tech in 1981.

Don's career as a grassland ecologist and academic brought him to Missoula in 1981, where he began his work with the University of Montana School of Forestry. Don published more than 45 professional papers and was an editor for both the *Journal of Range Management* and the text "Rangelands of Central Asia." Don created a diverse and beautiful native garden in his backyard.

Don's work allowed him a view of many of the world's grand and remote native grasslands: from Glacier National Park and the Rocky Mountain front to Mongolia's Gobi Desert, the high-elevation and rugged Wakhan Corridor in northeastern Afghanistan. In western China he conducted rangeland studies in Wild Yak Valley, the Kharteng Valley and throughout the Kunlun Mountains. His most recent international work focused on a project on China's Tibetan Plateau with additional consultancies in Azerbaijan. Don was held in great esteem by the international community of range scientists.

Don was a tireless worker in the field, often returning late in the evening to camp from a day's long trek collecting plant specimens and assessing range conditions. Only after carefully examining the day's collection would he retire to his tent. He cared deeply about the world's increasingly stressed ecosystems, the people, particularly simple pastoralists, who lived on them, and the wild flora and fauna of which they

were a part. He was a patient and compassionate mentor of aspiring scientists and land managers from around the world.

For those of us fortunate enough to know and spend time with him, what was most remarkable, outshining his professional achievements, was Don's ability to calmly share his humility, grace, strength and humor with family, friends, students and strangers. We consider ourselves fortunate to have had him in our lives. He will be missed immeasurably.

Don's greatest joys were his family, friends and cherished days outside. From boyhood Don found a great passion camping, hunting, hiking, kayaking and canoeing, taking family and friends on the simple Bitterroot and Blackfoot as well as hair-raising trips down the Alberton Gorge and the Lochsa. Don's most profound sorrow was the loss of son Michael. He found solace hiking in the Bitterroot Mountains. Time, family, friends and peaceful escapes to the natural world, coupled with the love of Mo Gary, helped restore him.

When Don and Mo met, they found a kindred spirit that became the love of their lives. They sea kayaked in the Baja, rode camels in Egypt, toured the red-light district in Amsterdam and hiked the mountains of western China. Everywhere they traveled they made sure to know the word for beer.

It was his sons and grandchildren who gave him the greatest joy. Last summer his son Dylan and daughter-in-law Stephanie, along with their children, came from Texas. Don introduced his grandchildren to river camping on the Blackfoot. The boys got thrills and chills kayaking with their "granddon" on the white water. Addylan danced her way deep into his heart. The following winter he strengthened his relationship with his son Andrew hunting in the east fork of the Bitterroot.

Don is survived by his wife Mo Gary and son Andrew of Lolo; son Dylan (Stephanie) and grandchildren Cade (12), Brock (9) and Addylan (5) of Texas; mother Doris of Fort Worth, Texas; brothers Steve (Melisa), Mark and John (Pam) and several nieces and nephews, all from Texas; as well as lifelong friends Chris Kennon and Greg Kennett and an array of long-term friends, colleagues, travelers and

wanderers who attended dinners, hunts, hikes, classrooms, symposiums, and those divine evenings under the stars, around campfires. His family is grateful for his dear friends who have taken great care of us.

A memorial service was held on Thursday, Feb. 2, at the University of Montana. In lieu of donations, celebrate him by continuing his legacy of selfless grace and kindness.

*Peace claims the prairie landscape.
Winters rest before the renewal of
spring.*

-Jody Best

Happy Trails, Keith!

Contributed by Gerry Ehler

SRM would like to extend its very best wishes to Keith Lyseng who has recently retired from his position as Executive Director of the Rangeland Management Branch, Public Lands Division, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Over the many years, Keith has been a strong leader and supporter of range management, conservation related organizations, and SRM activities such as: range health, stewardship, range research, and conservation, and education organizations and institutions such as the RMFRA, Cows and Fish, Universities of Alberta and Colleges.

When times were tough, he continued to support his range management staff to attend SRM functions throughout the prairie provinces and Montana, and other United States. He also supported SRM efforts further abroad such as in China.

Keith's quite, strategic, dedicated efforts, and good nature will be missed.

All our best Keith...its time to celebrate with ice cream, pie and cake on or off of your Lute Fisk tractor!

Are cattle grazing & forestry compatible uses on Alberta's eastern slopes? Edward Bork & Jill Kaufmann, University of Alberta

Cattle grazing and commercial forestry are important land uses on public land in SW Alberta, and the successful integration of these land uses has been a key objective of the Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association. Where these uses occur on a common land base, significant concerns can exist over their compatibility, and more information is needed on how cattle grazing and timber harvesting interact across the landscape. For example, high levels of tree residue (known as slash) following logging may reduce accessibility of clearcut areas to grazing cattle. Conversely, by opening up forested areas, cattle may congregate within clearcuts to capitalize on regrowing grasses and forbs, and in the process, negatively impact the survival and vigor of regenerating trees.

With support from the Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association, the Alberta Beef Producers, and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Jill Kaufmann recently completed her MSc Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Edward Bork at the University of Alberta examining cattle grazing behavior at two locations, including a deciduous forest west of Drayton Valley, Alberta, and a montane landscape in the southern Porcupine Hills. Each study was repeated over 2 years and was designed to address a variety of questions, including 1) Which habitats do cattle inherently prefer within those environments?, 2) What are the fundamental factors that influence cattle decisions to select certain habitats over others?, and 3) What is the impact of cattle grazing on aspen and conifer tree regeneration? A combination of GPS collar and field plot studies were used to address these questions. The results were very encouraging as they suggested cattle grazing had little to no detrimental influence on typical forestry operations across this region of Alberta.

At the Drayton Valley location, cattle use across the landscape during mid-summer was positively associated with increases in forage biomass and quality (specifically crude protein concentration), and

reflects attempts by livestock to maximize foraging opportunities - all other factors being equal. In contrast, cattle use decreased with increased distance from water, greater slash cover and increased aspen sapling densities. The tendency for cattle to spend more time at and near water sources reinforces the importance of maintaining adequate water distribution to ensure that all portions of forested grazing leases are used, and in the process avoid excessive localized grazing and undesirable impacts on regenerating trees near a single water supply. Although cattle were expected to have an affinity for the up to 60% greater forage biomass available in cutblocks, this did not occur. Cattle avoided clear cut and partially cut habitats, and instead selected uncut forest despite its lower productivity. Avoidance of harvested areas appears to be at least partly related to abundant slash and thick deciduous tree regrowth, both of which deterred cattle use. Notably, maximum levels of forage removal remained below 20% in all habitat types, well within sustainable levels of grazing.

Overall impacts of cattle on individual aspen trees also remained low, and were related primarily to stocking rate rather than habitat type. During 2008, only 2.3% and 7.3% of all tree regeneration experienced some degree of damage under low (0.3 AUM/ha) and moderate (0.6 AUM/ha) stocking, respectively, stressing the importance of conservative livestock stocking to protect forestry interests. Additionally, a much lower proportion of trees were damaged (< 8%) across all harvested areas compared to uncut forest due to sharp increases in tree regeneration following overstory removal. As the low levels of observed damage to tree regeneration are unlikely to prevent future forest re-establishment to provincial regeneration standards, and the low cattle stocking rate we tested remained consistent with allowable stocking on public land in the region, these results highlight the compatible nature of forest management with cattle grazing in the lower foothills of Alberta, even 1-2 years after logging.

At the Porcupine Hills location, cattle use was assessed from July through September for 2 years across diverse landscapes containing a mix of lowland grasslands (i.e. those dominated by introduced grasses), upland (native) grasslands,

aspen forest, mixedwood forest, coniferous forest and conifer clearcuts. Cattle stocking rates were 0.35-0.59 AUM/ha. Forage biomass and utilization varied widely among habitats. While biomass was greatest in grasslands (lowland and upland) and cutblocks, moderate in aspen and mixedwood forest, and very low in conifer forest, cattle utilized primarily lowland grasslands (43% use), followed by upland grasslands, aspen and mixedwood forest (use of these ranged from 16-19%).

GIS analysis revealed that cattle preferred lowland grasslands the most, followed by upland grasslands and then aspen forest, while avoiding conifer forest and their associated clearcuts. Cattle avoidance of clearcut habitats occurred despite the fact that cattle selection across the landscape was positively associated with increases in forage biomass, which clearcuts had an ample supply of. Avoidance of clearcuts was instead attributed to the obstructive influence of slash accumulation and rugged topography, both of which were found to be a significant deterrent to cattle presence and forage utilization (<3% of forage in clearcuts was removed). Not surprisingly, damage to regenerating pine seedlings was all but absent in this study.

Factors found to increase the likelihood of cattle use across the montane landscape were similar to those altering cattle behaviour at Drayton Valley. Cattle preferred to forage in areas with increased forage biomass and quality (protein concentration), but avoided areas further from water. However, cattle also preferred areas further from back country roads, presumably in an attempt to minimize disturbance of normal daily activities. Cattle also avoided areas of the landscape with excessive terrain ruggedness, instead electing to use flatter valley bottoms or plateaus. Disproportionately heavy use of nearly level, lowland grasslands likely accounts for the greater abundance of grazing tolerant, introduced plant species at this location, and reinforces the importance of improving cattle distribution in this type of heterogeneous foothill landscape, either by strategic supplement (salt or mineral) placement, active animal movement (i.e. riding), or by the creation of smaller pastures to control animal access and distribution. Overall, results of this study provide important insight into the development of sustainable

grazing capacities for montane landscapes in SW Alberta by further refining habitat designations as primary (lowland grassland), secondary (upland grassland, aspen and mixedwood) and non-use (conifer forest and clearcut) rangeland.

A provincial perspective on policy, regulations and management of feral horses in Alberta, Canada

Michael Alexander, Kevin France, Rob Kessler

Few issues stimulate as much emotion and strong polarized opinion as free-ranging horses. The role that horses have played in the history and settlement of western North America weighs significantly in the high profile free-ranging horses receive. The undeniable majesty of these large, graceful herbivores further increases the emotional connection that many people feel. When it comes to feral horses, opinions are deeply entrenched, which creates a challenging environment when conflicts arise.

In Alberta, free-ranging horses on public land are descendants of domestic stock (Franzen 2010, Clabby 1976). The original populations were brought to Alberta by early settlers. Over time these original populations have survived and have been augmented by escaped and released horses (Alberta Government 2012). The history of Alberta's feral horses is extremely cyclical and historically includes essentially opportunistic management correlated with economic cycles in the province.

Alberta's original free-ranging horse populations were, for the most part, a result of settlement and early natural resource development. Horses were used for agriculture, logging, mining and transportation. The need for horsepower was cyclical and horses were set free to take advantage of Alberta's vast, unfenced rangelands when the need for horsepower was low, and they were rounded up again when needed (Kennedy 2005).

With the industrial revolution, the need for horses declined in the early 1900's and large herds of free-ranging horses were a common occurrence throughout Alberta. The first documented roundups

of free-ranging horse herds occurred in southern Alberta during the Boer War when there was a significant need for horses to support the war effort (Smith and Kunst 2003). Similar roundups also occurred during World War I. However, because of the reduced need for horses following the significant mechanization that occurred during World War I, free-ranging horse populations continued to increase.

Due to the large populations, and because of the impacts free-ranging horses were having on the landscape, a major effort was made by the government to remove free-ranging horses from the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve in the 1920s (Alberta Government 2012). These efforts were not completely successful; likely because of opportunistic management of these horses for economic gain by some groups (Kennedy 2005).

Since the 1920s there have been other efforts to remove or reduce free-ranging horses from the Eastern Slopes of Alberta, including fairly significant efforts in the 1950's.

Although long-term historic census data for Alberta's free-ranging horses does not exist, there is anecdotal evidence that free-ranging horse numbers increased when horse markets were poor and declined when markets were good. Government directed efforts to remove or reduce free-ranging horse populations coincide with times when horse prices were low and the numbers of free-ranging horses were high. The cyclic nature of free-ranging horse populations in Alberta continues today.

In recognition of their domestic ancestry, free-ranging horses in Alberta are classed as feral animals. By definition, feral means a plant or animal that has escaped or been released from domestication and is now living untamed, without domestic management (Merriam-Webster 2012).

Although Alberta's free-ranging horses are classed as feral, this does not mean that they are without legislative standing. The shooting or hunting of horses (feral or domestic) is illegal according to Section 444 of the Canadian Criminal Code. The capture of feral horses in Alberta is regulated under the *Stray Animals Act* of Alberta.

In the early 1990's, concerns about mistreatment of horses captured on public land led to the creation of the Horse Capture Regulation under the *Stray Animals Act* (Alberta Government 2012). This regulation was developed to ensure humane treatment of feral horses during capture and removal from public land. The regulation also enables the Alberta Government to regulate the issuance of licences for horse capture in designated areas of Alberta's Eastern Slopes.

High fecundity, low rates of capture, and increased rates of escaped and illegally released horses have significantly increased horse numbers and the area that these horses occupy along the Eastern Slopes of Alberta. Since the 1990's the approach the Alberta Government has taken is to control feral horse numbers by regulating removals through the feral horse capture licensing system. Feral horse population estimates are determined through annual aerial counts which are used to determine the minimum population size. The maximum level of permitted horse removal within specific equine management zones is set using these minimum population counts.

Since the early 2000s, especially since 2008, the market value of horses for all uses has diminished (Animal Industry News Update 2000 - 2010). With this sharp decline in horse values, there has also been a significant increase in the number of illegally released and abandoned horses that have joined the existing feral herds (Girard 2012). Poor horse markets have also significantly reduced the interest in horse capture licences. The low level of horse capture license issuance and the corresponding low capture rate has led to questions about the long-term effectiveness of the current horse capture licence program as the only tool to manage Alberta's feral horse populations.

Over the past 15 to 20 years there have been cyclical changes in feral horse populations within specific equine management zones. However, the provincial horse population remained reasonably stable at around 400 horses until about 2006. Since 2008, however, there has been at least a 234% increase in the feral horse population in the Eastern Slopes (Unpublished Alberta Sustainable Resource

Development (ASRD) 2008-2011 data). The minimum population is currently just over 1,000 animals. Annual population growth in individual equine management zones since 2008 has been as high as 40%.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development recently has also seen some of the lowest horse capture numbers recorded. Due to the low demand for horse capture permits from the public, and the resulting impacts of increased feral horse populations on rangeland health, graziers in the Rocky Mountain forest reserve have started to obtain capture licences in order to try to reduce the feral horse populations. Forest reserve graziers have a vested interest in trying to control or reduce the feral horse populations, as the Alberta government uses rangeland health as a criterion to assess the stability and sustainability of livestock grazing and management.

The habitat that feral horses occupy in the Rocky Mountain forest reserve is a unique and highly diverse landscape. This diversity makes this landscape extremely important. Not only is the forest reserve the headwaters for the Prairie Provinces, this landscape is also extremely important for biodiversity, wildlife habitat, timber production, non-renewable mineral resource extraction, recreation and extensive domestic livestock grazing. All of these values and activities are managed, by strategies such as setting resource allocations and management planning. Feral horses are one of the few aspects of this extremely busy and high profile landscape that do not have specific management goals.

As the horse numbers and area they occupy increase, there is growing evidence and awareness that, under certain situations, feral horses can be detrimental to other natural resources and activities on the landscape. It has become increasingly clear that feral horse management is necessary. The Alberta government has undertaken a number of projects to better understand the feral horse populations of Alberta's Eastern Slopes, some of which are in partnership with the University of Alberta, and the Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association. These projects include detailed range inventory and rangeland health assessment of landscapes occupied by feral horses, feral horse

habitat selection studies using GPS collars, and field monitoring of the feral horse populations. The goal of this work is to ensure the best information is available to support land and resource management decisions involving feral horses. The work completed so far indicates that feral horses are not just an agricultural issue affecting livestock producers. Feral horses are a resource management issue influencing and affecting wildlife habitat, timber reforestation, public safety, rangeland and watershed health (Girard 2012, Salter 1980).

Although it will be extremely challenging because of the strong emotional and cultural connection that people have with feral horses, it has been recognized that it is time to engage in a feral horse management strategy for Alberta's Eastern Slopes. Clear goals, strategies, and objectives for feral horse management need to be determined. These discussions need to look at and discuss feral horse management using science, conventional knowledge and public input. Important discussions need to occur regarding existing resource allocations and how they fit into developing a feral horse strategy. The discussions also need to address where feral horses do and do not fit into the busy and heavily allocated landscape of Alberta's Eastern Slopes. This discussion also needs to clearly define who is going to pay to support and ensure a successful feral horse management strategy.

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The Shoulders We Stand On

The Shoulders We Stand On award was designed to recognize those folks who have contributed throughout their life to the betterment of the range, and shared their enthusiasm and knowledge with others throughout their lives. These folks were recognized at the SRM-IMS Fall Meeting in Lethbridge, Alberta in 2011 and are featured in the photograph below. This honour was awarded to nine folks in 2011. In the previous newsletter, the information for five of these folks was published. The remaining four are presented here.

Sherm Ewing

Working first on Montana and California ranches, Sherm and Claire Ewing eventually established the SN Ranch west of Claresholm in the Porcupine Hills in 1955 where they raised their family.

Sherm's long association with SRM began in the early 1950's when an acquaintance in Arizona gave him a copy of the Journal of Range Management. For the Ewing family, SRM membership was being part of an extended family. It was a centre for learning, sharing and many treasured friends and associates in the field of range. Indeed it involved the whole Ewing family.

A particular legacy to our society and to ranching are Sherm's treasured books *The Range and the Ranch*, telling the story of western ranching and the associated North American cattle industry. Sherm has the ability to convey his love of the range into beautifully descriptive prose sprinkled with an earthy, and dry sense of humor, just like the land. Canadian historian Dr. David Breen, a well known historian of Canadian ranching history describes these books as uniquely valuable because of they contain primary source information, Sherm captured the stories in the original words of all those he interviewed.

In terms of support for the IMS section, Sherm pretty much covered all the bases. He was on IMS council from 1958 to 1961, was section President in 1965, was the newsletter editor from 1983 to 1988, secretary-treasurer from 1995 to 1967 and section historian from 2000 to 2005. He also served on the SRM Board of Directors with the parent society from 1967 to 1969. Society recognition included Outstanding Achievement in 1988, Long Service recognition in 1990 and the Trail Boss Award in 2003, marking over 50 years of membership in the Society and IMS.

A particular memory that Sherm shared with me yesterday was of his old friend Harry Hargrave, a man of immense stature in the prairie rangeland scene and one time superintendent of the Onefour Substation and deputy director of PFRA in Regina. At an SRM meeting in Strathmore, likely organized by the McKinnons, and attended by about 100 men and women, Harry proceeded to introduce from memory,

every man and woman in the group including some relevant information about each person. That story captures an image of the kinds of people Sherm associated with and appreciated in our society.

Dan McKinnon

For Dan McKinnon, joining SRM was inevitable given the deep stewardship values of his father Art and Uncle Charlie and Ed who were founding members of the Society and very, very dedicated members. The McKinnon family participated in the last roundup on the CPR block south of Bassano in 1929. The McKinnon Brothers (Charlie, Art, Ed) were recognized in 1985 for long service to the Section and to rangeland management.

Dan McKinnon joined SRM in 1967 when attending the summer tour in Ennis Montana. Also a long term member of Foothills Forage, Dan enjoyed SRM because of the hands on, on the ground approach. With their operation at Airdrie, the McKinnons have witnessed massive land use change and have worked to promote resource stewardship and sustainable practices. Dan was council member for the Section for 1983 and 84 and then Section president in 1987. He was responsible for the very successful 1986 summer tour at Stavely.

Some particular memories that Dan has of SRM include the hail storm at Stavely where the tour participants sheltered under his the big silage tarp from the back of his truck. He also remembers that big rain storm at Kinsella, but was lucky enough to get in the jump seat of someone's pickup truck.

The prairie, in all its expressions, is a massive, subtle place, with a long history of contradiction and misunderstanding. But it is worth the effort at comprehension. It is, after all, at the center of our national identity.

- Wayne Fields

Edwin Nelson

Thankfully, Fred Randle was up for an adventure when Ed Nelson phoned and suggested they fly to Mexico City to check out this "range management

society". That was 1968 and Ed has seldom missed a section or parent society meeting since. Ed says he has enjoyed travelling throughout North America with SRM and meeting ranchers and learning from them and helping out where he could. Ed served on the IMS Council in the early 1970s and was our president in 1973. Ed was also on the SRM Board of Directors from 1988-1990.

Ed has always been an advocate for rancher rights and the stewardship of rangelands. In 1962, as the first manager and chairman of the Board for the Waldron Grazing Co-op, Ed helped ensure that landowners, in need of summer pasture, had a place to go. Ed advocated for fair compensation to ranchers from oil companies and for minimal disturbance to native rangelands. Ed's ability to translate scientific information into pithy messages like "manage the shoots to maintain the roots and take care of the grass and cows will take care of themselves", his ability to react to emerging issues and his positive attitude, made him an invaluable contributor to the Prairie Conservation Forum, the Foothills Forage Group, and the Stavely Range Research Station.

Ed received recognition from SRM for long service and skilled range management in 1994 and SRM Fellow Award in 1995. In 2010 Ed was recognized for his lifelong work in the ranching industry when he received the Outstanding Ranchmen Award.

Art Bailey

Dr. Art Bailey was appointed the University of Alberta's first Range Management professor in Canada in 1966. He retired in 1997, the same year he was awarded the WR Chapline Research Award from the Society for Range Management; the first Canadian recipient of this prestigious award. The who's who of range management in Alberta and much of western Canada that are senior managers today were trained by Dr. Bailey as either undergraduates or graduates. His favourite question was simply "why". His contribution continues to exceed his 31 years of service. Dr. Bailey was the original fund raiser at the University of Alberta and today's range management students enjoy scholarships and educational opportunities as a result of his timely efforts. Under pressure from

Sherm Ewing, Dr. Bailey established the U of A Range Team in 1980, and the original sponsors truly enjoyed the undergraduate activity within the section, including beating up on Texas A&M on occasion.

Art's fondest memories of SRM are the infamous Kinsella Ranch tour where the group was caught in an intense thunderstorm, and the ranch cows tried to chew the fuselage from Sherm Ewing's plane. Other fond memories include listening to the sweet orations of Alex Johnson. Before retirement he enjoyed seeing the evolution of recognition of grazing as a tool for ecosystem management, the elevation of fire as a management tool, and the increasing importance of non-livestock products from rangelands. After retirement he still enjoys SRM-IMS summer tours and fall meetings, especially riparian management in the Cypress Hills and grassland reclamation in the Porcupine Hills.

SRM High School Youth Forum

Tracy Kupchenko

Hello everyone! Well, another SRM conference has come and gone. PHEW!!! What a whirlwind!! However, it didn't compare to all the time and energy that was put into helping to prepare Morgan Klaiber for this year's High School Youth Forum competition! Morgan won the Top Hand Award at the 2011 Southern Alberta Youth Range Days and as such, was given the opportunity to represent IMS in Spokane. The students are allowed to pick a topic of their choice, as long as it has something to do with range management. For those of you that aren't familiar with the Forum, students are required to write a paper and then do an oral presentation on it, using slides or props. The presentation must be less than 8.5 minutes, with questions from judges hidden within the crowd to follow. No pressure!! ☺

I encouraged her to choose a topic that is close to her heart. Well, Morgan picked a doozy!! Her title was, "Wind Power - A Rancher's Perspective". She felt that since there is a wind-farm proposed for her family's land, that this was a perfect topic. Throughout the fall and winter months, she researched wind power via internet and interviewing folks like Carlo Plava (their land agent for the wind farm), Marilyn Neville, myself and Kevin Redden. I

was impressed by how aggressive she was at searching out answers to her questions. Many trips were made out to the Eagle Butte High School in Dunmore to pick her up after classes to work on her paper at the local Subway or Pita Pit, and then return her to school for her evening volleyball practices.

It was definitely tough competition in Spokane!! In the end she was disappointed that she didn't place in the top 5, but I feel that it was her personal best. She spoke very clearly and answered all EIGHT of the judge's questions in a very thorough and knowledgeable manner. Marilyn Neville and I both expressed our excitement that she had "nailed the questions!!"

One thing should definitely be mentioned as far as coaching is concerned. It was definitely A GROUP effort!

Nancy Boutilier, Kevin Redden, Marilyn Neville, Jake Powell, Brian Laing, Lynn Fitzpatrick, Paul Jungnitsch, Gerry Ehlert (and more folks I may have forgotten) all helped to coach Morgan. From her writing and information gathering (Marilyn), to practice presentations (the SRD group including Gerry & Jake), to answering questions "effectively" (Nancy and Kevin). I would like to ensure that all of these folks are recognized for helping Morgan out. THANK YOU!!!!

Like the old saying goes- "It takes a village to raise a child."

Sure, I did a lot of the small details of coaching and I enjoyed it. This may be the closest I have ever felt to having my own child!!! It was a bit stressful, but Morgan and I survived it, and we had fun. Over the months, I got to know Morgan pretty well and I am impressed by how confident she is and how well she remembers details. Morgan told me that she enjoyed her time at the HSYF where she met some great kids and had some excellent experiences. I'm not worried about Morgan being discouraged. She is only 15 and has asked if it's possible to win another buckle (the 2012 Top Hand Award) at Youth Range Days! Besides, I think we may have sparked her interest in reclamation?? Congratulations on a job well done Morgan, we are all proud of you!

Forage kochia & winterfat test plots

Matt Ricketts, Jim Jacobs, Becky & Mike Bales

Twelve test plots were established in Stillwater County Montana. Four different soil preparations were used; disc only, harrow only, disc and roll, and no treatment. These plots were chosen to cover a variation of native grasses and cheat infested areas.

Within each of these twelve plots, Utah common winterfat, "Open Range" winterfat, and Utah "immigrant" forage Kochia were broadcast (see diagram II). Seed was broadcast with rice hulls, as a carrier, for even distribution.

Winterfat is vigorously grazed by all classes of livestock, especially sheep, and is an important food source for elk, deer, and antelope. The persistent leaves and late season crude protein content make this plant an exceptional winter browse species. When utilized as winter forage, winterfat provides crude protein levels of 7 to 11 percent and is relatively high in calcium, phosphorus, and potassium.

Forage kochia is highly nutritious to cattle and sheep, most commonly used for standing fall and winter forage as an alternative to harvested hay. Crude protein levels range from 7 to 14% during fall and winter months (August to March) with higher protein levels than perennial cool season grasses, forbs and legumes during that period.

Soil preparation was done on Monday, April 11, 2011 and Tuesday, April 12, 2011. Broadcast seeding was done by NRCS on Wednesday, April 13, 2011. The final roll of the disc and roll sections, were done the evening of Wednesday, April 13, 2011. There was no measurable precipitation during these 3 days. Temperatures were daytime highs of 40's and 50's and night-time lows of 20's and 30's.

This area will be fenced off from grazing for the next 2 to 3 years, for establishment of plants.

2011-2012 IMS Executive Committee

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Contact information for these folks is available at
<http://ims.rangelands.org/contact.shtml>.

Mark These Dates!

March 1	Alien Invasive Species Forum, Olds College, AB
March 2	Action for Agriculture 22 nd AGM, Balzac, AB
March 19-20	Crown Managers Forum, Lethbridge, AB
April 3-5	Alberta Institute of Agrologists, AGM, Banff, Alberta
April 18-19	Alberta Society for Professional Biologists AGM
April 21	Alberta Native Plant Council AGM
April 24-27	Weeds Across Borders, Cancun, Mexico
May 25	Deadline for submissions for June Newsletter
June 18-20	Montana Range Days, Deer Lodge, MT
July 16-20	Montana Youth Range Camp, Townsend, MT
July 17-19	Youth Range Days, Cardston, AB
July 19-20	IMS Summer Tour, High River, AB
Oct. 5	Deadline for submissions for Oct. Newsletter