



New Mexico Section Newsletter

Society for Range Management

SPRING 2011

President's Desk



Jim Thorpe, New Mexico
Section SRM President

Spring is calving time on the ranch – a time of renewal and new beginnings. Attentive mamas lick their newborns as they stagger up on shaky legs, instinctively searching for that sustaining first taste of thick colostrum. Rangeland too shows signs of new life as it breaks dormancy in fits and starts with bits of emergent forb speckling bare ground, or tentatively revealed when peeling back the basal leaves of yellowed bunch grass. Such seasonal rangeland transitions are of course “normal,” even as such normalcy is itself ever subject to variation. On rangeland variation is the norm. “Normal” is usually the exception; outliers of boom and bust often the rule.

This time last year saw most (though not all) of New Mexico rangeland off to a great start with a “near perfect Spring,” prelude to one of the best forage years in recent memory (fortuitously coupled with high cattle markets). This year it may well be the other extreme with the advent of a “Perfect Drought” ushered in by *El Nino*'s little sister. Notes the *Climas Drought Tracker*, “Over the next several

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New Mexico Section SRM Summer Tour

Save the Date!

By Les Owen

NM Section tour: July 22, 2011 at The Corona Range and Livestock Research Center. Board of Directors will meet the afternoon of July 21 with a cookout that evening.

The [Corona Range and Livestock Research Center](#) is a 27,886-acre working ranch laboratory located near the geographical center of the state of New Mexico, just east of the village of Corona. Land within the research center is characterized by rolling hills alternating with undulating to flat areas with the elevation ranging from 5,720 to 6700 feet. A transitional area runs the length of the ranch with the southern half predominately piñon juniper woodland and the northern half described as a short grass prairie. The research center is operated by New Mexico State University's Animal and Range Sciences Department. Research programs, as well as graduate student studies are a major part of the research centers activities and are incorporated into the normal production cycle of the cattle and sheep commercial operations, a registered Angus seedstock herd, a native mule deer population and an introduced herd of pronghorn antelope. Join us for a tour of the ranch and on-site discussions related to current research projects including:

- Juniper control
- Biofuel research
- Grazing distribution
- Monitoring

More details to come at a later date.

New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp

Date: June 5-10, 2011

Location: Valles Caldera National Preserve

Youth ages 15-19 can apply online at:

<http://nmyrm.nmsu.edu/>



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months, forecasts call for persisting, expanding, and intensifying drought conditions in all of New Mexico and all but the northwest corner of Arizona.” Feast and famine. In wet years everyone is a great manager; hard dry spells humble even the best.

This “Perfect Drought” however is not restricted (as it “normally” would be) to the critters, plants and soils that make up our rangelands, but reaches the community of rangeland researchers, educators and managers that populate our SRM membership. The fiscal currents normally sustaining our rangeland institutions and professions have themselves been subject to a devastating *La Nina* of their own. Like our dust-driving spring winds, the pervasive deficit crises are desiccating budgets across the spectrum. Programs are frozen, allocations rolled backed, key positions left vacant. Everyone is having to do even more with even less in a changed but always challenging environment.

Is this merely a temporary disturbance for our rangeland community, or is it a sign of some precipitous threshold transitioning to a less desirable state? Will there be erosion of our learning institutions and loss of applied knowledge on the land? Will there be further declines in the ranks of rangeland managers, educators, *and* stewards, all at a time when the aggregate demand

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2011 ANNUAL WINTER MEETING AND TOUR

Restoring Rangelands: Applied Ecology, Persistent Practice

The new year was but a few days old when we met in sunny Las Cruces, touring the [West Potrillos Grassland Restoration Project](#) (BLM’s landscape-scale experiment in multi-stakeholder collaborative-management and hearing from a panel of seasoned producers presenting personal “case-studies” across a spectrum of ecosystems, resource challenges, and practical restoration techniques, including management of roads and arroyos. An inaugural “Agency Forum” also gave us an opportunity to learn about the common themes – and variations – faced by all our agency colleagues.

Feedback taken at the meeting (n=10) and in the follow-up e-survey (n=26) indicated that the 2nd week in January would work better for optimizing future attendance (we had 54, about a third of our membership). There was general approval of recent meeting facilities, services, and registration fees (which, without the support of sponsors, seldom cover all costs!). Half favored alternating between the sunny south (Las Cruces) and our major metropolis (ABQ), with 15% remaining partial to each city, and a third interested in moving around a bit (Artesia anyone?). Not surprisingly, there continues to be strong support for student participation, and great interest in meeting content that emphasizes both the Art and Science of range management in New Mexico.

SECTION LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

NM SRM Fiscal Policy and Annual Budget: Following the section fiscal policy initiated in 2010, the new BOD adopted a balanced annual operational budget for 2011. Total revenue and expenses approximate \$10,000; our beginning total money market total is \$55,343. This budget anticipates modest event income (keeping registrations “affordable”), modest returns from balanced long-term investment of up to half of our “reserves,” enhanced recruitment of event sponsors, and an annual fund raising effort (e.g. \$20 per member in “enhanced dues” would bring in \$3000). Our major expenses reside in support for youth and student activities (guidelines and protocols for two SRM \$500 scholarships are being revised for the 2011-12 academic year). Outreach efforts to other rangeland stakeholders (e.g. NMCGA, Quivira) are based on sponsorship reciprocity and, when available, matching support from the SRM Redd Fund.

NMSRM BOD and Committee Handbook Update:

Did you know that our section handbook, clearly detailing all the responsibilities and duties of our officers and committees, was last updated in 2005? Did you even know that we had such a handbook? We tracked down rumors that such a document existed last fall and finally found someone who had a copy on an aging hard drive. After dusting it off, it seemed a review and update for the new decade was in order. Tom Bartlett, Bob Alexander and David Graham are heading up the review and promise us significant progress by our summer gathering. If you have any bright ideas, please contact et101@zianet.com



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 for the sustainable production of food and fiber (and all those “ecological services”) from rangelands continues to increase?

If History is any guide, rangelands are (though not always) remarkably resilient when challenged by disturbance. So also (though not always) are rangeland communities. Consider the devastation of - and recovery from - the Dust Bowl, not quite a hundred years ago, a catastrophic experience spawning the art and science of range management that we profess today. Consider the vigor and rigor with which this art and science has been pursued, the adaptive tools and technologies that continue to be developed, the dedication and professionalism of practitioners at every level. Consider the cumulative rangeland knowledge and experience that is leveraged in the interactive network that is SRM.

Is the current fiscal and climate challenge a “New Normal,” or are we on the downward stroke of what should be a familiar cycle of boom and bust? Resilient rangelands are those that both endure and recover from disturbance. Resilient rangeland communities are those that facilitate and further this process.



NMSU Range Club News



The NMSU Range Club took first place in the Student Chapter Display Contest at the 2011 Society for Range Management conference in Billings Montana. Jimmie Hughes, a Range Club member, took second overall in the public speaking contest, which was very competitive this year. In addition, our Rangeland Cup team took 6th overall out of 15. All the members really enjoyed the trip, and when we weren't competing in events we were attending different symposia on great topics, like the implications of wolf re- introduction on Montana producers and communication techniques for range managers. The generous grant from the New Mexico Section of SRM greatly contributed to our ability to attend this event, and was used to pay hotel, travel and meal bills. We greatly appreciate the support and were pleased to represent New Mexico up in Montana!

Monty Lane, 2010-2011 Range Club President



NMSU Range Club in Montana

Tammy Smith, Laura Goodman, Steven Lunt, Ryan Hiles, Monty Lane, Jim Thorpe (NMSRM section President), Sam Teske, Hector Elias-Justiniani, and Jimmie Hughes



1st place Range Club Display



Jimmie Hughes, 2nd place Public Speaking



Rangeland Cup Team



New Mexico and SRM's Native Range Initiative:

By Bob Alexander

Rangelands used by Native American's was the focus of the Native Range Session at the Billings, Montana on February 10, 2011. The daylong session provided an opportunity for Native Americans and others interested in the management of the rangelands they use to have dialog on the management programs and how they could be more effective.

Members of the New Mexico Section who participated in the program included Mark Sando, Jim Thorpe, Bob Alexander and Tony Howard. Bob Alexander served as the moderator for the session, Jim Thorpe recorded the session via voice recorder and digital camera, Mark Sando gave a wrap-up presentation on how the SRM can increase its role on Native Rangelands. Tony Howard worked hard on preparation for the session and making sure the Navajo Nation story was told.

Over 30 Native Americans attended the session. This represents a significant increase in the number of Native Americans attending SRM events. The session included an opportunity for dialog and making suggestions on how SRM can participate on Native Rangelands. If you are interested in participating in the Native Range Initiative of the Society or if you have suggestions on how SRM can participate on Native Rangelands located in New Mexico, contact Bob Alexander at bob1alexander@msn.com or (505)470-5637.



New life finds comfort amidst ten years of unabashed rotational grazing; what was once a bare gully sporting cocklebur, continuously grazed just 75 yards from a windmill, is now full of covering midgrasses enjoying significant growing season rest. Not a bad place to start off if you're a young-un (especially if you are such a picturesque misfit in what's suppose to be an all-black outfit!)

- Jim Thorpe

2011 Regional Range Tour Partnerships

A 2011 NM SRM initiative is to partner with the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts to promote regional range tours aimed at producers and the interested public. The inspiration for this was an October 2010 Taos SWCD tour of Wolf Springs Ranch, which our section helped sponsor. For a slideshow of this tour see [Taos SWCD Wolf Springs Tour](#)

Contact Tony Benson benson1@newmex.com

CONGRATULATIONS LAURA LANE 2nd in the HSYF!

The New Mexico section of SRM was represented in the High School Youth Forum (HSYF) at the 2011 International Meeting of the Society for Range Management by two outstanding high

school students: Jordyn Bannon of Des Moines, and Laura Lane of Aztec, Jordyn and Laura were kept quite busy as they joined the HSYF delegates representing other SRM sections in Billings.; Youth Forum delegates toured rangelands of southeast Montana, including stops at Pompey's Pillar and the Custer National Battlefield, attended the HSYF Professional Interaction Dinner, and each student gave a presentation in the HSYF Paper Presentation session. Jordyn gave her presentation titled "Alternative Crops", and Laura was awarded 2nd place overall for her presentation titled "Formulating Trends of Nematode Distributions". Congratulations to both Jordyn and Laura for their achievements!



HOLD THE DATE

July 22, 2011

2011NM Section SRM Summer Tour
Corona Range and Livestock Research Center

Rangeland Education Reports



By Laurie Abbott, Chair of the NM SRM K-12 Rangeland Education Task Force
K-12 Rangeland Education Activities

In January 2010, the NM SRM K-12 Rangeland Education Task Force was created to address the goal of increasing an awareness and appreciation of rangelands among K-12 students and teachers in New Mexico. The Task Force's mission was to explore ideas and approaches to increasing rangeland literacy, and to establish a framework for involving our section members in this endeavor. The Task Force identified 4 core topic areas that could be emphasized in rangeland education efforts, and proposed several types of activities and actions to support this effort. In Fall 2010, we sought input from our section members through the NM SRM Membership Survey,

which included a series of questions related to K-12 rangeland education; 30 section members responded to these questions. Member input is summarized here:

Prioritize education efforts targeted at middle school and high school ages.

Topics related to rangeland ecosystems and ecosystem services were prioritized for both age groups, and the topic of range careers was highly rated for high school students.

Development of curriculum focused on NM rangelands, range field trips, and website of range-education resources were identified as key approaches to reach both age groups. In addition, classroom speakers, careers exploration, and science fair projects were identified as important for high school students.

Survey results were summarized in more detail in a presentation at the NM SRM Winter Meeting; this presentation can be accessed through the section website.

Based on input from the section membership, the K-12 Task Force has identified several strategies for outreach and education:

Projects: promote High School Youth Forum (HSYF) and science fair projects that are range-related with an emphasis on projects conducted outdoors.

Connections: support activities that increase connections between students and teachers with people who are knowledgeable and care about New Mexico rangelands – our section members!

Curriculum: develop curriculum and educational materials focused on New Mexico rangelands.

Web-based Resources: create a web site that students and teachers can access to find information about rangelands, and to facilitate making connections with range “experts” – our section members who could speak to classes, mentor HSYF and science students working on range-related projects, accompany class field trips, etc.

Accomplishing these goals can only be done with participation and help of our section members throughout the state. If you are interested in participating in any part of this effort, or would like more information about ways in which you could help, please contact Laurie Abbott (labbott@nmsu.edu).

NEW MEXICO SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS

1st place Phillip Lane Weather or Not: Seasonal Change: Identifying change in weather patterns and shift from when rainfall was previously occurring to recent conditions and the effect that that has on growing vegetation.

2nd place Serna Pack What Will Grow: Working with mine reclamation of soils in Grants County. Identifying germination times of seeds of different soil types.

3rd place Grace Wood Eroding Roads Phase 2 :Looking at the amount of erosion caused on a dirt road.

Others to mention:

Monitoring the Disturbance of Soil Micro-Ecosystems

Vermicomposting for reclaiming soils in Oil Field

Salt Cedar's effect on Bio Diversity

For more information visit us online: <http://nmsrm.nmsu.edu/>

2010 – NMSRM Membership Survey Results

By Lee Hamilton, Laurie Abbott, and Andres Cibils



This article summarizes the most relevant results of last year's NMSRM membership survey; it highlights portions of the data presented at the Section's 2011 Winter Meeting in Las Cruces earlier this year. Our immediate concern was to communicate these results to the section membership as soon as possible, although a more in depth report (including data presented at the winter meeting) will be posted on the Section's website later this year.

Demographics

Almost 40% (62 out of 157) of NMSRM members who received the survey responded. The majority of respondents (85.2%) were males, closely mirroring the gender ratio of the NM Section membership as a whole. Interestingly, the majority of respondents were either old-timers (section members for 5 yrs or more), or new-comers (less than 2 years with the NMSRM), with very few respondents in the intermediate bracket. No significant relation between the years of section membership and a respondent's age were found and a majority of respondents were Federal employees.

What should we prioritize?

When asked what activities should be prioritized, most respondents felt that more dissemination of information and educational activities were needed. Most respondents were also of the opinion that the Section's efforts in recognizing outstanding range managers (i.e. awards) are just about right (this was the only activity that some respondents thought should be cut back). Members in the intermediate and older age bracket (36 years or older) were the ones who most frequently requested that the section provide more professional development activities. Younger members (ages 35 and younger) felt that current levels of professional development opportunities were adequate. Members of all ages however, agreed on the need to increase information dissemination efforts. Respondents from all regions of the state were basically in agreement about the activities that need to be prioritized by the NMSRM.

Section meetings

Networking, interaction with other members, and training were the three most frequent reasons that respondents gave for attending winter or summer section meetings. Work priorities were the most frequent reason for not attending section meetings. Conflicts with other SRM meetings, venue location, or program topic were next most cited reasons for not attending. Again, old-timers and new-comers were the respondents that had attended most meetings in the last 3 years. Members in the intermediate bracket were most likely to stay home.

Rangeland health, rangeland monitoring, and weed management were the topics most frequently selected as very important, and would presumably also be of highest interest and would sway the decisions to attend a Section meeting by most. New members rated most topics highly, whereas respondents in the intermediate bracket (members 2-5 yrs) appeared to be the least enthusiastic group across the board. Promoting educational opportunity for students during section meetings was the most frequent suggestion made in response to our open ended request for additional comments.

Section dues

Most respondents were in favor of a hypothetical increase in section dues; newer members supported higher increases (\$15-25) than respondents with memberships of 2 years or more (\$10 or less). The decision to increase dues would be supported by most if these funds were destined to support scholarships for Range majors, student memberships, or educational booths.

Other comments

A number of valuable suggestions were received which included the perceived need for: a) greater Section presence on the web; b) increased opportunities for young members to become involved; c) increased focus on educating the public; and d) holding Board of Directors meetings throughout the state.

Have You Checked Membership Status Lately?

SRM has a new membership services contractor and the transition has not been without a few hiccups. For instance, our NM SRM President, along with 31 others, was recently purged from the membership list for being tardy in renewal. Please check your status today. If you are one of those who has gone missing, contact srm@allenpress.com. (By the way our current membership should be 150, *mas o menos*, but the roster shows only 136!)



Upcoming Events

2011 Ecologically-based Invasive Plant Management (EBIPM) Field School

Park Valley, UT, September 13-15, 2011

Website: <http://ebipm.org/map/173>

65th Annual Society for Range Management Meeting

Spokane, WA, January 29-February 3, 2012

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