



LEOPOLD
CONSERVATION
AWARD
Year In Review 2011

The Leopold Conservation Award in South Dakota was presented in 2011 to the Mortenson family. (pictured)
Photo credit: Colette Kessler

PROFILES OF ALL EIGHT 2011 LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENTS
CALIFORNIA ★ COLORADO ★ NEBRASKA ★ SOUTH DAKOTA ★ TEXAS ★ UTAH ★ WISCONSIN ★ WYOMING



Aldo Leopold, whose writings and land ownership inspire Sand County Foundation's devotion to the cause of private landowner conservation leadership, wrote that the landscape of any

farm is the owner's portrait of himself. Our Leopold Conservation Awards honor landowners who work ceaselessly to paint beautiful landscapes across our nation.

The Leopold Conservation Awards recognize landowners actively committed to a land ethic. Working with prominent state conservation partners, Sand County Foundation presents the award, which consists of \$10,000 and a Leopold crystal, in settings that showcase the landowners' achievements among their peers.

The Leopold Conservation Award is a productive investment in private lands conservation. The \$10,000 that accompanies each award would not go very far as a direct investment in a conservation project. However, by using it to highlight, nationally, the outstanding stewardship being practiced by exemplary landowners, the award program indirectly leverages hundreds of thousands of dollars in improvements to natural resources by a growing array of private landowners who make measurable, lasting enhancements to the land, water, and wildlife in their care.

The Leopold Conservation Award program has several positive outcomes. First, it recognizes and celebrates extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation by private landowners. Second, it inspires countless other landowners by example. Third, it provides a prominent platform by which agricultural community leaders are recognized as conservation ambassadors to citizens outside of agriculture. Finally, the program builds bridges between agriculture, government, environmental organizations, industry, and academia to advance the cause of private lands conservation.

Sand County Foundation and its many partners and sponsors actively seek others to join this effort. An award program like this could not exist without quality landowner nominees or sustainable funding. So, please consider nominating a landowner for this prestigious award and/or making a financial contribution to the program. The Leopold Conservation Award program offers corporate sponsors or individual investors an opportunity to align themselves with outstanding agricultural families, while helping to ensure that these landowner conservationists receive the recognition they deserve.

For more information, please visit: www.leopoldconservationaward.org

Celebrating modern leaders of conservation



In December 2011, Sand County Foundation and its partners presented the Leopold Conservation Award to the 45th agricultural family since the program's inception in 2003. In 2012 we will exceed five dozen of such effective, committed, and resilient leaders who embody the spirit of a land ethic described in the writings of Aldo Leopold.

However, we have just begun to showcase meaningful stories of land owning families and their environmental achievements. Most of our ranch, farm, and forest conservation champions are not yet visible to their peers, the general public, environmentalists, or policy makers, because they are busy and impactful out of our sight. The Leopold Conservation Award program is intended to identify, honor the efforts, and tell some the stories of America's farmers, ranchers, and foresters who are committed to improving the health of the natural resources in their care. It is our great honor to meet and learn from these and the many future families to be recognized through this program, while making sure their accomplishments become more evident to those inside and outside of agriculture.

Independent judging panels in each state must select one recipient from a number of worthy candidates each year. The large amount of quality applications reflects the tremendous conservation work being done on private lands nationwide, but it also makes the judges' task very difficult. Selection standards are high and those who are nominated have exemplary credentials.

The nine Leopold Conservation Award recipients in this report have made conservation a family tradition, many over several generations. Their achievements, however, are often reached in the face of adversity. For example, the San Francisco Bay-area Koopmann Ranch is located in a region where encroaching development is a persistent threat. When faced with the reality of selling or sub-dividing their ranch, the Koopmanns placed two conservation easements on their land to help ensure

that the agricultural operation is sustainable for future generations. Drought is another difficult reality for many family operators such as the McEndree family in southeastern Colorado who have used improved soil and water management techniques to help keep their operation viable.

Innovation is a characteristic of all Leopold Conservation Award recipients. The Mortensons in South Dakota utilize a cattle management technique to move livestock across their land similar to the movement of buffalo herds, thereby improving vegetation and increasing the diversity of wildlife. The Fieldgrove family in Wyoming has waged war on the invasive, costly leafy spurge for generations. Through persistence and trial and error, the Fieldgroves developed a cost-effective integrated weed management program that utilizes free ranging goats.

The work of these and other equally outstanding Leopold Conservation Award recipients is receiving increased attention from state leaders. Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman honored the Mathewson family during a press conference at the State Capitol in Lincoln. Similarly, Wyoming Governor Matt Mead recognized the Fieldgrove family as the recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award during a ceremony at the Capitol in Cheyenne.

The families mentioned here are but a few of the terrific landowners we had the pleasure of meeting in 2011 through the Leopold Conservation Award program. These families, as well as the strong array of finalists in each state, are modern leaders of conservation. They are all humble people who use a land ethic as part of their motivation. The pages that follow are a tribute to their creativity, leadership, and fortitude.

Sincerely,

Brent M. Haglund, Ph.D.
President

★ KOOPMANN RANCH
Tim Koopmann



“Without the dedication of hard-working ranchers to keep their operations viable, McMansions would dot every hill in the Bay Area instead of oaks.” — TIM KOOPMANN



Tim Koopmann is a third generation rancher who owns and operates an 850 acre cow-calf operation in Sunol. The Koopmanns’ ranch is an agricultural gem surrounded by development.

Tim’s effective management practices have improved the soil and wildlife populations on his land, but his dedication to the enhancement of water quality on and off of his ranch is truly exceptional. As a Watershed Resource Specialist for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), he manages over 40,000 acres of watershed lands. Tim’s talent for building partnerships to tackle environmental issues has produced significant results. For instance, he formed a team of 15 public agencies and agricultural organizations to develop a comprehensive watershed management and monitoring plan that has been recognized in California and internationally. Also, the Koopmanns have been integral in the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition, which was developed at their ranch in 2005. The Coalition brings together environmentalists, ranchers, and resource professionals from state and federal agencies to advocate for the preservation of working ranches.

Faced with encroaching development and the reality of selling or sub-dividing his ranch, Tim placed two conservation easements on his family’s ranch. He conserved a naturally occurring pond and the surrounding 31 acres of grassland in perpetuity for the California tiger salamander. He also conserved 107 acres in perpetuity as a result of an adjacent golf course. These easements allowed Tim and his family to pay their estate tax bill and, most importantly, allow them to continue their work on the preservation of the land and other natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

“Some people talk about conservation, species protection, and sustainable agriculture,” said Paul Banke, Alameda County Resource Conservation District, in his letter of recommendation. “Tim Koopmann gets it done. He has shown all of us that the environmental community and ranchers can work together and achieve good things.”

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Sustainable Conservation

★ PAST CALIFORNIA RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ **Montna Farms**
Al Montna

2009 ★ **Red Rock Ranch**
John Diener

2008 ★ **Three Creeks Ranch**
Chet Vogt

2007 ★ **Sierra Orchards**
Craig and Julie McNamara

2006 ★ **LangeTwins Wine Estates**
Brad and Randy Lange

Photo credit: Paolo Vescia

★ PIPE SPRINGS RANCH
McEndree Family

“It’s really important to us to maintain the land so that the operation is sustainable and there is a future here.”

— KAYE KASZA



Photo credits:
Bill Gillette



Siblings Jo Ann McEndree, Kaye Kasza, Steve McEndree, and Cathy Tebay are fourth generation ranchers who are highly committed to the economic and environmental health of their *Pipe Springs Ranch*, located near Springfield, so it can be passed on to future generations.

In 1997, the family made the decision to switch from a traditional ranching operation to a model where pastures are utilized for approximately two weeks during the annual growing season. The long rest periods increase the productivity of the soil and result in a greater diversity of native grasses and forbs. The McEndrees were able to make this transition due to a reduction in pasture size and a water management strategy that included the installation of 25 miles of pipeline, 20 water tanks, and a water collection system in Pipe Spring to allow for better water flow. These efforts, as well as the installation of a shallow water habitat and the maintenance of 24 ponds, have dramatically enhanced the wildlife population at Pipe Springs Ranch. These projects were all completed in the face of severe drought, which has affected northwestern Baca County since 2001. As the McEndrees state in their award application, “Focusing on conservation has allowed the land to flourish even when Mother Nature has not cooperated.”

All of the McEndree siblings and their families believe strongly in the importance of community involvement and the promotion of agriculture. For example, Jo Ann is the Colorado CattleWomen Education Chair, leading the organization’s members across the state to educate youth about agriculture. All are highly involved in FFA and 4-H with over 80 years of 4-H leadership experience among them.

“They pass along their love for the land and cattle as they share their knowledge and experiences with youth,” wrote Susan Russell, Bent-Prowers Cattle & Horse Growers Association, in her letter of recommendation. “Leadership was ingrained in the siblings growing up and has matured into a true belief that they can make a difference in future generations.”

The McEndrees also utilize Pipe Springs Ranch as an educational tool, hosting workshops on rangeland and water management techniques.

“In all of his efforts, Steve and Pipe Springs Ranch have worked selflessly, sharing their time, talent, and treasure without asking favors in return,” wrote Tim Steffens, Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS, in his letter of recommendation.



Photo credit: Bill Gillette

- ★ PAST COLORADO RECIPIENTS
- 2010 ★ **Stanko Ranch**
Jim and Jo Stanko
 - 2008 ★ **Coleman Ranch**
Jim, Frances, Tim and Teddi Coleman
 - 2005 ★ **McNeil Ranch**
Mike and Cathy McNeil
 - 2009 ★ **Mesa De Maya Ranch**
John and Carolyn Doherty
 - 2007 ★ **San Isabel Ranch**
Mike and Sara Shields, Bet Kettle
 - 2004 ★ **Rusk Hereford Ranch**
Randy and Claricy Rusk
 - 2006 ★ **Bohart Ranch**
Dick and Sandra Tanner
 - 2003 ★ **Capps Ranch**
Frankie and Sue Menegatti

★ RGM Corporation
Mathewson Family



“True environmentalism is working with nature, using scientifically validated management practices, to produce a sustainable, high quality product, while simultaneously improving the land.”

— BEAU MATHEWSON



Rodney Mathewson started a small farming and cattle operation near Potter, Nebraska in the 1940's. His commitment to the health of the natural resources in his care was instilled in his son, Randy, and grandson, Beau, who run the ranch with their wives, Gina and Kahla, respectively.

The Mathewsons utilize several innovative techniques to effectively manage the land, water, and wildlife on their ranch. The family has used rotational grazing for over thirty years, which operates on a full season deferment system where each pasture receives a full season rest every third or fourth year. Beau Mathewson has recorded photo points, forage composition, and measurement records for nineteen sites. These sites are managed through a combination of photography, GPS receiver, and a laptop in the field.

In the early 1990's, the Mathewsons expanded their ranch through the purchase of neighboring lands, which were enhanced through the Mathewsons' effective soil and water management efforts. The family installed over nine miles of pipeline and more than 20 bottomless tanks, which are hydraulically or electrically controlled to eliminate overflow. They also replaced many inefficient windmills with electric wells so that livestock can have reliable water for the entire grazing term and, through NRCS, installed cross fencing that increased

production by 40 percent. The family puts a lot of effort into noxious and invasive weed management. Three times per growing season, they ride every acre of the land searching for noxious weeds and monitoring their weed control progress via GPS.

The Mathewsons have increased wildlife habitat by planting over 6,000 trees with 2,700 shrubs planned for 2011. Several wildlife watering facilities have been added, as well as a raptor nesting site, and bird escapes on all water tanks.

The family takes it upon themselves to educate others about the importance of land stewardship. They have worked with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension and the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition on several field days and Beau is a Board member for both organizations. Beau has also assisted with the Cheyenne County leadership Program, as well as two youth career days. In 1998, the Mathewsons received the Grassland Manager of the Year Award from the NRCS and the South Platte Natural Resources District.

“Making a living from the land is ingrained in the Mathewsons, and they realize that to achieve sustainability they must take care of the land, both for themselves and for future users,” wrote Ron Bolze, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, in his nomination of the Mathewson Family.

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST
★ NEBRASKA
★ RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ **Kalkowski Family Ranches**
Kalkowski Family

2009 ★ **Bluestem Valley Farms**
*Lyle and Alice Sittler,
Kristen and Todd Eggerling*

2008 ★ **Calf Creek and 4-O Ranches**
A.B. Cox

2007 ★ **Christen Ranch**
Rod and Amy Christen

2006 ★ **Wilson Ranch**
Blaine and Bryan Wilson

★ MORTENSON RANCH
Mortenson Family



Photo credit: Colette Kessler, NRCS

LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD
★ MORTENSON RANCH
Hayes, South Dakota

“Ranching is about the love of the land. It’s not about what I can do to make the most money. It’s about what I can do to sustain my livelihood out here and have something to pass on to my children.”
— TODD MORTENSON



Photo credits:
Colette Kessler, NRCS

At the end of the 1940s, Clarence Mortenson began to wonder how all of the water originating on his ranch could be kept there for use over an extended period of time. This idea sparked his effort to restore the ranch to its natural state. Clarence’s vision has been embraced by his sons, Todd, Jeff, and Curt, who currently operate *Mortenson Ranch*.

“I’m the third generation on this ranch,” Todd Mortenson said. “Each generation has done something different to improve it. I still see areas I can improve upon, and I want to be sure that when I hand it to my boys that it’s as good as I could do and, hopefully, it will continue with them.”

In the 1980s, Todd learned about holistic management that moves cattle across the land similar to the movement of buffalo herds. In the spring, the herds graze on grasses in riparian areas while stamping seeds into the ground to help

establish trees and grasses. In summer, the cattle are moved to the uplands. In the 1990s, researchers observed a substantial increase in native tree and shrub species along the ranch’s streams, as well as an impressive increase in wildlife populations. In addition, the Mortensons’ efforts have led to a significant decrease in sediment flowing through creeks on the ranch. Due to practices like these, the family has come a long way since Clarence began his quest. More than 90 percent of the 19,000-acre ranch is back to native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees.

“In my 40 years of studying riparian woodlands in many states, never have I met producers with more enthusiasm, dedication, and genuine interest in restoration and conservation than the Mortensons,” wrote Dr. W. Carter Johnson, Professor of Ecology at South Dakota State University, in his nomination of the Mortenson Family.

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST SOUTH DAKOTA RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ Doud Ranch
Rick and Marlis Doud

★ TEMPLE RANCH
Buddy & Ellen Temple



“When we got this ranch, we decided that we wanted to restore it to as close to what it used to be as possible.”

— BUDDY TEMPLE

Photo credits: Chase Fountain, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Arthur “Buddy” Temple purchased *Temple Ranch*, near Lufkin, in 1992. Since that time, Buddy and Ellen Temple, along with ranch operators, Robert and Jenny Sanders, have introduced many beneficial conservation practices.

The ranch uses rotational grazing and prescribed fire, burning approximately 1,500 to 2,000 acres per year in a rotational pattern, which helps with plant and wildlife management. Wildlife populations are surveyed annually through helicopter, spotlight, and cameras located at feeders. Temple Ranch is enrolled in the Managed Lands Deer Program to keep the deer population at a healthy level.

Water development is extensive on the ranch. Approximately 10 miles of water line supply continuous water to all of the ranch’s pastures. Water is supplied in earthen tanks and troughs every ½ mile with the exception of one pasture where water is located every ¾ mile. Nesting structures exist at several of the water tanks to improve wildlife habitat.

For many years, the Temple Ranch has served as a tremendous resource for wildlife research. The Temples and Sanders have worked with Texas A&M University on several studies, including an evaluation of quail covey and hunter interactions and a study that examines turkey nesting success and movement. Robert and Jenny Sanders also volunteer as bird banders for a whitewing dove monitoring study through the University.

With the encouragement of the Temples, Robert and Jenny Sanders participate in several outdoor and wildlife education efforts. Jenny serves on the Texas Wildlife Association’s Women of the Land and Conservation Legacy Advisory Committees in an effort to promote wildlife and natural resource literacy in Texas. Temple Ranch has hosted field days for local ranchers, as well as a wildlife field day for 70 7th graders who learned about topics such as habitat management, turkey biology and research, retrieving and working with hunting dogs, and the job duties of a wildlife biologist, extension agent, and game warden.

Photo credit: Chase Fountain, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST TEXAS RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ **Anderson Ranch**
Jim Bill Anderson

2009 ★ **Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve**
J. David Bamberger

2008 ★ **Llano Springs Ranch**
The Vandivier Family

2007 ★ **77 Ranch**
Gary and Sue Price

2006 ★ **Treadwell Brady Ranch**
John and Brian Treadwell

2005 ★ **Richards Ranch**
John and Brent Hackley

2003 ★ **Douglas and Janet Hardie**

★ RED PINE LAND AND LIVESTOCK

Osguthorpe Family



Photo credit: Ron Francis, NRCS

2011 Leopold Conservation Award Recipient || UTAH



RED PINE LAND AND LIVESTOCK
Park City, Utah



Photo credits: Ron Francis, NRCS

“One thing my father taught us is if you have land, you leave it in better condition than you found it, for the benefit of the next generation.”

— STEVE OSGUTHORPE



While managing their 178,000 acres of land near Park City, *Steve Osguthorpe* and his family carry on a tradition of conservation and sustainable agriculture that Steve inherited from his father, D.A. “Doc” Osguthorpe.

“One thing my father taught us is if you have land, you leave it in better condition than you found it, for the benefit of the next generation,” Steve Osguthorpe said. “Protecting the soil and watersheds, that’s been the focus of our farming operations, because we know that if we’re going to be in business tomorrow, we’ve got to take care of the land today.”

When the Osguthorpes began working their land, primary income sources were livestock, crops, and wool. Although the family continues to run sheep and grow alfalfa, corn, barley, and oats, they have incorporated other sources of income into their agricultural operation. A forest land management plan has allowed the family to add timber sales into the equation. In addition, the Osguthorpes made a significant change to their land management strategy by adding recreation to their operation. They lease approximately 1,000 acres to the Canyons Ski Resort and operate a horseback riding and snowmobiling

company. These changes allowed Steve and his family to adjust to changing economies and surrounding land uses, while keeping the land in agricultural production and natural forest. Watershed management is a key component of the family’s conservation efforts. Steve developed a seed mix for use on the land the family leases to the ski resort, which has reduced soil erosion and stream sediment to the point where the streams on their property now run clear.

Given their location, the Osguthorpes are surrounded by development, which they have resisted. Steve and his family have placed a conservation easement on 120 acres of crop and rangeland, keeping it in agriculture and ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to carry on the family’s conservation legacy.

“The Osguthorpes were conservationists before it was popular to bear that title,” said Bill Hopkin, Utah Grazing Improvement Program, in his letter of recommendation. “They have operated sustainable livestock operations for generations and the fact that they are still thriving in the business is a testimonial to their high quality management.”

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST UTAH RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ Della Ranches
Tanner Family

2009 ★ Tavaputs Ranch
Butch and Jeanie Jensen

2008 ★ Johnson Ranch
Darrell and Carol Johnson

2007 ★ Harold Selman, Inc.
Fred and Laura Selman

★ BRAGGER
FAMILY DAIRY
Joe & Noel Bragger



Photo credit: Kevin Kiley

★ BRAGGER
FAMILY DAIRY
Independence, Wisconsin



Photo credits: Kevin Kiley



“Great things can be accomplished when we harness and understand the knowledge and passion that producers have about their operations and the environment they manage.”

— JOE BRAGGER

Bragger Family Dairy, a partnership of Joe and Noel Bragger, and Joe’s brother, Dan, and his wife, Mary, with assistance from Joe and Dan’s mother, Hildegard, is located in the steep and narrow valleys of west-central Wisconsin’s driftless area. While very productive, it also poses challenges in terms of controlling soil erosion and run-off.

“We firmly believe that we need to not only manage every aspect of our farm in a profitable way but to do so in such a way that will enhance the soil by keeping it and the nutrients we apply in place,” Joe Bragger said.

The farm began as a dairy operation but has evolved into a diverse agricultural business that allows the family to effectively utilize the various landscapes found on the farm. Manure from the farm’s 300 dairy cows, 50 beef cattle, and 64,000 pullets (young chicken hens) is incorporated onto fields as fertilizer for over 500 acres of corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and barley. The Braggers use a no-till cropping system that improves the texture and water retention in the soil, helping to prevent erosion. Another 150 acres of woodlands are managed for wildlife, recreation, and timber production. The areas of their woods that

are not suitable for timber production are routinely burned to maintain native grasses. Adding to the farm’s diversity, 4,000 brown trout are raised annually in partnership with the local Elk Rod & Gun Club and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in a spring-fed pond on the farm before being released into area streams.

The farm was a participant in the University of Wisconsin Discovery Farms Program, and a number of stewardship practices have been implemented to enhance water quality, soil conservation, and profitability.

Joe Bragger understands that education and outreach, especially by producers, are essential to agriculture. He has spoken about agricultural issues in several states and has held positions of leadership within organizations such as the Wisconsin Soybean Association, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.

“Great things can be accomplished when we harness and understand the knowledge and passion that producers have about their operations and the environment they manage,” Joe Bragger said.

★ PRESENTED IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST
★ WISCONSIN
★ RECIPIENTS

2008 ★ Terry Peters

2006 ★ Gerry Mich

★ Presented in partnership with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association

KOEPKE
FARMS INC.
Koepke Family



Photo courtesy of the Koepke family

“Nature has it all figured out. All we need to do is work with it, not against it. Our involvement with conservation never costs, it always pays.”

— JIM KOEPKE



LEOPOLD
CONSERVATION
AWARD

KOEPKE FARMS INC. ★
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin



Koepke Farms Inc. is a partnership between brothers Alan, David, Jim and Jim’s son, John. Together, they milk 320 cows and operate 1,000 acres of cropland plus another 150 acres of woods and wetlands.

They are one of the first farms in their area to adopt a completely no-till system and utilize conservation practices such as contour strip cropping, diversified crop rotation, nutrient management, and use of cover crops and grassed waterways.

The Koepkes are great dairymen in addition to being innovative land stewards. When they took home the ‘Dairymen of the Year’ Award at the 2011 World Dairy Expo in Madison it was for a variety of reasons, including raising a Holstein named “Granny” that once broke the world record for lifetime milk production. She is just one example of the care and management that you see in every facet of this farming operation, making it highly sustainable both economically and environmentally. The net result is healthy soil, cleaner water and greater farm profits.

Being active in the agricultural community, both close to home and beyond, the Koepkes’ contributions have helped to shape several important agricultural policies over the years. The efforts they have made in preserving their own land transcends into the work they do preserving agricultural land across the state.

While the list of conservation practices adopted over the years is quite extensive, the power of the Koepkes’ approach to sustainability is that it is easily adaptable to virtually any farming system. It is not designed around expensive or complicated technologies that are farm size specific or intimidating to users. The foundation of their system is good management and attention to detail, based on sound soil and water principles.

“Conservation is not just something they do, it is the essence of who they are,” wrote Nancy Drummy in her nomination of the Koepke family. “Their commitment to sustainability and to educating others has created measurable change within the farming community.”

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST
★ WISCONSIN
★ RECIPIENTS

2008 ★ Terry Peters

2006 ★ Gerry Mich

★ Presented in partnership with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association

★ FIELDGROVE RANCH
Ryan & Teresa Fieldgrove



Photo credits: Heather Hamilton



“Conservation is about solving problems, utilizing existing resources, sacrifice, and hard work. These are all things that are important for my children to see in action.”

— RYAN FIELDGROVE



Photo credit: Heather Hamilton

Ryan and Teresa Fieldgrove’s ranch, located near Buffalo, is a cow/calf range operation consisting of over 10,000 acres of deeded and leased land. Ryan Fieldgrove’s family has ranched in the area for over 125 years with his children representing the fifth generation to be involved. The Fieldgroves place a high value on passing a land ethic on to their children.

“To me, the most important part of conservation is the mechanism it provides to teach my three children a mindset,” Ryan Fieldgrove said. “Conservation is about solving problems, utilizing existing resources, sacrifice, and hard work. These are all things that are important for my children to see in action.”

The Fieldgroves’ primary stewardship practice was the incorporation of goats into their operation in an effort to battle the family’s long-time nemesis ... the leafy spurge. The goats are part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system that includes Flea Beetles, which feed on the leafy spurge. The system has been so successful that the weed has virtually been eliminated on most of the ranch.

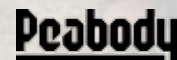
“It is in large part due to Ryan’s efforts and commitment to managing the resource and leading by example that we can claim spurge infestations are now on the downswing countywide,” wrote Rod Litzel, Johnson County Weed and Pest District, in his letter of recommendation.

Another stewardship strategy the Fieldgroves utilized was the reduction of their stocking rate to combat the years of drought they have experienced. Ryan and Teresa have discovered that the reduced amount of cattle has improved range conditions and benefited wildlife. In addition, the family has reduced their goat herd. Goats can be harsh on terrain and lead to erosion in certain areas, but the Fieldgroves’ ranch shows no sign of erosion from the goats.

A third major conservation practice on Fieldgrove Ranch is the family’s participation in a sage-grouse habitat improvement program. The Fieldgroves turned four pastures into eight, allowing for rotational grazing. They also stay out of the sage-grouse leks during breeding times. The program includes pasture aeration, which allows for native forage to overcome areas of cheat grass infestation, and the development of suitable plant life for the sage-grouse’s diet.

“Ryan is a progressive, innovative, and committed operator,” wrote John Pearson, Lake DeSmet Conservation District, in his letter of recommendation. “He wishes to educate his children in good conservation practices, so they have the same opportunity he experienced with being ‘raised on the ranch.’”

★ PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



★ PAST WYOMING RECIPIENTS

2010 ★ **7E Ranch**
Ron and Linda Heward

2009 ★ **Foy Ranch**
Rocky and Nancy Foy

2008 ★ **Pape Ranch**
Norm and Barbara Pape

2007 ★ **Golden Willow Ranch**
Paul and Catherine Kukowski

2006 ★ **Barlow Livestock, Inc.**
Glenn and Joy Barlow



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The Nature Conservancy

★ COLORADO ★

Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc.
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Peabody Energy
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Mr. Michael Dowling
Mr. Ken Gart
The Nature Conservancy

★ NEBRASKA ★

BNSF Railway
Cargill
Ducks Unlimited
Farm Credit Services of America
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
The Nature Conservancy
Nebraska Attorney General's Office

NEBRASKA CONTINUED

Nebraska CattleWomen
Nebraska Cattlemen Research & Education Foundation
Nebraska Environmental Trust
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Nebraska Land Trust
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
Sandhills Cattle Association
Sandhills Taskforce
Sierra Club
Union Pacific

★ SOUTH DAKOTA ★

American State Bank
Daybreak Ranch
Ducks Unlimited
Millborn Seeds
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Rasmussen Leopold Fund
South Dakota's Conservation Districts
South Dakota Department of Environment & Natural Resources
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
South Dakota Game Fish & Parks
South Dakota Grassland Coalition
South Dakota State University Foundation
The Nature Conservancy

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★ WYOMING ★

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Sand County Foundation Generations on the Land *A Conservation Legacy*

To keep the land in the family ... To operate the land profitably ... To leave the land better than they found it ...

Each year, Sand County Foundation's prestigious Leopold Conservation Award recognizes families for leadership in voluntary conservation and ethical land management. In *Generations on the Land: A Conservation Legacy*, veteran author and journalist Joe Nick Patoski visits eight of the award-winning families, presenting warm, heartfelt conversations about the families, their beloved land, and a vision for a healthier world.

Generations on the Land celebrates these families' roles as conservation leaders for the nation—far beyond the agricultural communities where they live—and reinforces the value of trans-generational family commitment to good land stewardship. The eight landowners profiled by Patoski include six ranchers, a forester, and a vintner. They reside across the country: in California, Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Their conservation accomplishments range from providing a habitat corridor for pronghorn antelope to hammering out an endangered species "safe harbor" agreement for grape growers.


Generations on the Land is available for purchase online:
www.generationsontheland.com

JOE NICK PATOSKI

Generations on the Land



A CONSERVATION LEGACY



Sand County Foundation's mission is to advance the use of ethical and scientifically sound land management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and the ecological landscape.

Sand County Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity supported entirely by tax-deductible contributions from corporations, government agencies, foundations, and individuals who want to help us further our mission. All contributions are tax deductible.



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