



LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD  
Year In Review 2012



The Leopold Conservation Award in California was presented in 2012 to Dino Giacomazzi. (pictured)  
Photo credit: Paolo Vescia

PROFILES OF ALL EIGHT 2012 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. It recognizes and celebrates extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation by private landowners and inspires countless others by example. 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 help 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](http://www.leopoldconservationaward.org)



# Celebrating modern leaders of conservation



In December 2012, Sand County Foundation and its partners presented the Leopold Conservation Award to the 54th agricultural family since the program began a decade ago. In the years ahead, we look forward to honoring more committed, effective leaders who embody the spirit of a land ethic described in the writings of Aldo Leopold.

We have just begun showcasing 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. Why? 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. In other words, bring their stories to light among other citizens.

Independent judging panels in each state must select one recipient from a number of worthy candidates each year. The number 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 eight Leopold Conservation Award recipients in this report have made conservation a family tradition, many over several generations. It is a privilege to recognize them through the award program. And we will have an opportunity to honor many of them, along with their predecessors, as they gather for our 2013 Symposium entitled "Innovations on the Land: Private Conservation for the Public Good."

On July 25-26 in Lincoln, Neb., Sand County Foundation and partners will bring together award-winning landowner conservationists to exchange ideas about agriculture and

conservation -- issues that are important to the agricultural community and the general public. The event will convene Leopold Conservation Award recipients from across the nation to address potential solutions to the most critical agricultural and environmental issues facing our nation today.

Our 2012 Leopold Conservation Award recipients truly embody the concept of private conservation for the public good. They recognize that their works of good stewardship have far reaching benefits that touch all of us, and will for generations.

For example, Colorado LCA recipients, Russell and Tricia Davis successfully integrate the needs of a productive beef operation with the habitat needs of a suite of shortgrass prairie wildlife species. Their 12,000-acre ranch focuses not only on beef production but makes a meaningful connection with the community at large through birding, eco-tourism, agri-tourism and hunting.

Similarly, California LCA recipient, Dino Giacomazzi is a fourth-generation dairy farmer whose influence doesn't stop at the boundaries of his land. He embraces conservation tillage to enhance soil, water, and especially air quality, in an area that experiences high air pollution levels. And he is a leader in communicating the importance of conservation practices to others inside and outside the agricultural community through demonstrations, field days, and an active social media presence.

Innovation is a characteristic of all Leopold Conservation Award recipients. The families mentioned here are but a few of the terrific landowners who advance "innovations on the land" through the Leopold Conservation Award program. These families and their fellow award winners and finalists in each state, are modern leaders of conservation, and we benefit from their environmental improvements. Following is a tribute to the 2012 award winners' innovation, leadership, and fortitude.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent M. Haglund". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brent M. Haglund, Ph.D.  
*President*



★ GIACOMAZZI  
DAIRY

*Dino and Julie Giacomazzi*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH







★ GIACOMAZZI  
DAIRY  
Hanford,  
California

LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD

Photo credits:  
Paolo Vescia

*“One of the greatest benefits of being a dairy farmer is the relationship you have with the land and that, at the end of the day, you can go home, knowing that you produced something of value.”*

— DINO GIACOMAZZI

*Dino Giacomazzi* is a fourth-generation dairy farmer whose farm is comprised of 900 dairy cows on 900 acres in Hanford where the farm has operated since 1893. Dino represents what it means to farm responsibly and sustainably, enhancing natural resources as part of his work.

“Ever since I started thinking about conservation as a practice, I have been seeking a reward,” Dino said. “The reward of leaving this farm for my son in better condition than my father left it for me. It isn’t as much of a desire as an obligation since my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had done that for me. Conservation farming is really the only way I know how to do it ... adapt to change, preserve the land, try to make money, and move the family farm forward.”

Dino participated in one of the first conservation tillage projects in California, which has proven to enhance soil, water, and, especially, air quality in an area that typically experiences high air pollution levels. Dino credits conservation tillage for leading to higher yields with reduced costs for labor, equipment, and fuel. Building upon his experience with conservation tillage, Dino participates in research to help define the relationship between dairy farms and air and water quality.

Not content to confine these successes to his own farm, Dino is a leader in communicating about the importance of conservation and agriculture to other farmers. His communication methods are both new and traditional, utilizing social media channels, including Twitter and a variety of blogs, and hosting demonstrations and field days at his farm to connect with those inside and outside of the agricultural community. He also published a farming guide to help dairy farmers transition to conservation tillage. These outreach efforts have led to the adoption of conservation tillage on more than 25,000 California acres.

“Dino Giacomazzi exemplifies what it means to farm responsibly and sustainably, improving overall land health and reaching out to others to advocate such practices,” wrote Michael Marsh, Western United Dairymen, in his letter of recommendation. “He is the type of farmer the Leopold Conservation Award is designed to honor.”

★ PAST  
★ CALIFORNIA  
★ RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Koopmann Ranch**  
*Tim Koopmann*

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*



★ WINEINGER-  
DAVIS RANCH  
*Russell and Tricia Davis'*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH



COLORADO  
CATTLEMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION



Colorado Cattlemen's  
Agricultural Land Trust



**Peabody**



*“It’s important for us to keep that next generation on the ranch with a focus on conservation and wildlife and continue to do the good things for research here.”*

— RUSSELL DAVIS



Photo credits: NRCS



Russell and Tricia Davis’ *Wineinger-Davis Ranch*, located in Lincoln and Crowley Counties, was established in 1938 as a 400 acre livestock operation. It currently consists of over 12,000 acres. Ranch operations include beef production, birding, eco-tourism, agri-tourism, and hunting.

The Davis family successfully integrates the needs of a successful and productive beef operation with the habitat needs of a suite of shortgrass prairie wildlife species. In 2004, Russell and Tricia placed perpetual conservation easements on the ranch through the Colorado Division of Wildlife’s Colorado Species Conservation partnership program. The easement protects 12,245 acres of intact native shortgrass prairie and riparian ecosystems. This agreement focuses on proper livestock grazing to benefit all shortgrass prairie and plains riparian wildlife species. As a result of these easements, the Davis family became the first private landowner in Colorado to protect and manage black-tailed prairie dogs, which inhabit 8% of the Wineinger-Davis Ranch. In addition to the protection and management of the wildlife, Russell and Tricia Davis have provided their ranch as an area of research to better understand mountain plover habitat use and nesting success on native shortgrass prairies in Colorado.

Beyond their ranch, the Davis family is committed to contributing to the conservation and agriculture movement. Among other efforts, Russell plays a lead role in Partners for Conservation, a multi-state effort that unites landowners to discuss land management decisions and conservation programs. The Davis family also opens their ranch to educational tours and workshops, including the Ranch and Wildlife Program (RAW), which teaches urban and suburban students about ranching and wildlife management.

“Most importantly, Russell has become one of the more active and influential agricultural producers in the state who has dedicated his time to working with all groups to gain a better understanding of the symbolic relationship that can and should occur with ranching and wildlife management,” wrote Ken Morgan, Private Lands Coordinator, Colorado Division of Wildlife, in his recommendation letter.

★  
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PAST  
COLORADO  
RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Pipe Springs Ranch**  
*McEndree Family*

2010 ★ **Stanko Ranch**  
*Jim and Jo Stanko*

2009 ★ **Mesa De Maya Ranch**  
*John and Carolyn Doherty*

2008 ★ **Coleman Ranch**  
*Jim, Frances, Tim and Teddi Coleman*

2007 ★ **San Isabel Ranch**  
*Mike and Sara Shields, Bet Kettle*

2006 ★ **Bohart Ranch**  
*Dick and Sandra Tanner*

2005 ★ **McNeil Ranch**  
*Mike and Cathy McNeil*

2004 ★ **Rusk Hereford Ranch**  
*Randy and Claricy Rusk*

2003 ★ **Capps Ranch**  
*Frankie and Sue Menegatti*

★ SHOVEL  
DOT RANCH

*Buell Family*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH







*“It’s not just what Larry and I and our families have done over the last 30 to 40 years, but it’s what each generation of Buells has done, because I think we have a family that’s been conservationist throughout the generations.”*

— HOMER BUELL



Photo credits: Kevin Kiley

SHOVEL DOT RANCH ★  
Bassett, Nebraska



*The Buell family* is part of the fabric of the Nebraska Sandhills. For nearly 130 years, they have ranched in the region, while caring for the land, water, and wildlife.

The Buell family’s legacy in the Sandhills began when Benjamin Franklin Buell fell in love with the area while on his way from Michigan to Washington State. He lived in Washington for a short time but found his way back to the Sandhills where he settled in 1882 and began a ranch tradition that included the preservation and enhancement of the unique landscape of the Nebraska Sandhills.

Today, the Buells’ Shovel Dot Ranch is owned and managed by brothers Larry and Homer Buell and their wives, Nickie and Darla, respectively, who carry on the commitment to conservation they inherited from their predecessors.

The Buells continue to maintain and expand upon an environment in which water quality and the region’s native plant life and animal habitat can flourish alongside livestock and crop production.

The family installed high tensile electric cross fencing and over fifty miles of pipeline, watering close to one hundred pastures, which allows for more effective cattle distribution, giving pastures more rest between grazing periods. This leads to improved recovery, better ground cover, and increased production.

Many of the Buells’ management decisions are made to benefit wildlife habitat. Approximately fifty acres is fenced off around two lakes on their land to provide space for deer, turkeys, swans, ducks, and geese. Abundant vegetation along two creeks on the ranch attracts several native wildlife species. Trees are planted to provide windbreaks for cattle and habitat for turkey and deer.

It is clear that the Buells do not shy away from innovation and technology to assist in ranch management. In the early 1990’s, they became one of the first few major users of a computer-based information gathering system in the United States.

The Buell family believes in community service on and off of Shovel Dot Ranch. They have provided numerous tours to domestic and international visitors. Larry has served as president of the local school board and as a member of the community hospital board. Homer has served on several boards within the cattle industry. The entire family is highly supportive of Nebraska 4-H and FFA.

“For almost 130 years, generations of Buells have cared for the land, water, livestock, and wildlife entrusted to them,” wrote the Kalkowski family in their nomination letter. “They have successfully passed down a love of the land and ethic of care for it. Each generation has worked to grow and improve the operations through care, creativity, and hard work.”

★ PAST  
★ NEBRASKA  
★ RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ RGM Corporation  
Mathewson Family

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



# ★ KOPRIVA ANGUS

*Kopriva Family*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH



Photo credit: Colette Kessler, NRCS



**KOPRIVA ANGUS** ★  
Clark, South Dakota

**LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD**

*“Farmers are the true conservationists. We have the job of feeding the whole world.”*

— JIM KOPRIVA



Photo credits:  
Colette Kessler, NRCS

*Jim and Karen Kopriva* purchased their first land in Clark County in 1991, but credit Karen’s parents, Harold and Mary Hurlbert, with helping them establish their farm. Karen’s family has been in Clark County since 1880 and her parents have helped both their daughters’ families get started in agriculture. Over one third of the operation’s land base is land that has been in Karen’s family for three generations.

Like many of their neighbors, the Koprivas were initially grain farmers. However, economics and Jim’s fondness for cattle prompted them to transition their cropland to grassland and hay land over the past decade.

Today, Kopriva Angus, which Jim and Karen manage with their son, Lee, and daughter, Angela, consists of approximately 2,000 owned and leased acres, 130 of which are no-tilled and cropped with a spring wheat-winter wheat-soybean rotation. The remaining acres are native rangeland, seeded pastures, and hay land.

Some of the Koprivas’ conservation practices include native grass seeding, rotational grazing, and the use of cover crops and crop residue stubble to extend

the grazing season. The family also uses controlled burns, which have been effective for reducing invasive vegetation in native pastures and promoting the return of species diversity.

The Koprivas are also highly invested in wildlife habitat and water quality. They leave some acres on each quarter of land as habitat for wildlife such as whitetail and mule deer, ducks, geese, grouse, partridge, pheasant, coyotes, fox, hawks, and owls. The ranch is in an area where excess flooding is a concern, so the Koprivas’ grass management efforts have helped improve water quality on their ranch through reduced erosion.

“As I worked with and became friends with Jim and Karen over the years, I have gained a tremendous amount of respect for the way in which they were able to take a farm and turn it into a productive, sustainable ranch that will be able to be passed to the next generation in better shape than when they started,” wrote Mark Washechek, NRCS, in his letter of recommendation. “It is admirable to have the conservation ethic and it all starts with this love and respect for the land.”



★ COOK'S  
BRANCH  
CONSERVANCY

*Mitchell Family*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH



Photo Credit: Earl Nottingham



LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD

COOK'S BRANCH  
CONSERVANCY ★  
Montgomery, Texas



*"We all have this incredible respect for what this place could be. Watching it become that is really rewarding for all of us."*

— SARAH MITCHELL

Photo credits: Earl Nottingham

The George Mitchell family's *Cook's Branch Conservancy*, which consists of 5,650 acres in southeastern Texas, has been managed for nearly 50 years under a family tradition of conservation and sustainability.

In the spirit of Aldo Leopold, the Mitchells committed themselves to restoring their land back to health. Their desire to return the land to pre-settlement conditions led to the family's decision to discontinue commercial agricultural operations at Cook's Branch Conservancy in 2000 to minimize typical human impacts on the landscape. Income derived from resource management activities, including timber harvesting and hay production, is used to offset management and operation costs on the property.

The Mitchells practice adaptive management, changing plans every three years based on monitoring, current environmental conditions, and other factors. This allows for adaptation to changing conditions and provides documented responses to management activities for future reference. Some of the Mitchell family's conservation practices include continuous timber monitoring, selective thinning to ensure uneven aged pine-dominated upland forest with a healthy representation of sub-dominant tree species, and prescribed burning to rid the property of unwanted growth. These efforts have resulted in a 25% stand composition of old growth pines, which are increasingly rare in the region. Prescribed fire is used to reduce mid-story and small hardwoods/shrubs while enhancing native ground cover.

Wildlife species are continuously monitored at Cook's Branch Conservancy. The Mitchells have effectively managed the white-tailed deer population, enhanced habitat for wild turkey and other grassland dependent bird species, and significantly increased the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker population on their land.

Water resources at Cook's Branch Conservancy have been improved through the establishment of Streamside Management Zones, planting approximately 2,000 hardwoods in formerly clear-cut riparian areas, development of a groundwater quality monitoring site, and implementation and maintenance of impoundments to reduce erosion and provide wildlife and fisheries habitat.

"This commitment to forgo financial benefit and dedicate a sizeable tract of private land in one of the fastest growing areas in the state exclusive to habitat and wildlife conservation demonstrates a land ethic seldom seen in twenty-first century Texas," wrote Dan Jones, wildlife biologist, in his letter of recommendation. "This, I believe, is the embodiment of citizen stewardship as envisioned by Leopold and uniquely qualifies the Mitchell family and Cook's Branch Conservancy for recognition of their efforts and success."

★  
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PAST  
TEXAS  
RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Temple Ranch**  
*Buddy & Ellen Temple*

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**



★ HEATON LIVESTOCK  
COMPANY

*Heaton Family*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH





*“Conservation is a top priority for us, and we recognize that that’s what’s kept us in business.”*

— KARL HEATON



★ HEATON  
LIVESTOCK COMPANY  
Alton, Utah



Cousins Karl and Raymond Heaton are fourth generation ranchers responsible for the management of over 140,000 private and federal acres at *Heaton Ranch*, located in Alton. The ranch consists of approximately 1,250 head of cattle.

The Heaton's believe that natural resources conservation is critical to the success of their ranching business. They utilize conservation practices to improve grassland, water quality, and wildlife habitat at the ranch. Water quality and delivery improvements include the development or restoration of over 50 stock ponds, as well as converting flood irrigation systems to wheel move sprinklers and pivot irrigation on over 150 acres. The Heaton's also developed a spring through the installation of a solar pump.

Grassland has improved since the Heaton's adopted rotational grazing in the 1980s. They also cleared nearly 5,000 acres of trees and brush, seeding these areas with forbs and grasses that are beneficial to mule deer and the Heaton's sage-grouse population, which is the southernmost sage-grouse habitat in the United States. Karl and Raymond use a combination of prescribed burning and chemical treatments to maintain the health of these areas.

When faced with a mule deer depredation problem, the Heaton's organized other landowners, with similar issues, into an association to tackle the problem. Since then, mule deer have become an asset to the ranch.

The Heaton's have diversified their ranching operation by running an outfitting business and offering cattle drive vacations in which tourists participate in the Heaton's' cattle drive, moving livestock from the summer to the winter range. This endeavor offsets the costs of the drive.

Not content to confine what they have learned to their ranch, Karl and Raymond have an impressive legacy of outreach and service inside and outside of the agricultural community.

“When it comes to conserving the natural resource base in our area, they not only ‘talk conservation, they walk conservation,” wrote Tyce B. Palmer, UACD, in his letter of recommendation. “For the Heaton's, conservation doesn't cost, it pays!”

★ PAST  
★ UTAH  
★ RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Red Pine Land and Livestock**  
*Osguthorpe Family*

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*





# HEBBE FAMILY FARM

*Jim & Val Hebbe*



★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH







**LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD**

**JIM & VAL  
HEBBE ★**

*Green Lake, Wisconsin*



*"I always feel very good when I'm giving back to the community, because I've always felt that the community's given so much to me."*

— JIM HEBBE

Photo credits: Kevin Kiley

*Jim and Valerie Hebbe*, along with their daughter, Ashley, operate a cash grain farm in Green Lake County. In his nearly 30 years of experience in melding conservation and agriculture, Jim is the essence of adaptive management.

Jim began farming in 1983 by renting some land from his father. He planted field corn, using conventional tillage, resulting in poor yields. Following a couple of attempts, Jim realized that he needed a system that conserved soil moisture and improved organic matter. This led him to no-till farming in 1986, when he purchased his first piece of farm machinery, a no-till drill, and he's never looked back.

Today, Jim and Valerie Hebbe farm 1,100 acres, producing field corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa. In addition to no-till planting all of their crops, the Hebbes have implemented numerous conservation systems that complement each other and lead to less erosion and more residue cover on the land. A water and sediment basin was constructed to help reduce field runoff from a significant slope that drains into Snake Creek, the farm's

Class 1 trout stream. To further enhance the soil and water quality of the farm, the Hebbes planted native prairie grasses in a field that borders the creek. Through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Hebbes planted 25 acres of evergreen trees in what was once light and sandy soil.

The Hebbes are leaders in conservation and agriculture. They often host field days to demonstrate what they have learned about agriculture and conservation. Jim has worked as the conservationist for Green Lake County for nearly 30 years and is currently the county's Land Conservation Director. In 1985 he helped develop conservation standards for Farmland Preservation Program participants to control soil erosion to sustainable levels. He also enacted an ordinance, requiring environmentally sound manure storage structures, which set a standard statewide.

"Aldo Leopold is one of the founding fathers of conservation, and I believe Jim is strongly carrying on that same tradition," wrote Diane Cole, Badgerland Financial, in her nomination letter. "Jim is an excellent spokesperson for conservation."

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PAST  
WISCONSIN  
RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Bragger Family Dairy**  
*Joe & Noel Bragger*

2011 ★ **Koepke Farms Inc.**  
*Koepke Family*

2008 ★ **Terry Peters\***

2006 ★ **Gerry Mich\***

*\* Presented in partnership with the  
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association*



★ SOMMERS  
RANCH

*Sommers Family*

★ PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH







**LEOPOLD  
CONSERVATION  
AWARD**

★ **SOMMERS RANCH**  
*Sublette, Wyoming*

Photo credits:  
Sommers Family

*“Our family’s been in this business more than 100 years. If we had not been good stewards of the private and federal lands, we would not be here.”*

— ALBERT SOMMERS

The *Sommers family* has been ranching cattle in Sublette County, Wyoming since 1907 when Albert “Prof” Sommers and his brother, Pearl, established the ranch. Today, third generation ranchers Albert and his sister, Jonita, manage the operation. Sommers Ranch consists of 1,000 acres of rangeland, 200 acres of irrigated pasture, 30 acres of wetland, and 827 acres of hayland.

Albert and Jonita’s concern about a continuation of their family’s conservation legacy led them to enroll their land into a perpetual conservation easement, including 1,700 acres along the Green River, in 2010. This created a 19,000-acre easement, which was the largest private land easement in Wyoming at the time.

Monitoring is a large component of the Sommers’ land management strategy, helping them make decisions to improve the rangeland and cattle distribution. Albert volunteers his time to lead a cooperative range-monitoring program through the Upper Green River Cattle Association, which he has extended to encompass the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private land he grazes. Albert is now the driving force behind the monitoring of over 190,000 acres, equaling 6% of Sublette County.

The Sommers family believes that wildlife and livestock production can go hand in hand, so they take steps to maintain and improve habitat on their land for various species, including mule deer, sage-grouse, moose, pronghorn, and migrating waterfowl.

The Sommers family was one of six families to form the historic Green River Drift, which trails cattle 68 miles from spring BLM pastures west of Big Piney to the headwaters of the Green River and back again in the winter. Today, there are 10 families involved in “The Drift” who share responsibilities for moving the herd.

Albert and Jonita believe strongly in outreach to the agricultural community and beyond. Jonita is highly involved in the Sublette County community and Albert is involved in several agricultural organizations, including the “Catch a Calf Program,” where ranchers are paired with young people to educate them about agriculture.

★  
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PAST  
WYOMING  
RECIPIENTS

2011 ★ **Fieldgrove Ranch**  
*Ryan & Teresa Fieldgrove*

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*



# Innovations On The Land

*Private Conservation for the Public Good*

JULY 25 - 26, 2013 IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA  
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Sand County Foundation

WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS



*Building Knowledge  
Through Shared Experience*



# *Sand County Foundation* Innovations on the Land

The majority of the land in the United States is privately owned, so America's farmers, ranchers, and foresters are critical to the health of natural resources. Sand County Foundation will bring together dozens of award-winning landowner conservationists, from across the nation, to exchange ideas about agriculture and conservation ... issues that are important to the agricultural community and the general public.

The event, to be hosted by Sand County Foundation, Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Land Trust, and University of Nebraska – Lincoln's Center for Grassland Studies, will convene Leopold Conservation Award recipients from across the nation. These are farming, ranching, and forestry families who are deemed by their respective states to be among the best and brightest leaders inside and outside of the agricultural community.

The majority of speakers at the symposium will be Leopold Conservation Award recipients. They will tackle important issues such as private-public partnerships, water, family succession, wildlife management, invasive species, and drought recovery.

*[www.innovationsontheland.com](http://www.innovationsontheland.com)*



Photo credit: Paolo Vescia



Photo credit: Jim Denevan



Photo credit: Chase Fountain





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★ NATIONAL ★

Farm Credit  
The Lynde & Harry Bradley Foundation  
Mr. Jim Truax

★ CALIFORNIA ★

California Farm Bureau Federation  
S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation  
Sustainable Conservation  
The Nature Conservancy

★ COLORADO ★

Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc.  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Peabody Energy  
Mr. Michael Dowling

★ NEBRASKA ★

Cargill  
Farm Credit Services of America  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
The Nature Conservancy  
Nebraska Cattlemen Research & Education Foundation  
Nebraska Environmental Trust  
Nebraska Land Trust  
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture  
Sandhills Taskforce

★ SOUTH DAKOTA ★

American State Bank  
Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership  
Daybreak Ranch  
Ducks Unlimited  
Millborn Seeds  
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
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Professional Alliance  
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  
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

★ TEXAS ★

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**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:

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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.



SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION | 16 NORTH CARROLL STREET | SUITE 450 | MADISON, WI 53703 | (608) 663-4605

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