



LEOPOLD
CONSERVATION
AWARD®

PRESENTED BY SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

2022

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2022 MISSOURI LEOPOLD CONSERVATION
AWARD RECIPIENT, BRITT FARMS.

PHOTO BY SETH LOWE

It was Aldo Leopold who wrote, "the landscape of any farm is the owner's portrait of himself".

In Leopold's influential book, *A Sand County Almanac*, the renowned conservationist, landowner and scientist called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage. His idea of a "land ethic" is alive and well today in thousands of American farmers, ranchers and forestland managers who improve soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat while they produce food and fiber.

For more than 50 years, Leopold's land ethic has guided Sand County Foundation's work to inspire and empower more landowners to recognize and embrace conservation opportunities on their land.

Today, with dozens of partners and sponsors across the U.S., Sand County Foundation proudly presents the Leopold Conservation Award in 25 states to private landowners who exemplify the spirit of Leopold's land ethic.

The award program recognizes extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation, inspires other landowners, and helps the general public understand the vital role private landowners play in conservation success.

An award program of this stature could not exist without quality landowner nominees and contributions both large and small. Sand County Foundation and its many partners and sponsors invite you to become part of this important story.

To learn more, visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org and contact Lance Irving at 608.729.1389, Living@sandcountyfoundation.org.

Dear Friends,

Sand County Foundation and our partners are proud to share the stories of the land stewards who make up the Leopold Conservation Award Class of 2022.

Whether managing an apple orchard or cotton field, they use conservation practices to enhance soil, water and wildlife habitat. There are Great Plains cattle ranchers, and dairy farmers on both coasts. The recipients from New York and Texas are protecting and providing drinking water for millions of people through innovative partnerships with nearby municipalities.

An eighth-generation dairy family from Maryland oversees a farm founded in 1759, while Montana's recipients are cattle ranchers who manage neighboring land with the help of their beef cattle.

This year's awardees range in age from thirties to nineties. One runs a grazing apprenticeship program, some are former teachers (from kindergarten to college), and all are educators in their own way. Most host farmer field days and school tours, while others are sought-after speakers on the soil health circuit.

Something special happens when you get a group of trailblazers together. We are already making plans to gather the Leopold Conservation Award's more than 200 alumni for a national conservation symposium in Wisconsin in June of 2024. I hope you'll join us!

Sincerely,



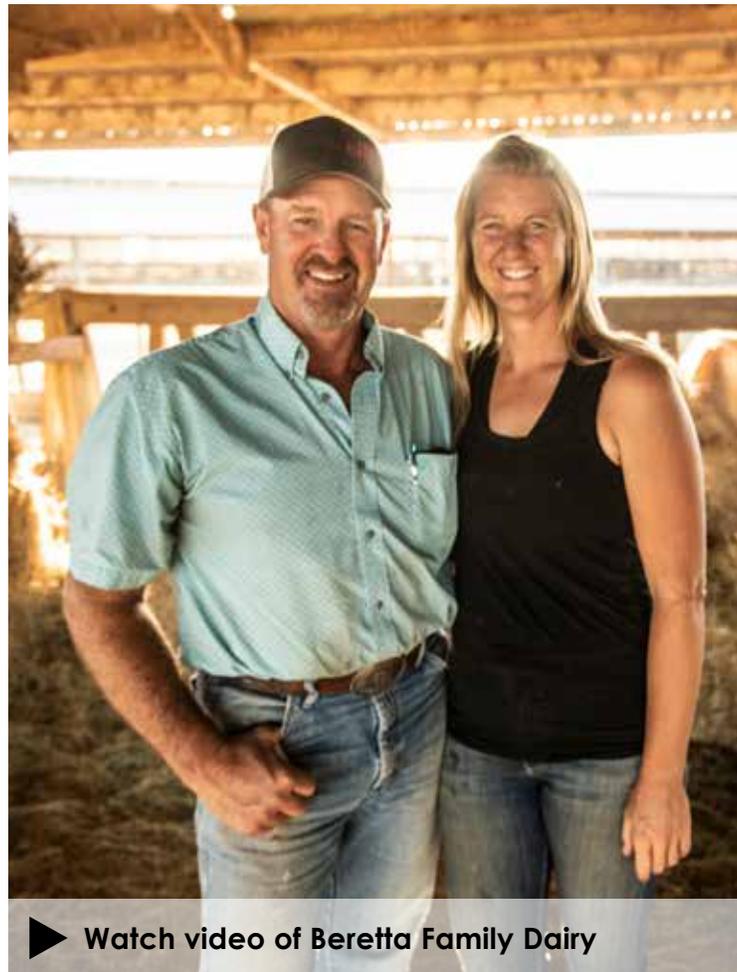
Kevin McAleese
President and CEO
Sand County Foundation



Empowering Landowners
Advancing a Land Ethic

CALIFORNIA

BERETTA FAMILY DAIRY



▶ Watch video of Beretta Family Dairy



Conserving California's water is important when milking cows. The Berettas are dairy farmers who have long sought to improve water quality and quantity.

Located in Northern California's ecologically and economically important Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed, the Berettas are innovators when it comes to recycling wastewater and preserving groundwater.

Doug and Sharon Beretta farm with their children: Jennifer, Lisa, and Ryan, and grandson Brayden. Doug's father Bob had the foresight in 1968 to build a pond that secures nutrients from runoff. The nutrients are later used to fertilize pastures and crop fields. It's one of many conservation projects the Berettas have implemented to reduce groundwater usage, improve soil health, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and protect federally recognized endangered species.

The Berettas have utilized the City of Santa Rosa's reclaimed wastewater to irrigate their pastures and hay fields since 1981. Using recycled water has eliminated the need to draw 45 million gallons of groundwater annually. The Berettas also partnered in California's first-of-its-kind, voluntary water quality credit trading project with Santa Rosa and the Sonoma Resource Conservation District in 2015. It aided with pasture improvements that protect water quality by reducing soil erosion and manure runoff.

Recently, Beretta Family Dairy secured a pair of grants from the California Department of Food and Agriculture to achieve more environmental and economic efficiencies through conservation. An Alternative Manure Management grant helps reduce labor and fuel costs with a new barn scraper system and a manure separator that eliminates methane. Compost derived from the separation process is used as cattle bedding,

which eliminates their need to purchase sand. A Healthy Soils Program grant will improve forage productivity by spreading compost on pastures, utilizing a no-fill drill to seed grassland, and designing a new rotational grazing plan.

Due to volatile prices in the conventional milk market, the Berettas made the decision in 2006 to transition to organic production for a better and more stable pay price. In doing so, they also began switching from the Holstein to Jersey breed. Jersey cows are better grazers and their smaller frames create less compaction on the soil.

The Berettas graze their cattle on wetlands, thoughtfully managing these areas for their ecological significance with beneficial grazing practices. That includes 200 acres of wetland that they lease from the State of California. The combination of irrigation and managed grazing of pastures and wetlands has helped reduce the likelihood of wildfire.

As Santa Rosa's city limits have grown, Beretta Family Dairy has become a refuge to turkeys, pheasants, and deer. The farm's ponds serve as nesting areas for waterfowl, and its pastures are covered with 100-year-old valley oak trees.

The Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed's unique ecological communities compel the Berettas to use careful farming practices that benefit the natural systems they work within. That includes farming with three endangered flowers, one of them endemic to the Laguna, and an endangered, distinct population segment of the California tiger salamander.

Long ago, Doug Beretta was taught that you only milk as many cows as your land can handle. That advice is just part of the conservation ethic that has guided Beretta Family Dairy for more than 70 years.

Presented in
Partnership with



Finalist

Sardella Ranch of Tuolumne County



COLORADO

PANKEY RANCH



▶ Watch video of Panky Ranch



The Pankey family's resilience was put to a test when a wildfire burned nearly half of their ranch in 2018. Among the devastating impacts of the fire was that livestock and wildlife could no longer drink from ponds because they were covered in ashes.

Keith and Shelley Pankey raise beef cattle with their sons, Kevin and Justin and their families, in Moffat and Routt counties. They have a history of doing right by their land. Following the fire, they cleaned the ponds and aerielly reseeded native grasses on 900 acres in the fire's path. It's not the first time investing in conservation practices has paid off for this family and the landscape they share with livestock and wildlife.

Keith's great grandfather homesteaded an area of high desert known as Great Divide. The Pankeys are still able to graze cattle in the drought-prone region from spring through fall thanks to improved water distribution and rotational grazing systems.

They replaced windmill-powered wells with solar pumps. New water storage tanks and nearly three miles of natural flow pipelines were also added. By doubling the number of watering stations to 12, the Pankey's increased their ability to properly graze cattle while creating wildlife habitat across the ranch.

Precipitation, range conditions, and animal performance all impact how the Pankeys plan pasture rotations and stocking rates. They analyze pasture rotations to determine which areas benefit from early, middle or late season grazing. They've also found that some areas benefit from longer or shorter periods of grazing, while others benefit from being grazed twice in the same season.

When cattle widely disburse themselves, the Pankeys find that grass recovers at a faster rate, and taller grass is left behind when the cattle are rotated to another pasture. The ranch's wildlife populations have greatly increased thanks to rotational grazing and

the improved water system. By working with neighbors to control noxious weeds, desirable grasses have become dominant across the ranch.

Pankey Ranch borders Colorado's largest Greater sage-grouse lek, a breeding ground for this declining species. The Pankeys hosted Colorado State University students to study grasses, insects, and Greater sage-grouse habitat in the Great Divide range. Their study was helpful in determining which conservation practices to adopt. The Pankeys fenced off a large area around a natural spring to provide cover. They also equipped water storage tanks with overflows that provide water and prolonged green vegetation to encourage production of insects that grouse chicks consume.

The Pankeys are involved with a large-scale conservation effort led by Trout Unlimited to stabilize Elk Head Creek's riparian corridor. They have installed rock toe and erosion control mats, and reseeded stream banks to prevent erosion. Hundreds of willow trees have been planted in corridors to preserve wetlands and fish habitat. Less erosion in the creek means cleaner water downstream in the Elk Head Reservoir and Yampa River. This family's leadership in raising awareness of the creek's impaired health, and commitment to on-the-ground conservation practices, is inspiring other landowners to follow suit.

The Pankeys also provide public hunting opportunities on their land. In 2011, they obtained a conservation easement on their Routt County property through the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust to ensure future agricultural uses on the land. As a longtime volunteer with the Moffat County Fair, Keith shares his land ethic and conservation practices with youth, neighbors and the general public.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalist

Round River Resource Management LLC of Lincoln and Pueblo counties



IOWA

PINHOOK FARM



▶ Watch video of Pinhook Farm

Seth Watkins was 10 years old when he nursed a muddy, cold calf back to health in the warmth of the family farmhouse with a shot of Bourbon. It was a formative event for a young caretaker who now uses cattle to help heal his farm's landscape.

The land Seth farms with his wife Christy, and children Spencer and Tatum, has been in his family since 1848. His ancestors inherited deep, rich soils on the Southern Iowa Drift Plain, but that changed over time. Prairie was plowed under to grow corn. Erosion from gullies and ditches increased while biodiversity diminished.

When Seth inherited and bought parts of what would become Pinhook Farm in the 1990s, he had a different vision. He would emulate how Native Americans once stewarded the land by not tilling it, and return much of it to grass to rotationally graze livestock rather than grow row crops.

Yet Seth knew he couldn't attain sustainability without profitability. Early in his career he created a business plan that convinced Fontanelle Hybrids to buy enough land in Iowa to graze 450 beef cattle that he would manage. Today, Seth manages about 900 acres of crops, prairie, and forests for other landowners across Page, Taylor and Adams counties. The Watkins own 320 acres and rent 2,790 acres to grow the grass, hay and corn needed to feed their herd of 600 beef cow-calf pairs.

Early on, Seth seeded new pastures for rotational grazing, and used cover crops and a no-till cropping system to reduce erosion while increasing the soil's capacity to infiltrate and hold water. He relied on geospatial technology to determine which conservation practices would benefit different parts of the farm.

Seth removed ditches, built 14 ponds and established a wetland to naturally drain hundreds of acres of his farmland.

Another 42 ponds have been built on land under his management. To diversify his farm's income and provide wildlife habitat, Seth regularly plants nut and fruit-bearing trees around ponds that are restricted from livestock.

Seth credits his conservation ethic to having artistic parents, and to his own love of learning. Although the 1980s farm crisis denied him a college education, he's as an avid reader and regular participant in on-farm research projects related to growing cover crops and integrating prairie strips into crop fields.

Seth will be first to tell you his neighbors think he's crazy. That doesn't stop him from doing right by the land, and talking about it to anybody who will listen. That includes his advocacy for getting more marginal farmland enrolled into the federal Conservation Reserve Program for environmentally-sensitive areas.

The 100 acres enrolled in CRP at Pinhook Farm are restored prairies and windbreaks, shallow water habitats, and riparian buffers. All of these areas have seen an influx of songbirds, Monarch butterflies and beneficial pollinators.

In looking to the future, the Watkins family entered into a permanent conservation easement that ensures Pinhook Farm will not be plowed again.

As for the calf that was nursed with Bourbon. Seth named her Scotch, and she lived to the ripe old age of 15.

Just as Pinhook Farm's landscape has evolved, Seth says he always thought cattle were what he loved about agriculture, but he's come to see it's the land he truly loves.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Vic and Cindy Madsen of Audubon County
Loran Steinlage of Fayette County



KANSAS

MICHAEL THOMPSON



▶ Watch video of Michael Thompson



Like the five generations before him, Michael Thompson grew up knowing the challenges of farming and ranching in northwest Kansas. There were crop failures brought on by harsh weather. Michael also remembers the scars left by tillage on semi-arid soil.

As young adults, Michael and his brother Brian were told there wasn't a future for them at Thompson Farm & Ranch. However, the avid learner and experimenter knew there had to be a different (and more profitable) way to grow crops and raise cattle.

Michael began researching land stewardship and soil improvement. He knew his family's land could no longer afford to lose more topsoil from wind and rain. After seeking out peer groups across Kansas, he soon saw the benefits of growing a diverse rotation of cover crops, using no-till practices and rotational grazing.

Keeping farm fields covered with growing vegetation year-round would infiltrate water instead of letting it wash away. Michael admits he was no fan of cattle in his youth, but he's come to see their role in a holistic, regenerative system. Their manure delivers nutrients to native rangeland and his corn, soybean, and wheat fields.

He started small with a few acres of cover crops and some electric fencing. Grazing cover crops provided another source of feed for beef cattle, and provided an unexpected benefit of giving existing pastures and rangeland more time to rest and grow between grazings. The extra rest produced a more robust and diverse stand of native grass species.

Growing cover crops coupled with a no-till system improved earthworm activity and soil life. An increase in nutrient cycling allowed for less fertilizer use.

Improved water infiltration meant crops and forage grew even in years of drought.

Ultimately, rebuilding worn-out soils proved essential in allowing Michael and Brian to return home to farm with their father, Richard.

Michael shares his knowledge and lessons learned with other farmers and ranchers. He's a founding member and chairman of the Kansas Soil Health Alliance, president of No-till on the Plains, and a supervisor on the Norton County Conservation District Board.

Michael, who worked as a kindergarten teacher for a dozen years before returning to the farm, now shares his conservation experience with thousands of people each year at local, statewide, regional and international conferences and field days.

He also serves as a mentor in the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) program that connects Kansas farmers and ranchers to improve water quality. He encourages his mentees to examine what goes on underground. In extreme droughts or after heavy rains, Michael often digs below ground to examine root structure and worm channels. He teaches others that what happens deep within soil determines what grows above ground, and good soil management is key to enduring the weather extremes.

Despite being part of the National Association of Conservation Districts' Soil Health Champions Network, Michael doesn't claim to be an expert. He humbly claims the path to lasting success is often through failure. His peers say this makes him an authentic, accessible, and passionate voice for conservation.

Michael exemplifies the leadership qualities needed in agriculture to better steward its greatest resource, the soil.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Ray and Susan Flickner of McPherson, Hodgeman, Dickinson and Norton counties

Kevin Karr Family of Lyon County

Glenn and Barbara Walker of Ellsworth, Lincoln, Rice, Russell and Saline counties



KENTUCKY

REDDICK FARMS



▶ Watch video of Reddick Farms



"It Starts With the Soil" was the title of farmer and soil scientist Ray Archuleta's address to the National No-Till Conference in 2017. What Brad Reddick and his son Joel heard that day about regenerative agriculture would change the way they farm.

Archuleta promoted eliminating tillage, growing diverse winter cover crops, planting corn and soybeans into cover crops, reducing synthetic input costs, and grazing livestock on row crop acres. The Reddicks would soon implement all of these conservation practices. They remained profitable and noticed a profound impact on their Carlisle County farm.

The way their soil cycles water, nutrients, and carbon vastly improved. Their 1,800 acres are now a regenerative showcase. The backbone of this change was switching from vertical tillage to no-till, and replacing single small species of cover crops to diverse, large cover crops.

Not tilling soil prior to planting crops each spring increases the soil's infiltration and conserves moisture, which buffers against drought.

The Reddicks' unique cover crop system builds soil organic matter, reduces erosion and suppresses weeds. A blend of cover crops species is custom matched for each field's crop rotation. The covers are planted immediately after the fall harvest and grow until they are flattened by a roller-crimper the following spring.

Cover crops absorb nutrients and then release them back to feed corn plants as they mature. This win-win scenario reduces nutrient loss by storing it in the cover crop and later increasing corn fertility and yield. This natural uptake of nutrients reduces the need for commercial fertilizers.

Reddick Farms incorporates manure from its beef cattle herd and litter from its poultry broiler

flock into its fields with low soil disturbance equipment to improve the soil's biological properties. Soil and tissue samples are tested to ensure that phosphorus and other fertilizers are not over-applied.

The Reddicks see erosion as a symptom of a larger problem rather than the problem itself. Erosion is the result of a broken water cycle when soil cannot infiltrate the water falling onto it. Soil tests have shown a reduction in the volume of nutrients leaving fields after just three years of cover crops and limited fertilizer use.

The Reddicks adopted cost-effective conservation practices to improve regional water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Wildlife habitat is provided in the farm's wooded areas that are enrolled in a conservation reserve program. Elsewhere, there are 40 acres of buffer strips along creeks and 20 acres of perennial waterways. Rock chutes of loose riprap-lined channels safely convey water to a lower elevation while protecting the soil surface.

Tile drainage is used to lower the water table of fields near creek bottoms. It prevents surface drainage and allows the soil to filter nutrients from water before its released into the creek.

The Reddicks' cattle are fenced away from waterways to prevent stream bank erosion. A benefit of their rotational grazing system leaves the height of grazed pastures tall enough to capture and soak in rainfall instead of letting it run off.

Brad Reddick's not shy about sharing his successes and failures with other farmers. He promotes sustainability at every opportunity since that fateful presentation in 2017. His message always starts with the soil.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Donald Veatch of Marion County

Michael W. Wilson of Anderson County



MARYLAND

CALEB AND ALICE CROTHERS



▶ Watch video of Caleb and Alice Crothers



There's a new sheriff in town on one of Maryland's oldest dairy farms.

Caleb and Alice Crothers were in their thirties when they left behind law enforcement and healthcare careers in Knoxville to return to his family's farm. Caleb took over the 200-cow herd at Long Green Farms in 2015, the year before his father passed away.

Long Green Farms is located amid intense residential growth near the environmentally sensitive Chesapeake Bay. The Crothers don't plan to grow their dairy herd's size and are using conservation practices to make the farm economically and environmentally sustainable.

The Crothers partnered with Appalachian Stream Restoration and Wetland Studies in 2020 to reconstruct and realign more than 14,200 feet of streambank of a creek that feeds into North East Creek, a direct tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The project included planting 60,000 trees, grading, and installation of many stream and fish habitat improvements. The project prevents 8763 pounds of nitrogen, 1210 pounds of phosphorus, and 1974 pounds of sediment from entering the creek annually.

To prevent soil erosion from farm fields, the Crothers plant 300 acres of cover crops to slow the velocity of rainfall and melting snow. Cover crops also improve the soil's ability to infiltrate water, cycle nutrients, and build organic matter. An aerial applicator is used to broadcast cover crop seeds into standing crops of soybeans and corn, which gives the cover crop a jump start prior to the corn and soybean harvest. Long Green Farms also invested in a no-till planter for corn and soybeans to not disturb the soil's structure.

To minimize the use of commercial fertilizers, the Crothers use drag lining to apply manure on their 225 acres of corn, 120 acres of soybeans, and 80 acres of hay. This process reduces field compaction and allows for precise application.

A livestock barn with manure storage was constructed in 2017 to provide a stable, non-eroding surface to house heifers. Clean rainwater from its roof, and runoff from terraces are diverted to grassed waterways that carry water to a safe discharge area without creating flooding or erosion. These areas, along with the land Caleb's grandfather enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, improve water quality while providing wildlife habitat. The Crothers have also placed 535 acres into permanent protection with the Cecil Land Trust.

While Long Green Farms has lots of neighbors, it doesn't generate complaints. Alice connects with neighbors and promotes ag literacy via her "Heels and Holsteins" Facebook page. Caleb, an eighth-generation dairy farmer, serves on the National Dairy Research and Promotion Board.

As for what's next, the Crothers will soon replace an earthen lagoon with a concrete structure to store manure. With a goal of achieving carbon neutrality, they are exploring options to install a methane digester to generate electricity, and a sand separator to recycle sand used as livestock bedding. As farmers, they cite conserving the environment among their greatest callings.

Despite owning a family farm that has been around since 1759, it's clear Caleb and Alice aren't resting on its laurels.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Mount Pleasant Acres Farms of Caroline County

Persimmon Tree Farm of Carroll County



MISSOURI

BRITT FARMS



▶ Watch video of Britt Farms



Technology's role in agricultural conservation has long intrigued Ryan Britt. When his father, Randy, equipped his combine with a yield monitor to evaluate crop production in the early 1990s, teenage Ryan thought it was a huge step forward for Britt Farms.

Ryan returned home from the University of Missouri in 2000 with more than a degree. Agricultural systems management classes had shown him how technology can maximize efficiency while protecting water and soil. Ryan and his father produce beef cattle, corn, soybeans, wheat and hay in Randolph, Chariton, and Macon counties.

Ryan put his passion for conservation to work as an early adopter of grid-based soil testing and variable rate fertilizer applications. Global positioning system (GPS) and geographic information system (GIS) technologies assisted in applying fertilizer only where it was needed, and at the precise rate. The Britts soon saw precision agriculture's economic and environmental benefits.

During the next few growing seasons, other conservation techniques were rapidly adopted. Britt Farms transitioned from using conventional tillage to a completely no-till system. Crop rotations and use of cover crops reduce erosion and improve soil health. Cover crops also provide an additional source of forage for their cattle.

The Britts adopted a rotational grazing system for their beef cows. State and federal programs assisted with installing cross-fencing, watering tanks and three miles of water line. Fencing cattle out of streams and ponds reduced soil erosion and protected water quality in the nearby Thomas Hill Reservoir.

To minimize nutrient loss and optimize cattle health, the Britts built a covered feeding area with a deep pack barn designed for zero runoff. By utilizing manure as a natural fertilizer, Britt Farms maximizes the efficiency of having cattle and crops.

In addition to creating terraces and grassed waterways, the Britts developed a wetland area for wildlife preservation. To attract beneficial pollinators, they planted native wildflowers in field buffers and in acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

The Britts host on-farm research on the effects of crop diversity on soil health, and on crop sensors that assess a crop's nitrogen needs. Measuring the effects of each change guides decision making for their farm and others. The Britts are also reducing their use of commercial fertilizers by taking advantage of biological stimulants to increase use of nutrients already in the soil.

Ryan has an unwavering commitment to improving soil, water and wildlife habitat through conservation. Whether through an active social media presence or board leadership for state and national soil and water conservation district associations, Ryan's willingness to share his successes and failures with others has directly helped expand conservation on other farms.

Ryan works with his two sisters to preserve the family farm for future generations. One sister direct markets Britt Farms Beef, and a nephew helps precisely apply fertilizers and crop protectants with his Unmanned Aerial Vehicles.

Ryan and his wife, Rebecca, believe it is important to teach love and appreciation of the land and its inhabitants to their three children.

"We hope that wherever their passions settle, they will see the value in being a faithful and wise steward of the soil," says Ryan. "Our intention is to leave the land better than when we found it."

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

- Cope Grass Farms of Lincoln County
- Rick Aufdenberg of Cape Girardeau County
- Stanton Farms of Boone County



MONTANA

BARNEY CREEK LIVESTOCK



▶ Watch video of Barney Creek Livestock



Pete and Meagan Lannan are innovative ranchers who found a way to raise beef cattle amid exorbitant land values in Montana's Paradise Valley. As owners of Barney Creek Livestock, they became land managers who show others how conservation can heal landscapes.

Pete studied the environmental and economic benefits of rotational grazing when his parents, Larry and Cathy Jordan, offered to lease Jordan Ranch to him. Pete and his wife Meagan were passionate about making improvements to the soil at the 200-acre ranch that has been in his family since 1900. They embraced conservation practices to build its resiliency for future generations, including their children, Maloi and Liam.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program helped with that conversion. With its financial and technical assistance, the Lannans mapped out grazing plans and upgraded their fencing and water infrastructure. Water and energy efficiencies were gained when a flood irrigation system was replaced with a pipeline delivering water to livestock tanks and a sprinkler irrigation system.

Their cattle and grass both thrived with a rotational grazing system, allowing the Lannans to increase stocking densities on their pastures. Pete and Meagan realized the more grass they could grow, the less hay they would need to harvest or buy. Since grazing year-round and stopping hay production in 2016, they only purchase the hay needed to feed during harsh winter storms. This change has saved them \$120,000 in equipment depreciation, in addition to lower fuel and labor costs.

Barney Creek bisects their family's ranch. Its riparian area was fenced off to only allow short-duration grazing, which promotes sapling growth and improved riparian function. Windbreaks were established

to protect cattle and provide habitat for deer and elk. Wildlife-friendly fencing was installed on the ranch's perimeter.

Each conservation success at the ranch inspired the Lannans to do more. They saw their cattle as a tool to help other landowners in Paradise Valley achieve soil health. They built relationships with owners of ungrazed and degraded properties by explaining how their stewardship could conserve and enhance natural resources.

Landowners have noted an influx of birds in pastures grazed by Barney Creek Livestock, lending credence to the adage that "what's good for the herd is good for the bird."

The Lannans lease more than 800 acres from five landowners; but it's about more than grazing their 100 head of cattle. Their lessors learn about the photosynthesis process, carbon sequestration, the benefits of hoof action on the land, and that livestock are nutrient cycling machines. They are coached on how soil amendments enhance soil microbiology, and they receive results from annual soil and plant tissue tests.

Early on, the Lannans recognized that raising cattle is about much more than just marketing beef. The path to success led them off of their home ranch in more ways than one. They frequently move their cattle to greener pastures in Paradise Valley, and they are members of a variety of peer, consumer, neighbor, and apprenticeship networks.

Of all their notable successes on the land, their greatest conservation achievement might be their willingness to share their land ethic with others.

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Finalists

Goggins Ranch
of Madison County

Kurt and PJ Myllymaki
of Judith Basin County



NEBRASKA

WINE GLASS RANCH



▶ Watch video of Wine Glass Ranch



Logan Pribbeno grew up around rotational grazing and no-till farming in the 1990s when both practices were still hotly debated by academics and farmers alike. Today, the self-described “second-generation conservationist” prioritizes rebuilding the light soils his family farmed for over a century, while making a living.

Without off-farm jobs and income, Logan and his wife Brianna, and his parents Jeff and Connie Pribbeno, rely on what they reap from the soil to sustain their family and employees. They manage the 30,000 acres of crops, rangeland, and grazing lands at Wine Glass Ranch to be productive, progressive and profitable. The catchy name of their integrated farm and ranch is a nod to the wine glass shaped cattle brand that Logan’s great-great grandmother registered in the 1930s.

One example of how the Pribbenos have combined conservation with profitability is their use of “ecological edges” as habitat for beneficial insects. All 4,500 acres of their cropland is bordered with a mix of perennial, native grasses. Beneficial predator insects like lady beetles, flower flies, and tachinid flies thrive in these areas. When pests descend on crops, the predator bugs descend on them. By shifting the ranch’s insect ecology, broad-spectrum insecticides are never used.

The Pribbenos grow a diversified crop rotation of corn, millet, milo, and wheat to optimize soil fertility with crop residues. Minimum-till or no-till is used on all cropland. Over time, the Pribbenos have come to utilize cover crops not just a long-term regenerative practice, but a short-term profit center. They graze livestock on fields of cover crops and harvested crop residues on their own farm and on rented fields. Doing so puts money in their neighbors’ pockets while helping recycle nutrients. It’s a win-win for the local farm economy and soil community.

Winter grazing of cover crops and harvested crop residues allows the native range to rest, while maximizing snow catch and minimizing wind erosion.

Since dividing 18,000 acres of Wine Glass Ranch into 90 paddocks in 1987, 120 stock tanks, 50 miles of pipeline, and more than 100 miles of cross fencing have been added to allow for high intensity, short duration grazing. Rather than trampling watering areas and over grazing pastures, a planned grazing system increases the vigor of their grasses thanks to increased rest periods for each paddock.

The Pribbenos continue to refine their system. Data from an annual evaluation of each paddock’s vegetation and soil type helps create the next grazing season’s herd size and moves. Proving that their system is working, Wine Glass Ranch’s stocking rates speak for themselves. Few graziers can keep as many as 3,000 beef cattle in a single group while regenerating the soil.

More than 10,000 trees and shrubs have been planted across Wine Glass Ranch to provide windbreak protection and wildlife habitat areas. A waterfowl pond was constructed, and four wildlife water guzzlers were installed to provide drinking water for wildlife.

In addition to 750 environmentally-sensitive acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), another 61 wetland sites on 107 acres have been enrolled into CRP wetland restoration and buffer strip programs.

Aldo Leopold defined conservation as the state of harmony between man and land. That harmony is found at Wine Glass Ranch, where the Pribbeno family’s deliberate management decisions are restoring, enhancing, and conserving their land.

Presented in Partnership with

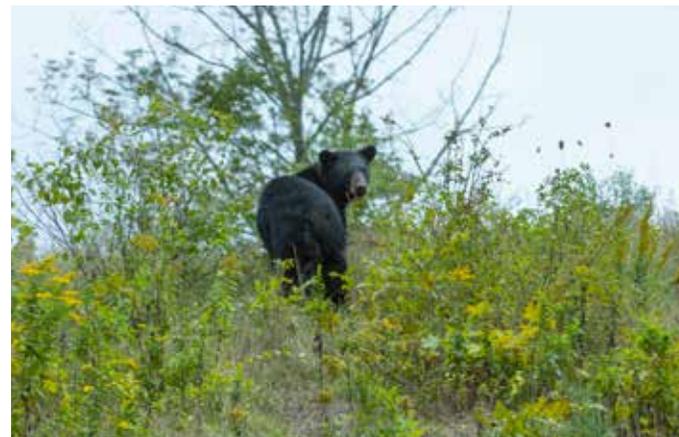


NEW ENGLAND

WHEEL-VIEW FARM



▶ Watch video of Wheel-View Farm



John and Carolyn Wheeler have deep roots in more ways than one.

As kids they roamed pastures and forests looking for wildlife and exploring rocks, trees and vernal pools. They grew up on neighboring hilltop farms near a town named Shelburne.

Before Shelburne got its name, locals called it Deerfield North Pasture. Unlike the fertile, flat fields of nearby Deerfield, this hilly area has always been deemed better for grazing.

John and Carolyn's career paths and their plans for Wheel-View Farm took unplanned and unpredictable turns, but their focus has always been to use the land as it's best suited.

Before buying a dairy farm from Carolyn's parents in 1979, they milked cows with John's family early in their married life. After selling the herd in 1988, John and Carolyn got off-farm jobs in teaching and insurance, and completed master's degrees. They raised cut flowers and bulbs for commercial markets in New York and Boston, and rented their pastures to a neighboring dairy in the 1990s.

The Wheelers bought a few Scottish Highland cattle in 2002 with plans to sell grass-fed beef. John and Carolyn both had studied integrated pest management and knew keeping their pastures clear of invasive species would be a constant struggle. They sought cost-share assistance through the Grasslands Reserves Program to remove overgrown juniper, barberry, and pine trees.

Some areas had to be cleared using bulldozers. Wood chips were used as mulch to cover the soil's surface and prevent erosion. Lime was spread and a mix of grasses and clover was seeded on the pastures. The Wheelers still rely on a Bush Hog, hand-mowing and judicious use of herbicides to stem the spread of spread of multi-flora roses and barberry bushes.

Today, cattle graze grassy areas where junipers once stood. John and Carolyn's rotational grazing system improves pastures with natural fertilizer from cattle, and by leaving enough grass standing to ensure it grows back quickly and stays productive. To prevent erosion, the area used as pasture during the winter is harrowed and reseeded after it becomes muddy and roughed up by hooves.

The Wheelers diversified their farm's income stream after buying a nearby peach and apple orchard. As neighboring farms became available, John and Carolyn purchased them to grow more hay for their growing beef herd. The beef business grew from a few cattle to 180 head in just a few years. The Wheelers sell beef to stores and restaurants, and via mail-order. They also sell direct to consumers from an on-farm store built in a shed.

Welcoming and educating visitors to the farm comes naturally to John and Carolyn. Both maintained teaching careers and advocated for conservation and agricultural causes during their farm's evolution.

They have always viewed themselves as temporary caretakers of Wheel-View Farm. Carolyn's ancestors settled in Shelburne in 1896, John's came before them in 1752. With an eye to the farm's future, about a third of their 350 acres have been enrolled in an agricultural preservation program. When eligible, these land stewards intend to apply for all of the farm to not be developed and remain in agriculture in perpetuity. Just as you'd expect in an area once called Deerfield North Pasture.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Bread and Butter Farm of Shelburne, Vermont

Cedar Mountain Farm of Hartland, Vermont



NEW MEXICO

SID GOODLOE



▶ Watch video of Sid Goodloe

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

JX Ranch of Quay County

Philmont Scout Ranch of Colfax County

Sid Goodloe has blazed his own trail at Carrizo Valley Ranch for more than six decades, and was practicing “regenerative ranching” before the phrase was coined.

As with most innovators, his ideas were not always initially welcomed with open arms by the scientific, academic, and ranching communities. Yet many of Sid’s skeptics would later adopt his conservation practices.

While working in Africa in the 1960s, Sid witnessed a different way to graze cattle on rangelands with Zimbabwean scientist and farmer Allan Savory. They noticed that pastures eventually flourished when they were given an extended period of rest after cattle quickly grazed them. They co-wrote a description of what would be called the short duration grazing method, and the Society for Rangeland Management published it in 1969.

Sid returned home and implemented short duration grazing in 1971, where it continues today with few changes. Sid hosted Savory, and arranged a speaking tour at several Western universities in 1974. The results were varied, with some academics either threatened by or discounting Savory’s knowledge. Undaunted, Savory would later revolutionize established grazing methods worldwide.

Sid would make his own mark as a visionary in removing Pinon/Juniper trees, and riparian area restoration. His management practices have yielded a showcase of wildlife habitat and plant diversity at elevations between 6,000 to 7,500 feet.

Beef cattle graze the ranch’s riparian areas for one to two weeks during dormancy. This helps prepare a seed-bed for beneficial grasses and wildflowers, while providing year-round forage for elk, deer and antelope. Recently Sid reduced his stocking rate by half to enhance wildlife habitat at the cow-calf ranch which does double duty as a fee hunting property.

Sid’s ingenuity turned oak brush from a nuisance into an asset. By cutting oak brush from three feet down to six inches, it later stimulates rapid growth of a nutritional green forage when native grasses are dormant.

More than 65 years of recordkeeping at the ranch shows that rain and snow deposit an annual average of just 19.5 inches of moisture. In response, forests have been thinned, drought provisions established, and installation of solar wells and dirt tanks have increased water availability.

Erosion turned abandoned homestead roads that crisscross Carrizo Valley Ranch into gullies. Sid’s steps to prevent erosion once drew opposition from downstream landowners who depended upon the silt-laden runoff water to irrigate their hayfields. After two years of litigation, they realized that Sid’s work was recharging the aquifers that furnished their well water.

Forest Service personnel and college students regularly tour the ranch to see its exemplary forest management and range practices at work. Sid’s efforts have been featured in three documentaries, and he’s a frequent guest speaker on conservation and land management issues. He works to preserve the Western way of life as the longtime president of the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium, a three-day chuck wagon cook-off and Western music event.

After 66 years of ecosystem improvement, the future of Carrizo Valley Ranch is very important to Sid. A conservation easement on the ranch guarantees it will provide open space and be financially unencumbered in perpetuity. Sid and Cheryl Goodloe plan to pass the ranch on as a protected property that will provide ranching, wildlife and recreation opportunities for their grandchildren.

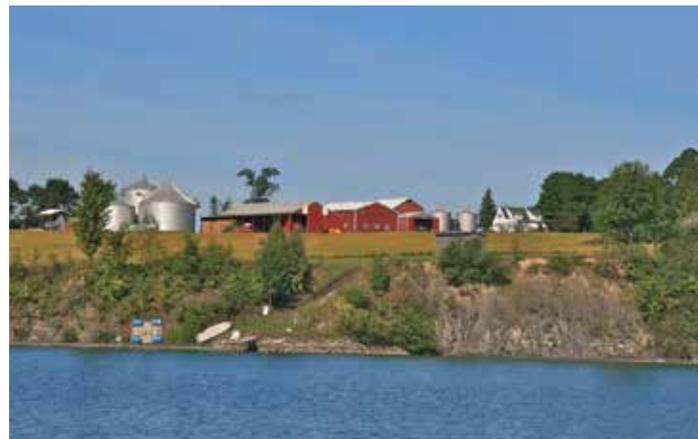


NEW YORK

GREENFIELD FARMS



▶ Watch video of Greenfield Farms



The Greenfields say their topsoil is more valuable than any of the crops they grow.

Preventing soil erosion at Greenfield Farms is important because most of its corn, soybean, hay, oat, and wheat fields overlook Skaneateles Lake, which provides the drinking water for Syracuse and seven other New York municipalities. The rest of the farm drains toward Owasco Lake, which supplies drinking water for the City of Auburn's 36,000 residents. Jim, Tom, Bill and TJ Greenfield utilize agricultural conservation practices to make their farm act as a 1,400-acre sponge that absorbs rain and snow melt and keeps topsoil in place.

Improving water quality through municipal-agricultural partnerships is a new concept elsewhere in the nation, but Greenfield Farms and its neighbors have been part of such a public-private partnership for decades.

It was 30 years ago when the New York State Department of Health gave the City of Syracuse a choice. It could either build a \$70 million water treatment plant (with an estimated \$6 million annual operating expense), or it could begin working with farmers in the watershed to improve water quality before it reached the existing plant. In collaboration with farmers like Jim Greenfield, Syracuse opted to do the latter. Jim was one of seven farmers who agreed to help encourage other landowners across the 37,952-acre watershed to voluntarily participate in the program.

As one of the founding fathers of Syracuse's Skaneateles Lake Agricultural Watershed Protection Program, Jim started making changes to the way things were done at home. The Greenfields sold their moldboard plow in 2000 and were among the first farms in the area to invest in no-till technology to plant crops. To improve their soil's ability to infiltrate water, add

organic matter, and reduce erosion, the Greenfields began planting cover crops.

The Greenfields established more than 12 miles of grassed waterways, and edged all of their crop fields with grass buffers to control runoff. They've also installed and maintain more than two miles of stabilized access roads at the farm to keep their tractor tires from spreading clumps of soil onto public roadways.

Their farm also features 20 water and sediment control basins that capture clean water and move it underground (away from potential contaminants) and release it safely to a stream or ditch. By having an industrial forester advise the Greenfields on the best management of their natural resources, they benefit the local forest industry and provide wildlife habitat.

Greenfield Farms uses smart technology to help apply, by variable rate, the amount of lime, fertilizers and other soil amendments required to grow crops. This technology showed them that shade from hedgerows eliminates the profitability of nearby rows of corn. After converting these under-producing areas to grassed buffers, they saved approximately \$400 per acre in time and topsoil resources.

Jim's involvement with Syracuse's Skaneateles Lake Agricultural Watershed Protection Program has not waned through the years. In addition to mentoring the next generation of board members, he gathered the sons and daughters of participants for a dinner meeting in 2017. He explained how hard he and his peers had to work to get the innovative partnership off the ground, and instilled in them why they need to carry it forward.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

- Echo Farm of Essex County
- Humbert Farms of Wayne County
- Lawnhurst Farms of Ontario County



NORTH DAKOTA

SPRING VALLEY CATTLE



▶ Watch video of Spring Valley Cattle



Whether it's land or livestock, Lance Gartner believes it's best to look at nature and emulate it. As owner of Spring Valley Cattle, he extends his calving season late into May and grazes most of the winter. That's working with nature, rather than against it.

Lance has created a low-input ranch that is economically and environmentally resilient with a diverse, no-till cropping system, and reduced labor, fuel and other input costs required to raise beef cattle.

Innovative grazing and cropping strategies have allowed Spring Valley Cattle to nearly double production from its 5,000 acres, reducing the need for more land and the costs associated with it.

Lance's grazing strategies typically allow him to leave taller grass on the land, which makes the landscape more drought tolerant. Better managed grasslands are more ecologically productive.

Cross fencing has been used to increase the number of grazing cells on the ranch from 14 to 88 since 2005. This was made possible by the installation of solar water developments across the ranch to provide reliable access to drinking water for livestock and wildlife.

Spring Valley Cattle has partnered with local, state and federal agencies and programs to install conservation practices such as reseeded more than 410 acres of crop fields with native grasses.

Spring Valley Cattle's herd is grazed as long as winter weather cooperates, with hay typically fed for just five weeks when the snow is deepest. Lance distributes hay bales to parts of the ranch that will benefit most from the nutrients in cattle manure.

The herd has adapted to these unique winter grazing techniques, and Lance reports better herd health, a healthier range, and a reduction in the concentration of manure on the landscape.

On his 400 acres of alfalfa, rye and oats, Lance uses no-till cropping methods and a diverse rotation of cover crops to promote water infiltration, reduce erosion and control weed species. Cover crops such as sorghum and sudan grass are grazed, which helps break up soil compaction and increase water and mineral cycling.

For more than a decade, Spring Valley Cattle has not used synthetic fertilizers on crops. Instead, rye and oat crops are paired with a companion legume such as peas or hairy vetch. The legumes naturally supply the rye and oats with the nitrogen they need to grow, which keeps input costs low. These are the types of innovative approaches Lance shares with others as a member of the Grazing Lands Coalition Mentor Network.

In its nomination of Spring Valley Cattle, the Morton County Soil Conservation District wrote that whether during a ranch tour, as a guest speaker, or a one-on-one monitoring session, Lance's message is "honest, raw, and full of things that worked well and those that didn't."

Spring Valley Cattle provides a blueprint for how a family-run ranch can embrace a more sustainable model of land improvement. It shows that farms and ranches can retain their size yet produce more to meet the needs of feeding a growing population.

Presented in Partnership with



North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts



OKLAHOMA

SMITH FAMILY FARMS



▶ Watch video of Smith Family Farms

People didn't use the term "cover crop" 50 years ago, but the Smiths were growing one.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Jimmy Smith grows rye as a companion to cotton. What some would call an innovation has long been considered a necessity in western Oklahoma. The year-round presence of a living root retains precious moisture in a drought-prone region and prevents wind erosion of sandy soils.

Jimmy and Cathy Smith farm with their children Spencer and Calli. They credit conservation practices and technological advances with saving time and money, and benefitting the landscape.

Growing rye as a cover crop has improved the Smith's soil, which average 2 to 4 percent organic matter compared to the statewide .5 percent average. They began interseeding rye on their fields prior to harvesting cotton in 1998. There was a time when they used a moldboard plow to integrate rye back into the soil each spring. They now terminate the cover crop with herbicides rather than tilling it. Jimmy had completed a transition from conventional tillage to strip tillage to no-till practices across his 2,200 acres of cotton by 2010.

Smith Family Farms also grows 200 acres of rye, some of which is used to graze their herd of 40 beef cattle. The rest produces the seed used to plant that year's cover crop. Rye grows on the farm's sandiest soils that cannot produce cotton.

To improve water quality in the Elk City Lake watershed, the Smiths utilize nutrient management plans and have fenced off riparian areas from cattle with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services. They also retrofitted watering facilities for wildlife, resulting in an uptick of local turkey and deer populations.

Much of Smith Family Farms borders residential areas of Elk City. The Smiths maintain neighborly relations using precision application technology that reduces drift of fertilizers and pesticides. They make positive impacts off the farm in other ways as well.

Smith Family Farm became a cooperator with the North Fork of the Red River Conservation District in 1988, and Jimmy has served on its board since 2001. Spencer serves on the USDA's Farm Service Agency Committee for Beckham County. Smith Family Farms hosts field days for fellow farmers, researchers, and agribusiness professionals to learn more about their conservation practices.

Jimmy and Spencer's ingenuity led to the creation of an agriculture manufacturing business. When the Smiths switched to no-till practices, they noticed their planter gauge wheels quickly wore out. After working with a machinist to build stronger tires, other farmers took notice. The Smiths partnered with machinist Jake Hunter to launch 4 AG MFG, which now produces and sells wheels for no-till planters and air seeders internationally.

It's the latest reinvention in a story that began when Jimmy's great grandparents Edmond and Martha purchased the farm's original 300 acres in 1913 to grow cotton and raise cattle. Smith Family Farms survived the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl and witnessed nearby Elk City's run as a booming cotton town from the 1930s to the 1970s, with nine cotton gins in operation.

When Jimmy returned home from college to farm with his father and grandfather, soil health wasn't a commonly used term. Yet his efforts to improve the soil, water, and wildlife in his care ever since earned him an induction into the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame in 2021.

Presented in Partnership with



PENNSYLVANIA

FLINCHBAUGH'S ORCHARD & FARM



▶ Watch video of Flinchbaugh's Orchard & Farm



When it comes to conservation and commerce, Flinchbaugh's Orchard & Farm is an agricultural showcase.

A retail farm market, picnic pavilion, and seasonal events attract thousands of visitors. While there, three generations of Flinchbaughs educate their guests on how conservation benefits their food, water, and environment.

Cover crops, grass buffers, no-till practices, and precision agriculture technology are central to how their crop fields and orchards are managed. Siblings Mike and Andrew Flinchbaugh, and Julie Keene, are continuing the stewardship practices begun by their recently retired parents, Ritchie and Sonia.

The Flinchbaughs have long partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to conserve water, soil, and energy resources on their farm and on leased cropland. They grow 2,000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, and milo, and another 52 acres of specialty crops: fruit, pumpkins, tomatoes, and flowers. For decades the family has leased cropland at the historic, county-owned Horn Farm, where they help provide public educational opportunities at the Horn Farm Center for Agricultural Education.

To improve their soil, the Flinchbaughs became early adopters of no-till farming in the 1980s. No-till mimics a forest floor, with many different layers of organic matter coating and cooling the soil's surface. Organic matter boosts the soil's ability to absorb and retain water, limiting runoff from heavy rain and melting snow. Rather than relying solely on manure and fertilizer to stimulate crop growth, no-till increases the amount of soil microbes that cycle nutrients.

The Flinchbaughs also plant a variety of cover crops every fall to increase soil fertility and biodiversity. Keeping living roots in the soil year-round with cover crops of winter rye, winter radishes, and turnips, provides an anchor against soil erosion, while controlling weeds, insect pests, and plant diseases.

Precision agriculture technology is used to maximize production with minimal nutrient

application. Fertilizer, seed, and pesticide application is guided by Global Positioning Systems. This technology automatically turns the application equipment on or off to ensure there is no overlap, thereby reducing waste and runoff.

The Flinchbaughs achieve efficiency and resiliency with an Integrated Pest Management program on their specialty crops. The program is an environmentally sensitive approach to managing pests by combining biological, physical, and chemical tools in a way that reduces fiscal, health, and environmental risks.

The adoption of high-density apple production is another way the Flinchbaughs are willing to take risks to increase their economic and environmental resiliency. This innovative approach improves fruit quality and labor efficiency. To break into the large grocer market, Flinchbaugh's Orchard & Farm took the calculated risk of investing in a modern system that supplies increased quality and quantity of apples to supply their buyer's demands.

To sustainably grow apples and peaches for the retail and wholesale markets, water is conserved using drip irrigation technology. Just as crop fields are rotated to increase soil fertility, the Flinchbaughs rotate their orchards every 15-25 years. The first fruit trees were planted shortly after Ritchie's grandparents Jacob and Minnie Flinchbaugh bought the farm in 1951.

The Flinchbaughs maintain grass buffers along creeks and grassed alleyways between rows of fruit trees to absorb runoff, improve water quality, and provide bird and wildlife habitat. Mike, Andrew, and Julie each serve on local and regional committees that promote agricultural conservation. Their combined efforts have established Flinchbaugh's Orchard & Farm as a well-known community hub.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Dotterer Farms of Clinton County

Troy Firth of Crawford County



SOUTH DAKOTA

BIEN RANCH



▶ Watch video of Bien Ranch



“Grass has been the very root of our family’s survival,” says Neil Bien. “To have that in our history spurs us to save the grassland and keep it as long as we can.”

The Bien family’s dedication to conservation has allowed them to sustain the landscape while earning their livelihood from it for more than a century. Neil and Muriel Bien, along with Neil’s brothers Boyd and Lyle and their families, operate the ranch homesteaded in 1888 by their grandfather Ole Bien.

“We try to focus on being environmentally sound and economically viable,” Neil said. “If you don’t do things that are profitable, you won’t have anyone here. And, if you don’t have anyone here (on the land), you can’t take care of the environment.”

Much of Bien Ranch’s 8,200 acres is grassland and original native prairie. About 2,000 acres of no-till farmland produces hay and other feed for a herd of about 1,000 beef cattle. Neil’s brothers own adjacent land that is managed with the same conservation ethic. The Bienes strive to conserve water as they ranch in a way that mimics nature by keeping fields green with cover crops.

Located in northeast South Dakota’s Prairie Coteau, the Bien Ranch is an intact representation of the prairies, wetlands, and woodlands this glacial landscape is known for. Neil’s passion has long been preserving and restoring wetlands. He has preserved 100 natural wetlands, and restored 15 wetland basins across Bien Ranch.

Neil says wetlands are essential to the water cycle and provide critical habitat for waterfowl and wildlife. This approach is in contrast with those who converted to row crop agriculture by draining wetlands in recent decades.

“We believe you can’t pump something out of the ground without putting it back for the future,” Neil said. “Sustainability is not possible if you exploit, exhaust, or use it up.”

Water development and miles of well-designed interior cross fences have been established at Bien Ranch in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. These improvements helped the Bienes transition from season-long grazing to rotational grazing for the benefit of the land, livestock, and wildlife.

Interspersed throughout the ranch are wildlife food plots, 100 acres of tree plantings, and other wooded areas that offer protection to wildlife and livestock. Their careful placement does not impact species that rely on open native prairies. As a result, waterfowl and native upland birds like the Sharp-tailed grouse are found in abundance.

“Part of being on the land is enjoying it; we’re not just here to work,” Neil said. “Fishing, hunting, and setting up bird houses and feeders, is important.”

Like Aldo Leopold before him, Neil is a great observer of nature and natural processes.

Neil served on the state wildlife commission for eight years. He and Muriel taught at the high school level in Sioux Falls, where he was recognized as the South Dakota Biology Teacher of the Year. As a true teacher and conservationist, Neil found it impossible to remove himself from either of his core vocations.

He required his students to read Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* because it taught patience with the environment and land.

“You have to be patient with wetlands and native grass,” he said of his own ranch, which he considers a work in progress.

Presented in Partnership with



TEXAS

JOHN BUNKER SANDS WETLAND CENTER



▶ Watch video of John Bunker Sands Wetland Center

Presented in
Partnership with



Lee and
Ramona Bass

John Bunker Sands was a cattle rancher, land steward, and wetland conservationist.

As manager of his family's Rosewood Ranches in the 1980s and 90s, he rotationally grazed beef cattle, increased the land's ecological diversity, and provided outdoor recreational opportunities for others. Bunker's passion was reestablishing wetlands on more than 2,100 acres of ranchland spread across four counties. His conservation efforts earned a Lone Star Land Steward Ecoregion Award in 1996.

At the East Fork of the Trinity River, Bunker recreated a wetland at his family's ranch that had long ago been drained to grow crops. Since his untimely passing in 2003, something remarkable has blossomed there.

It's now part of a 2,000-acre system of 28 wetland cells that filter natural and treated wastewater from the Trinity River. The Rosewood Corporation and Bunker's family agreed to sell ranchland to the North Texas Municipal Water District to make the project possible. They formed a public-private partnership with the water district to construct, oversee, and manage a nature center named in Bunker's honor.

The East Fork Water Reuse Project couples Bunker's land ethic with the water district's vision to provide millions of people with clean water. A sustainable water supply is vital in a region where the population of 5 million people is projected to double by 2050.

Nearly 90 million gallons of water are naturally filtered daily after spending a week to 10 days flowing through the system of wetlands. A pump station then transports the cleansed water through a 43-mile underground pipeline to Lavon Lake for storage, blending, treatment, disinfection, and delivery to municipal water utilities.

A closed-loop urban water cycle that doubles as habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife provides a unique opportunity

to teach people about the importance of wetlands, water conservation, and wildlife ecosystems.

Since opening in 2010, the John Bunker Sands Wetland Center has increased the conservation literacy of more than 50,000 students and 25,000 adult visitors. Middle and high school students perform field studies in wetland ecology. Careers in conservation are encouraged by giving students an idea of what it's like to be a researcher or property manager.

The center hosts research conducted by nearby universities in the areas of water reuse and quality, wetland systems, and wildlife conservation. Small islands amid the wetland cells are planted with native vegetation to provide feeding and nesting habitat for birds.

The center's director, John DeFillipo, describes it as a looking glass into an important ecosystem. Along its boardwalks, the public gets an up-close look at its water supply's connection to birds, fish and wildlife in a natural setting. Despite its uniqueness, DeFillipo said this laboratory of education and research could be replicated elsewhere.

Just as the center's namesake did decades ago, prescribed burning is used to control the spread of cattails, and beef cattle are still rotationally grazed at the center and on adjacent ranchland owned by the Rosewood Ranches.

The John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, and the land that surrounds it, are testaments to how one man's conservation ethic can positively impact the landscape, water, wildlife, and the lives of millions of Texans.



UTAH

MYRIN RANCH



▶ Watch video of Myrin Ranch



The Myrin family is not immune to the harsh realities forced on Utah ranchers by drought.

Last year they reduced their cattle herd's size. However, conservation practices are helping the Myrins make the most of the limited moisture Utah receives. An intensive, rotational grazing system benefits the Myrin Ranch's ecosystem and beef cattle business.

Alarik and Beth Myrin and their children Rik, Deborah, and Nils (and their families) manage about 35,000 acres, between private land and federal grazing permits. The Myrin family has ranched in Duchesne County since 1945, and have long relied on conservation to achieve efficiency.

Whether building fences or developing water sources, their investment of time and resources has improved soil health and wildlife habitat on their pastures and rangelands. Quickly moving their grazing cow-calf herds leaves behind grass tall enough to regrow as a dense ground cover with greater ability to infiltrate and retain water.

The Myrins grow hay for their winter feeding needs. Over time they have improved the efficiency of irrigating hay fields. Pressurized sprinkler systems reduce the evaporation that comes from misting and fogging. Having enough hay stockpiled provides stability to their stocking rates and offers cover for wildlife. Hay is strategically placed near wildlife areas to keep wildlife from accessing valuable crops elsewhere.

Myrin Ranch is home to mule deer, elk, beaver, sage grouse, turkey, and waterfowl. It hosts large populations of wildlife migrating off the Uinta Mountains. A grazing system where cattle are moved frequently gives the Myrins flexibility to work around sensitive wildlife areas at key times.

Wildlife-friendly electric rope fencing has replaced barbed wire because the Myrins view wildlife as a resource, not a nuisance.

The riparian habitat along the Lake Fork River that runs through the ranch acts as a wildlife corridor.

The Myrins have planted trees, and made streambank restoration and flood irrigation improvements to that area with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Although invasive and problematic, a patch of Russian olive trees is managed because deer and elk like them for sanctuary and feed. Where Russian olives have been removed elsewhere, fruit trees have been planted.

In addition to providing a mobile structure that provides shade for cattle, the Myrins continue to improve infrastructure that simplifies frequent cattle moves. They've also invested in water distribution to the forests where a majority of their cow-calf herd is grazed from June to October. The ability to graze more reduces the ranch's carbon footprint as tractors are used less.

After five years of intensive grazing, the Myrins noticed the carrying capacity of their grassland increased by 20 percent. More available feed allowed them to raise some of their calves as yearlings and start a retail grass-fed beef business. They formed Canyon Meadows Ranch in 2009 as a way to diversify from the conventional beef market.

The Myrins are stewards of land, wildlife and the agricultural community. A partnership between the ranch and Utah State University provides agricultural and range students with employment opportunities. Off the ranch, Alarik Myrin is well known for serving his community, state, and the livestock industry. He served 18 years in the Utah Legislature, and has held many leadership roles with the Utah and National Cattlemen's Associations.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Lewis Farms of San Juan County
Bennion Beef of Tooele County



WISCONSIN

JOE AND CHRISTY TOMANDL



▶ Watch video of Joe and Christy Tomandl



Agriculture and education go hand-in-hand for Joe and Christy Tomandl; so do grazing and dairy farming.

Joe and Christy grew up on dairy farms before meeting in college studying to become teachers. They taught agriculture to middle and high schoolers before pursuing their own dairy farm dreams. They bought 40 cows and 80 acres near Joe's hometown of Medford, while expecting their first child.

Joe grew up on a dairy farm where cattle were grazed. He felt that grazing made the most sense, economically and environmentally, for a beginning dairy farmer.

Joe and Christy had a conservation plan in place before their first day of farming. With planning and financial assistance from the Taylor County Land Conservation Department and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, they built infrastructure to rotationally graze cattle. Pastures were seeded with perennial forages. Travel lanes, fencing, and waterlines were built, and a large wetland was restored.

The Tomandls even chose to raise a dairy breed known for its grazing efficiency, New Zealand Friesians. The cows are fed harvested perennial forages during the winter. A managed grazing system for the herd protects the farm's woodlands and wetlands, and grazing is delayed in some areas for grassland nesting birds.

The Tomandls exceeded the soil conservation requirements of Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program. Their cropland's soil erosion rate is nearly zero. The University of Wisconsin's Marshfield Agricultural Research Station called their system the gold standard in soil health for coupling farm profitability with environmental benefits like improved water infiltration and proven carbon sequestration. As an organic farm, the lack of pesticide use improves pollinator habitat in its pastures.

The Tomandls adeptly balanced their conservation and business planning as the farm grew to 180 cows on 320 acres by 2010. That same year, Joe drew on his agricultural education roots to spearhead a grazing apprenticeship in Wisconsin.

Joe developed a two-year, work-based program that links aspiring graziers with dairy farmers. He laments the consolidation of dairy farming, as fewer dairies erode infrastructure and leadership in rural communities. This inspired him to design a structured pathway to transfer knowledge, skills, and farms to the next generation.

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship was registered as a national apprenticeship by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2015. As its executive director, Joe oversees more than 200 approved training farms in 15 states.

When the opportunity to grow their own farm came up, the Tomandls didn't just build another freestall barn to milk more cows. Instead, they established a second 180-cow farm on 200 acres nearby in 2015. They added yet another 175-cow dairy on 200 acres of pasture in 2020.

Joe and Christy are achieving what they first set out to do as agriculture teachers. They are providing an obtainable path for future dairy farmers, which brings people back to rural communities.

By only grazing as many cows as their land can sustain, they are improving soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat. When it comes to conservation, the Tomandls are at the head of the class.

Presented in Partnership with



Finalists

Full Circle Farm of Shawano County

Joe Hovel of Vilas County

Noll's Dairy Farm of Buffalo County



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McDonald's

COLORADO

American Farmland Trust
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust
USDA NRCS
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Colorado Department of Agriculture
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Kansas Forest Service
McDonald's
The Nature Conservancy in Kansas
USDA NRCS
A Kansas LCA recipient
Green Cover Seed

KENTUCKY

American Farmland Trust
Kentucky Agricultural Council
Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation
USDA NRCS
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Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board
Kentucky Tree Farm Committee
Kentucky Woodland Owner's Association
University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

MARYLAND

American Farmland Trust
Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment
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Delmarva Chicken Association
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Chesapeake Conservancy
ShoreRivers
The Nature Conservancy in Maryland

MISSOURI

American Farmland Trust
Missouri Corn Merchandising Council
Missouri Farmers Care Foundation
Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council
Missouri Soybean Association
USDA NRCS
FCS Financial
MFA, Inc.
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Fertilizer Control Board
Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives
Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Program
McDonald's
The Nature Conservancy in Missouri

MONTANA

American Farmland Trust
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Montana Rangeland Resources Committee
Sibanye Stillwater
TC Energy
Northwest Farm Credit Services
USDA NRCS
C Lazy J Livestock Inc.
Ducks Unlimited
McDonald's
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
Soil and Water Conservation Society
World Wildlife Fund

NEBRASKA

American Farmland Trust
Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska
Cargill
Nebraska Environmental Trust
Farm Credit Services of America
Audubon Nebraska
Lyle Sittler Memorial Fund
McDonald's
Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Nebraska Land Trust
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
Sandhills Task Force
Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association
USDA NRCS
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
World Wildlife Fund – Northern Great Plains Program
Green Cover Seed

NEW ENGLAND

American Farmland Trust
American Farmland Trust – New England Chapter
New England Forestry Foundation
Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities
Farm Credit East
David and Ann Ingram
Yale School of the Environment

NEW MEXICO

American Farmland Trust
New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts
New Mexico Coalition to Enhance Working Lands
Quivira Coalition
Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association
USDA NRCS
Farm Credit of New Mexico
John Duncan and Anita Sarafa

NEW YORK

(In partnership with Agricultural Environmental Management)
American Farmland Trust
Cornell Cooperative Extension
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
The Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation
Farm Credit East
EDPR NA Distributed Generation
Audubon New York
New York State Agribusiness Association
USDA NRCS

NORTH DAKOTA

American Farmland Trust
North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition
North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts
North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Starion Bank
North Dakota Game and Fish
APEX Clean Energy
Audubon Dakota
Basin Electric Power Cooperative
Burleigh County Soil Conservation District
Cass County Soil Conservation District
ConocoPhillips
Cow Chip Ranch

Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Emmons County Soil Conservation District
Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District
KEM Electric Cooperative
McDonald's
Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative
North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality
North Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife
North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Pheasants Forever
Roughrider Electric Cooperative
Slope Electric Cooperative
The Nature Conservancy in North Dakota
The Wildlife Society of North Dakota
USDA NRCS

OKLAHOMA

American Farmland Trust
ITC Great Plains
Noble Research Institute
Oklahoma Conservation Commission
Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture
USDA NRCS
McDonald's
Oklahoma State University
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts

PENNSYLVANIA

American Farmland Trust
The Heinz Endowments
Horizon Farm Credit
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
EDPR NA Distributed Generation
USDA NRCS
Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania

SOUTH DAKOTA

American Farmland Trust
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Grassland Coalition
First Dakota National Bank
South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation

South Dakota State University College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences
USDA NRCS
Audubon Dakota
Bad River Ranches
Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership
Blair Brothers Angus Ranch
Cammack Ranch
Daybreak Ranch
Ducks Unlimited
Jim and Karen Kopriva
McDonald's
Millborn Seeds, Inc.
North Central SARE - Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
Professional Alliance
South Dakota Agricultural Land Trust
South Dakota's Conservation Districts
South Dakota Pheasants Forever
South Dakota Soil Health Coalition
South Dakota Soybean Association

The Nature Conservancy in South Dakota
Todd Mortenson Family
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish & Wildlife
Wagner Land & Livestock

TEXAS

American Farmland Trust
Texas Parks & Wildlife
Lee and Ramona Bass
Dixon Water Foundation
McDonald's

UTAH

American Farmland Trust
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Western AgCredit
Producers Livestock Marketing Association
The Nature Conservancy in Utah
Utah Association of Conservation Districts

Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Wool Growers Association

WISCONSIN

American Farmland Trust
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Culver's
Compeer Financial
McDonald's
The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin
USDA NRCS
We Energies Foundation
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
Wisconsin Corn Promotion Board
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board

PAST RECIPIENTS:

CALIFORNIA

2021
Witcher Creek Ranch
Marie and Glenn Nader

2020
Burroughs Family of Farms
Ward and Rosie Burroughs

2019
Rominger Brothers Farms
Bruce and Rick Rominger

2018
Lundberg Family Farms

2017
Thomson International, Inc.
C. Jeff Thompson

2016
Lone Star Ranch
Mark and Dina Moore

2015
Prather Ranch
Jim and Mary Rickert

2014
Full Belly Farm
Andrew Brait, Paul Muller, Judith Redmond and Dru Rivers

2013
Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co.
Bob, Karen, Diana, Lynn and Jill Giacomini

2012
Giacomazzi Dairy
Dino and Julie Giacomazzi

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
Lange Twins Wine Estates
Brad and Randy Lange

COLORADO

2021
May Ranch
Dallas and Brenda May Family

2020
Collins Ranch
Toby and Amy Johnson

2019
The Livingston Ranch
Mike and Julie Livingston

2018
Beatty Canyon Ranch
Steve and Joy Wooten Family

2017
Rancho Largo Cattle Co.
Grady Grissom

2016
Stacked Lazy 3 Ranch
Keven and Sandi Turecek

2015
Flying Diamond Ranch
Johnson Family

2014
Turkey Creek Ranch
Walker Family

2013
Visintainer Sheep Co.
Dean and Gary Visintainer

2012
Wineinger-Davis Ranch
Russell and Tricia Davis

2011
Pipe Springs Ranch
McEndree Family

2016
Stacked Lazy 3 Ranch
Keven and Sandi Turecek

2015
Flying Diamond Ranch
Johnson Family

2014
Turkey Creek Ranch
Walker Family

2013
Visintainer Sheep Co.
Dean and Gary Visintainer

2012
Wineinger-Davis Ranch
Russell and Tricia Davis

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, Sandra and Nate Tanner

2005
McNeil Ranch
Mike and Cathy McNeil

2004
Rusk Hereford Ranch
Randy and Claricy Rusk

2003
Capps Ranch
Frankie and Sue Menegatti

KANSAS

2021
Dwane Roth

2020
Flying W Ranch
Josh and Gwen Hoy

2019
Ted Alexander

2018
Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch
Stacy and Chaston Hoeme

2017
Lazy VJ Farms
The Vorhees Family

2016
2S Land & Cattle
Randy and Nicole Small

2015
Sproul Ranch
Sproul Family

KENTUCKY

2021
F.L. Sipes Farms
Fred Sipes

2020
JRS Angus Farm
James R. "Buddy" Smith

2019
Dr. James W. Middleton

2018
Trunnell Family Farm
Edward (Myrel) and Shirley Trunnell

2017
Tallow Creek Farm
Harry and Karen Pelle

2016
Turner Family Farms
Mark and June Turner

2015
West Wind Farm
Charlie Williams

2014
Springhill Farms
Peery Family

2013
Sherwood Acres Farms
Jon and Sylvia Bednarski

MARYLAND

2021
Persistence Creek Farm
The Warring Family

MISSOURI

2021
Oetting Homestead Farms
Steve and Sharon Oetting Family

2020
Yoder Farms
Joshlin and Addie Yoder

2019
Brinker Farms
Kenny and Susan Brinker Family



Save the date for Innovations on the Land

Madison, Wisconsin June 23-25, 2024

Sand County Foundation's national "Innovations on the Land" conservation symposium brings together Leopold Conservation Award recipients and other conservation leaders who strive to improve soil health, water resources and wildlife habitat.

2018
Scherder Farms
John and Sandy Scherder

2017
Uptown Farms
Matt and Kate Lambert

MONTANA

2021
Hidden Hollow Hideaway
Cattle & Guest Ranch
Kelly and Jill Flynn Family

2020
C Lazy J Livestock
Craig and Conni French

2019
Milton Ranch
Bill and Dana Milton

NEBRASKA

2021
Switzer Ranch
Switzer Family

2020
Someday Farm
Ed and Leta Olson

2019
Broken Box Ranch
Russ and Angela
Sundstrom

2018
RuJoDen Ranch
Jim and Lora
O'Rourke Family

2017
K & W Farms
Kurt and Wayne Kaup

2016
Plum Thicket Farms
Rex and Nancy Peterson

2015
Shaw Family Farms
Shaw Family

2014
Pelster Angus Ranch
Pelster Family

2013
Beel Ranch
Beel Family

2012
Shovel Dot Ranch
Buell Family

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
4-0 Ranches
A.B. Cox

2007
Christen Ranch
Rod and Amy Christen

2006
Wilson Ranch
Blaine and Bryan Wilson

NEW ENGLAND

2021
Choiniere Family Farm
Guy and Beth
Choiniere Family

2020
Rinta Family Farm
Linda Rinta

2019
Hull Forest Products
Bill Hull

NEW MEXICO

2021
Ute Creek Cattle Company
Tuda Libby Crews
and Jack Crews

NEW YORK

2021
Table Rock Farm
Meghan Hauser

2020
Sang Lee Farms
Fred and William Lee

NORTH DAKOTA

2021
Sand Ranch
Brad Sand

2020
Dockter-Jensen Ranch
Kerry and Brenda Dockter,
Kyle and Kristi Jensen

2019
Goven Ranch
Gene and Christine Goven

2018
The Wilson Family Farm
Jeremy and
Sarah Wilson

2017
Miller Ranch
Ken and Bonnie Miller

2016
Black Leg Ranch
Jerry and Renae Doan

OKLAHOMA

2021
Lazy KT Ranch
Dr. Katie Blunk, Michael
Hornqvist and Rose Blunk

2020
Victor Ranch
Grant Victor Jr.

2019
The Chuck and Ruth
Coffey Family

2018
Jackson Farms
Russ and Jani Jackson

2017
Emmons Farm
Jimmy and Ginger
Emmons

PENNSYLVANIA

2021
Brubaker Farms
Luke, Mike, Tony,
and Josh Brubaker

2020
Slate Ridge Dairy Farm
Ben and Sharon Peckman

2019
Mt-Glen Farms
Dean and
Rebecca Jackson

2018
Harvest Home Farms
The DiFebo Family

SOUTH DAKOTA

2021
Prairie Paradise Farms
Levi and Crystal Neuharth

2020
Blair Brothers Angus Ranch
Ed, Rick, Chad and
Britton Blair

2019
Johnson Farms
Alan, Mickie, Brian and
Jamie Johnson

2018
Cammack Ranch
Gary and
Amy Cammack

2017
Blue Bell Ranch
Hamann Family

2016
Cronin Farms
Mike and Monty Cronin

2015
Jorgensen Land and
Cattle Partnership
Jorgensen Family

2014
Rock Hills Ranch
Perman Family

2013
Guptill Angus
Guptill Family

2012
Kopriva Angus
Kopriva Family

2011
Mortenson Ranch
Mortenson Family

2010
Doud Ranch
Rick and Marlis Doud

TEXAS

2021
San Pedro Ranch
Joseph Fitzsimons and
Pamela Fitzsimons
Howard Families

2019
Killam Duval
County Ranch
David Killam

2018
Laborcitas Creek Ranch
Berdon and
Rolanette Lawrence

2017
Dixon Water Foundation
Robert Potts

2016
Blue Mountain Peak Ranch
Richard Taylor

2015
The Bigwoods on the Trinity
Dr. Robert McFarlane

2014
Winston 8 Ranch
Winston Family

2013
Buckhollow and
Stockard-Sirianni
Ranches
Jack and Jan Cato

2012
Cook's Branch
Conservancy
Mitchell Family

2011
Temple Ranch
Buddy and Ellen Temple

2010
Anderson Ranch
Jim Bill Anderson

2009
Selah, Bamberger
Ranch Preserve
J. David Bamberger

2008
Llano Springs Ranch
Vandivier Family

2007
77 Ranch
Gary and Sue Price

2006
Treadwell Brady Ranch
John and Brian
Treadwell

2005
Richards Ranch
John and Brent Hackley

UTAH

2021
Yardley Cattle Company
Yardley Family

2020
Half Circle Cross Ranch
Colby and McKenzie
Pace Family

2019
JY Ferry & Son, Inc.
John, Ben and
Joel Ferry

2018
Ercanbrack Livestock
Ed and Dixie
Ercanbrack Family

2017
Circle Bar Ranch
Fred Thurston

2016
Jerrold Richins Ranch
Jerrold Richins

2015
W.F. Goring & Son, Inc.
Goring Family

2014
Johnson Mountain
Ranch LLC
Johnson Family

2013
H.A. Farms
Stowell Family

2012
Heaton Livestock
Company
Heaton Family

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

WISCONSIN

2021
Fountain Prairie Farm
John and Dorothy Priske

2020
Eron Farm
John and Melissa Eron

2019
Lake Family Farms
Jeff Lake

2018
Gold Star Dairy
David Geiser

2017
Brickstead Dairy
Dan Brick and Family

2016
Brooks Farms
Brooks Family

2015
Meuer Farm
David and Leslie Meuer

2014
Herricks Dairy Farm
Jack and Pat Herricks
Family

2013
Cates Family Farm
Dick and Kim Cates

2012
Hebbe Family Farm
Jim and Val Hebbe

2011
Koepke Farms Inc.
Koepke Family

2010
Bragger Family Dairy
Joe and Noel Bragger

2008
Terry Peters Logging
Terry Peters

2006
Gerry Mich

WYOMING

2017
Garrett Ranch
Pete and Ethel Garrett

2016
SR Cattle Company
Kane Family

2015
King Ranch
Eisele Family

2014
Ladder Ranch
O'Toole Family

2013
Padlock Ranch
Wayne and Judy Fahsholtz
and the Scott Family

2012
Sommers Ranch
Sommers Family

2011
Fieldgrove Ranch
Ryan and Teresa Fieldgrove

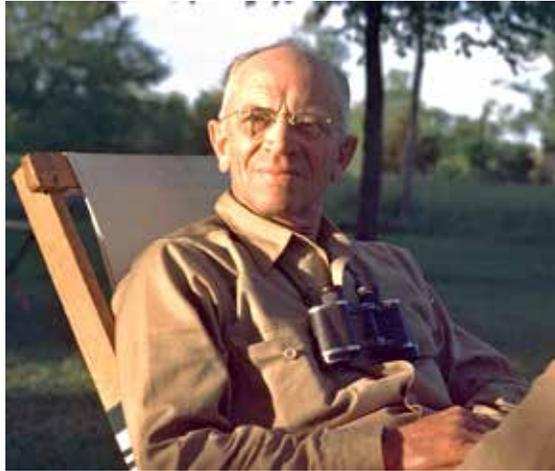
2010
7E Ranch
Ron and Linda Heward

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



“Conservation can accomplish its objectives only when it springs from an impelling conviction on the part of private landowners.”

– Aldo Leopold

Conservationist, landowner and
author of *A Sand County Almanac*

