

Best possible outcomes of Rangeland Monitoring Group

posted by **Peter Donovan** on 2022-01-30

We improve the resiliency of the land. As producers, we get reliable information and use that to make better decisions. We have baseline data that shows we are regenerating our soil through our management practices, taking our landscape back to a healthier state. Moving cattle daily, resting pastures for 18 months, all the things people do to try and make themselves better, that's all validated.

Our ranch will survive, financially. The next generation will get some money in the bank.

I've never worked on a ranch where every acre changed the same. There are corners that explode and there are places that do absolutely nothing. That will create frustration within us. We are honest, to reflect and challenge each other. Our team understands what it is to create change. We understand the difference in the approach of each rancher (the worst is to create competition). We do not expect everyone to be doing the same thing, and be open to allow each person to do their own exploration.

We further the knowledge and improve the management of future land managers that will follow us. Community management of data is possible. We create baseline data that lasts for 100 years: we're long gone, but someone could know how grasslands and people coexist.

We grow the positive understanding of the general public for agriculture in general and the positive benefits of grazing land agriculture. This project is an important piece of substantiating and reinforcing people's belief that this is an appropriate way of taking care of communities and places. The results are able to demonstrate the ecosystem services and economic benefits of this process called regenerative ranching. We paint regenerative ranching in a good light, carrying that through to society, sequestering carbon or storing more water than a conventional farming system.

People become aware of how valuable grasslands are: a carbon sink, part of the environment. We can demonstrate that well-managed grazing is completely compatible with healthy rangelands, wildlife, for open spaces, for everything that people find important, with benefits to them as well to the producers who are operating them. We create understanding of the dynamics of mother earth.

We build trust with the outside world: with open candor and open reflection, not afraid to share what is working and what is not. We're not afraid to tell those stories of how we failed. If we hide everything we'll create distrust. We'll have some naysayers. We pay attention to what they're saying. If we listen to them they'll listen to us.

As a group we are able to collaborate with other ranchers, as their management shows what's going on on their places. With our larger group of 100 or so: They have an acceptance and understanding of what we are doing. It's not just you or I that are telling the story, but they are grabbing other folks and saying this is what we can do and this is what we need to do. We maintain an open atmosphere and encourage/invite outside people in.

We are devoted to a community-based collaborative approach to managing large landscapes. This is going to be the pathway people can get into taking care of things without being overwhelmed by discord. They get a lot of satisfaction and it helps them personally as well as their community.

Suzanne Simard's work is evidence of how soil life talks with itself and collaborates, with mycorrhizae supporting multiple species. We're totally interdependent and the only way we're going to coexist is to be collaborative, which is how nature works in ecosystems. It doesn't mean that people don't die, get eaten, don't get used, but the system requires that every part be aware of each other and be supportive of each other. If human beings could be wise enough to be like nature, and our group process could be one pathway to get people to appreciate how this works, it would be super wonderful.

What we're doing is an important component of making the Grasslands Roadmap successful. Across the northern plains the process of monitoring, sharing monitoring, and collaborating with others is known as a valid approach, both for science and also for practical application, which then is accepted and shared across other grassland regions besides the northern plains.

A collective statement from January 28, 2022. Participants included Chris King, Rick Caquelin, Roland Kroos, Bill Milton, Cliff Montagne, Casey Coulter, Peter Donovan.

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