Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

RANCHING, CONSERVATION, COMMUNITIES – A WINNING TEAM!
Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

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Letter from the President:

As we near the end of 2018, I look back over the year with a profound sense of awe and amazement. Why? Our accomplishments would not be possible without the dedication of our Board of Directors, staff, and outstanding volunteers. I am honored to be leading a group that is so deeply committed to our mission: Ranching, Conservation, Communities – A winning team!

We take great pride in partnering with dedicated private land stewards, like minded public land managers, and creative conservation organizations, which are essential to our success. Our community based collaborative conservation model continues to be the best path forward to the future. A future ensuring that the Northern Great Plains remains a healthy, intact prime wildlife habitat and productive agricultural based economy.

Our most exciting news of the year is the hiring of additional staff. We are please to welcome Paula Enkerud as our full time Executive Director. We will also be adding additional part time staff, contract and volunteer staff to assist Paula in her duties. Therefore, RSA will go from 16 paid staff hours to somewhere near 60 staff hours. With this additional expertise, RSA will continue to grow its legacy of community collaboration.

This annual report reflects many remarkable accomplishments of the past year and I am confident that 2019 will bring bigger and better things.

Sincerely,

Perri A. Jacobs
RSA President 2018
“The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance has a proven track record of delivering on-the-ground conservation that supports local communities and natural resources. Specifically their ability to bring people together, find common ground, raise awareness and funding, and deliver is really second to none in Montana. We are honored to be a partner in such a great organization.”

Greg Neudecker
State Coordinator
Montana Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
Meet your RSA staff:

Paula Enkerud—Executive Director

paula.ranchstewards@gmail.com

406 654-1405

Fifteen years ago in 2003 the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance began its legacy working as volunteers to establish an organization that promotes conservation, community and ranching sustainability. In November, 2018, these hard-working volunteers of RSA were able to hire a full-time executive director. I am humbled and grateful for this opportunity to take the baton and continue the legacy. Being raised on a farm/ranch west of Glasgow, MT, I have been involved as a third-generation rancher my whole life. A list of volunteer experience in the agriculture industry starts with 4-H, being a long-standing member of Phillips County Cattlwomen, past State Montana Cattlwomen Treasurer and past President of the Northcentral Cattlwomen. As a former MSU County and Reservation Extension Agent plus work in the human resources industry throughout my career, I bring extensive experience working with individuals and groups across many cultural spectrums.

To quote media mogul Martha Stewart, RSA is “a good thing”. RSA has developed a reputable presence as a team player partnering itself with many state and federal agencies providing financial cost share and technical assistance through awarded grants. An annual workshop series was established this past year providing financial education for the ranch or small business owner. RSA’s knowledgeable board members have shared their expertise through hosting ranch tours, speaking at workshops and serving on foundation and state boards.

Please enjoy this report. I look forward to visiting with you while sharing our mission, Ranching, Conservation, Communities—A winning Team!
“RSA is a unique organization because it brings together local agencies, nonprofits, and landowners to work on common conservation goals. This really lets ranchers lead the conversation on many issues in the area, and brings together groups that wouldn’t normally work together. This approach really increases the impact each group can have and multiplies the overall benefit to ranching and conservation. I really enjoy working on meaningful conservation projects with this group.”

Martin Townsend
SGI Range Conservationist
Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Montana/NRCS

“Working with RSA is such a positive experience. It is so great to work in an environment of collaboration where we can all achieve shared goals. The Conservation Committee has provided lots of opportunities for conservation groups and ranchers to learn from each other”

Kelsey Molloy
Rangeland Ecologist
The Nature Conservancy
Our work at Ranchers Stewardship Alliance has always focused on the importance of ranching families to their communities, wildlife, and the world. Through thoughtful, strategic partnerships, community outreach, and educational opportunities, RSA strives to improve the resiliency, profitability, and sustainability of the family ranch.
RSA continues to offer resources and strives to support the continuing education of the dedicated land stewards on the Northern Great Plains. We seek more than just the sustainably of the family ranch; we seek to support a thriving rural community. Local communities are sustained through services to family ranchers, not just feed stores and agricultural suppliers, but rural retailers such as grocery stores, fuel stations, banks, and restaurants all rely on the continuing profitability and sustainability of the family ranch. That is why we continue to seek the best educational opportunities like livestock handling, ranch succession, and profitability workshops. In 2018 RSA worked to keep our membership updated on the many opportunities available through our partners featuring several workshops and participated in even more conversations with the many stakeholders in this landscape.

See more about RSA’s efforts to support the ranching community on the next page.
Below are a few of the educational opportunities Ranchers Stewardship Alliance offered around the community in 2018.

♦ RSA featured Dave Pratt in Malta presenting his “Ranching For Profit School”. “Our Ranching For Profit School has been recognized internationally for 35 years as THE business school of ranching. In less than a week we cover topics more effectively than any other program in agriculture ... The result is healthier land, happier families and more profitable business” (quoted from www.ranchmanagement.com). Dave engaged a crowd of about thirty people in three thought provoking presentations. Session one dealt with making ranches profitable—they aren’t sustainable unless they are profitable. Session two introduced tools taught in the Ranching for Profit Schools that can be used to impact profit and quality of life. Session three dealt with maintaining effective business relationships and loving family relationships simultaneously. Dave is an excellent teacher and really helped people to start thinking about their businesses a little differently than what they were accustomed to.

♦ RSA participated in the Western Landowners Alliance Lands and Livelihoods Conference. The basis of the seminar was to learn about working lands economics for the next era of conservation. The goals of the workshop were 1) to establish shared values surrounding land health and livelihoods; 2) to identify strategies to better align policy and economics that facilitate our values; 3) to showcase on the ground efforts; and 4) to identify need and opportunities for scaling up place – based collaboration. Participants left the workshop with a renewed sense of purpose and armed with examples of how to move their messages forward.

RSA remains committed to finding ways to support the continued sustainability, resiliency and success of our ranching community. We would like to extend our deepest thanks to our supporters that helped make these opportunities available. If you haven’t yet done so, we invite you to help sponsor or join us for one of our workshops in 2019!
“RSA promotes a collaborative approach to conservation and community resilience. WWF is proud to be a member of RSA because of the many stakeholders it brings to the table, the collaborative conservation solutions the organization has developed, and the trust RSA has built between ranchers, agencies, and NGOs.

A strength of RSA is their ability to get on-the-ground work done. Over the last few years, they have effectively implemented multiple large grants to conserve thousands of retiring CRP acres in Eastern Montana. Furthermore, the organization has grown from a volunteer-led group to supporting multiple staff, growing their reach exponentially.”

Claire Hood
Sustainable Ranching Initiative
World Wildlife Fund
CONSERVATION

This thriving landscape, that we now enjoy, has abundant wildlife and healthy vegetation. It is through the efforts of family owned and operated ranches that is has been tirelessly and lovingly restored from the disaster of the dust bowl era. Conservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat is a tenet of life that we learned from our parents and their parents before them. There is no way to separate ranching and conservation. Without careful stewardship of the ecosystem, natural resources, such as grass and water, cannot continue to be a sustainable part of a ranching operation. Without land management from ranchers and grazing systems to manage forage, wildlife that rely on grazers will not thrive.
Two successful National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Northern Greats Plains proposals in 2017 and 2018 allowed RSA to form a Conservation Committee with seven partner organizations, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Fish Wildlife, and Parks, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Montana Rangeland Partnership, Pheasants Forever, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana (Sage Grouse Initiative). Our partnership began coordinating and delivering grassland enhancement and restoration in 2017. Since then, the partnership has allocated 98% of current funding to 17 separate enhancement and restoration projects. Together, these include 7,512 acres of expiring Conservation Reserve Program lands, 6,515 acres of native grassland restoration, and 4,116 acres of improved management of exotic crested wheatgrass. Our collaborative work on the conservation committee has increased project opportunities for all participating groups and led to many projects being cost-shared across multiple funding sources.
RSA continues its dedication of communicating to the world how vital working lands are to ensure ecosystem health and biodiversity in the Northern Great Plains. RSA presented this important message to many professionals over the course of 2018.

- Leo Barthelmess, RSA board member, presented at the 3rd annual Transboundary Conservation Seminar in Glasgow, MT. The Transboundary Grasslands Workshop seeks to bring together all the stakeholders, including government, non-government agencies, indigenous peoples, landowners and academic professionals to discuss advancing community based conservation across the boundaries of Montana, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Leo presented information on RSA’s model of cooperative conservation, specifically on the theme of antelope migratory routes, which have been documented to span over a distance of 300 miles.

- RSA directors and conservation committee members Leo Barthelmess, Perri Jacobs, Connie French, and Sheila Walsh, met with the Montana World Wildlife Fund (WWF) board of directors to discuss working lands, and the role they play in local community, economic development, and conservation. The working lands in the Northern Great Plains, which span more than 180 million acres across two Canadian provinces and five U.S. states, are vital to conserving the grasslands. WWF “recognizes that conserving the Northern Great Plains goes hand-in-hand with sustaining the rural communities who live here...keeping ranchers in business leaves grasslands intact” (quoted from www.worldwildlife.org) Through this meeting future support and cooperation was developed.

- The Malta High School Biology class visited the Barthelmess and French ranches taking part in an interactive and educational workshop on the historical and biological effects of the homesteading era. The students assumed the role of a settler and acted out the procedure of claiming, working and even losing their 360 acres due to the hardships the pioneers endured and the environmental catastrophe of the Dust Bowl. The day also included presentations on working land use, soil and ecological sites and range plant identification.

- Other student tours included the Veseth Ranch hosting Clemson University students interested in the Northern Great Plains as a working landscape for people, livestock and wildlife. MSU College students toured the Barthelmess Ranch to learn about working lands, conservation and wildlife. Also statewide FFA members visited the French ranch where they were given a presentation on RSA’s project work.

- RSA was invited to participate in the Partners for Conservation Training in Boise, ID. This training was designed to help landowners and their partners from several western landscapes to increase knowledge and the potential of broad-based public/private partnerships in achieving durable conservation solutions. Through the conversations at the workshop several areas of common assistance were identified. They included organizational support; staff and volunteer training; provide a network; and move the collaborative conservation message forward. RSA looks forward to continued support from Partners for Conservation.

- Leo Barthelmess attended a Northern Great Plains Partnership Meeting on behalf of RSA. The meeting brought together National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant recipients from across the Norther Great Plains to work on their shared conservation goals. Continued investment by NFWF and the Martha A. Cargill Foundation in the Northern great plains is expected and RSA is uniquely positioned to bring community friendly conservation projects to this region.
“Newly formed, the Winnett ACES (Agricultural Community Enhancement and Sustainability) is working to become the first affiliate of the RSA. Ranching is as the core of our rural communities and good stewardship ensures a long future for the land, the producers, and the community. With this idea as the center of our projects, Winnett ACES and RSA are working together to create a grassbank that will provide a leasing opportunity for multiple producers while spreading conservation practices across a wider landscape.”

Laura Nowlin
Rancher
Winnett ACES
COMMUNITY

The importance of community has always been a pillar on which Ranchers Stewardship Alliance has based its work. Ranching families belong to a community that surpass the boundaries of towns, counties, and states. We belong to a community of people that work hard to feed the world. We love the land and wildlife habitat, which has been entrusted into our hands, and work tirelessly to steward it to the best of our abilities. That’s why Ranchers Stewardship Alliance works hard to give back, not only to the ranching community as a whole, but also to our local community in Phillips County, Montana.
RSA had another busy year around the community. The third annual Phillips County Proud event was held on September 22nd, 2018 at the Tin Cup in Malta. About 60 people attended the event to celebrate the community. This year’s event recognized nine couples and individuals whom are the next generation of Phillips County residents helping to shape a bright future for the community. RSA hosted a meal for the gathering, kids game, dancing and music provided by Schipman Sounds. RSA also presented the accomplishments and successes of the past year. The previous two events recognized some of the one-hundred-year businesses and families in the area. The aim of this annual event is to bring the community together and celebrate our “pioneering past and vibrant future”. 

Even though RSA is proud of the community based projects and its support to Phillips and the neighboring counties we have a large goal in mind. We aim to expand the size of our “community”. Over the last year we have begun a relationship with the Winnet Agricultural Enhancement and Sustainability (ACES) group. Initially ACES was seeking guidance on becoming a nonprofit similar in structure to RSA, but over the course of several meetings it was determined that ACES and RSA shared common goals and interests, and a more formal affiliation was desired that would benefit both groups. RSA’s nonprofit status and expertise in areas of common ground would help ACES achieve their goals while giving RSA the opportunity to stretch our influence to new communities. ACES has been working hard on establishing bylaws, obtaining grants to fund projects and drafting an affiliation agreement between RSA and ACES. Their most ambitious project to date is a land project where they seek to manage a local ranch for the benefit of agriculture, conservation and their community. All of this while also serving their initial goals of educating the public and helping future generations succeed in agriculture. We are excited to begin partnering with another likeminded organization that shares the vision of:

Ranching, Conservation, Community—A Winning Team!
Hello! My name is Casey Gallagher, and I am a 2nd term Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) member serving for the Milk River Watershed Alliance in Malta! “BSWC is an AmeriCorps program that assists Montana’s watershed communities to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts while strengthening the experience of young professionals” BSWC members are scattered across 27 different host sites in Montana, from Hamilton to Sidney. Many host sites are in Western MT, in or around cities like Bozeman, Missoula, and Helena. I truly feel like I have had one of the best “Montana” experience’s being placed in Malta. I wanted to share the opportunity to learn form the land stewards that are working every day on ranches and farms in Eastern MT. After attending the Barthelmezz’s sheep shearing in 2017, I knew this would be the chance to round up volunteers in 2018.

Eight BSWC members from Helena, Livingston, Bozeman, and Sidney came out to volunteer at the shearing. And they were certainly put to work! Members helped corral sheep, move them up the chute, collect the wool, vaccinate, and help prepare meals. Two were lucky enough to give shearing a try! The experience was a new one for all the members! Members were able to visit with Leo and his family, the shearers, and the friends that came to help. The members learned about sheep, the art of shearing, the conservation practices incorporated into the operation, the mutual relationship between livestock and the greater sage grouse, and the trials and tribulations that lead them to where they are today.

“I know for me, it was my first, hands-on experience with ranchers and ranch work. Chatting with Leo and herding the sheep with him was a wonderful experience, as I got to pick his brain and learn about his process and his experiences working in a field that I have had absolutely no experience in. It gave me a new outlook on farm and ranch work, the difficulties that are involved, and the knowledge required. And they were all just so kind! Darla and Leo were wonderful hosts and so generous. It made volunteering my time for them an absolute joy.” Taylor Mudford, BSWC member serving with Friends of the Missouri Breaks.

Upon leaving the ranch, the members talked about the shearing for the rest of the night! There was such positive excitement around the knowledge they all gained! The members were incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to learn while getting their hands and boots dirty. The physical exhaustion was well worth it!

THIS PAGE:
Shearing Shenanigans © Casey Gallagher
BSWC Members © Casey Gallagher
The generosity of our supporters and partners over the last year is deeply appreciated. We offer our sincere thanks for each and every gift, both large and small. Your support this year has allowed Ranchers Stewardship Alliance to offer support to our ranching community members at unprecedented levels. We have big plans for projects in the future to ensure that ranchers continue to have access to the tools, knowledge, and support to continue to produce food and provide wildlife habitat far into the future.

2018 was a productive year, and RSA was able to preserve and restore important grasslands that are vital for the people and wildlife that call this place home. To date RSA has conserved over 18,000 acres for people and wildlife.

RSA held it’s 2nd Annual NFR Las Vegas Raffle. RSA sold a limited amount of tickets for a grand prize trip to Las Vegas. The trip included 4 nights at Treasure Island Resort and Casino, and 2 tickets to 3 performances of the National Rodeo Finals. $1000 cash was also included for travel expenses. The winner was Richard Dunbar of Malta, MT.
“I enjoy working with RSA because they clearly demonstrate their commitment to ranching, conservation, and communities. The grass roots collaboration of private landowners, NGO’s, and agencies allow for community valued conservation projects and initiatives”

Casey Gallagher
Range Technician
Montana Rangelands Partnership

“The National Wildlife Federation strongly supports the work of the Rancher Stewardship Alliance and RSA’s collaborative efforts on behalf of both wildlife conservation and the rural Montana economy. RSA is a leader in the Hi-Line community for finding balance between the needs of people and wildlife and NWF looks forward to partnering with RSA on future projects”

Andrew Jakes
Regional Wildlife Biologist
National Wildlife Federation
OUR PARTNERS

The work that RSA strives to accomplish would not be possible without the volunteer time, technical expertise, and financial assistance from our wide range of partners. RSA believes that as long as we have a common goal, the vitality and resiliency of family ranching, there is common ground. We pride ourselves on working with a wide range of non-profit organizations, for profit entities, state and federal agencies, and private individuals. Thanks to all of you who stepped up along side of us in this last year. With your help, we know our goals will be realized.

Conservation Committee thanks our partners!

This annual report wouldn’t be complete without giving our sincere thanks to the organizations and individuals that have gathered around the table and joined us at our conservation committee. Your enthusiasm for the preservation of the ranching community, grassland conservation, and supporting thriving rural communities has made this partnership crucial to RSA’s mission.
CONTRIBUTE

I would like to contribute to the continuing efforts of the Rancher Stewardship Alliance, Inc.

Name: ________________________________
Organization: ____________________________
Phone: ________________________________
Email: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________

Amount: (Please Circle)
$20 $50 $100 $150 $200 $500 $1,000 Other: ________

Please make check payable to: Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

VOLUNTEER

At RSA Events

I would like to volunteer my time for:

Fundraising Committee
Education/Workshops Committee
Communications/Outreach Committee
Phillips County Proud Planning Committee
Set-up/Cleanup crew for activities
Food contributor for activities
Grant Writing
Other: ________________________________

I would like to volunteer my time for:
Please contact me at:
Name: ________________________________
Phone: ________________________________
Email: ________________________________