2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

RANCHING, CONSERVATION, COMMUNITIES ... A WINNING TEAM!
Amazing 2020 is already here. The time of the year we’re all tasked with finishing up our paperwork. It is my pleasure as president of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance to give an update on the past year’s events. First and foremost, I would like to thank the dedication of our Board of Directors. The contributions that our board members have made to the success of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance cannot be emphasized enough, thank you one and all. Another group of people that I would like to recognize are the participants of the conservation committee. The ability of our conservation partners, and of the ranching community to work together is something that is garnering a lot of attention around the country. It is wonderful to be part of an organization that can contribute so much to building successful communities. As in the past with the help of our partners, we have continued to secure grant funding to do conservation work that is beneficial for ranching and wildlife. We have been able to continue to bring educational opportunities and support to other area non profits. The future of the Northern Great Plains looks brighter for all that call this wonderful place home. Thank you again for your continued support.

Leo Barthelmess, President
The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
A continuing tradition for RSA is celebrating our pioneering past and vibrant future by celebrating the pride we have in our community. We co-sponsored this event with Phillips Conservation District. Our celebration was held on September 21st at the Lucky Bullet. Families gathered and enjoyed good food, good fun, and great music. The District recognized their conservationist of the year in Conni and Craig French. The French’s had also been nominated by RSA for the Leopold Award and were recognized for making it into the top three in the state of Montana.

Career days at the Malta High School found our president, Leo Barthelmess, visiting with students about ranching. Leo impressed upon the students the value of relationships, innovation, knowledge, and ecology. Topics covered included: four things to be a successful rancher, what is capital and the resources available, do you need to own land, types of products, and a good management plan. He also listed products ranchers can produce that consumers need. Leo concluded that ranching is a business requiring similar management to all other small profitable businesses.

The RSA hosted a low stress stockmanship school at the Milk River Pavilion on November 13th, 2019. Instructor Tom Curtin has handled livestock for 35 years in both the United States and Australia. A classroom presentation before lunch was followed by a livestock demonstration. Ranchers in attendance were certified for the Beef Quality Assurance program. Lunch was provided by the Malta FFA Alumni for 75 people, including FFA chapters from Hinsdale and Malta. The clinic was generously sponsored by the Montana FFA Foundation, Boehringer – Ingelheim and the Phillips County Veterinarian Association. A no-host dinner and reception was held afterwards for participants to network about low stress stockmanship. Everyone enjoyed the day.

Students from Yale University, University of Wyoming, Sheridan College, and Texas A&M University - Kingsville worked together to complete the Land Management Field Practicum, a two-week applied learning experience in Wyoming and Montana. Students engaged in a collaborative, decision-making process to address a natural resource management question. After five days of field and research training, the team collected data to evaluate the success of grassland seeding on marginal cropland in Montana. Students focused on this question because a group of conservation organizations (Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Pheasants Forever) have been working with landowners to plant cropland with native plants to provide wildlife habitat and cattle forage. Students summarized data and authored a report to inform future grassland restoration seedings. Findings from the Land Management Field Practicum will be useful in guiding native plant seedings going forward, but this experience also provided students with skills in natural resource management, field study design, ecological restoration, and collaboration.
Ede Breitmeier runs a complicated operation. With multiple herds paired with certain prime bulls, there are a lot of moving parts that make this registered angus operation work. Add in complexities of Northern Montana weather, drought and severe winters, and a separate full-time job (other than ranching) it is enough to make anyone's head spin. Yet, Ede is on top of it, continually working to improve her operation and improve habitat for wildlife at the same time.

I first started working with Ede setting up grazing monitoring points to help guide grazing management on the operation. Ede was already working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to transition expired CRP into a grazing system. With the help of NRCS she put in a watering system to effectively utilize all the grass she had. This was done to benefit her livestock performance and improve grass health and production. During the first year of monitoring, it was apparent to me that Ede knew how to manage her grass sustainably. Units were rested and rotated annually, all to improve the health of her system. Abundant and healthy grass stands were proof of her good management. Yet, she was looking for ways to improve her grazing. Each fall we would go monitor each unit talking about how the grass looked and what the use was like, then each winter we would go to the drawing board - working together to find the best plan for using the grass to improve quality for livestock and wildlife habitat. During one of these monitoring days, Ede mentioned how she would like to add a little bit of water and some fence to help graze a couple pieces more efficiently. This, she felt, would further improve her livestock performance and plant health on her operation.

I took that idea to a community-based organization called the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (RSA). RSA's three pillars of work are ranching, conservation, and communities and this project was a good fit for RSA to fund through a grant they received from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Through the help of RSA, we wrote up an agreement to cost-share a tank, pipeline, and fence to improve management. This agreement also helps ensure that wildlife habitat will stay intact for years to come. Ede's desire to be a good manager is paying dividends for her operation and for wildlife in the area. Just this year, Ede excitedly told me how she saw Sage grouse for the first time in years out in her pasture!

Ede's operation is in an incredible area for wildlife. The property adjoins large areas of native prairie on all sides. It represents prime habitat restoration potential for grassland songbird species of concern such as Sprague's Pipit, McCown's Longspur, Chestnut Collared Longspur and Baird's Sparrow. The large blocks of native prairie immediately neighboring this property support strong populations of these species. Additionally, the property is in a priority area for Sage Grouse, has prime waterfowl habitat, and has great Sharptail Grouse habitat.

This project showcases how Pheasants Forever is utilizing partnerships in the area to help landowners reach their conservation goals and improve wildlife habitat. This project would not be possible without an amazing landowner, Ede Breitmeier, and a whole host of organizational support (Pheasants Forever, NRCS, NFWF, RSA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).
CORPORATIONS TOUR RSA PROJECT SITES

September 24-25th, representatives from Cargill, Inc. and Burger King toured RSA restoration projects with members of the RSA Conservation Committee. The tour started with a demonstration of the rainfall simulator by NRCS staff, followed by visits to a crested wheat restoration with water and fence improvements, a seeding project, and intact prairie. The tour ended with a lunch where the group discussed how partners could invest in RSA projects. The Conservation Committee looks forward to funding from these potential partners for further restoration projects, landowner training in management techniques, and increased capacity for RSA in 2020.

Photos by Kelli French

- Hosted a 4-part “Ranch Profitability” workshop series with Plank Stewardship Initiative.
- Hosted 40 people for a Dave Pratt Ranching for Profit School.
- Moonshadow Leadership Training for RSA Board and partners.
- Earth Day apple tree planting at the Hi-Line Community Center in honor of farmer and rancher residents from the Hi-Line in attendance.
- Assist in sponsorship of Leopold Award in Montana.
- Donation to Rural Communities and Neighbors (RCAN) rodeo event.
- Western Sustainability Exchange (WSE) presentation by Roger Indreland.
- America's Grasslands Conference in Bismarck, ND attended by several RSA volunteers.
- Advocacy Day in Helena attended by 5 RSA volunteers discussing cooperative conservation and general positive outcomes of working together for the betterment of rural communities.
A continuing tradition for RSA is celebrating our pioneering past and vibrant future by celebrating the pride we have in our community. We co-sponsored this event with Phillips Conservation District.

Our celebration was held on September 21st at the Lucky Bullet. Families gathered and enjoyed good food, good fun, and great music. The District recognized their conservationist of the year in Conni and Craig French. The French’s had also been nominated by RSA for the Leopold Award and were recognized for making it into the top three in the state of Montana.

RSA recognized individuals who were making a difference in their community through their volunteer efforts. Those recognized were Riley Abrahamson, Shane Anderson, Katie Brown, Bridgett Ereaux, Vince Mace, Kelsey Molloy, Laura Pankratz, Robert & Betty Plouffe, Travis Rhoads, and Jo Tharp.

This year RSA donated their share of the proceeds of this event to the First Creek Hall, which sustained hail and wind damage this past summer. (Jenifer Anderson presenting award to Conni & Craig French.)

CAREER DAYS at the Malta High School found our president, Leo Barthelmess, visiting with students about ranching. Leo impressed upon the students the value of relationships, innovation, knowledge, and ecology. Topics covered included: four things to be a successful rancher, what is capital and the resources available, do you need to own land, types of products, and a good management plan. He also listed products ranchers can produce that consumers need. Leo concluded that ranching is a business requiring similar management to all other small profitable businesses. Photo courtesy of Katie Brown
Amazing 2020 is already here. The time of the year we’re all tasked with finishing up our paperwork. It is my pleasure as president of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance to give an update on the past year’s events. First and foremost, I would like to thank the dedication of our Board of Directors. The contributions that our board members have made to the success of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance cannot be emphasized enough, thank you one and all. Another group of people that I would like to recognize are the participants of the conservation committee. The ability of our conservation partners, and of the ranching community to work together is something that is garnering a lot of attention around the country. It is wonderful to be part of an organization that can contribute so much to building successful communities. As in the past with the help of our partners, we have continued to secure grant funding to do conservation work that is beneficial for ranching and wildlife. We have been able to continue to bring educational opportunities and support to other area non-profits. The future of the Northern Great Plains looks brighter for all that call this wonderful place home. Thank you again for your continued support.

Leo Barthelmess, President
The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

RSA closed out its first NFWF Conservation grant in 2019. A total of 13,340 acres of private land on 17 family ranches were directly impacted by these projects. Via stock water systems and fence infrastructure, 6,280 acres of expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands were transitioned into functional grazing systems. An additional 5,515 acres of marginal cropland were restored to native grass and forb cover and transitioned to livestock production. A total of 4,260 acres of non-native crested wheatgrass were treated with targeted grazing systems, including 2,715 acres within expiring CRP projects and an additional 1,545 acres.

The total funds expended on the 17 ranches was $269,517.59. Matching dollars from ranchers and partners doubled this amount to $539,034.00. All of this money stayed in our local communities, benefiting many businesses and ranchers.

Fifteen additional projects have been approved under subsequent conservation grants that are ongoing. These are in various stages of completion, with water tanks, pipelines, reseeding, and fencing.

### 2019 YEAR END STATEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets 1/1/19</td>
<td>$55,853.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$176,102.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td>$208,541.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Income</td>
<td>&lt; $32,439.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets 12/31/19</td>
<td>$23,413.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTRIBUTE
I would like to contribute to the continuing efforts of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance.

Name ____________________________________
Organization ______________________________
Phone ____________________________________
Email ____________________________________
Address __________________________________

Amount: (please circle)
$20   $50   $100   $150   $200   $500   $1000
Other _______ Please make check payable
to: Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

VOLUNTEER
I would like to volunteer my time for:
___ Fundraising Committee
___ Education/Workshops Committee
___ Communications/Outreach Committee
___ Phillips County Proud Planning Committee
___ Set-up/Clean up crew for activities
___ Food contributor for activities
___ Grant writing
___ Other __________________________________

Please contact me at
Name ____________________________________
Phone ________________________________
Email ________________________________

*Photo courtesy of Hunter VanDonsel*