



Center for Grassland Studies

203 Keim Hall
P.O. Box 830953
University of Nebraska-
Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583
(402) 472-4101
Email: grassland@unl.edu
Website: grassland.unl.com

Grazing Livestock Systems | PGA Golf Management | Integrated Beef Systems |
Grassland Ecology and Management

Winter 2018
Vol 24 Issue 4

Nebraska's Prairie Heritage is an IANR Priority

by Steve Waller, Interim Director, Center for Grassland Studies

Mike Boehm, NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor, has a passion for prairies and a vision for Nebraska's grassland heritage. He assigned the administration and management of Nine-Mile Prairie to the Center for Grassland Studies (view **Dave Wedin's** presentation on Nine-Mile Prairie at <https://grassland.unl.edu/past-seminars>), and created the Nine-Mile Prairie Advisory Council with the following mission:

To provide strategic recommendations to the IANR Vice Chancellor for the vision and commitment to the enhancement and preservation in perpetuity of Nine-Mile Prairie to serve the University's core academic mission areas of teaching, research, and extension.

Vice Chancellor Boehm envisions Nine-Mile Prairie playing a pivotal role in educating people about the fragility of our global grassland heritage and the importance of grasslands to our global future. The native temperate grassland biome is heavily predisposed to the irreversible conversion to non-natural environments (Carbutt, Henwood, and Gilfedder, 2017). In the Great Plains of North America, about 53 million acres of intact temperate grasslands have been converted since 2009 — equivalent to an area the size of Kansas (World Wildlife Fund, 2016). Educating the general public on the economic, environmental, and social benefits of our native grasslands cannot be more urgent. Nebraska's grassland heritage and history in grassland science creates an opportunity for the state to be a national and international leader in temperate grassland management, utilization, and preservation for future generations.

Nine-Mile Prairie could become the epicenter of a prairie network that would encompass Lincoln's prairie corridor, network with prairie resources in the county, and radiate out to include the Sandhills and the state's expansive grassland resources. The Dalbey Prairie is a recent addition to the Center's prairie portfolio, and these "prairie engagement zones" could inform the public with research-based grassland education programs, living and learning laboratory opportunities, and Extension outreach activities attracting learners of all ages. The network could be integrated with the University and other public and private prairie resources, promoted by the Nebraska Tourism Commission and marketed through highway rest stops and local visitors centers. The Nine-Mile Prairie Advisory Council shares and embraces the vision of Dr. Boehm. The Council is committed to providing leadership needed to pursue that vision. They would appreciate your input by emailing swaller1@unl.edu. (Continued on Page 2)

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The Center for Grassland Studies is a unit within the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It receives guidance from a Policy Advisory Committee and a Citizens Advisory Council.

Note: Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy of the Center for Grassland Studies, the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, or the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

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Director's Comments

by Steven Waller, Interim Director, Center for Grassland Studies

The Center for Grassland Studies office and all of the affiliated faculty, staff and students wish each of you a joyous holiday season. This is a time of reflection and celebration. As we reflect on the Center's year, there is much to celebrate and it begins with the people — those we serve and those we are fortunate to have as our

collaborators. The common thread that joins us all is an unrelenting passion and appreciation for our grassland heritage and a commitment to the stewardship of our grasslands for the future.

Whether it be the successful launch of the Beef Systems Initiative, the growth of the Bachelor of Science degree in Grazing Livestock Systems, the assignment of the Bachelor of Science degree in Grassland Ecology and Management to the Center, the curriculum innovation in the PGA Golf Management undergraduate program, gaining administrative oversight of the Nine-Mile Prairie, adding the Dalbey Prairie to our management portfolio, or the successful Nebraska Grazing Conference, the Center has enjoyed a productive year thanks to the efforts of many, which is the true gift of the season.

Take time now and throughout the coming year to thank the grassland stewards that share our vision — the rancher, the farmer, the extension educator, the scientist, the wildlife biologist, non-profits, producer organizations like the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, the Society for Range Management, livestock organizations, the Sandhills Taskforce, seed producers and other businesses that support our grassland industries, and all of the state, regional and federal agencies that provide educational programming. This list is not inclusive, but it is reflective of the effort needed and the potential collective influence of all of the partners acting with one voice in support of our grasslands. This will be our lasting gift for future generations.

Nebraska's Prairie Heritage

(Continued from Page 1)

References

Carbutt, C., Henwood, W.D. & Gilfedder, L.A. (2017) Global plight of native temperate grasslands: going, going, gone? *Biodivers. Conserv.* 26: 2911-32.

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Alumni Spotlight: Kristin (Nollette) Schlueter

Kristin (Nollette) Schlueter is a resource conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in West Point, Nebraska. The duties and subject matter of her position are very diverse, which keep things interesting and challenging. The NRCS offers a wide variety of financial and technical assistance to help producers voluntarily apply conservation to their land. Working with producers who manage cropland, pastureland, animal feeding operations and wildlife habitat are all part of NRCS activities. Kristin says, "I really feel like protecting our nation's natural resources is one of the most noble callings a profession can have, and ultimately that is what keeps me engaged."

The soil health movement was just beginning to gain steam when Schlueter joined the NRCS. Determining how to make current cropping systems mimic Mother Nature and act more like a native range system is what it equates to for Schlueter. Improving plant diversity with cover crops and adding livestock back to the landscape to see how the soil, the plants, and the livestock are interconnected, and understanding a system and the snowball effects that can occur when pieces of that system are missing, i.e. soil health affects nutrient management, pest management, soil erosion, water quality, profit potential, etc., is all very relevant to her job today. "This interconnectedness is what attracted me to a degree in Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS)," explains Schlueter.

Kristin's family background and growing up on a small family ranch amid the beauty of the Sandhills also galvanized her interest in pursuing a GLS degree. Participating in 4-H and FFA activities were part of Schlueter's learning. However, it was her father and uncle, both ag teachers, who were always educating her, whether it was while working cattle, haying or artificially inseminating cattle during the summers. She remembers being quizzed on plant identification while on horseback moving cows.

Schlueter went on to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and obtained Bachelor's of Science degrees in Animal Science and Grazing Livestock Systems, and a Master's in Agronomy. She feels her advisors did a great job making sure she had



The Schlueter Family

the necessary classes to prepare her for a career with the NRCS. One of the most valuable things she learned from her GLS studies that supports her current career activities is a systems approach to thinking. "There are some days when I think I ended up about as far removed from range as I can be, but, ironically, those same concepts of range management are serving me well today, even in a landscape dominated with corn and soybean production," says Schlueter.

In addition to regular studies, Schlueter participated in the GLS internship program. She gained information as a range trainee at the NRCS office in North Platte, Nebraska, which led to future summer jobs and employment opportunities during school. The internship with the NRCS was invaluable in gaining experience and making important networking connections, both of which Kristin attributes to helping her land her current position at the NRCS.

Kristin and her husband, Cory, also a UNL graduate, live near Scribner, Nebraska with their children, Grace (13), Aubree (11), Hannah (9), and Emmett (4). They have their own cow/calf operation selling Gelbvieh and Balancer, primarily Gelbvieh X Red Angus cross, seed stock. Developing bred heifers is also part of their operation.

If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter instead of a print copy, please let us know by emailing mmckendree14@unl.edu. Thank you.

PGA Golf Management Students Compete in 2018 Jones Cup

by Dann Husmann, Director, PGA Golf Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The PGA Golf Club (Wanamaker Course) in Port St. Lucie, Florida was the setting for the 17th PGA Jones Cup on Oct. 29-31.

Dann Husmann, Director, PGA Golf Management Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) accompanied the five-member Team Nebraska to compete against 17 other PGA golf management programs. **Cordell Weber**, Welcome, Minnesota; **Sam Rice**, Pleasant Hill, Iowa; **Kyle Murray**, Beatrice, Nebraska; **Josh Baldus**, Fairmont, Minnesota; and **T.J. Loudner**, Blair, Nebraska represented Team Nebraska.

Husmann said, "The Wanamaker is a Tom Fazio designed course that challenges every team and provides for a true champion. The course was in excellent condition and the weather this year was fantastic."



Pictured (left to right): Kyle Murray, Sam Rice, Josh Baldus, Cordell Weber, T.J. Loudner, and Dann Husmann

The Jones Cup is a two-day stroke play competition in which the top four scores for each team of five golfers is counted towards a cumulative score. Since its inception in 2002, the Jones Cup continues to signify professionalism, integrity, sportsmanship, and camaraderie through competition among PGA golf management students. These character traits are ones Dr. S. Roland Jones, namesake of the event and first director of the Mississippi Student University PGA Golf Management program, instilled in his students.

At the conclusion of the day one competition, Team Nebraska tied for 16th place out of the 18-team field. After discussing strategies moving forward, Team Nebraska made a strong charge on day two firing the second lowest round total of the day for all teams, which moved them into an overall tie for 8th place with Coastal Carolina University. Their second round total of 292 was one stroke out of the 291 team total for the 2018 Jones Cup winner, Florida Gulf Coast.

Congratulations to Team Nebraska on a great showing.

Ron Hanson Receives Silver Eagle Award



Ron Hanson

Ron Hanson, emeritus professor in agricultural economics, received the Silver Eagle award during the Nebraska Farm Bureau's annual convention, held Dec. 4 in Kearney. Presented annually, the award is the bureau's highest honor and recognizes an individual or entity for contributions to Nebraska agriculture. He received the award for his 43-year career at Nebraska, teaching and advising agribusiness students in the Department of Agricultural Economics within the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Hanson was a featured speaker at the Nebraska Grazing Conference held in Kearney, Nebraska Aug. 6-8. Both his presentation, Keeping Your Ranching Operation in the Family for Future Generations, and the session he moderated, Sharing Our Ranch Succession Planning Strategies and Experiences: A Ranch Producer Panel, were very well received by the audience.

Leu Lecturer: Dr. Chuck West by Liz Husmann, Office Associate, Center for Grassland Studies

On Monday, November 12th, the Center for Grassland Studies was honored to welcome **Chuck West** as this year's Leu Distinguished Lecturer. West, Program Director and Thornton Distinguished Chair in the Department of Plant and Soil Science at Texas Tech, spoke about his research quantifying the water use of forage crops and pastures as affected by grazing management, and his team's efforts to integrate forages into row-crop systems as a way to reduce the use of irrigation water while sustaining profitability of Texas High Plains agricultural systems.

West's presentation was particularly relevant to Nebraska because, as he explained, Texas also utilizes the Ogallala Aquifer for irrigation. Because the water levels in the Aquifer are declining faster in the Texas Panhandle, West is interested in exploring ways to reduce their water "footprint," or as he explained, the "impact of using a nonrenewable resource for producing a low-value product." Interestingly, West's current research focuses on incorporating alfalfa into grazing, a practice that at first glance may seem counterintuitive if you're trying to use less water, but one that data shows is effective in reducing the overall water input and more effectively stretches a limited water supply. The general idea is that by integrating legumes such as alfalfa into a grazing system, the greater irrigation required by the legume presence is offset by the increase in animal gain due to higher protein content in the diet, thereby more efficiently utilizing the water put into the system and reducing the water footprint overall.

West was encouraging of audience participation and brought a spirit of innovation and exploration to his presentation. "I'm inviting you to challenge me and come up with some more ideas," he said during his introduction, and audience members were more than happy to oblige, posing questions and offering suggestions throughout the course of the talk. It was a lively and informative seminar, with students and experts in all areas of agricultural studies listening and responding to the fascinating research West was presenting.

A video of Dr. West's presentation is available at: grassland.unl.edu/past-seminars.

PGA Elects Female President

by Dann Husmann, Director, PGA Golf Management Program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Pictured (left to right): Suzy Whaley, PGA of America President-elect; Kendall Vaughn, North Carolina State University; and Gretchen Keller, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

History-making is one description of the 102nd PGA Annual Meeting held Nov. 6-9 at the Indian Wells Renaissance Resort in Indian Wells, California. It is at this meeting that 52-year old **Suzy Whaley** became the first female president of the PGA of America; an accomplishment not previously seen in the organization's 102-year history.

Whaley is PGA Director of Instruction at Suzy Whaley Golf in Cromwell, Connecticut, and the PGA Director of Instruction at The Country Club of Mirasol in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Suzy is the first women since **Babe Zaharias** to qualify for a PGA Tour event when she won the Connecticut PGA section championship in 2002, which earned her a spot in the Greater Hartford Open.

The PGA Golf Management Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln sent two students to the meeting to observe the operation of the annual meeting, and the election of its officers for the next two years. **Nate Vaughn**, current PGAM student club president, and **Gretchen Keller**, past PGAM student club secretary, were both on hand for this monumental occasion.

Keller found the meeting to be an incredible experience. Gretchen noted, "Seeing Suzy Whaley become the first female president of the biggest sports organization in the world was so inspiring; it is an experience I will never forget." The students observed the internal workings of the delegation process, met many of the current PGA of America officers, and had dinner with past officers of the PGA organization. Keller also stated, "I think this was exactly what the world needed. Suzy's accomplishments will provide another stepping stone towards the game of golf becoming more inclusive for females."

Crop Residue Exchange Connects Cattle Producer with Available Forage

by Jay Parsons, Farm and Ranch Management Specialist, Mary Drewnoski, Nebraska Extension Beef Systems Specialist, and Daren Redfearn, Nebraska Extension Forage and Crop Residue Specialist, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

About half of the available corn residue in Nebraska is grazed by cattle. In addition to providing a winter feed resource, this practice can be used as a management option to increase the amount and rate of corn residue breakdown. University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) research has shown that when corn residue was grazed at proper stocking rates (15% residue removal), crop production after grazing was not reduced. In fact, small, positive impacts on subsequent soybean yield has occurred.

UNL recommendations for establishing corn residue stocking rates are based on 50% utilization of leaves and husks (8 pounds per bushel or 20% of the total corn residue). Some additional corn residue disappears through trampling and wind loss, but we have not found increased erosion when only 40% to 50% of the corn residue is removed through grazing. Other factors such as fencing and water availability can be issues with corn residue grazing. Lack of access to cattle is another common reason that corn residue is not grazed.

The Crop Residue Exchange is an online engagement tool designed to increase the convenience and accessibility of grazing crop residues. This online exchange assists corn and other crop producers to market crop residue to cattle producers.

A new feature is the “Other” category where producers can list forage cover crops for grazing. This interactive, online tool helps farmers and cattle producers connect and develop mutually beneficial agreements to use crop residue and forage cover crops for grazing.

After establishing a log-in account, farmers can list cropland available for grazing by drawing out the plot of land available using an interactive map. They can then enter basic information about the type of residue, fencing situation, water availability, and dates available and provide their preferred contact information. Grazing rates listed in 2018 have ranged from \$0.75 to \$1 per head per day for fields that were fenced or partially fenced and included water and animal care. There are also some listed at \$15 per acre with water onsite but unfenced and no care provided.

Livestock producers can log in and search the database for cropland available for grazing within radius of a given location of interest.

Development of the Crop Residue Exchange was made possible with funding support from the Nebraska Extension Innovation Grants Program.

Interviews with the authors of BeefWatch newsletter articles become available throughout the month of publication and are accessible at <https://go.unl.edu/podcast>.

The Crop Residue Exchange online engagement tool can be found at <https://cropresidueexchange.unl.edu/>.



This interactive, online tool helps farmers and cattle producers connect and develop mutually beneficial agreements to use crop residue and forage cover crops for grazing. Photo credit of Troy Walz.

Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Hosts Jason Rowntree

by Liz Husmann, Office Associate, Center for Grassland Studies

Jason Rowntree of Michigan State University was the speaker for the 2018 Traveling Road Show co-hosted by Nebraska Extension and Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition and held at eight locations around the state. His talk, entitled “Grazing Research and Cattle Management through a Holistic Lens,” spanned everything from impacts of grazing management and industry attitudes about beef grass finishing to international grazing practices—truly encapsulating the spirit of thinking globally, acting locally. On Nov. 15, Rowntree spoke at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s (UNL) Nebraska East Union, an event attended by UNL faculty and students as well as producers from across Nebraska.



Jason Rowntree

While helping farmers recover from the hurricanes that severely impacted Louisiana agriculture in 2005, Rowntree began to contemplate resilience in food systems. “[In post-Katrina New Orleans] there was nothing for us to eat. We had a richly diverse agricultural system, but it was a large scale system,” he explained. Around the same time, Rowntree began working on curriculum for a cattle producer program that got him thinking about profitability. Ultimately, these two experiences informed Rowntree’s interest in holistic management and the current research he conducts on grazing and beef production systems at Michigan State.

An engaging and knowledgeable speaker, Rowntree encouraged questions throughout his presentation, leading to lively discussions about the research and ideas being presented. He was insistent, however, that he is exploring these concepts on a high, rather than individual, level. “I never want to point to a farmer for the challenges that we see in agriculture,” he explained, “I think farmers and ranchers are always forced into having to make decisions to feed their family first and foremost.” Rowntree acknowledged that many producers face a variety of challenges and pressures that make it difficult to enact big changes, even if there is a desire to do things differently. Rowntree made sure to highlight the complexities and nuances of the topics at hand, which created a space conducive to inquiry and conversation.

There was much to take away from Rowntree’s presentation, but the most prevailing concept was to challenge the status quo. On multiple occasions Rowntree referenced a famous quote attributed to Henry Ford: “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” Rowntree isn’t interested in sticking to the confines of an “if it’s not broke, don’t fix it” mentality. Innovation and adaptability are vital components to holistic management, which is ultimately, as Rowntree explained, “learning to balance things from a social, economical and ecological perspective.”

A video of Dr. Rowntree’s presentation on November 15, 2018 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is available at: grassland.unl.edu/past-seminars

Internship Experiences Highlighted

The 2018 Grazing Livestock System (GLS) Internship Symposium, held November 9 in the Massengale Residential Center, featured five GLS degree program students. **Alexa Johnson, Emily Gill, Katelin Oborny, Alex Hays, and Scott Gates** each gave a presentation highlighting their internship experiences over the summer. Faculty, staff and other students in the planning stages of their internships were on hand for the presentations.

Internships are tailored to the experiential learning needs of the GLS students. Other components of the GLS internship include pre-internship development sessions; proposal development; proposal presentation to GLS faculty; and a submission of a final report.



Pictured (left to right): Alexa Johnson, Emily Gill, Katelin Oborny, Scott Gates, and Alex Hays

Center for Grassland
Studies
203 Keim Hall
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GLS Alumnus Shares Ranch Management Practices

by Katie Cumming, GLS Graduate Assistant , Center for Grassland Studies



Ben Andrews

Ben Andrews, manager of Spring Valley Ranch and Cattle near Basset, Nebraska, spoke at the November 28 Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS) Club meeting. Ben is an alumnus of the GLS degree program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Andrews' presentation, "Returning to the Ranch," addressed the career path Ben took to get to where he is today. He talked about what valuable experiences he gained having a degree in GLS, and what he would do differently if he could do it over. Ben also discussed the ranch management practices he uses, and what has and has not worked well for him.

The GLS Club holds producer seminars each academic year to give students the opportunity to learn more about what producers are doing at their own operations, as well as to network with producers.

For information about joining the GLS Club, email kcumming@huskers.unl.edu.