



# In Practice

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## Relationship as Resolution

BY ANN ADAMS

I recently had the pleasure of virtually attending the 2022 REGENERATE Conference held in Denver, Colorado. Although I didn't get to enjoy the amazing food or live music during the barn dance or network with people in the hallway, it was still a great learning opportunity as I listened to all the speakers and reflected on their knowledge and experience. Their talks helped me move past some pre-conceived notions I had, which always feels liberating. (see more about the conference and view pictures in the Program Round Up on page 15).

The theme of the conference was "Cultivating Restorative Economies" and it was great to hear the innovation and creativity of people tying the potential new markets with

more regenerative practices, as well as ideas of how to engage more diverse audiences in this movement. I also appreciated the spirit in which the conference was developed and curated. HMI, the American Grassfed Association, and the Quivira Coalition all focus on aspects of regenerative agriculture, but we come at it in a variety of ways and with different audiences. Our goal is to model effective collaboration while encouraging and utilizing the diversity we bring to the table. In turn, the conference program often offers talks and discussions about how to collaborate effectively to encourage diversity as diversity is an indicator of a more resilient system.

In the conference program there was a list of "Community Agreements" for the conference participants that I thought was worth sharing for us all to consider in our own communities and families as a good reminder of "right action" and a means to more effectively collaborate. I share a slightly edited version here.

- Embrace paradox—You will hear things that you might not agree with, or concepts that contradict one another. Lean into the discomfort and look for the emerging questions. We'll walk away with more questions than answers, and that's okay!
- Embrace relationship as resolution—if there is an issue that can't be resolved, focus more on the relationship than the issue, lean into that.

While these concepts and practices are all excellent tools to help improve communication and collaboration, the last one was the one that really spoke to me—embracing relationship as resolution. While there is so much divisiveness in the world, I have also seen so many people using Holistic Management to help their families and communities to create common ground by articulating shared values and even a shared vision of what future they would like to see—the desired outcomes. In doing so, they often do reach resolution on what tools or processes to use to move them forward.

But, that is not always the case. In those moments I now have greater clarity that I need to engage in the relationship with those people. I don't think that tenet means we just agree to disagree (although that is one model). I think that statement means to engage more fully in that relationship as one's authentic self. To speak one's truth and embrace the paradox of someone else's truth being different from yours can be a challenging request to make of yourself. I will readily admit it is one of the most difficult actions I have attempted and I am not always successful.

I have, however, made a commitment to continued learning, and reminding myself of that commitment, and remaining humble to who might be my teachers has always resulted in greater learning than if I had focused on debating my opinions with someone else. For someone who has raised in a debating household, that is a hard habit to break. I am

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## Holistic Intention

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*Setting a clear intention is part of the Holistic Management planning processes and goal setting. In this issue, you will see how people have defined their values, identified their purpose, and set intention to improve the planning and implementation in line with their values and purpose.*



## Community Agreements

- Take care of yourself. Be gentle with yourself.
- Practice Confident Humility—the self-awareness that we all have wisdom and other assets, and we will always have more to learn.
- Consider listening if you talk often; If you often listen quietly, consider speaking up.
- Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views.
- In conversations, speak YOUR truth—try using "I-statements", speak from your experience.
- Avoid assumptions about any member of the group or generalizations about social groups. Don't ask individuals to speak for their (perceived) social group. Everyone is infinitely complex, embrace and assume their fullness and uniqueness and all the things you do not know about them.
- Commit to learning, not debating. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.



# In Practice

a publication of **Hollistic Management International**

*HMI's mission is to envision and realize healthy, resilient lands and thriving communities by serving people in the practice of Holistic Decision Making & Management.*

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## Gundillawah & Trewalla— Farming with Intent and Purpose

BY ANN ADAMS

**P**eter and Bundle (Pamela) Lawson come from a long line of farmers. Bundle's family has been farming the 2,200-ha (5,500-acre) Gundillawah in the Mundarlo valley of New South Wales, Australia for five generations, while Peter's family has been on the 1,600-ha (4,000-acre) Trewalla near Book Book since 1975. Peter took over management of Trewalla, predominantly a Grassy Box Woodland around 1998. This property had been set stocked prior to Peter's parents purchasing it. Peter and Bundle have more recently taken over management of Gundillawah in 2014, which ranges from creek flats to heavily timbered, native range.

The Lawsons heard about Holistic Management in the 1990s. Peter's father did a Resource Consulting Service (RCS) course around 1993 with Stan Parsons and brought back a lot of good information that sat well with Peter as the family began exploring changes in practice to improve the degraded landscape they had inherited. Peter went to agriculture college and returned home to do a Holistic Management course with Holistic Management Educator Mark Gardner in 1996. In the meantime, Bundle heard about Holistic Management at university in the mid '90s including a visit to long-time Holistic Management practitioner George Gundry's farm. In 2000, Bundle did a Holistic Management course with Holistic Management Educator Brian Marshall. Then in 2008 Pete and Bundle

(now married) did a Holistic Management course with the late Bruce Ward, another Holistic Management Educator. With that knowledge they have adapted their management to improve land health and business profit while enjoying the process of farming with a clear intent and purpose.

### Lessons Learned

While the Lawsons were beginning to integrate some Holistic Management practices they were still using agronomists and consultants and conventional agricultural practices. Peter liked the simplicity of the Holistic Management decision-making and being able to think in a new way after he took the course. He saw farmers were losing control and really were



*Bundle and Pete Lawson with their children Georgie, Tessa and Max and Hippo the dog. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

managing their farms for the consultant and losing the direction of their farms. He didn't want that to happen to Trewalla.

So he and his father began to implement some of the grazing principles they had learned and Peter acknowledges they made an awful lot of mistakes. In 1998 Peter took over management of Trewalla and began building more fences. While they wanted to run some larger mobs, they didn't really have adequate water and they ended up with more of a rotation

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than actual grazing planning. On top of that, they went into massive drought from 2002–2009 and were not getting their average rainfall of 600 mm (24 inches).



*The main mob of predominantly Angus breeding cows and calves heading into a new paddock. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

During that time, Peter chipped away at improving the water infrastructure and married Bundle in 2004. It got to a point in the drought where they were asking themselves what they wanted to do, was farming here in this way ultimately what they wanted to do. “We worked through it, but it reinforced that we wanted to do things differently and make more of a concerted effort to put Holistic Management into practice,” says Peter.

Peter says that the Lawson’s holistic goal hasn’t changed much since they first developed their individual goals at their initial training. However, he believes they should have revisited the holistic goal more in their decision making. By the time they did their training with Bruce Ward in 2008, they began testing their decisions and integrating their plans with their holistic goal. At that point they were down to 20% of their carrying capacity. “Had we been managing well, we would have only been down to 50–60% of the carrying capacity because of the drought,” says Peter. “But despite the stress of the continuing drought and low livestock numbers, we immediately began enjoying farming more because we were now clear about our intent and purpose with the farm.”

Coming out of the drought, they took on adjustment to build their livestock numbers without buying stock. This enabled them to see bigger mobs at work. They also started subdividing their paddocks even more, often using temporary electric tape and single electric wire fences. They are now averaging 45,000kg/ha (39,683 lbs/acre) stock density. “We are seeing a much greater response from the land now,”

says Peter. “One year we might see a lot of new grasses in one area, and other areas will have far more gradual changes. But we have a lot more desirable species. Before we had a lot of low-quality native grasses, annuals, and lots of bare ground and lichen. Now we have a lot more perennial plants and more basal size and the ground cover is solid. We’ve more than doubled our carrying capacity and we are not routinely putting on synthetic fertilizers anymore.

“The plant density is far and away much better and the summer native grasses have started spreading and flourishing, like the kangaroo and wallaby grasses. We also have a lot more red grass. But, we started to see changes on the land in the first few years after 2008. Our grazing and recovery periods have changed a couple of times, but we average a 120 to 150-day recovery. Our biggest changes



*The Lawson family driving the mob up the driveway after a day out grazing. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

have always come when we’ve been able to give the forage 150 days of recovery.”

Water infrastructure is critical to the success of a good grazing plan. The Lawsons have a number of dams on both properties. Trewalla is quite undulating country and there is still a lot of erosion. They have bores and tanks on each property and the water is gravity-fed to various troughs. The system is set up so they can expand it. Currently they have 25–30 troughs connected to each tank. Each trough is designed to water 800 cows and calves.

The Lawsons have noticed that their dams are not filling up like they used to because of the improved water infiltration in the soil. But when the dams do fill there is grass right down to the water and the water is cleaner.

Currently the Lawsons run 560 predominantly Black Angus cows and followers as well as 2,000 Merino ewes and followers on Gundillawah. At present there are multiple cow herds and the sheep are run separately from the

cows. Having recently upgraded the livestock watering system at Gundillawah, they are now starting to sub-divide paddocks so they can reduce cow herds and increase animal density.

At Trewalla they run 460 Black Angus cows plus calves as one herd until the calves are weaned. They sell from weaning to 12–14 months of age in the restockers market or at the sale barn. The weaner heifers being kept for breeding return to the main cow herd in time for joining. They had started with 35 paddocks and they are now at 115 paddocks. The properties are 50 km (30 miles) apart and they have a full-time employee living at Gundillawah while the Lawsons live at their homeplace at Trewalla.

The Lawsons are part of the 8 Families management group which was formed after the 2008 Holistic Management training. Some of these farms direct market their grassfed beef and the Lawsons have explored working with Provenir to supply them with some of their cattle. The 8 Families management group has been a huge support for the Lawsons. “It’s always good to talk to like-minded people,” says Peter. “We discuss issues that you wouldn’t do with more conventional farming friends. It’s refreshing every time we catch up and we get re-enthused. Someone might have done something new so we can learn from each other. We meet every six weeks and we move around to a different property each time.”

The Lawsons have three teenage children, all interested in agriculture.



*This boundary fence line contrast in a typical summer is why the Lawsons practice Holistic Management. Notice the higher productivity on the left side of the fence which is the Lawson’s property. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

They help on projects and Peter says that since he and Bundle have been fortunate enough to have gone through two positive succession plans with their families, the pressure is on them

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# James Ranch Family Delegated Meeting Process

BY JOE WHEELING

*Editor's Note: The following article is an excerpt from Joe's presentation during HMI's workshop at the James Ranch in Durango, Colorado in August 2022 titled "Joining the James Ranch Journey" about how the James Ranch has integrated this meeting process with Holistic Management.*

**A**t the James Ranch we have been using this Delegated Meeting Process as a way to help us more effectively practice Holistic Management for the last 18 years. It has helped us a great deal and so I am sharing how we use this process.

## Why Have Meetings?

The first question to ask is why have meetings? Lots of people don't like them and we have all been to meetings that felt like a waste of time. But, we have found that meetings allow us to:

- Explore complex issues
- Develop solutions
- Make decisions and agreements together
- Follow-up on previous action items / decisions

## Benefits of Delegated Meeting Process

The key outcomes we have found in using

the Delegated Meeting Process are:

- It ensures meetings stay efficient
- It increases individual and mutual accountability
- It helps keep transparency and integrity of the group
- It builds leadership and team skills
- Participants stay focused on objectives and goals
- It leads to clearer decisions
- It creates positive energy.

The key meeting principle is that meeting roles are rotated such that all members develop skills of a high performing team such as planning, facilitating and time management.

## Meeting Roles

Family members take one or more of the following roles to improve meeting outcomes:

### Host

We start nearly every meeting with a meal. The Host's responsibility is to host the actual meeting as well as to coordinate meal plans. The Host works with the Moderator to set the meeting date, location and time.

### Moderator

The Moderator's job starts a couple weeks prior to the meeting with a request for meeting topics. Meeting topics require background information on the decision needed and an estimated time needed for a decision. Topics that are informational only are typically sent as an email and are not discussed at the meeting unless there is a decision required or the group's creativity is needed in some capacity. The Moderator shapes the meeting by challenging the presenters' requests for meeting topics, time needed for discussion, actual

decision requested and the level of background information and detail required.

Organizing the agenda is important to get maximum energy flow. The toughest decision (especially emotional ones) should not be at the beginning or the end of the agenda. During the actual meeting the Moderator runs the meeting using encouragement for full participation and making sure other meeting roles are effectively participating in the meeting outcome. The moderator also stops side bar conversations or tangent topics. If a relevant tangent topic surfaces, it is put in the "parking lot" on a sheet of paper for discussion at the end of the meeting or for the next meeting.

### Pacer

The Pacer creates the rhythm of the meeting by re-communicating each topic's length from the agenda and updating the remaining time throughout the discussion. The Pacer's role is making sure energy stays high and time commitments are respected.

### Decision Driver

As a topic is discussed, the Decision Driver's role is to listen for a decision. Many times, various team members will state a potential decision and the Decision Driver picks up these clues, stops the meeting and asks if a decision has been reached by restating what they have heard. The key components to a decision are What, Who, By When, Where, How and Why.

### Scribe

The role of the Scribe is to record all decisions. Again, in the format of What, by When, Who is responsible. The decisions are read aloud before moving to a new topic to make sure decisions, responsibilities and

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## Gundillawah & Trewalla

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*A wombat enjoying the recent good seasons at Trewalla. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

to do the same for their children.

Peter and Bundle are involved in a number of projects including the Land to Market

program. They started their Ecological Outcome Verification in 2017 and they are hoping this information might be useful for the carbon market in the future. They have also done field days and worked with university students and Birding Australia on long-term monitoring.

By keeping focused on their values and using the Holistic Management decision-making tools, Peter and Bundle have been able to create the farm they first articulated over 20 years ago—a farm that is improving land health while creating healthy food and they are able to make a good living by focusing on simple biological processes and their values.

"It's been a really enjoyable journey," says Peter. "Once we got clear about our goal, the Holistic Management process has enabled us to enjoy what we are doing and know why we are

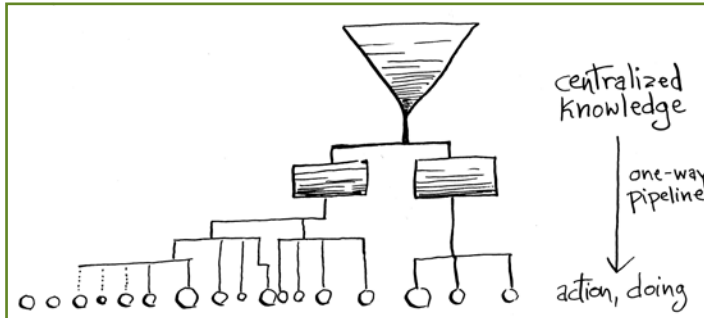
doing it. It gave us direction and a plan and helped us react to things effectively." 🌱



*Calves are sold anytime from weaning to about 14 months of age, depending on the season. Photo credit: Lawson Family.*

# Pipelines versus Platforms— Power and the Politics of Knowledge

BY PETER DONOVAN



*Editor's Note: The original article was published at: <https://soilcarboncoalition.org/pipelines-versus-platforms-power-and-the-politics-of-knowledge/>*

see three patterns unfolding:

1. the widening circles of human catastrophe from large changes in water and carbon cycling
2. the widening failures of institutional solutions for these challenges
3. the widening movement in agriculture and natural resource management toward peer-to-peer, participatory, local learning groups.

Is the age of miracle cures—of quick fixes, of institutional, top-down solutions for complex problems—on its way out? What patterns or possibilities are these widening ripples generating?

For agriculture in the U.S., the miracle cures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century include mechanization, pesticides, nitrogen fertilizer, large irrigation projects, biotechnology, and the development of a distribution system for these technologies. These revolutionized agricultural production around the world, with a singular focus on yields and efficiency. Agricultural research and extension, along with the land-grant university system in the U.S. that trains agronomists almost everywhere, effectively created a monopoly on the creation and distribution of knowledge. Huge corporations such as Monsanto-Bayer, Syngenta, and Cargill came to control inputs such as seeds and chemicals, agricultural methods, and marketing. Many agricultural lenders followed suit. These corporations also funded a good deal of agricultural research.

There have been great successes with many of these miracle cures and short-term fixes, and even today they are continuing. They have forestalled famines, reduced pest pressure in some cases, and saved farms from failure. They have enabled some countries to feed the world by exporting cheap food, extending their technology pipelines, and concentrating profit and power for

the input sectors such as machinery, equipment, fertilizer, seed, and chemicals. They have helped maintain amazingly high levels of production on degraded and degrading soils, with increasing drought and pest pressure.

The oft-used analogy here is that of a pipeline, where research and development creates innovations and technologies which are then delivered to “end users” or farmers via channels and programs that provide information and incentives for adoption. It is a one-way flow, from the creators and developers of knowledge and technology to the presumed end users, driven by carrots and sticks (external motivations). The metric for success is the rate of flow: the adoption of practices or technologies, the signups to incentive programs, the sale of inputs.

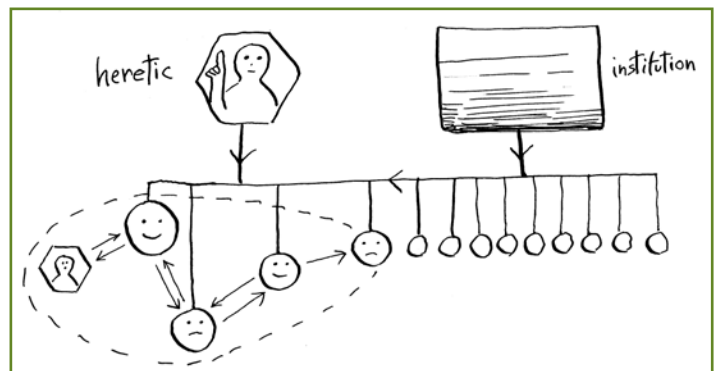
In complex domains such as ecosystems, the one-way pipeline design lacks good feedback or accountability. Researchers, input suppliers, and extension take charge of knowing, while farmers are responsible for doing. Knowing and doing are thus poorly correlated. The practices and strategies the one-way pipeline has delivered produce long-term, cascading failures: large-scale damage to soil health, desertification and compaction, massive loss of biodiversity, increased risk of erosion, drought, fire, and flood, much higher input costs, declining food quality, disappearing aquifers, more virulent weeds and pests, rising risks to human health, farm failure and consolidation, social conflict, and the hollowing out of many rural communities.

Institutional responses to these problems in the U.S. include adding different nozzles and

channels to the pipeline: programs to promote conservation, sustainable agriculture, and climate-smart agriculture, to help underserved producers, to idle marginal and erodible land, crop insurance subsidies to de-risk agricultural production on increasingly degraded soils in a changing climate, to address marketing and rural community issues, for farmer mental health issues, and for institutional research on all of this.

There is also competition. Heretics and innovators have long challenged the monopoly of the USDA-land grant university axis for example on the creation and dissemination of knowledge and advice. The default or self-evident way to promote change is to set up another one-way pipeline through which an organization or consultancy can deliver its knowledge, information, best practices, and advocacy to its constituents. (See Deborah Frieze’s trenchant critique and alternatives at <https://soilcarboncoalition.org/deborah-frieze-on-change/>)

The Big Ag pipelines are still operating but there is increasing competition from sustainable, organic, or soil health movements and pipelines, which also compete with each other. Resistance and competition take many forms, including funding research to show that a rival movement’s innovations don’t work or can’t be implemented, co-opting a movement’s claims, various shades of greenwashing, and even partnership or combination.

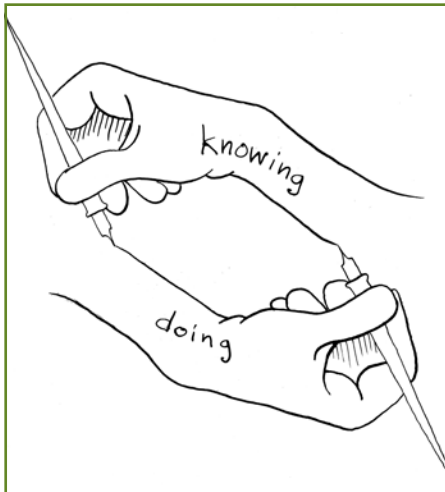


Some heretics and innovators catalyze relationships between farmers, where similarly inclined or inspired farmers or ranchers begin to learn from each other, while still depending on pipelines for information, advice, or access to programs. This is the third pattern that is unfolding: the widening movement toward farmer-centered, peer-to-peer learning groups. This has been occurring for a long time, but in the last century the aforementioned institutional pipelines have displaced or sidelined a good deal of this activity.

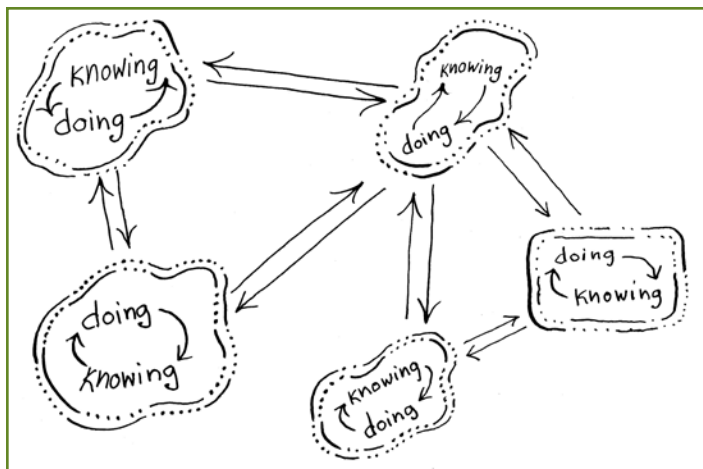
Improving the productivity and soil health

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of a pasture or field is a complex challenge. As you might change the course of a fast-running stream by placing a log or rock in it, so the flow of sunlight energy through the pasture-photosynthesis, water cycling--means that small changes might produce large effects over time. Cause and effect may be entangled, like the chicken and the egg. There are lots of interacting variables, lots of unknowns, and some unknown unknowns.



For knowing and doing, results and actions, to become correlated, the doers must also want to know--to accept the responsibility for their own education. This happens when farmers, ranchers, or land managers realize that there is a gap or discrepancy between their present situation, and what they recognize as needed, wanted, and possible. This gap can become a creative tension, an intrinsic motivation for learning that differs from the extrinsic motivations (carrots, sticks, and judgment) relied on by one-way pipelines.



While few seem to be abandoning the pipelines, the increasing popularity of farmer-to-farmer learning groups highlights the tension between top-down and bottom-up, between one-way pipelines and the must-have accountability of connected knowing/doing. Pipelines are still where the money and jobs are for educators, marketers, and consultants, and many farmers are either loyal, dependent, or both. Taking responsibility for your own learning in the face of complex challenges is scary and hard. Peer support is not everywhere to be found, and can be difficult to create and maintain. But a possible future pattern might be represented thus:

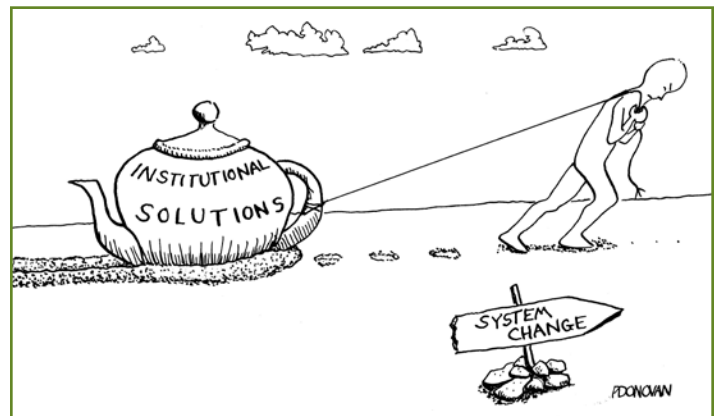
Aggregation has occurred, analogous to a process of soil aggregation. An institution (still somewhat rectangular) is now a participant in a learning network, with two-way exchange and internal accountability/feedback like the others--who may be individuals, or local groups of individuals. Internal accountability, the entanglement of knowing and doing at multiple scales, power sharing, the participatory co-creation of knowledge, as well as semi-permeable membranes, are characteristic. It resembles an interdependent ecosystem.

Such ecosystems are unlikely to be created by policy, but their evolution could be supported where there is some kind of start. Some organizations and institutions are trying to support peer-to-peer farmer networks, but there often remains a subtle collaboration between their own habits, skills, and capacities on the one hand, and on the other the trained expectations of many farmers to be told best practices, to respond to carrots and sticks, to

monitoring or science is outsourced.

We're in the midst of an evolution, for which effective shortcuts are unlikely to appear. Three elements that can support the connection between knowing and doing in the face of complex challenges:

1. Group facilitation that is knowledgeable about the local situation, but sufficiently detached so that people can take responsibility for their own learning, their own progress. Facilitators learn to be a guide on the side, not the sage on the stage.
2. Questions, including questions about evidence and trend in land function, that are relevant to people's intrinsic motivations, what they truly care about. Participants can pose their own questions.
3. An adaptable platform or framework (not a one-way pipeline!) for participatory community science that respects trust, relationships, locality, and the needs and goals of participants, and supplies a way of fostering a shared intelligence, a group memory, evidence including some detailed answers to some key questions, and a semi-permeable membrane for sharing. This is the design of soilhealth.app.



*Institutional solutions...necessarily fail to solve the problems to which they are addressed because, by definition, they cannot consider the real causes. The only real, practical, hope-giving way to remedy the fragmentation that is the disease of the modern spirit is a small and humble way—a way that a government or agency or organization or institution will never think of, though a person may think of it: one must begin in one's own life the private solutions that can only in turn become public solutions. (Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America, 1977)*

be judged by experts. The result is that people can postpone taking responsibility for their own learning. Knowing and doing remain separated, and

### Some Further Reading

The Global Alliance for the Future of Food, a consortium of NGOs, has put out an excellent document called *The Politics of Knowledge*. Vijay Kumar from Andhra Pradesh was among the contributors. It calls for "participatory,

# LAND & LIVESTOCK



## Pratt Livestock Company— Ranching Holistically in Idaho

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

**W**endy and Mark Pratt both come from ranching backgrounds, with Wendy growing up on a ranch about 10 miles away from their present operation near Blackfoot, Idaho. “I never intended to do anything different in life than what my mom did, which was support my dad in their ranching efforts. My siblings and I loved being ranch kids,” Wendy says.

Wendy and Mark were married in 1990 and have three kids. “Our families had been ranching here a long time: my family homesteaded here in 1870 and Mark’s family came here in 1904. Ranching is our way of life,” says Wendy.

“My Dad was a real old-fashioned naturalist, but I became super-focused on conservation ranching when Mark and I took our first course in Holistic Management about 30 years ago.” Ranchers were battling a lot of bad press and a growing movement to get cattle off public lands, like “Cattle Free in ‘93” and other anti-cattle propaganda.

“That was ugly. I hated to think our industry was hurting the land. So when we took a class in Holistic Management, it fundamentally changed the way we look at the world. We can see how everything is connected and how it all fits together. Today it’s become trendy to say there is a social, financial and ecological element to our activities but that is the basic tenet of Holistic Management,” she says. The Pratt’s passion for helping the livestock industry become more sustainable has led them to improve their grazing and share their knowledge and passion with others.

### Exploring Practices

Wendy and Mark took their first class when Roland Kroos came to Blackfoot and put on a 2 ½ day course. “There were agency people (Fish and Game, NRCS, State lands, etc.) there and the course was sponsored by our grazing co-op. At that time, we thought we were going to do all this and change the world!” Ranchers were literally fighting for their lives and trying to counter the efforts of environmentalists that were intent on putting ranchers out of business.

“Western Watersheds (an anti-cattle group) was right here in our backyard, and the agency people were not very helpful,” Wendy says. Many agency personnel seemed to be more sympathetic with the environmental movement to reduce or eliminate grazing on public lands.

“This has changed a lot; now they seem like they want to keep

ranchers around because they’ve discovered that the alternative is much worse. I am not sure what helped them see this, but the people we are now working with in BLM, Fish and Game, State lands, etc. are being good to us and want us to be successful,” Wendy says.

“Back then, however, we were facing huge challenges and Holistic Management seemed like the answer that would change the world. We were so excited! This blend of the social aspect and the fact that cattle can be part of the solution was intoxicating to ranchers like us who were young and enthusiastic.



*The Pratt Family (back from left to right): Cole and Anna Lickley, Mark and Wendy Pratt; (front): Callie Ritter and Leah and Seth Pratt*

“The first thing we did was try to initiate herding on our range allotments. We hired day herders to keep the cattle where they were supposed to be (and up out of the riparian areas). Our cattle graze up there for four months, so we consolidated the various herds and really gave it a go for five years. This is the length of time that Bud Williams said was important; you have to do the herding for at least five years before you really start to get it figured out. But it was only during the summer and we found that it was very difficult to put other people’s herds together that were not herd mates.” Cattle are a social species and have their own hierarchy and pecking orders. They also prefer to be in their own familiar group and favorite spot. It can be very challenging trying to put several different groups together, acting as one herd.

“We went whole hog into low stress stockmanship with Bud Williams,”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



says Wendy. “We took the Ranching for Profit courses. We’ve gone to grazing schools. Now the big focus is soil health workshops. We love it all, and also had a marketing group that became our community because they were also based in Holistic Management. We later joined Country Natural Beef. We made a lot of trips to Oregon because that’s where they are based.

“In our grazing association, however, we failed with our herding efforts, and eventually had to put in fences. We found out, as Bud Williams would have said, that this was much more complicated to actually put into effect than a person thinks it is. Some people say you can place cattle on the range and have them stay in selected areas. That’s not what we found.

“We found that cattle like to walk. They walk a lot and will go around the whole allotment in one day, just because they want to. We had some help from some outside conservation groups who wanted to fund our herding project, but in the end we put in some cross-fences and split up the cattle again.

“We never lost heart, however. We learned a great deal about how the world works; working with people and with animals and the biology is not as easy as some people make it sound.”

The grazing association was established in 1916 and Mark’s grandfather bought into it during the 1940’s.

“My family were some of the founding members more than a century ago, so this is deep roots for us and it has worked for us,” says Wendy. “It is part private land, part state land and a little BLM.

For summer grazing it has been the cornerstone of our ranching operation. When you start thinking about changing the way you graze, trying to get 40 people on board with the changes just isn’t going to happen.

“One thing we have done over the past 30 years with Holistic Management—we were patient enough and persistent enough in what we wanted to do—that now we can take our cattle off the co-op ground for 60 days in the summer and then put them back out in the fall. Some people might think that changing the season of use is not a big deal but for us—and even getting the association to let us do that—was quite a feat. This is our fifth year doing it and we really like it, but there is still some resistance within the grazing association because it means we are on the co-op land late in the fall.” This is healthier for the land, however, because it gives the plants a break during the growing season and there is less impact utilizing that forage after it is mature and has gone to seed. This can be a good way to improve a range.

“We wean the calves and go back out there later with the dry cows and they utilize the range better; they climb and use the uplands and don’t stay as much in the bottoms,” says Wendy. “There are some good reasons to do it this way. Even though the state is supportive, it’s different from the traditional use and it’s easy for people to think that we are getting something they are not. So it continues to be a challenge.”



*The Pratt family do daily moves on irrigated land on their home place.*

## Collaboration is Key

Wendy acknowledges that when they first embraced Holistic Management they thought they could change the world. “Then we thought we could change our grazing association,” says Wendy. “Then we thought we could just change our ranch. But even there, we ran into obstacles; in the end you realize that the only thing you can really change is yourself—how you relate to people, how you control your own attitude about things, etc. That’s what I personally found. I have to be ok with how things are.

“I can work toward collaboration and influencing other people, but bottom line is being able to work from a personal aspect; what are my options, what can I do? That’s how we’ve spent the last 30 years, muddling along. One change we have made is that we graze more and put up hay less. We much prefer moving animals than running equipment.

“I’ve always struggled with this because I felt like we were never quite able to apply Holistic Management the way it was intended, but I finally decided that our efforts will always be imperfect, and that’s ok. A person just has to try to make it work as best they can, and be ok with that. I am 63 years old and realize that this is still a work in progress. We just need

to be ok with it and keep trying. The worst thing a person can do is to think that Holistic Management is not for you, and quit trying. I always encourage people to keep going, keep an open mind, keep learning.

“The way Mark puts it—he says he feels that we stepped out of our immediate community for a while to try new ideas. First, we joined Country Natural Beef and found our community there. Back then we didn’t think the Idaho Cattlemen’s Association would accept us, but things have changed over the

years. Now he is president of the ICA and we can talk about grazing and storing carbon, etc. and it’s cool. People are starting to listen, and there’s a worldwide push around soil health.

“You have to pay attention to the people and the various communities and form a goal that you can all get behind. This is what Allan Savory initially taught, and now it is becoming more mainstream.

“I don’t know if we will ever really get it right, but we have to try. When we came home from our first course, I remember looking down at the ground with new eyes. Roland made me look down. Then you can see what’s below your feet! As ranchers we look across (at the cattle, the grass, the fences, and all the other things we are trying to manage and keep track of), but we also need to look down and see how much bare ground there is—and whether there is organic litter on the soil.

“We need to look for signs of wildlife, etc. This realization was huge, and we haven’t quit. Those four processes are important—energy flow, mineral cycle, water cycle and community dynamics—those have been always playing in the background ever since we took that course. It becomes even more valid with all the current attention on micro-organisms in the soil. Sometimes I say to Mark, ‘Allan Savory was brilliant!’ He put those pieces together that long ago!

“Mark says that what Allan Savory did for us, or ‘to us,’ was to





increase our power of observation—‘to us’ meaning that sometimes it’s uncomfortable to actually see so much.

“I like the quote from Sam Bingham. He was one of the early cohorts of Allan Savory, and I have his statement written here in my office. People can whine about climate change or any number of things, feeling that we can’t change anything, but Sam Bingham wrote: ‘Fatalism is a luxury of people who have time to chat. People who must act, must hope.’ That really speaks to me. We really don’t have a choice. You have to try—especially if you are a rancher. You have to go out the door and act, every day. So you always have hope. It’s not an option.

“One thing that helped me a lot and gave me some confidence in advocating for the livestock industry was when I started keeping the books for our grazing association and also for some canal companies. I began to figure out how water works in the big scheme of things and how land management agencies (BLM, State Land and Forest Service) work. Our grazing association is a co-op and I could see some of the challenges that we face were typical across all kinds of disciplines when working together with people.”

But Wendy believes that ranchers have become “the whipping boy.” Ranchers and cattle are blamed for just about everything—from health issues (claiming beef is an unhealthy food) to animal welfare, to climate change.” Wendy says.

“A university nutritionist who supports our industry sent us an article that was in the *Journal of Nutrition*, which mostly talked about the environmental cost of eating meat. We don’t question the environmental costs of producing other foods, so why is meat being singled out? Plus, beef is a great source of nutrients, which wasn’t addressed at all in the article.”

## Actively Advocating

For several years after she and Mark were married Wendy helped on the ranch, but stayed home with the kids. “We got into low-stress handling of livestock, which was great fun, and this added another dimension to what we were doing every day. Mark’s mom raises border collies, and these dogs are an integral part of the ranch,” Wendy says.

Wendy also started writing a blog 10 years ago, called *The Pastoral Muse*. “This is my outlet; writing is therapy for me,” says Wendy. “My mom wrote a book, and both of my grandmas were poets and writers. They were all historians, and I also like to write about history.

“We’ve all done it differently, but I keep the books, like my mom did, and I help with the cattle and feeding. I still feed one load to the heifers in the wintertime; it’s my fitness program.”

There are many ways to contribute to the ranch by serving in other capacities. In recent years Wendy got onto several boards, including the Idaho Sage Grouse Advisory Committee, the Partners Advisory Council for the University of Idaho Rangeland Center, and the planning team for the Sage Grouse and Grazing Research project that is still ongoing. “I’ve learned how the research world works. It’s fascinating, but I think they

try to prove everything except that cattle can actually maintain healthy rangelands if they are managed correctly,” she says.

“Most research, by design, has a narrow focus, which rarely addresses what we really need. These are good people with good intentions but producers need more holistic solutions.

“Other than the bookkeeping jobs for other entities, I’d always just been here on the ranch helping Mark. Our children have always helped, too. Working together as a family is very challenging and also very rewarding. Our son Seth and his wife have been here awhile and they live in the old homestead house. Our daughter Anna and her husband just moved back here this spring, to be a part of the ranch, but they both have jobs. We’re going to try this out and see how it goes. The future on our ranch is going to look different than how Mark and I did it, and that’s ok.”

Navigating all of these changes, and retaining positivity in the face of drought, rising input costs, etc. is a huge challenge. “Part of my role, and the role of many women on ranches, is that we tend to see the bigger picture. Mark is so caught up in the daily work that he doesn’t always look beyond what has to be done right now. Though he doesn’t always like to

hear it, I keep nudging him about the other things that we have to keep in mind.”

Wendy is also on the Idaho Ag Credit Board, which has been another interesting experience. “It’s been quite an education. There are so many opportunities to learn! I am also on the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and supervisor of our local Conservation District. That’s a new thing for me; I’ve only been at it for a couple years. It’s become way bigger than advocating for how cattle can be part of healthy



*The Pratts trailing the herd to summer range.*

ecosystems. We need to look at the soil as habitat for organisms and how healthy soils are the best place to store water. This important aspect is left out of most conversations,” she says.

Even the projects funded by NRCS and other government programs may not be the best for the land, depending on the context. “For instance, moving from flood irrigation—which is what we mostly do on our ranch—to sprinkler irrigation (with the purpose of “conserving” water) may or may not be the right thing to do ecologically. There are many benefits from flood irrigation,” she explains.

Water that is not used by plants seeps into nearby canals or streams and the underwater aquifer, keeping springs and streams flowing longer through summer. Ditches provide wildlife habitat as well. “Our ranch has lots of trees because of the ditches. This fact is often ignored or left out when people try to conserve water by reducing or moving away from flood irrigation,” she says.

“Our ranch is now a flood-irrigated island amongst a bunch of pivots. We are a valley irrigated operation surrounded by potato farms and high mountain range 45–50 miles away. We walk the cows with calves to range in the spring, wean calves in October and walk the cows back home in Nov-Dec and feed hay in the winter. Ours is a natural landscape and not a

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monoculture. We don't farm much except to occasionally plow a hayfield and replant it—but not as often as the hay people think we should. Where our house is located there's a canal going by, and some dry sand hills and some flood-irrigated ground, and a lot of trees and brush, and grass—and the cows come through. It's a way to live what we were taught in Holistic Management. We enjoy the birds and wildlife that we attract," Wendy says.

Trying to "conserve" water by changing to sprinklers is not really the answer. "Once again, it's taking things out of context and not looking at the whole picture. A water expert recently told me that efficiency always increases consumptive use of water. That was the first time I'd heard that distinction about consumptive use. It looks like flood irrigators are using a lot of water, but with sprinklers the water is evaporating or used directly by plants. Efficient yes, but is this considering the whole picture? Our emphasis needs to shift to healthy, organic-rich soil, perennial crops, or use of cover crops following a cash crop to keep the soil covered and living roots in the soil. With flood irrigation, especially with perennial crops like pasture, the water is not being consumed; it is being put back into the soil profile and recycled," Wendy says.

"We realize how little we can actually influence people about some of these realities, but we have to keep trying anyway. As I've aged I've figured out I'm not going to change very many things, but just try to do my small part. We have no alternative, except to just be bitter and complain, which is counterproductive.

"Beef production is accused of being an inefficient use of resources. Any inefficiency is actually a good thing, however, along with the magic of ruminant animals. Cattle return much of what they eat back to the soil surface in the form of manure and urine which feeds the soil. This cycling of plant material and carbon is the way nature intended.

"I'm not sure if I am actually advocating more for the rancher or for the public; ranchers need to step up and lead, and show they are doing a good job. They need to leave residual forage on pastures and look at the ground, and wake up to all the other types of organisms that our lands support. We are not just raising cows; we are trying to have healthy land, to grow healthy vegetation that feeds and provides habitat for many animals.

"One bright spot is the growing number of pro-grazing groups and soil health advocates, and people interested in regenerative agriculture. There are some good articles and documentaries showing that cattle can be good for the land. But there is also a large and growing influence around plant-based diets and lab-cultured meat that is very much against animal agriculture in its entirety."

"I did a TED talk in Idaho Falls, on 'Grazing to Heal the Earth.' It was difficult, trying to tell my humble little story, and the crucial story of photosynthesis and cycling of plants by ruminants to create food for the

rest of us, and how important it is to slow and store water in the soil. The recycling in nature (soil to grass to grazing animals to their excrement that nourishes the soil) is the basis of sustainable life. It's been gratifying to share this, and I've had some comments that makes me think I made some headway with people. We can all do our part."

Collaboration and "every voice in the room" to achieve good outcomes are principles that Wendy and Mark have used throughout their lives. "We have worked in many groups, natural resources and otherwise, and use these principles a lot. We can think of wildly successful examples and others that we are still working on," she says

"Don and Randee Halladay from Canada came to herd for us one summer. They were certified Holistic Management educators early on and were anxious to put animal handling practices to the test. We still quote them from time to time. Randee's words about "getting the questions

right" and about managing holistically being a 'process' rather than an end game were invaluable. Don taught Mark to rate pastures on expected animal/days/acre and how to plan for a range of recovery periods depending on growth rate. We've gone on from there to consolidate herds and do the best we can to get timing and intensity right."

### Into the Future

Mark's parents are still on the ranch and Mark and Wendy have two daughters and one son. "Our daughter Anna works in Blackfoot for

the Idaho Department of Agriculture. Her husband Cole works for a dairy co-op. Our son Seth works remotely for another agricultural company. His wife Leah is getting her master's degree in public policy, and they have a little girl. They all help us on weekends and when we are working cattle, so it is still very much a family operation," Wendy says.

"We did a holistic family goal a couple of times, but we have not done it since the kids came home to be an ongoing part of the ranch, and we know we need to redo our goal. This is a key piece, and this winter we really have to do it. We understand that the ranch will be different because they have other jobs and are not as around-the-clock dedicated as we are. They love it, but some things will be different—and who knows what may develop? They are working at jobs that are very demanding, so they can't put a lot of mental energy into the ranch, but they want to see it continue on."

When the kids were young and Mark's parents were a major part of the operation they created their first holistic goal. "I don't know how effective it was; it's not like we looked at it every day or posted it on our refrigerator though we did that for a while. When you ask yourselves how you want your life to be, our young son Seth said he wanted it to be 'juicy' and I always think of that! It's about living with intention and enjoying being in the moment as you plan for the future. I think we have lived with intention over those thirty years," she says. 🌱

You can read more about the Pratt Family at: <http://thepastoralmuse.blogspot.com/>.



*The Pratt herd on the mountain range in the fall.*



## DS Family Farm— Taking It to the Next Level

BY ANN ADAMS

**D**S Family Farm is a 160-acre farm in Malcolm, Nebraska owned and operated by Doug and Sheila Garrison started in 1997 with 70 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). They run Red Angus-Devon cross cattle and raise pastured poultry and pork all for direct market in their 30-inch average rainfall environment. Doug recently retired in 2021 from a 36-year career with the NRCS as a conservationist and has been ramping up the farm with the help of Holistic Management and other regenerative agricultural practices.

### Building a Knowledge Base

Doug was mostly doing GIS work with the NRCS and didn't feel he was as strong in the field work as he would like. As he began considering changing management practices on his farm he began exploring an adaptive management approach and reached out to the late Terry Gompert

who was an HMI Certified Educator and Extension Agent in Nebraska. One of the questions he had was how to explore stock density. "It was the simplest thing I ever learned," says Doug. "I saw Terry at a field workshop and he suggested I go to NRCS to find out what they would recommend for the amount to graze so many animals for a day and put them in that area. He said sometimes you'll guess wrong, but by the time you get around the field, you'll find you have a lot more to graze and you will see how much more you can carry."

Besides Terry, Doug also learned from other Holistic Management educators and practitioners by going to other workshops and watching videos and DVDs of Gabe Brown, Neil Dennis, Joel Salatin, Greg Judy, and Ralph Tate. He also took some Holistic Management online courses to continue to better understand how he could maximize the forage that he had to grow his grassfed business as well as make it more profitable. His government job had helped them float along with the farm business,



*Doug has found that fire is not as powerful a tool for improving land health as good animal impact and grazing.  
Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*



*The Nebraska prairie with increasing diversity on DS Family Farms. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*



*Doug and Sheila Garrison at their information booth.  
Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

but with retirement coming up he wanted the farm to be profitable by itself.

Doug started his grassfed beef program in 2011 and is currently running 35 Animal Units (AU) which was the capacity for the dry 2022 season. He can graze half of his CRP ground each year and he has been doing some bale grazing in the winter to improve soil health. In fact, in 2021 he put out 90 1,100-pound round bales. "It might take two years to work through the stuff on the ground," says Doug. "The hay is a combination of local grass hay, alfalfa, orchard grass mix, and a winter cover crop that I've hayed off as well as a warm season mix including Sudan. Competition has been an issue with the cattle so we are still experimenting with that. During the winter we don't use a back fence so they might have access to bales for a couple days."

Doug has about 12 permanent pastures and he moves the cattle daily with string polywire resulting in over 150 paddocks. He's excited about his ability to extend his grazing season. "I was grazing stockpile still through February in 2022. Then I use small bales through March-May. I'm bale grazing now through

May 20<sup>th</sup> as the start of the growing season. I am aiming for a full year of recovery in some areas, but at least 45 days as the minimum.

"With bale grazing we are getting more bare ground on the land that is coming out of long-term CRP. But, in our native prairie we've got excellent litter, and it is definitely increasing diversity. We are hoping that the litter on the CRP will increase as a result of the bale grazing over time.

"The CRP was a native mix of big and little bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass, and sideoats grama. But, now it is mostly just big bluestem left and it is knee high at best. But

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with our bale grazing we've got red clover, vetch, weeds, Illinois bundle flower (I did plant some flowers). The grass vigor is much greater with wider leaves and deeper color, and you can see the tillers. We also have more diversity."



*Pastured chickens are one of the products DS Family Farms direct markets. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

Doug also had been experimenting with fire as a management tool because of the brush encroachment on his pastures. "Before the cows we had a lot of honey locust and heavy thatch," says Doug. "So I nuked the quarter section with a burn and the natives responded in the first year. But then I listened to Terry and he talked about all the carbon going up in the air. I could see all the spacing between our bunch grasses so I haven't burnt since 2009."

Doug's efforts have been noticed and in early 2013 DS Family Farms received the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society's 2012 NSAS Beginning Farmer Award. He's also been involved in the National Center for Appropriate Technology's (NCAT) Soil for Water Program.

**Adding Value**

Doug has also been busy exploring how to increase the profitability of his small farm. He likes the quick income from chickens as compared to grassfed beef and his also added pigs to the mix in 2022. "I went to a local guy and started with four of his pigs to give it a try," says Doug. "It was easier than I thought it would be so now we have our 16 X 16-foot pigmobile that I move once a day. I open up one side with a pig net to extend the area. The main drawback is the daily feeding, which makes me wonder if we should get sheep instead who can use the forage better."



*Doug has experimented with the effect of animal impact on a monoculture of Reed canary grass. He's found the cattle can set it back so other plants have an opportunity to come in and create more diversity as well as opening up the canopy so there is more open water. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

At this point Doug has hay, cow/calf, yearling, and finishing enterprises along with the chickens and pigs. He does do some custom beef where people can buy a quarter of a cow and pick it up at the locker as well as selling retail beef by the piece both from the farm or by delivery. Doug is exploring other market opportunities as he currently sees the marketing link in the value chain to be the weakest.

"I know I need to tighten up my financial analysis," says Doug. "I enjoy what I'm doing and we are cash flowing, but I want to better understand where I should focus my attention to make this a more profitable deal. We've been growing conservatively with no debt as we tried to figure things while I was working. Now it's time to take the next step. I bought HMI's Grazing Planning software that Ralph Tate developed and that's really helped me project out my forage, and I've been grazing for over 10 years." Doug's focus on continuing education is one of the hallmarks of adaptive management.



*Doug has found that grazing tall grass has helped jump start the soil biology on his farm. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

**On-Farm Research**

Doug has also been doing some on-farm research on both his soil health/land productivity and to learn more about the health of his animals and how that translates to healthier food. Each year they have their beef analyzed to see the Omega 6: Omega 3 ratio. They are aiming to get as close to 1:1 as possible compared to the 14.5:1 that corn-fed beef has, which is linked to inflammation, cancer, and heart disease.

In the last 8 years they have averaged 1.85:1. Two years they had their high of 2.4:1 which was due to grazing CRP land when the grass was getting rank and they were moving too slowly



*Doug has experimented with various ways to contain pigs to get the density, impact, and control that he wants.*

*Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

through the grass. The other case was when the cattle were eating hay. Doug now makes sure to flash graze the CRP land after they come in by their July 15<sup>th</sup> start date.

Doug is also collaborating with the Colorado Conservation Tillage Association (CCTA) on their FARMS Project (Farms Advancing Regenerative Management Systems). They have been planting cool-season annuals into the warm-season dominated pastures for a pasture cropping experiment that will hopefully feed the soil biology and provide some additional feed for the cattle. Doug planted the first cover crop in 2020 and they got two inches of rain for some good germination. However, they had a dry summer of 2021 with no rains coming until the end of October.

Another interesting experiment that Doug tried was how to get more diversity in a monoculture stand of Reed canary grass. He brought his cattle in 2015 and they grazed and trampled, opening up the canopy



*Doug has been able to extend his growing season and his cattle graze through much of the winter with stockpiling and bale grazing. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

and allowing more diversity to emerge in this swampy area. Doug had been hunting with a wildlife biologist on his land 20 years ago and asked the biologist what he could do to create more diversity for wildlife. The biologist suggested burning. Doug notes that they did burn that area several times before he decided to try his herd. "Let's just say burning had NO impact compared to what the herd was able to do in just a few weeks," says Doug. "In addition, the 'herd effect' has now proven to have a lasting impact!"

Doug notes that from a production standpoint the Reed canary grass will produce more pounds per acre, but he prefers to have the diversity so there is more stability and resilience in the system than the boom and bust of a monoculture. In this way, the cows have more a salad bar when they graze and wildlife can thrive on the edges of the habitat.

Doug also learned a valuable lesson during their first Animal Welfare certification process. The inspector told them to have a manure sample checked by a veterinarian to see what the worm count was. They assumed they'd pass with flying colors but instead they were told the egg count was 1,200 per gram. Clearly, they were losing production and



*Doug provides a saltwater brine for his cattle to provide minerals.*

*Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.*

animal performance with a worm load like that.

They decided to mix equal parts apple cider vinegar, diatomaceous earth, and salt to create a non-toxic supplement for the herd. They fed the herd from a tub and also added the homeopathic remedy, Cina, to their water in the fall and early spring. When they had a worm count down that spring the report was 200 eggs per gram, an acceptable amount for them. While they were glad the supplementation helped, they have also decided to improve their grazing strategy by moving the cattle more often to increase their grazing heights. Their goal now is move the herd twice a day given certain seasons and locations on the farm. They may experiment with more moves.

### A Passion for Health

Doug says that HMI has trained many of his mentors and they have been role models for him that he has tried to emulate. He has taken the

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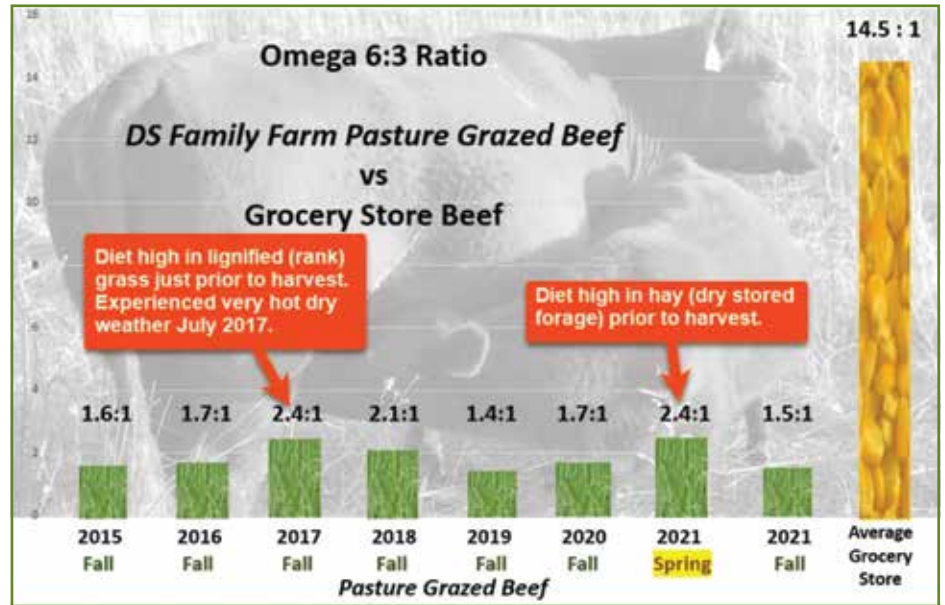
principles and examples they have provided and adapted them to his unique situation. But, ultimately, to succeed at farming you need to have a passion and desire for it, “A burning in your belly,” says Doug. “That’s what keeps you going when things go south.”

Doug knows something about things going south and having a fire in the belly. In 1997 Doug had some health issues and he and his wife started talking about raising their own cattle, but it wasn’t appealing to Doug because he saw what conventional grazing looked like for the animals and for the land. But as his health continued to worsen he continued to investigate grassfed beef and that in turn led him to HMI Certified Educator Terry Gompert who told him about grazing that could be good for the land, the animals, and the people.

That lifestyle change did result in healing and a conviction that this type of farming was important work. “Those kind of issues are coming up for the people we see,” says Doug. “That’s why we do what we do. We just had a young lady come to our farm with two young kids. She just happened to research regenerative agriculture and found us. These kinds of conversations and their desire for our food and for the information we provide is what

keeps you going. It’s also great to see the little ones petting the chickens. We’re helping people reconnect with agriculture.” 🌱

To learn more about the DS Family Farms go to: <https://dsfamilyfarm.com/>.



Doug has been sending in tissue samples for the last 8 years to see how his beef measures up to the 14.5:1 ratio of Omega 6: to 3 of corn-fed beef in the store. He’s found that his beef has averaged 1.85:1 with a couple of years high at 2.4:1 due to feeding hay or grazing rank hay. Photo Credit: DS Family Farms.

## James Ranch Family Delegated Meeting Process

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

timeframes are clear. The Scribe is expected to distribute the decisions to all meeting participants within 48 hours of the meeting. The Scribe is not expected to record excessive context or individual discussion.

### Goalkeeper

We added this role to make sure a decision does not conflict with our Mission Statement and Three-Part Holistic Goal. The Goalkeeper listens and steps in if they detect a potential conflict and either the goal is changed, or the decision is modified or discarded.

### Coach

Upon conclusion of the meeting, the Coach is given 10 minutes of monologue to evaluate how the team prepared and performed for the meeting by giving positive and constructive feedback for improvement. The feedback is both as a team as well as for individuals. Good coaching is critical to team development, and it teaches everyone on how to give good, meaningful feedback.

### Decision Maker

The James Family does not use this role because we have chosen to be managed by consensus decision making. However, if you chose to have one decision maker, the process still is effective as the decision maker is making informed decisions after gathering input from team members. 🌱

To learn more about the James Ranch visit: <https://jamesranch.net>

## Pipelines versus Platforms

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

transdisciplinary research and action agendas,” and offers many insights into the tension between bottom-up, farmer-centered learning efforts, and the top-down pipelines that have sometimes sought to suppress or negate them.

Agroecology requires an approach to knowledge that transcends compartmentalized, reductionist, market-led, and elitist knowledge systems in favour of bottom-up, people-led, holistic, and transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge and wisdom.

The co-creation, exchange, and mobilization of knowledge and evidence creates new entry points to systemic transformation and needs to be harnessed to facilitate action across food systems. Evidence on its own does not catalyze change due to structural barriers, such as short-term thinking, cheap food, export orientation, and narrow measures of success, that keep industrial food systems locked in place. Unlocking these structural barriers requires changing our research, education, and innovation systems.

There are pdf and multimedia versions in English, Spanish, French here: <https://futureoffood.org/insights/the-politics-of-knowledge-compendium/>. See also Dan Yankelovich on the public learning curve at: <https://managingwholes.com/pages/democracy-problem.html> 🌱

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## PROGRAM ROUND UP

### 2022 REGENERATE Conference a Success

HMI is excited to report that the 2022 REGENERATE Conference hosted by the Quivira Coalition, the American Grassfed Association and HMI and held at the National Western Center in Denver, Colorado on November 2-4, 2022 provided quality regenerative agriculture content to 582 participants who either attended the conference in person or virtually or participated in one of the many educational events connected to the conference held in New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. Participants came from 40 states and 8 countries with a large percentage of participants new to this conference and/or young/new agrarians.



*Holistic Management practitioners Mark Biaggi (with microphone) and Coley Burgess with HMI Executive Director Wayne Knight (on right) leading a roundtable on regenerative grazing.*

In addition, the conference also offered a very robust “Webinar Week” held the week before the conference with such topics as: Leasing Your Future; The Carbon Farming Market; Erosion Control and Amendments; Economic Success with Regenerative Grazing; Introduction to a Zero Waste Production System; 5 Steps to Protecting Your Farm, Legally Speaking; How to Do a Gross Profit Analysis; Low-Cost, Low-Risk Grazing; Accessing Markets for Regenerative Practices, and a host of other educational webinars.

The theme for this year’s conference was “Cultivating Restorative Economies” and speakers included: Sarah Mock, Kate Greenberg, Oliver Chedghey, Mark Biaggi, Coley Burgess, Beth Robinette, LaRae Wiley, John Liu, Dorn Cox, Jessica Chiartas, Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Linda Faillace, Neal Thapar, Mariela Cedeño, and numerous other informative speakers.



*New Agrarian Program Graduation ceremony. Photo Credit: REGENERATE Conference*

Roundtable topics where participants could engage more deeply with speakers and other members of the conference community included: Funneling the Money Where it Matters; Impact of Federal Policy on the Ground and How We Can Influence It; Developing Drought Tolerant Cover and Forage Seed for the Southwest; Giving Voice to Nature Through Data; New Paradigms, New Tools: Rethinking Rangeland Conservation; Alternative Economic Approaches to Food Sovereignty and Justice; Triple Bottom Line: Supporting Profit, People and Planet with Producer-Owned Collaboratives; Revising the Family Farm; Young Agrarians: Living the Questions Now and Seeking Bold Solutions;

and Cultivating Holistic Wellness Among Agricultural Producers.

The National Western Center was a new venue for the REGENERATE Conference and there was a great deal of interest in the event with this new location and Colorado State University helped sponsor our opening social on the night of November 2nd. We also tried something new this year with an assortment of food trucks to provide a variety of foods and the opportunity to use donated food from regenerative farms and ranches.

As with previous REGENERATE Conferences, there was an application for scholarships for young agrarians through the HERD Fellowship. This year there were 23 HERD Fellows from around the country who came to learn about the innovative practices, programs, and policies discussed at the conference.

Thanks to all our sponsors who made this programming possible including: No Regrets Initiative, Funders for Regenerative Agriculture, the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Foundation, The Thornburg Foundation, Regenerative Agriculture Foundation, Grasslans Charitable Foundation, Mighty Arrow Family Foundation, Lydia B. Stokes Foundation, Taos Ski Valley Foundation, Colorado Department of

Agriculture Foundation, Tomkat Ranch Educational Foundation, Nancy Ranney & David Levi, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Colorado State University, Natural Grocers, El Pomar Foundation, Denver Zoo, Fort Union Ranch, Other Half Processing, Lone Mountain Cattle, Ferrell Ranch, Biological Capital, Performance Food Service, Grassburger, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Merrill Lynch, Animas Foundation, Bumbleroot Foods, The Nature Conservancy-Colorado, Reba Epler-Land, Energy, Water Law & Real Estate, and First Southwest Bank.



*2022 HERD Fellows. Photo Credit: REGENERATE Conference*

And, we would also like to acknowledge our field day and workshop partners which includes: Mimms Ranch, Weaver Ranch, Del Cielo Farm/Pica Flor, Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute, Lowry Ranch, and the Agroecology Research Center.

### High Stock Density on NM Rangelands Open Gate

**O**n Sept 30, 2022, 23 participants influencing 215,127 acres gathered at HMI’s Hearth, Wind & Sol Ranch Open Gate just east of Estancia, New Mexico. Owners John and Debbie Humphries have invested in temporary and permanent fencing and water in order to run a contract grazing operation on their place at 45,000 pounds/acre stock density on 480 acres of their 640-acre ranch. They even have experimented with as high as 210,000 pounds/acre stock density.



*John Humphries explaining his water system to participants at the Hearth, Wind & Sol Ranch Open Gate.*

The day’s program began with John explaining about how his great-grandfather had homesteaded in the Estancia Valley in 1919 and that his

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## Program Roundup

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father still ranches near Willard—an arrangement that works well for John who has ready access to cattle for his experiment and for his father who has gotten a good lease fee.

After a very brief introduction it was time for John to move the cows as he must move them approximately every hour during the morning with a mid-day hiatus for the cows to ruminate and then they pick up with more moves again in the afternoon for a total of about seven moves a day. John said he walks between five to seven miles a day moving fence. This is a six-week experiment as John will turn the cattle back over to his father once the animals have completed their grazing on all of his property.

The cattle were a little intimidated by the crowd eagerly watching the move so when John dropped the fence they held fast until we backed off. The animals were in good condition with full rumens, slick hides and well-fleshed. In addition, their cow pies were just the right consistency—firm, but not too firm.

The animals always have access to water as John does not back fence, but the cattle are only in the lane for about a week. John developed an interesting diamond-shape fencing pattern to reduce the amount of walking he has to do each day. The animal impact was evident around the water points and where there was higher production bottomland, John said he could have gotten more grazing from those areas.

After John finished answering questions about how he chose his fencing and water supplies, the group moved to an area of the ranch that hadn't been grazed to learn how to perform a forage inventory assessment with the STAC method. John noted that the STAC method had allowed him to conservatively plan for the number of animals. He noted that last year was not a great rain year and the first set of STAC monitoring they did averaged 3–6 Animal Days per Acre (ADA). John had done some bale grazing last winter and with great rains this year, he had calculated 8–12 ADA, going with the 8 ADA for his calculations of the amount of space to give the herd.

We then broke into groups to really find out how easy the STAC Method was and how to make it more accurate. Each group learned to determine what was edible or counted as forage as well as being able to estimate conservatively so participants could use this technique on their property.

Evaluations showed that everyone thought the program was good or excellent and that they would recommend the program to someone. Knowledge increase was 100%. People increased their knowledge around the value of grazing planning, how to plan for infrastructure development,

how to assess the quantity of forage they have, how to trial animal density, how to determine when to move animals based on their behavior and land condition, how to determine return on investment, and how to monitor the health of ecosystem processes.

Thanks to John and Debbie for an excellent tour and the lunch. Thanks also to the Thornburg Foundation for their support of this program.

## Advanced Grazing Planning Workshop Mimms Ranch, Texas

West Texas was blessed with good rains ahead of the HMI and Dixon Water Foundation's (DWF) workshop titled "Turning Desert Into Grassland," held on September 20–21, 2022—making the results of DWF's efforts to regenerate grasslands on the



*Mimms Ranch—discussing cover and forage growth with Holistic Planned Grazing. Photo Credit: Wayne Knight.*



*Mimms Ranch—discussing forage growth, mineral cycle and water cycle under CG management. Photo Credit: Wayne Knight.*

Mimms Ranch outside of Marfa, Texas clearly evident on the range.

DWF's mission is to show how Holistic Planned Grazing (HPG) can be used as an effective tool to increase profitability, reduce costs and regenerate land in most regions of Texas. Their Mimms Ranch eloquently shows how planned grazing versus set stocking/

continuously grazed (CG) improves soil cover, plant and animal species diversity and increases carrying capacity.

Part of the workshop covered the implications of these different management approaches. Due to the unpredictable rainfall in the Chihuahuan desert region, livestock carrying capacity must fluctuate to match the vegetation growth. To ensure that the trial of HPG versus CG yields meaningful results, Dixon keeps the carrying capacity the same across the two different management areas.

The visual results provide a stark contrast in soil and vegetation cover. The CG land has much more bare ground, than the HPG equivalent. On the CG areas plant diversity is much less diverse than with HPG. There is

## Relationship as Resolution

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

grateful for all the teachers I have had who have shown me how to ask better questions and embrace curiosity.

One of the more thought-provoking talks was titled "Demystifying Land Back: A Practical Community-Based Approach" which featured long-time Holistic Management practitioner Beth Robinette of the Lazy R Ranch near Cheney, Washington and LaRae Wiley of the Salish School of Spokane and a member of the

Colville Confederated Tribe.

Beth spoke eloquently of her discovery journey and how after learning the full history of how she and her family had been able to acquire their ranch, she sought out ways to share her ranch with the Indigenous people in her community. Her last point was to be persistent and patient in your efforts as it might not be easy to build those kinds of community bridges. She worked on forging relationships

and in the process found ways to be of service that has enriched her life.

Perhaps resolution isn't quite the right word because it implies an end point or singular solution. In my mind, it implies progress and true growth beyond a zero-sum game. It implies win-win engagement and collaboration. Those are investments worth making and sharing with others so we can be living examples of healthy symbiosis and reciprocity. 🌱



also more evidence of both overgrazing and overrest or decadent plants, dead or dying from non-use.

Research conducted by students from Sul Ross State University show that animals and birds prefer the HPG areas to the CG areas, too. Pronghorn antelope collared and tracked spend more time on the HPG areas. Bird surveys show similar results.

The workshop set out to help ranchers and land managers work with the 3 variables that need to be balanced to run a profitable business with improving soil life and more diversity over the long term. Wayne Knight, Executive Director of HMI and a presenter at the workshop, explained it as a balance between keeping livestock in productive condition while pushing forage utilization to accelerate nutrient cycling while effectively managing forage inventory in case of prolonged drought. A chunk of the workshop delved into the importance of livestock well adapted to the local environment in which they are expected to thrive at low cost, living predominantly off the forage available to them on land with healthy ecosystem processes.

The dilemma, Wayne explained, is that to improve soil life and water infiltration, grasses and forbs need to be grazed at density to feed the soil microbes that build soil structure, which speeds up water infiltration. Conversely, grazing too much will lead to forage shortages and severe destocking or poor animal performance during prolonged droughts. "It's like walking a tight rope with these 3 variables," says Wayne.

Casey Wade, VP of Grazing Operations at DWF, explained how he and his team evaluate available forage, and then portion it out over their prolonged dormant season grazing plan. The forage assessment is to help determine how much forage they have for the animals over the period they have chosen as a safe bet for more growth – about 18 months.

Casey explained how he and his team try to move the HPG herd daily to get the density as high as possible and provide the herd with constant selection of uncontaminated / fouled forage.

Since there is so much uncertainty in rainfall, growth rates and markets, monitoring is an essential component of effective management. Philip Boyd, Dixon's VP of Research and Communication, explained how the organization has 2 parts to its monitoring efforts. The most crucial component for management decisions is lead-indicator monitoring—indicators that will help the cattle management team make informed decisions about what they need to do next to optimize animal performance and profitability and simultaneously improve ecosystem function for future forage production and improved ecosystem function.

The second pillar is to show the scientific evidence that the collective decisions are achieving the organization's mission—improved soil health, improved diversity, wildlife numbers and diversity.

Wayne then discussed the importance of understanding the implication of application of 3 tools on ecosystem function in any environment:

1. Animal Density (the concentration of animals and how this impacts positively or negatively the environment),
2. Plant Recovery time (how much time following grazing, either light or heavy, does it take for plants to recover)
3. Depth of Graze – what effect does the proportion of the grazable material utilized and/or trampled by the herd have on recovery time and on future production potential.

Risk of running out of forage is much more significant in the Chihuahuan desert than for ranches with higher consistent rainfall. However, the forage in west Texas retains its nutritional value well over time.

To determine appropriate use of the tools of grazing, animal impact, and rest, Wayne explained how Graeme Hand's Safe-To-Fail Trials can

be used to learn the intersection of these variables at low cost and low risk to animal performance or land degradation. Casey and his team then demonstrated how to set up and execute the first phase of the trail—the density component. Following the ultra-high-density trial, it is essential to watch the trial area to observe the length of time it takes for the grasses to recover for optimal re-grazing. The next phase is to leave the trial area to see when the grass is overrested—when its nutritional value has fallen into an undesirable amount of rest and or is creating less digestible conditions in the plant.

William Jewett, NRCS consultant, did a great job of showing the physical and species differences between the sites that were visited in the HPG and CG sites. Sites were selected to show similar soil type, aspect, slope and history to allow for realistic comparison of management tools.

28 workshop participants, who manage 142,935 acres, registered for the workshop. 60% of attendees were under the age of 45 years. Evaluations showed that all participants were satisfied with the workshop and noted that they appreciated how open and accessible the information was and how there were so many really knowledgeable presenters. One participant wrote:

"It was a great deeper dive into the how and why of regenerative grazing. I'm so grateful a workshop was done in this area where it is "harder" to make this process work."

Our thanks to all those who helped make this event possible, particularly the staff at the Mimms Ranch and the **Dixon Water Foundation** for their sponsorship of this event.

## Pure Pastures Open Gate Field Day Results

**D**rought has ravaged much on Texas this year so that was a primary focus of our Open Gate at Pure Pastures located near Canyon Lake, Texas. HMI's



*Jeremy Eubanks in the Pure Pastures farm shop sharing details about their operation.*

Executive Director, Wayne Knight, and Linda Pechin-Long, HMI's newest Certified Educator, presented our valuable planning tools at this field day to help ranchers manage drought by going through the steps that enable the matching of available forage to animal numbers. Jeremiah Eubank, ranch host and manager, also brought these messages home with his presentation about the practices they use and the challenges they face on Pure Pastures. The 35 participants for the day manage 12,987 acres and they all increased their learning about these topics during the day and said they would recommend this type of programming to others.

The key topics that Linda started out the day with was the steps to enable early reduction of animal numbers to allow for the optimal use of forage grown. By going through these steps, a stock manager is able to carry the most stock through an extended dry season at low cost and with confidence. By reducing stock early, the manager is able to determine the economics of hay feeding, to choose to sell animals while they are in good productive condition and therefore able to fetch a decent price. Additional advantages are that land health can be maintained and tough decisions can be made before crisis and panic set in when markets are glutted and animal condition are poor and stress levels are high.

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Also, during the program Wayne Knight and host Jeremiah Eubank helped participants estimate forage yield with the STAC method. Next, they discussed how to calculate total animal number on a Standard Animal Unit (SAU) basis and how to determine a conservative estimate of the time until it rains, and growth begins.

Linda also explained how to monitor a grazing plan to ensure that the forage estimates match the actual utilization rate. If the utilization rate matches the plan, then there is comfort that the forage estimations were correct. If the utilization rate is faster than planned then it will show up as shorter than planned graze periods. If this happens, modifying animal numbers to match the faster than planned utilization level as soon as possible will enable the manager to keep the most animals with best animal condition possible through until it rains again and growth has begun.

Jeremiah did a great job of presenting Pure Pastures' story, including the value of using Holistic Management to handle the complexities involved with running a pasture-finished line of pork, lamb, and beef products. He described how he and his wife Maggie had started out and grown the online sales, deliveries and on-ranch shop. He also explained how he uses PastureMap to plan and monitor their grazing moves.

The Eubanks' shop was the venue for the morning's presentations. Daniel Oppenheimer from the Hill Country Alliance introduced his organization's work in the Texas Hill Country and how collaborations are the backbone of ensuring that working lands remain healthy and vibrant. Frank Davis from The Hill Country Conservancy explained how his organization is helping to preserve lands with the help of conservation easements.

Thanks to Jeremiah and Maggie Eubank, hosts at Pure Pasture, for their hospitality. Thanks to all the collaborators who brought the day together to make it a wonderful learning experience. Finally, thanks to the **Dixon Water Foundation** for their funding of this event. 🌱

**Book Review** by ANN ADAMS

***Green Grass in the Spring: A Cowboy's Guide to Saving the World***

By Tony Malmberg; Page Publishing, 2022, Pp 213



I have been reading Tony Malmberg's writing for almost 20 years, since when he would occasionally write pieces for HMI's publication, *IN PRACTICE*. I always found his writing to be insightful because of his humility and curious, open mind. For that reason, I was eager to read Tony's new book, *Green Grass in the Spring: A Cowboy's Guide to Saving the World*. I was not disappointed. Tony's writing is honest and forthright, telling stories and providing scientific detail in a way that makes it accessible to a wide audience.

Tony's introduction to and implementation of Holistic Management is legendary as he pushed the boundaries of how to implement the Holistic Grazing Planning, but also because of his interest in and willingness to engage with the government employees and community in his region to help more people understand what he was doing, the results he was seeing, and the benefits they could experience.

The essays about those experiences as well as how he used the Holistic Financial Planning process and the decision testing questions to determine the right course of action, including the financing of his land and his marriage to his wife, Andrea, (a particularly entertaining chapter you will want to read) are wonderfully crafted stories that draw the reader and make you root for Tony and his journey toward a better life.

As Judith Schwartz writes in her foreword: "Holistic Management's emphasis on observation and monitoring makes it harder to fool ourselves; it also provides a structure for facing reality, and ourselves, head-on." Indeed, Tony embraces this tool to help have those difficult conversations whether with his own family members or when working with a collaborative addressing water shortages in the West.

Tony begins his book with sections titled "Disturbance," "Overgrazed," or "Succession." In these essays he not only describes these land

management tool concepts, but he weaves them into the social components that are mirrored in human experience. Through it all is woven the memoir of his life as things fell apart and what he learned along the way about the preconceived notions of what was "good" or "bad" and how they constrained his creativity and effectiveness.

Tony sprinkles quotes from Lao Tzu, Allan Savory, and Shakespeare, and writes about how in his darkest hours he began to read broadly from the Bible to Lee Iacocca to Alvin Toffler. It was then that he began to explore changing management practices and the way he viewed life.

As part of this narrative, Tony writes about the time he spent managing investors ranches across the West. From that experience he became clear of the major challenges facing ranchers everywhere: 1) They had too much machinery on their places that was rusting and depreciating; 2) They had crippling debt from borrowing against the land's appreciated value; and 3) poor estate planning left complicated management and assets extremely vulnerable. He knew these traps could be avoided and wanted to get past the experience of most ranchers that his friend, Ron Cunningham, described: "Most ranchers have ten years of experience that they repeat five or six times. Can you get past that ten years and learn something new?" Tony said that question focused him to learn more.

One of the ways Tony learned was to force himself to listen to outsiders, those outside his peer group. "I started to forcing myself to stay, listen, and learn. It was uncomfortable, but I became more comfortable with being uncomfortable. I knew that too much comfort and tradition had strangled me." Enter Holistic Management in 1987. Tony now had a framework to hone his questioning mind and improve his management skills.

With that framework came the discipline to question old practices and stoked his curiosity to try to integrate these principles through a grazing plan. The results were that after seven years of planned grazing on his ranch he went to a pasture to prepare for a cattle move and realized how there was something different. He got out and began identifying grasses like blue bunch wheat grass, leafy green needlegress, needle-and-thread grass and Indian ricegrass that

## Reader's Forum

### Upcoming Opportunities and Challenges

BY DON CAMPBELL

October 25, 2022

Greeting friends,

I have been reflecting on the future. I want to stress that these ideas are my thoughts. I invite you to pause, reflect, and decide for yourself what you see coming and how you might prepare for the future.

I met Allan Savory about 35 years ago. I remember Allan telling me that we would see more floods and droughts as we moved ahead unless we stopped the desertification that was occurring around the world. This desertification would eventually lead to a worldwide food and water shortage. I never doubted Allan. I must admit that I didn't think that these things would occur in my lifetime.

As I observe the weather patterns in my area, in my country and around the world I believe we will soon have a worldwide shortage of food and water.

The results of this shortage will be catastrophic. They will be felt around the world. I can't imagine what the changes will be. However, I think change is coming and we would be wise to prepare so that we may prosper in the new times, and that we may be part of the solution, not part of the problem as we move ahead.

I believe Holistic Management can help us move ahead. Holistic Management helps us make decisions that are simultaneously socially, environmentally and financially sound. My favourite way to say this is: Holistic Management helps us care for our people, improve our land, and make a profit. This has always been important; it will be vital as we move into uncharted waters.

Agriculture is the foundation of civilization. This knowledge has been lost in our society. We need to educate people to this fact.

There have been about 26 past civilizations

that failed because their agriculture failed. People need to become aware of these facts. We need to keep agriculture alive and thriving for our benefit and the benefit of society at large.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities during this time will be:

1. The price of food will rise.
2. Food will become a priority. Luxuries will become less important.
3. We are entering an era when primary agriculture will thrive. This will be long lived, it will likely last 20 plus years.
4. The price for primary producers will increase. In my lifetime the highest prices for feeder cattle relative to the cost of production occurred in the 1950's. As we move ahead, feeder cattle prices will rise to exceed the cost of production on a regular basis.
5. Good management has always paid well. As we move ahead, it will pay even better.

#### CHALLENGES

The key challenge we will be facing is that the weather patterns will be totally unpredictable. Our management skills will be severely tested. I believe Holistic Management gives us the tools to meet these challenges.

#### POSSIBLE CHANGES

I believe these may be some of the possible changes we will see:

1. Forage type cattle will rise in popularity.
2. A low stocking rate may be essential.
3. A flexible stocking rate may be essential.
4. It may be advantageous to run a cow / yearling operation as opposed to a cow / calf operation.
5. Ethanol and biodiesel may disappear.
6. The feedlot industry may disappear.
7. Farming may move to a more regenerative model. This would include more forages, cover crops, and cocktail cropping. This will increase the amount of forage for livestock feed.

8. The value of cattle will be recognized in farming. We will see mixed farms between farms.
9. Farmers and ranchers will make win/win deals.
10. The importance of and the ability of grazing animals to sequester carbon will be recognized.
11. We may be paid for carbon sequestration.

#### Possible Action Steps

Given these potential changes, you might want to consider these action steps:

1. Do whatever is necessary to care for your people, improve your land, and make a profit. You are in charge.
2. Maintain your health and the health of your team.
3. Hone and increase your grazing and financial planning skills.
4. Share the benefits Holistic Management has given you with others.
5. Reach out to other producers. Host a field day. Share your knowledge and experience. People will be looking for a better way.
6. Reach out to extension agents, university professors, environmentalist, friends and relatives.
7. Talk to your local and federal elected officials.
8. Be part of the solution not part of the problem.

I feel confident that we are entering uncertain times. We are facing the biggest challenge since the end of the Second World War. I believe we are well equipped to rise to the occasion and to prosper.

I believe in you. I wish you a bright future. I would appreciate any feedback you may have. 🌱

*Don Campbell is a Holistic Management practitioner and Certified Educator in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada and can be reached at: doncampbell@sasktel.net*

had not been there for the 18 years he had been managing before. And, they were healthy stands, not small seedlings. He realized his management meant there was 80% more productivity versus when he had been grazing that area all season, while improving ecological health and function.

At the end of his book Tony writes that a keystone species must create more life. Our choice as humans is to make decisions to create more life, more green grass in the spring. Tony's book is a study in one person's attempt to do that because of his passion for life and learning. You can purchase *Green Grass in the Spring* from ReaderHouse. 🌱

to give maximum recovery to decrease the parasite load for the sheep and at the same time keep Bermuda grass from lignifying by grazing the cattle behind them as needed.

“We did this on the 69 acres of bottom land and 20 acres around the house with 35 ewes and 20 cows. We were able to improve the land so much that we also weaned 25 calves from another person. We can carry all our animals without feeding hay although we may occasionally supplement with alfalfa in the winter. In August a neighbor passed away and the family decided to quickly sell the property. It was a big financial investment, but again, with financial planning training, we were able to come up with a GPA (Gross Profit Analysis) on converting a large barn into a horse boarding facility to help offset a large percentage of the mortgage payment. We will be able to graze the sheep and cattle through the horse paddocks in our grazing plan. This has doubled our land. Our two daughters are both Aggies. Our youngest graduated in May and she will begin doing our books and managing the barn. Our oldest daughter has plans to help us plan a Farm to Table Dinner on the property as well.

“We used Stay-Tuff Fence around the perimeter because we have heavy coyote pressure. We use a 32-joule energizer and we put our cattle in with the sheep, but we originally did a leader/follow system with the sheep going first.”

Lauri notes that they have a lot of worm pressure for the sheep, so they make sure to not bring the sheep into any paddock in the summer when there has been rain without at least 90 days

since the last graze and ideally the grass is at least six inches tall. She also keeps an eye out for worm load by running regular fecal checks if they've had a lot of rain and checking FAMACHA scores on the sheep's eyes. She's watching which sheep do well and follows a 90/10 rule of culling 10% of the sheep that have the most problems. Using this protocol has greatly decreased the need to deworm sheep with chemicals.

Lauri does do some direct sales and farmer's markets, including putting up a sign in their vet clinic to get people to buy half/whole lamb carcasses and cuts. However, there have been challenges with getting a processing date because of the backlog at small processing facilities. They used to have Red Devons, but they needed to get slightly larger frame size so they now have crossed them on a Red Angus that finish at around 1,100 pounds.

Lamb is at an all-time high market price. It is easy to get the Dorpers to 70–80 pounds where they are bringing \$4–\$4.50/lb live weight at the sale

barn. This is a currently more profitable than holding them for almost a year to get to a slaughter weight of 110–120 lbs and then not always being able to get into a state inspected processing plant and then direct marketing them for meat. Because all their sheep are registered, Lauri sells what she can as seed stock and can get \$400–\$1,700/animal. “HMI training helped us see the triple bottom line for this enterprise—GPA of selling at 70 lbs vs 110 lbs,” says Lauri. “We also considered the social aspect of time involved in direct marketing with our schedule and selling early (less time of young animals



*Lauri has also been experimenting with “Safe to Fail” trials on stock density with her cattle. Here you can see what the forage looked like before (left) and after (right) she grazed one acre for 29 hours with 39 Standard Animal Units (SAU) of cows and calves.*

grazing which will allow more ewes to produce lambs, has been invaluable to us. Using the triple bottom line of financial, ecological and social aspects to reach our holistic goal has also been invaluable.”

Lauri decided to join HMI's Certified Educator Training Program because she enjoyed the mentoring she did as part of the Beginning Farmer/Rancher Program she participated in. “The need is huge,” says Lauri. “We have hundreds of people coming through our clinic and nobody knows about planned grazing or what regenerative agriculture is and how you can have enough grass to not have to feed. We have one client that sells hundreds of horses a year. She keeps a few cattle for the horses to work. I talked her into cutting her paddocks up and grazing the cattle. People are watching us graze as they come to the clinic and they can actually see the difference.”

As a Certified Educator trainee, Lauri has assisted in teaching online classes and instructing in HMI's Regenerative Agriculture Mentor Program (RAMP). “I love to see people have success,” says Lauri. “It's frustrating that so many people want a silver bullet and think these changes are going to happen overnight. They don't make a plan, but we are helping them with those plans. It doesn't have to be complicated, they just need to start.”

Lauri has donated to HMI because of the work HMI does to help people learn this process and not be dependent on consultants. “Every Certified Educator that I've worked with, no matter what part of the country, they want to help people meet that triple bottom line,” says Lauri. “They want to help them see the whole picture. Sometimes private consultants try to make it too difficult, like people can't do it by themselves. HMI helps them learn that they can do it by themselves, and they can reach out when they have questions.”

Lauri is excited about the future. They just purchased more land to expand the operation to a total of 180 acres where she could run 80–120 ewes and 40–50 cows. They have an intern now and she sees so much opportunity as more people move to the land and need to understand how to manage that land regeneratively. Lauri will be there to help answer questions, provide an example, and help them figure out their starting point on their regenerative journey. 🌱



*The Cejella's Dorper sheep grazing fully recovered forage.*

# Certified Educators

The following Certified Educators listed have been trained to teach and coach individuals in Holistic Management. On a yearly basis, Certified Educators renew their agreement to be affiliated with HMI. This agreement requires their commitment to practice Holistic Management in their own lives and to seek out opportunities for staying current with the latest developments in Holistic Management.

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## DEVELOPMENT CORNER

### Dry Creek Livestock— A Regenerative Journey

**L**auri Celella and her husband, Dave, run Dry Creek Livestock and Poetry Dorpers, near Poetry, Texas. Dave is a DVM and runs the Rockwall Equine Center as well, which brings them some traffic for their sheep and livestock business. Lauri grew up showing livestock and had a small flock of sheep and her father had some cattle.

In 2011 the Celella's started grazing some stockers and Dave went to a Bud Williams clinic to learn more about low-stress livestock handling. That year they fed hay on 50 acres with their 12 cows. By the time they sold that property in 2018 they had 20 cows and 30 Dorper ewes and were feeding no hay unless there was a major winter event.

That management transition was in part to Lauri learning about Holistic Management through HMI's Beginning Women Farmer/Rancher Program in Texas in 2012. "We wanted to start playing around with cattle as we had just heard about high density grazing," says Lauri. "We went to one of HMI's Open Gate field days where I heard about the Beginning Farmer/Rancher Program. That's how we got started."

Lauri says that she was struck by the Holistic Management philosophy that was presented in the program. "We learned how everything is



*Lauri Celella*



*The Celella's cattle and Karachan pups at sunset.*

intertwined—the environment, financial, and social," says Lauri. "People might be making a lot of money out of cattle and have covered ground, but they are spending their whole time taking care of the animals instead of going with family on vacation. We saw their kids hating what they were doing, because it took their family time away. We didn't want that either."

Lauri says really understanding and implementing recovery was a key component to what she learned in the Beginning Farmer Program. "We realized that we had to have enough recovery time to improve the land," says Lauri. "We get about 35 inches of rain so we can grow a lots of grass. When we started out with our grazing, we had one big paddock and we were set stocked with the land overgrazed and growing weeds. "We set up a lane down the middle and had 30 paddocks that were one to two acres each. We used poly wire and split those even further. We could also open up paddocks if we needed to be gone four or five days. We were able to provide 90-day recovery, although with the Bermuda grass we would shorten the recovery to 30 days in the spring. We wanted to bring more native grasses back, but the Bermuda is prolific. We also laid black poly pipe with a subsoiler from Tractor Supply and then we

used a 25-gallon water trough with quick connects to water four paddocks from one connection. We were able to lay that pipe all in one day because we have a sandy loam soil with no rocks."

Lauri also said that the financial planning she learned in the Beginning Farmer/Rancher Program helped them in making key financial decisions. "We had 35 acres and we had an opportunity to trade a piece of land with a 1031 Exchange to acquire 69 acres of bottom land that was behind us," says Lauri. "We used the financial planning to see if we could justify buying the land and looked at different scenarios and how

long it would take us to recoup money. We thought it would be 10 years to earn back the investment because it was so overgrazed. We broke the land into small sections with polywire and started to plan our grazing,

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