



Montana GLCI Quarterly Newsletter



Montana GLCI Steering Committee

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- Kris Walstad, Acting State Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS, Bozeman
- Carla Lawrence
DBA Carla at the Ranch
Roberts

Message from Dean Wang, Chairman, MT GLCI

This Quarterly Newsletter brings a tale of two halves, or perhaps 2/3 to 1/3, for the State of Montana. Last week, Karen and I accompanied our son Paul to UM orientation. From Billings on to Missoula crop and grass conditions looked very good. The eastern third of the State remains gripped in severe, if not record setting, drought. To compound the problem, North and South Dakota also remain in a severe drought. Most of the winter wheat in the area has been baled for hay, as there will be little, if any, dryland hay in the area. As I write this introduction on July 5th in Baker, it is 101 degrees with gusts to 32 mph. Locally, the forage appears to be adequate, and projects to last until weaning, but there will be little left for winter grazing.

We ate lunch in Gold Creek with John and Carole Hollenbeck at the Dinner Bell. I highly recommend the deli sandwiches. We thoroughly enjoyed the visit and the view of the Gold Creek greater metropolitan area. Their dryland winter wheat swaths were exceptional and the standing hay crop looked equally impressive.

The monthly committee conference calls continue to be well attended. Thank you for your participation and input. The National GLC convention is scheduled for December 2018 in Reno, NV. Please plan to attend. I'm already looking forward to the drive across MT, eastern and southern ID and northern NV. The views will be second to none in December.

The research and education projects have been funded for the most part. Red Lodge hosted the 41st Annual Montana Range Days on June 19-21. Thank you to the Carbon Conservation District and the local planning committee, volunteers and sponsors for an exceptional event.

In conclusion, we hosted an old rodeo friend, Peter Schulte, and his family from Australia for the July 4th holiday. They ranch on the eastern coast of Australia, which receives 70+ inches of rain per year. The temperature occasionally dips to an arduous 50 degrees. They struggle against heat, humidity, and pests, especially ticks, but are enjoying record cattle prices. They, like us, are frustrated by government intervention and environmental rules that impede full utilization of the available resources. It was great to see them in person. I haven't seen Peter in person since 1991 and hadn't met his wife, Tammy, and children Luke and Haley. We wish them safe travels and thank them for making the time to travel to Baker during their tour of the western US and southwestern Canada.

Best wishes and be safe. Please continue to pray for the safety of our troops and the wisdom of our leaders.

Dean Wang, Chairman, Montana GLCI

July

July 4: Independence Day

August

Enjoying the Summer and County Fairs

September

September 4: Labor Day
September 7-8: Montana Range Tout
September 11: Remembered

September 26-28: Women Stepping Forward for Ag



Partnership Spotlight–Ron Stoneberg

RON STONEBERG, MONTANA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS REPRESENTATIVE ON THE GLCI BOARD

Following the devastating soil losses during the "dirty thirties" the U.S. Congress passed laws (e.g. The Taylor Grazing Act and Public Law 46) and created the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to combat the causes of the massive wind and water soil erosion. One of the outcomes was the authorization for states to designate soil and water conservation districts (CDs). In 1939, the Montana legislature passed a law outlining the need and process for designating CDs.

The Montana Conservation District Law (Section 76-15-101 et seq., MCA) noted, "(1) that the farm and grazing lands of the state of Montana are among the basic assets of the state and that the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people; that improper land use practices have caused and have contributed to and are now causing and contributing to a progressively more serious erosion of the farm and grazing lands of this state by wind and water;.....". It listed the problems caused by the soil erosion and identified corrective practices including water control structures and water conserving farming practices. In addition, it suggested, "planting of waste, sloping, abandoned, or eroded lands with water -conserving and erosion-preventing plants;....". It also recommended, "restriction of number of livestock grazed, deferred grazing, and rodent eradication;.....".



Section 76-15-102. Declaration of policy, outlines the role and purpose of the Montana CDs. "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of the state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the state."

At present there are 58 CDs in Montana, most of which were formed in the 1940's. The CDs are governed by a non-paid, elected or appointed board of supervisors. The federal Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly SCS) provides personnel, equipment, office space, and extensive technical assistance to the districts. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is required by law to provide the CDs with administrative, technical, financial and legal assistance.

The results of 40 years of conservation work by the CDs were showcased, at least in NE Montana, during the drought of the 1980's. According to the weather office in Glasgow MT, the '80's drought was worse than in the '30's and lasted five years longer! While some of the light soiled farmland in McCone and Roosevelt counties blew and drifted, the rangelands, for the most part, remained stable and productive. On our ranch in south Valley County my wife's grandfather moved 300 cows to pasture north of Glasgow in the 1930's and returned a few years later with 50 head (the rest being sold to pay for the grass). In the 1980's, her father experienced only minor reductions. Much of the improvement in range condition between the 1930's and the 1980' droughts were due to technical and financial assistance for fencing and water development provided by the BLM, SCS/NRCS, and the CDs. Thanks to these agencies the rangeland in NE Montana is in better shape than when Lewis and Clarke traveled through here in 1805!

As a recently appointed Supervisor to the Valley County CD I am learning the roles and issues as the CD attempts to protect the natural resources of the county. The current major issue facing the district is the proposed introduction of wild, free-ranging, bison. I have also been appointed to represent the district on the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council (MRCDC) that consists of all CDs abutting the Missouri River. As one of the district's representatives on the Charles M. Russell NWR Working Group (CMR WG) I am attempting to shift the focus of the group towards assisting the CMR in collecting data on the impact of removing cattle on the vegetation and wildlife resources.

The goals and mission statements of GLCI overlap and compliment those of the Montana Association of CDs (MACD). Unfortunately, my isolation (off-grid, 45 miles from a paved road, etc.) limits my ability to have my finger on the pulse of either organization. Fortunately, the two entities have close connections at all levels which makes my job as a go-between much easier.



Rekindling the Flame by Martha Mintz

Disclaimer:
The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various authors and forum participants in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Montana GLCI, or the Montana GLCI steering committee and/or ex-official members.

Fire has long been fought on the native prairies of the Great Plains states, but recent research is looking to change that mentality. Lance Vermeire, a range-land ecologist at Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory in Miles City, Montana, has spent over a decade clearing the smoke on the benefits and best practices of prescribed burns on native northern mixed prairie. "Fire is an important process these rangelands have evolved with. When we remove an entire process, things don't function the same," says Vermeire. "In our region a lot of people have experienced the scary side of fire. While they can appreciate the benefits they see after, they don't have the confidence to do prescribed burns like we see in other prairie regions." Due to fire's blackened reputation in Great Plains states, Vermeire estimates the area is 30 years behind on fire research basics, such as timing and how the plant community will respond to fire as compared to the Southern Plains states where burning pastures is a regular practice. Vermeire's research has challenged misconceptions about fire, proven out benefits and established management strategies for prescribed burning. Fires are like hitting a pasture reset button. Many native grasses respond positively to burning while woody and weedy plants decrease. "We see higher forage quality after a burn and animals favor burned areas," Vermeire says. When a fire occurs, there is essentially a rapid decomposition of plant matter releasing a glut of nutrients in a short span of time, he explains. The plants take up these nutrients and soil microbes kick into overdrive cycling nutrients faster. This adds up to high quality forage. With all the low-quality litter removed, the only grazing option left is prime feedstuffs, and Vermeire's research has found producers can take advantage of that premium forage faster than they may have thought. "We've found there is no benefit to backing off on grazing burned pastures," Vermeire says. His research has consistently shown grazing moderately (50 percent forage removal) the spring following a summer fire has no negative effects. Cattle grazed on the burned acres gained weight and pastures recovered. He notes there's also no gain from resting the burned area. "If you rest the burn and the plant community doesn't benefit then you're giving up a benefit and taking an economic hit." This advice goes against the popular belief that grazing should be limited or avoided for a year or more following a burn.



Lance Vermeire lights up a native prairie plot for research he hopes will spur more controlled burns in the Great Plains.

Research shows advantages to burning native northern prairies

Weed wars. Weeds infestations may be a concern for many following fire. Vermeire says weeds are often the results of attempting to fight the fire, though. Weed seeds hitch rides on equipment and take advantage of soil disturbances such as mechanically created fire lines or bare hot spots from heavier fuels such as woody species. In carefully controlled burns of grass-dominated pastures, undesirable species actually decrease. "In sod-grass dominated systems that are adapted to intense and frequent fires we consistently see reduction in annual bromes such as cheat grass," Vermeire says. Woody species, forbs, and cactus also decline.

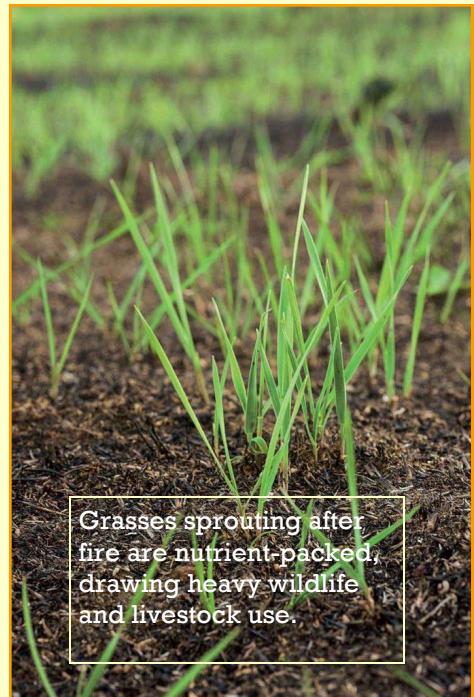
Interestingly, fire improves the forage value of an otherwise poor-forage-value native grass, purple threeawn. The bunchgrass is high in silica which wears down teeth and causes digestive problems. "When we burn we find there's a large reduction in the silica content making it a more desirable species," Vermeire says. Nutrient content of other beneficial grasses can change with fire, too. Phosphorus is a key element in forage quality and is essential for livestock to meet their energy requirements and gain weight, Vermeire explains. "What we've found is phosphorus might be subpar in our control plot vegetation, but the areas that have been burned meet the requirements for phosphorus," he says. As an added bonus, Vermeire notes grasshopper and tick populations are also negatively impacted by fire.

Lighting up. Controlled burns need to be carefully planned to maximize benefits. Vermeire has researched burns in almost every month. "We get the best positive impact on productivity and reduction of undesirable species by burning in late summer through early fall: August through November," he says. While he doesn't discourage spring fires, they don't typically yield the temperatures needed to control undesirable species. He wants a decently hot fire. "We did some work with western wheatgrass, blue gramma, threadleaf sedge, and needleandthread grass to see how much heat they could handle," Vermeire says. At up to 8,500 pounds/acre of fuel they saw no mortality on the western wheatgrass or threadleaf sedge. Blue gramma saw some losses at 6,700 pounds/acre. Native rangeland only produces 450 to 1,250 pounds/acre of forage.

Post-fire grass is great grazing, but it shouldn't make up all of a producer's pasture acres. "There's no backup forage if it turns off dry and you're not growing any new grass," he warns. "But you can build that old growth back up in 1 to 2 years with moderate grazing." His research has shown pastures would benefit from burning every 3 to 6 years. "Without fire, the scale is tipped in favor of undesirable species," Vermeire says. "Getting fire back into the system at any time, even spring, is better than continuing to fight and avoid it."

Provided by ARS-Fort Keogh, as written by

<http://johndeerefurrow.com/2017/03/10/rekindling-the->



Grasses sprouting after fire are nutrient-packed, drawing heavy wildlife and livestock use.

Reflections of Montana Range Days by Carla Lawrence

Every year at the start of the third week in June they arrive alone or in carpools and caravans, in campers, cars and trucks and they converge on one location to learn about and to celebrate Montana's largest natural resource..... Rangelands. This is Montana Range Days. This annual pilgrimage welcomes kids, students, 4-H and FFA, adults, instructors and families who come to learn about rangeland and natural resources in the great outdoor classroom that is Montana. And 2017 was no exception; the setting could not have been more beautiful, with the backdrop of the Beartooth Mountains and the town of Red Lodge welcoming around 270 folks, including participants and/or volunteers, who committed their time and energy to ensure the 41st Annual Montana Range Days went off without a hitch.

The Carbon Conservation District will be hosting the event for two years, 2017 and 2018. Along with assistance from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the state and local planning committees and the many amazing sponsors who provided funding and in-kind time and donations, Montana Range Days was a great success.

Divisions include: Buckaroos (age 4-6), Ecosystem Explorers (age 7-8), Superstarters (age 9-11), Wranglers (age 12-13), FFA Youth/Open Youth (age 14-19, not graduated from high school) and Rancher/Open Adult. Workshops in an outdoor setting include plant anatomy, plant identification, range and soil sites, inventory and monitoring, stocking rates and utilization and ranch planning.

Monday began with the arrival of the planning committee members and the instructors who drove miles across the state to teach and to help set up the training and testing sites. Later, the participants started to flow in and this continued throughout the day. The registration area quickly became the center of activity. Darlene Schwend, Carbon Conservation District and Tanya Lester, Stillwater Conservation District handled the registration for the event. After getting registered, the participants headed over to the practice site to hone their skills on plant identification.

Later that evening, the illustrated talks began at the Red Lodge High School. Participants in this event can be from 4-19 years old. Each person chose a range related topic and presented an illustrated (PowerPoint) talk, which lasted 6-8 minutes. After the talk, each participant answered questions from a panel of three judges. Jean Blackman, Cascade, MT was the winner of the illustrated talk's event.

Tuesday morning after breakfast, the participants were loaded in buses and driven out to the training site; the Ellis Cattle Company graciously hosted the day. The lunch of BBQ lamb donated and prepared by the Montana Woolgrowers was served at the ranch. The Ellis Cattle Company also hosted the testing site on Wednesday. "We cannot do this event without the ranchers, like Alvin and Maureen Ellis and family, who provided the land for the competition," said Scott Blain, chairman of the local planning committee.

Montana Range Days is not all work and no play; the Tuesday evening banquet provided an opportunity to for participants to unwind and enjoy a delicious meal. All meals were catered by the Carbon County 4-H Interstate Exchange, with Nikki Bailey and Sheri Hatten from the Carbon County Extension Office heading up the team. The beef for the supper was provided by The Montana Beef Council along with Sysco.

Three \$1000 scholarships were awarded during the banquet. The Montana Range Days scholarship was awarded to Daniel Levy, Bridger, MT; the Harold and Lillian Jensen Scholarship was awarded to Amanda Williams, Miles City, MT and the Bob and Donna Sitz Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Cache Younkin, Glasgow, MT. The Montana Range Days Hall of Fame inductee was Mike Sjostrom. Mike was hired as an Associate Loan Officer by Montana Livestock Ag Credit (MLACI) in 1981 and served as Vice President from 1986 until his retirement. Prior to working for Montana Livestock, Mike was employed by the Farmers Home Administration. He is a third generation Montanan, raised on a cow/calf/wheat operation near Malta in Phillips County. In 2006, Mike moved his family to Malta and continued to work for MLACI serving customers in the northeastern part of Montana through his retirement in February 2017. Mike and his wife, Deb, have two daughters. Mike enjoys fishing, boating, local history, attending sporting events and activities in which his daughters are involved. The banquet was followed by music by Dan Kosel and the Acoustic Waterfall where dancing was encouraged.

Wednesday morning found the competitors ready to go, albeit a bit tired, after the previous day and evening activities. They were loaded onto the buses and headed back to a new location at the Ellis Cattle Company to take the exam. The winners of all divisions can be found at the website: www.montanarangedays.org.

Tours were provided for the adults, not completing in the event. Tuesday, the participants were welcomed at the Bridger Plant Materials Center, Wetstein Ag, where they learned about cutter bees and a final stop at the Red Lodge Ales for a tour and sampling of the brewery in Red Lodge, MT. The Wednesday morning tour meandered up the scenic Beartooth Highway and mountain range. Joe Lefebvre provided a historic perspective of the vegetation and geology of the area.

For more information: check out the Montana Range Days website at www.montanarangedays.org.

Montana Range Days Hall of Fame

Mike Sjostrom

Mike was hired as an Associate Loan Officer by Montana Livestock Ag Credit (MLACI) in 1981 and served as Vice President from 1986 until his retirement. Prior to working for Montana Livestock, Mike was employed by the Farmers Home Administration. He is a third generation Montanan, raised on a cow/calf/wheat operation near Malta in Phillips County. In 2006, Mike moved his family to Malta and continued to work for MLACI serving customers in the northeastern part of Montana through his retirement in February 2017.



Mike graduated from Dodson High School in 1972 and received a Bachelor of Science in Ag Business from Montana State University in 1978. In 1991 and 1992 Mike attended and completed the Graduate School of Agri-Finance and Banking courses in Ames, Iowa. Mike is a member of the Montana Stockgrowers Association and Montana Farm Bureau. Mike served on the Statewide Steering Committee for Montana Range Days since 1991 and was in charge of Publicity and Scholarships.

Mike and his wife, Deb, have two daughters. Mike enjoys fishing, boating, local history, attending sporting events and activities in which his daughters are involved. Congratulations Mike!



Noel Keogh, MRD state board member, (right) presents the Hall of Fame award. Ty Wells of Montana Livestock AG Credit (left) accepted the award for Mike Sjostrom, the 2017 inductee into the Hall of Fame. The Montana GLCI "Cowboy up with Conservation – it can save your grass" banner is the perfect backdrop being a major sponsor of the event.



Ben Lehfeldt, Montana GLCI, was part of the team of Montana Woolgrowers members who donated their time to prepare the BBQ lamb for the Montana Range Days luncheon on site at the Ellis Cattle Company during the training day. The Montana Woolgrowers also donate the lamb for the event and have for years!

County Fair Importance Endures Throughout the Years by Chuck Bell

While my wife and I were traveling in the west last June, we stumbled onto a county fair in progress. It was the "Upper Missouri Valley Fair" in Williston, North Dakota, which is in the north-western part of the state, almost to the Montana line. The two of us, being former 4-Hers, can't resist taking in a new fair. This one was small compared to the local fairs here in Ohio.

There were 20 steers, 13 hogs, 26 sheep, and no dairy that we could see, but it still felt like home, even 1500 miles away. There were 4-Hers who were proud of their projects, parents who were proud of their 4-Hers, and extended family members. There were farmers, and there were those not directly related to agriculture. Then there were some like us who simply love a fair. And all of us were enjoying the event.

County fairs started here in Ohio in the early 1820s and really became popular after the Ohio Legislature, in 1846, passed an act that encouraged the organization of Agricultural Societies, more commonly known today as Fair Boards. The early fairs were designed to educate and update farmers on new trends and to provide opportunities to compare agricultural machinery, innovations, procedures, and livestock. The goal was to help improve efficiency and production on the farm. Remember, almost 80% of the population lived on farms at that time.

The county fair was not only a place to learn the latest trends and compare livestock; it also became a social event for the area. People came from miles around and visited with those seen only once or twice during the year. Women admired the food processing and needlework skills of others. To many families, the fair became the only vacation they knew.

Over time, livestock shows became especially competitive. Each farmer or breeder who won could command top dollar for his/her animals, and these owners would travel from fair to fair to compete.

The 1920s and 1930s brought the addition of the junior fair with 4-H and FFA exhibits and competition. In addition to competing, exhibitors spent much time visiting, and many lifelong friendships have had their start at the county fair. Junior Fair activities stress the importance of honesty, work ethic, leadership, fairness, and cooperation. One early Fair Board president made all participants gather in the grandstands on Saturday morning of the fair and listen to a message on these characteristics before they could get their premiums.

The county fair remains today an important part of almost every county in the state even though it has had to adjust with the population change. It still serves as a place to have fun, learn, and come together with people you don't get to see often.

Chuck Bell is a former Muskingum County 4-H youth development educator and district specialist and a member of the Muskingum County Farm Bureau.

Taken from on-line:

<http://www.zanesvilletimesrecorder.com/story/news/local/2015/08/16/county-fair-importance-endures-throughout-years/31636677/>

Summertime is Rodeo Time!

Calendar of PRCA Rodeos in Montana in July, August and September.

July

**July 2-July 4: Livingston Roundup, Livingston, MT
July 2-4: Home of Champions, Red Lodge, MT
July 6: Wild Horse Stampede, Wolf Point, MT
July 9: Drummond PRCA Rodeo, Drummond, MT
July 13-14: Bearpaw Roundup, Chinook, MT
July 21-22: Marias River Stampede, Shelby, MT
July 16: CM Russell Stampede, Stanford, MT
July 26-27: Central Montana PRCA Rodeo, Lewistown, MT
July 27-28: Sheridan Saddle Club PRCA Rodeo, Plentywood, MT
July 27-29: Last Chance Stampede, Helena, MT**



August

**August 4-5: Kootenai River PRCA Rodeo, Libby, MT
August 2-5: Big Sky Roundup, Great Falls, MT
August 3-4: Richland County Fair & Rodeo, Sidney, MT
August 6-7: Northeast Montana Fair & Rodeo, Glasgow, MT
August 10-12: Bozeman Stampede, Bozeman, MT
August 10-12: Missoula Stampede, Missoula, MT
August 11-12: Cascade PRCA Rodeo, Cascade, MT
August 12: Dawson County Fair & Rodeo, Glendive, MT
August 17-18: McCone County Fair & Rodeo, Circle, MT
August 17-19: Yellowstone River Roundup, Billings, MT
August 17-19: Northwest Montana Fair & Rodeo, Kalispell, MT
August 17-20: Fallon County Fair & Rodeo, Baker, MT
August 22-23: Eastern Montana Fair & Rodeo, Miles City, MT**



September

**August 31-September 2: Sanders County Fair & Rodeo, Plains, MT
September 2-4: Dillon Jaycee Rodeo, Dillon, MT
September 3-4: White Sulphur Springs Labor Day Rodeo, WSS, MT
September 15-17: Copper Spring Ranch Pro Rodeo, Bozeman, MT**

For more information check out the website at <http://montanaprorodeo.com/>

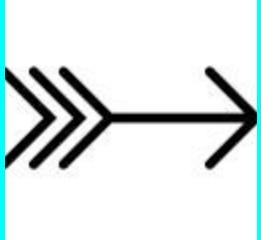
Montana GLCI

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We're on the Web
www.mtglci.org

Bob Lee, member of the Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) and the National Grazing Lands Coalition (GLC) will be a one of the featured speaker at the Texas Grazing Conference, to be held August 29-31, in Waco, TX. Bob will present "Ten Dimes to Make a Dollar"



We are proud to have Bob Lee represent Montana and the Montana GLCI as well as the National GLC!

The Texas Grazing Land Coalition Presents the

TEXAS GRAZING CONFERENCE

August 29-31, 2017 • Waco, TX

MORNING SESSION

Wayne Nejeda
State Photographer of Texas
"The Legacy of the San Antonio Viejo"

Tim Cansler
Cansler Consulting Washington, D.C.
"Conservation and the Farm Bill"

Bob Lee
Montana Rancher
"It Takes Ten Dimes to Make a Dollar"

Lynn Myers
Nebraska Rancher
"Transitioning the Ranch from One Generation to the Next"

AFTERNOON SESSIONS (CONCURRENT)

Livestock:
Walt Davis - "How to Not Go Broke Ranching"
David Crow - "Infrastructure for Intensive Grazing"
Ken Clayton - "Profitability and Stewardship: Can You Achieve Both?"
Markham Dossett - "Ranching in Shifting Markets and Unpredictable Weather"

Wildlife:
Steve Nelle - "Manage, Conserve, Sustain"
Josh Storm - "Wildlife Ecology on the Storm Ranch"
John Sewell - "Big Bucks, Little Budget"
Kelly Reyna, PhD - UNT - "Grazing for Quail"

TOUR
Rocosa Ridge & Flat Top Ranches

REGISTRATION
Registration is \$125 and includes all sessions, the tour, two mixers, and two lunches. For registration, visit the link below.
www.regonline.com/txgrazland2017
A block of rooms have been reserved at the Hilton.
Access to register for those rooms can be found at:
<http://mcfafe/ymirfl>

While in Waco, make time to take the self-guided Magnolia Trail Tour, where you'll visit shops like Magnolia Silos and eat at Chip and Joanna's cafe.
<https://wacoheartoftexas.com>