



**Nebraska Section SRM Council Meeting
October 17, 2024
Divots Convention Center, Norfolk, NE**

Laura Rubeck called the meeting to order at 8:12 am CST.

Thank you to Kyle Schumacher for organizing the meeting this year. A moment of silence was also observed for individuals who have passed away this past year and those lost range resources.

Minutes were reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes from the October 2023 annual meeting was made by Bob Broweleit and seconded by Jacob Harvey. Motion approved.

Treasurer's Report: The balances of the two checking accounts and four CDs as of October 17th, 2024 were as follows: \$6910.42 for the SRM account, \$16254.84 for the Range Judging account, \$7435.14 for the Nebraska Section CD, \$3078.22 for the William Wester HSYF fund, \$6861.47 for the NE State Range Judging CD, and the \$9622.69 for the other Range Judging CD.

A few key notes regarding insurance and main costs and incomes were also noted and discussed. Insurance for the year was paid. The total was \$1240.00 this year. Please note, this is slightly less than previous years (\$1430.00). Our insurance company was consulted regarding this change. We did not have a change or decrease in coverage; they did have a rate change. This is split between Nebraska SRM and NE Range Judging.

Since June there has not been much change to the SRM Section Account. The income was due to the deposit of the grant for the previous annual meeting that finally came through.

We have transferred money from several investment accounts to the checking account as investments are being transferred and consolidated. Kyle Schumacher is working with the investment accounts. Money has been transferred to investment accounts but wanted to note that activity in the checking account for documentation purposes.

We did receive reimbursement for the expenses submitted for the returning HSYF participants, \$2490.20. Reimbursements will be paid to Mary Reece and Lisa McMillan at a total cost of \$2411.00 for airline tickets. Mary discussed the possibility that the costs of the returning elected HSYF president costs to attend the meeting may not be reimbursed. We have not received the money dedicated to HSYF from Range Camp, but Shelly Kelly has indicated that we will be receiving these funds.

Thank you to our anonymous donor who also helps cover HSYF expenses. Thank you to WWF who helped sponsor a student to attend HSYF, and Bob Broweleit for facilitating that scholarship opportunity.

Signs were purchased for a total of \$1112.54 for ranches that receive the Range Management award. 2023 dues were received, \$395.00. Income collected and expenses paid so far have been sent to Kristi King. The income so far is reflected in the increase in the State Range Judging Account value.

If you have any questions, please let me know!

Officer's Report:

The Board of Directors of National SRM is working on a privacy policy regarding membership. They are working to develop a policy that allows information necessary for the Sections, but also protects individuals' privacy.

Ben Beckman reported information from the task force exploring HSYF and sections that have not participated the last few years. They would like to bring sections back and see what can be done to ensure sustainability and longevity. They will share their results with the Board. If you have any other questions please talk to Ben.

Committee Reports:

Newsletter:

Emma Barnett sent a digital report. Thank you to everyone for their continued efforts in providing articles to publish in the newsletter. She continues to have emails that bounce back from folks moving on to new positions/agencies. Emails are only updated once a year around February so if you want the newsletters you need to reach out after a job change to get your email updated for the newsletter. Nicole Strand will also be assisting her as a point of contact and helping to update the website.

Annual Meeting Committee:

Kyle Schumacher welcomes everyone to Norfolk. This is a unique area in regard to rangelands. This year's theme was Relying on Rangelands, and was held in a unique setting in Eastern NE where rangelands are a very valuable but less available resource. There will be sessions presented by Ann Dvorak with the WWF, breaking into small groups to discuss improving heterogeneity, prescribed grazing and ecological value of grasslands in the area. Looking at plans from an ecological value perspective will also be discussed. This discussion should be very interesting and he is looking forward to it and the small group conversations. The field tour for Friday will be in Stanton County and include areas in the Elkhorn Confluence that is part of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project and is the eastern extent of the Sandhills. Again, it is a unique area and should be interesting to visit and discuss. Thank you to Kyle for all his hard work planning and arranging the meeting this year!

Awards:

We will be presenting awards later during the meeting. The Outstanding Young Range Professional Award will be presented. There are other awards and we have many deserving individuals, please continue to nominate individuals for these awards to recognize their great efforts.

Envirothon:

Wyatt Kirwan submitted a committee report.

In 2024 the special topic was "Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future." This year 68 teams competed in seven regional contests, and 14 teams qualified to participate in the state contest. The 32nd Annual Nebraska State Envirothon was held on April 24th at Ponca State Park near Ponca, NE. First Place went to Concordia Lutheran High School (Omaha), Second Place went to St. Paul High School, and Third Place went to Overton High School. Additional Prizes were awarded to the top teams in each testing category:

- Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, and Wildlife: Concordia Lutheran High School (Omaha)

- Oral Presentation: St. Paul High School
- Policy (Tie): Concordia Lutheran High School (Omaha) & Overton High School
- Range: Burwell High School

A special thank you to Rebekah Poppe and Taylor LeTexier from Nebraska NRCS in the Lewis and Clark NRD for helping out with the Range Topic at State Envirothon. They made it so much easier to setup and administer the Range Topic Test portion of the State Envirothon.

The International Envirothon Competition is conducted by an organization called the National Conservation Foundation (NCF). NCF-Envirothon hosts more than 45 teams from the United States, Canada, and China. The top three receive a total of \$30,000 between them, as well as scholarships, through the sponsorship of Smithfield Foods. The fourth through tenth place teams also receive scholarships awarded through donations from NCF and the previous year's host. The 2024 NCF-Envirothon was held at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY. Nebraska was represented by the Concordia Lutheran High School (Omaha), coached by Mike Ellis. The team members include Avery Diekman, Malachi Ellis, David Rice, Margaret Rice, and Mayleigh Walvoord.

The Nebraska Section-SRM Envirothon Committee has the responsibility to develop the regional and state range contest questions, setting up the hands-on questions within the range portion of the state contest, and serving as the range topic contest official. The Committee is also responsible for developing and maintaining range topic study guides and conducting range topic trainings for Envirothon instructors and team participants. If you would like to view the study guides, visit <https://www.nrdnet.org/nebraska-envirothon>.

Each year in January an instructor training is held and Envirothon Field Days are held in the Fall. Envirothon Field Days were held to provide students with an opportunity to brush up on the Envirothon Study Areas while outdoors and with guest instructors. The goal is to provide students (and teachers) hands-on training with resource professionals (state and federal) in the areas of Forestry, Range, Soils, and Wildlife before the Envirothon Regional competitions in February. Students rotate through the 4 training sessions and completed a practice quiz during each session. In 2024, Envirothon Field Days were held in Wahoo and Ord. The events were sponsored by the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) and were partially funded with a grant from the National Conservation Foundation (NCF). Wyatt was unable to attend this year, but she would like to extend a big thank you to all those who volunteered!

Fundraising:

Vacant position.

Historian:

Jeff Nichols presented. He provides an article to Emma for the newsletter, he will get updates sent to her for publication. His duties include gathering information and happenings as well as the officers and information from the student chapters. He also writes articles for the newsletter. He will continue to update the overall history report for the Section.

Information and Education:

Laura Ruback discussed continuing to work on improving the NE SRM booth presentation and materials.

Investments:

Kyle Schumacher provided a report. In April of 2024, investments were moved from traditional CD investments to brokerage accounts with Northwestern Mutual. The first initial transfer for these accounts was from the First Interstate Bank accounts that held the “Jensen” Scholarship Fund. The other initial transfer for these accounts was from the “North Platte” Fund saving account. In May of 2024, the Pinnacle Bank CD known as the “Reece” CD matured and, along with the interest received, was also transferred to Northwestern Mutual. These separate funds were established for separate purposes described below and the separation of these funds has been maintained through the change in investment strategies. The “Jensen” and “Reece” scholarship funds are now combined as the “NESRM Academic Scholarship Fund” and the “North Platte” fund is titled as the “NESRM Youth Programs Fund”. A more comprehensive history of NESRM’s investment funds has been drafted and is an attachment to this year’s report. Some of the information in that review could change with new insight. Statements and investment account information are available upon requests. If you have any suggestions please reach out.

Planned Investment Strategies:

- April 2024-April 2025: Monitor return on investments to assess performance and comfortability with realized gains or losses on investments.
- October, 2024: Upon maturity of the West Gate Bank (North Platte) CD, deposit the CD in its entirety into the NESRM Youth Programs Fund.
- November 2024-October 2025: Compare investment performances with annual expenses for each account and establish a benchmark balance that would make each account self-sustained. Then, explore fundraising options if necessary to build accounts to defined balances.

ATTACHMENT:

Investment Committee History: A history of the people and groups that have helped set up financial stability for the Nebraska Section of SRM:

Committee Chair History: Pete Jensen UNK-1994, Walt Schacht 1994-2021, Kyle Schumacher 2021-Present.

NESRM investment funds have historically been managed under three investment accounts. The “Jensen” Scholarship Fund was initially created around 1977 (year needs verification) to award grants to graduate students. Pete Jensen was the first member to manage this investment fund. The year the NESRM investment committee was created is still being investigated, but current knowledge is that Pete served as its chair until 1994. In addition to the “Jensen” fund, NESRM has managed the “Reece” Scholarship Fund. This fund was created upon termination of the Nebraska Range Management Cooperative Committee chaired by Pat Reece. The remaining funds designated by the Nebraska Legislature for that committee were dissolved through a donation of \$2,702.36 to NESRM on October 24, 1994. The Cooperative Committee’s donation was on the terms that the funds were to be invested and that the income from the investment be explicitly used for “range management scholarships.” NESRM’s scholarship fund has grown over the past 30 years by more than \$18,000.00 because of the Cooperative Committee’s donation, numerous other individual donations, and accrued interest. This past year, donations were received from the Chadron State College Rangeland Club and from a continued anonymous donor. Thank you!

The “North Platte” Fund was based on a \$5,000 allocation from the income from the 1991 Summer SRM meeting in North Platte. Over the past 30 years this account has grown by over \$10,000 almost exclusively from interest gained. This “North Platte” account was set up to only be used for NESRM youth activities and support for High School Youth Forum expenses. All of

the above investment funds were managed by Walt Schacht who served as investment committee chair from 1994-2022. In April of 2024, investments were moved from traditional CD investments to brokerage accounts with Northwestern Mutual. The first initial transfer for these accounts was from the First Interstate Bank accounts that held the “Jensen” Scholarship Fund. The other initial transfer for these accounts was from the “North Platte” Fund saving account. In May of 2024, the Pinnacle Bank CD known as the “Reece” CD matured and, along with the interest received, was also transferred to Northwestern Mutual.

As described above, these funds have separate designations and the separation of these funds has been maintained through the change in investment strategies. The “Jensen” and “Reece” scholarship funds are now combined as the “NESRM Academic Scholarship Fund” and the “North Platte” fund is titled as the “NESRM Youth Programs Fund”. Pete Jensen was the Nebraska State Range Conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service for 30 years. He was a recipient of the Nebraska Range Management Award in 1972. Pete served as the Nebraska Section President as well as being the chairperson for SRM’s 29th annual meeting held in Omaha in 1976. Pete was instrumental in expanding the high school range judging program through the 1960’s and 1970’s. Pete was a veteran of the US Navy in the South Pacific during World War II. Pat Reece is a professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who joined the Panhandle Center faculty in 1978 and worked for 30 years as a Range Ecologist, studied intensive livestock-pasture rotations and their effects on key rangeland plant species. Pat studied the influence of short-duration grazing on needle-and- thread, a cool-season grass, and blue grama, a warm-season grass. He also studied rhizome development of prairie sandreed, another warm-season grass. He was a founding member of the Nebraska Range Management Cooperative Committee. He is now the owner and senior consultant for Prairie Montane Enterprises. Walt Schacht is Emeritus Sunkist Fiesta Bowl Professor of Agronomy at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln whose research and teaching focuses on grassland ecology and grazing management. Walt was a principal investigator of rangeland response to timing, frequency, and intensity of grazing in locations across Nebraska. He has mentored countless students as advisor for the UNL Range Club and coordinated the Range Short Course. Walt was awarded a Fulbright fellowship in 2011 to teach and study in Namibia. He was recognized as a Fellow of the Society for Range Management in 2012. Upon retirement from teaching he served as interim director for the Center for Grassland Studies. He now spends time traveling to see family and remains an advisor for the investment committee and other NESRM committees. The Nebraska Range Management Cooperative Committee was formed in 1985 to “facilitate joint cooperation in areas of common interest” in Nebraska’s rangelands. The committee consisted of representation from 15 federal, state, and private agencies, organizations and institutions including the Governor’s office. The committee provided program leadership in public relations, establishment of uniform stocking rate standards for Nebraska, Establishment of uniform seeding rate, technique, and species composition recommendations, and compilation and publication of a Nebraska Range Management Directory (from Rangelands 8(3), June 1986). The committee focused on producer involvement in its programs and recommendations up to its dissolution in 1994. - UPDATED 10/2024 KYLE SCHUMACHER

Membership:

No report.

Nominations:

Bob Broweleit presented the report. Every year we send out invitations for nominations. There is currently one nomination. As Bob is taking over IYRP he will be giving up the nominations committee.

Producer Affairs:

Sheila Luoma provided a report. Nebraska rancher Homer Buell from Rose, NE, with the Shovel Dot Ranch has been elected chairman of the board of the Sand County Foundation. The Nebraska Grazing Land Coalition Activities for 2024 included several education opportunities. A Grazing School was held in Gordon in combination with the Range Short course, and in September with Jim Gerrish on the McGinn Ranch. A Ranching for Profit course for young adults was held in Burwell, NE, in June. The 2024 Grazing Tour was held on the Cooksley Ranch and the McGinn Ranch with the topic being the Cooksley Complex Wildfire, and had 150 people in attendance. Succession Planning Workshops were held in Ord and Bassett. Two employees assisted with prescribed burn work, and assisted in writing burn plans and organizing over 10,000 acres of burn work in 2024. Upcoming events include Farm and Ranch Succession Workshops in O'Neill on Nov. 12th and Hartington on Nov. 13th. The 9th National Grazing Lands Conference in Tucson, Arizona is scheduled for Dec. 4th-6th. The American Grasslands Tour is scheduled for June 24th-25th, 2025 in Kearney with the National Wildlife Federation.

Public Affairs: Vacant position.

Range Judging:

Ben Beckman provided a report. This year wrapped up the 70th year of range judging in Nebraska. This year they reached 1396 participants through Area Contests, and at the State Contest that was held in Chase County there were 429 participants. The top senior individual and overall grand champion was Mason Crumrine from West Holt, and the top junior individual was Berkleigh Dvorak from West Holt. The top senior team was from West Holt and had members Mason Crumrine, Lily Vogel, Madalyn Pistulka, and Drake Nemetz. The top junior team was from West Holt and had members Berleigh Dvorak, Landon Konrad, Hunter Wettlaufer, and Elizabeth Olson.

Scholarships will once again be offered to the top 4 teams from the state contest. This scholarship is to be used for travel and registration for the National Contest held in Oklahoma City in May. The top 4 teams in 2024 were from the following schools: West Holt (Sr. team), West Holt (Jr. team), Burwell (Sr. team) and Chase County (Jr. team).

The formal invitations to host a contest in 2025 will be sent out by the end of the calendar year. The proposals for 2026 will also be sent out to the potential local committee members. We hope to have contest dates firmed up by March so schools can get this on their activity calendars.

We continue to award medals to the champion individuals and champion teams for all the contests. The larger medal is for state champions and the smaller pin is for area champions. NARD again provided plaques for all the division winner at state.

We have picked up new State Committee members. We welcomed Bryan Kahl, Megan Timms, Nathan Mueller, Kortni Schaub, Brooklyn Anderson, Matt Zvolonek, Kate Danziger, Monty Larsen, and Drayden Bellamy.

During the off season, the committee's work looking into changing the contest over to utilizing a scantron (bubble form) system was brought to a conclusion after 1.5 years of investigation by a subcommittee consisting of Ben Beckman (UNL & chair), Casey Lancaster (NRCS), Jack Gibbens (NRCS), Bill Hiatt (NRD), Kristy King (NRCS), Jessica Milby (NRCS), Dave Ference (Ag Ed), Boyd Bowder (Ag Ed), and Bethany Johnson (UNL). After a close vote (14 for/16 against/3 abstain), the committee decided not to move ahead with scantron scoring at this time.

As a result, several NRDs expressed concern about the labor required to put on the contest. The committee worked hard to address this issue by clarifying roles and expectations,

improving communication to the area hosts, streamline registration through an entirely online process (Thank you to Amy Timmerman with UNL Extension in O'Neill), and improve support by gathering volunteers through an online survey.

Despite these efforts, several NRDs decided to limit or totally pull out from supporting area contests this year. With several of these decisions coming close to the contest date, there was outstanding effort from local partners and committee members to ensure these contests were able to be held and had enough support.

It continues to be a great time for educating youth in Nebraska about the rangeland resource. Thank you to all that have assisted in one way or another with a contest or contests or helping schools to prepare for the contests.

There was discussion regarding online registration, and partners that have helped conduct the contests.

Range Research: Jacob Harvey from Barta Brothers Rancho presented. There are projects taking place at Barta Brothers Ranch and other projects under Mitch Stephenson. Kaitlyn Doshier is doing work with virtual fencing.

Range Camp/HSYF: Shelly Kelly sent a report. They had another successful year of Range Camp in 2024. They celebrated the 60th anniversary. It was hosted for the first time at Chadron State College. A big thanks goes to Tony Perlinski for hosting our group and making sure that it was a successful week. Thirty four students attended. They received great support from ranches, companies, and organizations that sponsored Range Camp. They included Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Chadron State College, Hansen 77 Ranch, Rodney Lamb, Enfield Ranch, Tim Griffin, Diamond Bar Ranch, Canyon Rim Ranch, Gross Seed Co, Reed Hamilton Ranch, Eateringer Cattle Co, Scott & Morgan Stout, Kraye Angus, Patrick and Aaron Simonson, Scott and Deborah Beckman, Ridder Hereford Ranch, Adams Land and Cattle, John Maddux, Dailey Angus Ranch, Ballagh Cattle Co, 7-V Ranch, Taylor Quarter Circle Ranch, Shovel Dot Ranch, Stallbaumer Farms, Farm Credit Services, Tecker Ranch, McMillan Hairpin Ranch, Terry Licking, Adkinson, Inc, and Sandhills Task Force.

They had 8 full-time adults help with Range Camp. These people deserve a lot of recognition for their commitment to making Range Camp successful. They include Tevyn Baldwin with Sandhills Task Force, Ryan Benjamin with UNL Extension, Amanda Hefner with Audubon, Brandon Jelinek with NRCS, Kortni Schaub with NRCS, Cody Trump with Sandhills Task Force, Matt Zvolanek with NRCS, and Shelly Kelly with Sandhills Task Force. Shelly and KyLee Kime with Sandhills Task Force served as Co-Directors. Tevyn plans to step in as a Co-Director for 2025. Additional speakers came to visit and present and we are very thankful to them for their help.

Total Range Camp expenses were \$10,633.70. Total income equaled \$8,199. The Sandhills Task Force has secured grant funds to cover the difference. Tony secured a grant that may also cover some expenses. These figures do not include the \$2,000 Range Camp pays to cover some HSYF expenses.

Many students were interested in High School Youth Forum. Lisa McMillan does a great job with them. As discussed, \$2,000 from Range Camp will go to fund HSYF. After discussions following Range Camp, the Crew Bosses and Co-Directors decided to plan to stay at Chadron for one more year and then start a rotation between NCTA and CSC.

Scholarship: Jess Milby – no report. There is funding for two, \$750.00 scholarships. The scholarships are to go to Nebraska residents going to college in a rangeland field of study. Applications are due Nov. 27th. Thank you to the anonymous donor and the investments that help fund these scholarships.

Student Affairs:

Students from both Chadron State College and UNL presented reports.

Chadron State College Range Club is excited and looking forward to participating in the meeting in Spokane. Both CSC and UNL are growing, with lots of freshmen getting involved.

Lisa McMillan reported that last year 5 high school students were able to attend HSYF, 2 of them returning from the previous year. Thank you to the WWF to sponsored one of the delegates. One student placed in the tope 5, and the other two were in the top ten. Leah Christen will be the returning Pres. Elect. There is only 1 student currently expected to present for tomorrow.

Letters were sent out to Range Camp Students to encourage participation. Questions and discussion has been brought up regarding students presenting over video presentations such as TEAMS.

A huge thank you goes out to our anonymous donor who donates \$1000.00 to helps cover the costs for sending these students.

A huge thank you also goes out to Lisa McMillan who travels with and helps get our students to the meeting and Mary Reece who helps with student registration and arrangements as well!

IYRP – 2026

We discussed the Year of Rangelands and Pastoralist, 2026. The committee started meeting in January. Jim O'Rourke passed away in March. They currently meet online as individuals are very spread out. If anyone would like to get involved please reach out, the committee is seeking additional members with a grassland passion that would share their expertise to help us reach our goal. Please contact Bob Broweleit at bentbarc@gmail.com with your ideas. The primary goal they have developed is: Educate and engage the people of Nebraska concerning the value of rangelands as an economic and natural resource base of Nebraska and the world, ultimately creating an informed population that is involved in policy decision-making. Thier theme has become "Get uncomfortable and quit preaching to the choir". They want to reach an urban audience. Recently, they have initiated a working relationship with Vivayic, a marketing and learning solutions provider. We have had a couple meetings with Seth Heinert of Vivayic and because of our discussions, Vivayic has offered to provide 40 hours of pro bono effort from a dedicated strategy team. This would be ideally executed this fall over 4-6 weeks. We continue to focus on using creative forms of education to connect with potential audiences in Nebraska. Vivayic will provide clearly communicated project protocols and a written summary of the plan that could also be used in fund raising efforts. Seth says we should consider scheduling a day or two this fall to work with the Vivayic team to really dive into our strategy. The committee needs to identify our desired short- and long-term outcomes, how we measure success, and who our primary audience(s) is.

Old Business:

There was discussion regarding holding the National Meeting in Omaha in 2027. There is no new information recently. It has been formally accepted, but they are still contemplating dates and availability of venues in Omaha. They have also discussed hosting with the Kansas Section. Kyle briefly discussed the Grazing Conference held in Kearney the past summer. Producer vs resource professional attendance was discussed. There was good content presented and good producer discussion. Possible new membership for our entity was discussed.

New Business:

There was brief discussion regarding the Nebraska Section bringing something for the Silent Auction for the National Meeting in Spokane.

Motion to adjourn made by Bob Broweleit, and seconded by Wyatt Kirwan.

Respectively submitted,

Angie Petersen