



Nebraska Section SRM Council Meeting
October 19, 2023
Merrick County 4-H Building
Central City, NE

Ben Beckman called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM CST.

Minutes were reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes from the October, 2022 annual meeting was made by Kyle Schumacher and seconded by Mitch Stephenson. Motion approved.

Treasurer's Report: The balances of the two checking accounts and four CDs as of October 18th, 2023 were as follows: \$8836.89 for the SRM account, \$6256.08 for the Range Judging account, \$7297.34 for the Nebraska Section CD, \$3021.17 for the William Wester HSYF fund, \$6734.31 for the NE State Range Judging CD, and the \$9444.36 for the other Range Judging CD.

A few key notes regarding insurance and main costs and incomes were also noted and discussed. Insurance was paid for the year at a cost of \$1430.00 split between both Range Judging and the Section Account.

Several changes have taken place with the CDs. The Range Judging Committee requested information regarding new advertised interest rates on CDs. Our CDs are business CDs, so they are different than personal CDs, which were advertised at a higher rate. We were still able to increase the interest rates on the CDs. The increased income from the increased interest rate made sense to close the CDs and reopen them at the higher rate as the penalty for early withdrawal was minimal. The exact breakdown of each account from opening to current status was sent to Ben and Kristi. They can also forward this information on to anyone who needs it. The Range Judging CD that was previously set to mature August 5, 2023, was an 18 month CD, and had a previous rate of 0.08%. The CD has to be closed and reopened to receive the new rate. The new rate is 1.84%, a 24 month CD, and has a new maturity date of 2/15/25. The other NE State Range Judging CD which was formerly set to mature July 23, 2024, was a 24 month CD, and had a previous interest rate of 0.20%. It now has an interest rate of 1.84%, a 24 month CD, with a maturity date of 2/15/25. It was good to have a brief look at when the CDs started, but it would be good to know a better history and if they were earmarked for a specific purpose.

The William Wester HSYF Fund CD matured Nov. 14, 2022. It was a special 47 month CD rate. It was not available at that same rate, so its interest rate did drop down to 1.84%, 24 month CD, set to mature Nov. 15, 2024. While assessing the Range Judging CDs, I also gathered information and sent it out to the council regarding closing and reopening the other NE Section CD at the higher current rate. It will also have a new interest rate of 1.84%, 24 month CD, and set to mature March 6, 2025.

The change in the range judging account is due to the cost of insurance and two travel scholarships that were awarded to Ord and Burwell that took their Range Judging Teams to the

National Contest in Oklahoma. Range Judging Cards and Awards were also ordered in August and September.

The SRM Section Account did have income from the annual meeting last year, including \$2000.00 from the PIE Grant. HSYF expenses and Range Camp income has been a topic of discussion this year as HSYF is one of our highest expenses, which is covered by income from Range Camp and our generous anonymous donor.

If there are any questions, please let me know! Motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Lisa McMillan and seconded by Daryl Cisney. Motion approved.

Officer's Report: NE SRM officers were introduced at the meeting.

Committee Reports:

Newsletter:

Emma Barnett was unable to make it to the meeting a report was sent via email. The newsletter is currently being distributed to 81 paying members, and one retired past member. As a reminder, the mailing list is based on the current member list provided by the parent society in January. The membership distribution list will be updated annually in February – based on active/paying members.

The newsletter used to be sent out to the NRDs, NRCS, etc. to send info out and keep outreach alive. It could also be sent out the ag lending banks, Games and Parks Commission, the SRM Board of Directors, and SRM staff in increase communication and participation. It would also be good to know what is going on in other sections. The board of directors is encouraged to join and participate in multiple sections.

Emma does apologize for some lapse in the newsletter publication timing. If anyone is wanting to take it over she is open to that. Thank you to Emma for all she does. It is a big task to collect information and get it compiled and sent out. Laura may help assist with the newsletter as well. The parent society has made an offer to have a section liaison to pass on information from the section.

There is a handful of new members and it is a good way to get them involved. It is good to get them tied into the parent society and get them to the national meeting. If possible, it is good to get organizations and their leadership to allocate a budget for training/learning opportunities and get them involved with mentorship if possible.

Annual Meeting Committee:

Laura Rubeck thanked everyone for being at the meeting today. We have almost 100 registered for today's meeting and about 60 for the banquet. Catering will be provided by Side Street Deli. Papa Toms will be catering the banquet in the evening. Central City Auction volunteered to help with the Crazy Auction. Awards will be presented in the evening.

Laura did receive a SARE mini-grant to help pay for some of the costs of the meeting.

The field tour will include the Whitney Education Center, a tour of seed harvesting and mixing as well as species collection.

Awards:

We will be presenting this evening. Brad Schick the past president, as well as Jack Arterburn have left extension education positions. Lance Schutte has stepped in the help guide awards.

Envirothon:

Wyatt Kirwan submitted a committee report.

In 2023, the members of the Envirothon Committee Wyatt Kirwan and Myra Richardson. Nadine stepped down from her role Envirothon Committee Chair last year.

In 2023, the special topic was “Adapting to a Changing Climate”. In 2023, eighty-six teams competed in the seven regional contests (11 more teams than last year), and 14 teams qualified to participate in the state contest. The 31st Annual Nebraska State Envirothon was held on April 26th at Lake McConaughy near Ogallala. This year, first place went to the Dawson County Envirothon Club, second place went to Milford High School, and third place went to St. Paul High School Team 1. The top team scores in each study area on the test:

- Concordia Lutheran High School recorded the highest scores in Aquatics and Forestry
- Dawson County Envirothon Club scored the highest in Policy and the Oral Presentation
- Milford High School placed first in Soils and Wildlife
- And Ord High School finished first in Range

A special thank you goes out to Nadine Bishop, Brandon Jelinek, and Shannon Bassett for helping the Range Topic at State Envirothon to run smoothly in my absence. My wife and I had our second child two days before the state competition and I was unable to attend, so thank you again to them as well as the folks in Nebraska NRCS and the Nebraska Section SRM for assisting in the search for volunteers.

The International Envirothon Competition is conducted by an organization called the National Conservation Foundation (NCF). NCF-Envirothon hosts students from the United States, Canada, and China. The 2023 NCF-Envirothon was held at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada. The team from Lexington, Massachusetts was the champion in 2023 and received the top prize of \$15,000. The winning teams are awarded scholarships and prizes. The top three teams receive a total of \$30,000 between them through the sponsorship of Smithfield Foods, while fourth through tenth place teams also receive scholarships awarded through donations from NCF and last year’s host, Ohio Envirothon. Nebraska was represented by the Dawson County Envirothon Club, coached by Janice Wolfinger. The team members include, Ryan Arbuthnot, Creyton Line, Parker Walahoski, Jacie Wolfinger and Jaelin Wolfinger. 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 this year several special trainings for team participants were held as well.

These 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 Field Days were held in Wahoo on September 16 th , in Ord on October 5 th and in in Scottsbluff on October 18 th . 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). The goal was 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 rotated through the 4 training sessions and completed a practice quiz during each session. Among the many volunteers and guest instructors, Bethany Johnston, Myra Richardson, and myself from Nebraska NRCS worked together to present the

Range Topic in Ord. A big thank you to them for their help! Seven high schools and about 100 students from eastern and central Nebraska participated in the Envirothon Field Day at Ord. An additional news item to report is the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts received a grant from NCF-Envirothon for hands-on supplies for Envirothon, with part of the funding going to Range. The funding is being used to purchase supplies to create plant mounts for each region in Nebraska, available for students to study plant identification. I will continue working to complete plant mounts and send them out to the regions.

Fundraising:

Vacant position. Kyle Schumacher encourages others to get involved on committees and become invested in our society.

Historian:

Jeff Nichols presented. He provides an article to Emma for the newsletter, he will get updates sent to her for publication. In the newsletter he provides history and provides a record of involvement and activities from years past.

Information and Education:

NE SRM had a booth at the Grazing Conference. There was some good dialogue and a few people interested in joining NE SRM. We are still interested in updating our booth and possibly coming up with something to hand out to people. Bob Broweleit brought up the upcoming 2026 International Year of Rangeland and Pastoralists. Walt Schacht has brought up the Center for Grassland Studies submitting a film to the film festival. Jim O'Rourke is also an excellent source and can provide ideas. There was a move to form an ad hoc committee tomorrow at the annual meeting to come up with ideas and monthly messages for 2025 and 2026. There would be a goal to show members what it's about and provide a message to an urban audience.

Investments:

Kyle Schumacher provided a report. He is working to switch things to provide better investment options. He is working with a Financial Planner from Northwestern Mutual. They are looking to switch things away from the CDs to Northwest Investments for a more sustainable interest rates. Kyle is the committee chair. Walt Schacht, Kyle Schumacher, and Angie Petersen will be cosigners to accounts as things are transferred. We currently have multiple banks and we want to maintain separate accounts for specific purposes, but would like to streamline the accounting. We currently have a \$1000.00 anonymous donor that provides funds to maintain scholarships that used to be funded by the investments accounts. Thank you to our donor that has maintained our scholarship opportunities! He has been looking to set up an endowment, contributable to in a tax deductible format. This would allow gifts to the Society and allow us to possibly grow our financial portfolio. The goal is have our investments accounts situated by June 2024. The goal is to protect our investments and become long-term sustainable.

Membership:

Lance Schutte is committee chair. He encouraged students who are attending the meeting to become student members.

Nominations:

Bob Browleit presented the report. He had contacted a number of individuals. Wyatt Kirwan has accepted the nomination. If you know of anyone who would be a good candidate for the future, please let Bob know.

Producer Affairs:

Sheila Luoma presented a report. The NGLC has a new executive director, Leah Peterson. They have been conducting workshops on Generational Transitioning. They have a summer grazing tour planned for June 2024. They also have a Grazing School planned as part of the Range Short Course this summer, as well as a Young Adults Business Seminar for June 18th-21st. Sheila would like to be a part of the ad hoc committee to bring NGLC to be a part of supporting the 2026 Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Public Affairs: Vacant position.

Range Judging:

Kristi King provided a report. They wrapped up the 69th year of range judging in Nebraska. This year there were 1450 participants through Area Contests, which was a new record high for the area contests. At the State Contest that was held in Gage County there were 428 participants. The top senior individual and overall grand champion was Lily Vogel from West Holt, and the top junior individual was Hayes Plugge from Burwell. The top senior team and overall champion team was from West Holt and had members Lily Vogel, Carter Gotschall, Sidney Burkinshaw, and Mason Crumrine. The top junior team was from West Holt and had members Marek Dvorak, London Konrad, Madalyn Pistulka, and Cade Deseire.

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 National Contest held in Oklahoma City in May. The top 4 teams in 2023 were all senior teams from the following schools: West Holt, Burwell, St. Paul, and Sargent.

The formal invitations to host a contest in 2024 will be sent out by the end of the calendar year. The proposals for 2025 will also be sent out to potential local committee members. We will 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 winners at state.

We have picked up 2 new State Committee members. We welcomed Brandon Jelinek (NRCS – Ogallala) and Kaleb Puncochar (NRCS – Valentine).

There was discussion regarding continued increases in numbers. There has been discussion regarding limiting participation at the State Contest. There is also continued discussion regarding the possible switch to use of Scantron for scoring. There is continued pressure from the NRDs to assist with scoring. There was discussion regarding developing a volunteer list for greater assistance at contests. There are some new high school ag programs and we may need to discuss changing districts.

Range Research: Mitch Stephenson presented. Dr. Nick McMillan is the UNL Grazing Lands Ecologist, a position formerly held by Walt Schacht. He is excited and has some great ideas moving forward.

Range Camp/HSYF: Shelly Kelly not present, but sent the following report:

We had another successful year of Range Camp in 2023. It was hosted at NCTA in Curtis and we had 45 students sign up. We had 3 no-shows; this happens more often than it used to and makes planning hard. We contacted each no-show and they just forgot to tell us they weren't coming. We had 10 full-time adults help with Range Camp. Additional speakers came to visit and present. We had 25 ranch and business sponsors. The Sandhills Task Force secured grant funds to cover the remaining expenses. Many students were interested in High School Youth Forum. Lisa McMillan does a great job with them. Next year we are tentatively planning to move Range Camp to Chadron State College. Tony Perlinski has done some ground work and KyLee and I plan to visit campus soon.

Scholarship: Jess Milby provided a report. Two, \$750.00 scholarships are normally chosen. She will send out information to the students regarding scholarships.

Student Affairs:

A report was presented by Mary Reece and Lisa McMillan. UNL and Chadron State College are coming to the meeting tomorrow to present their information for their clubs.

We were represented very well at the HSYF last year and we are very proud of our participants. The representative that we had place 3rd last year at the Nebraska meeting actually won 1st place at the National Meeting, Joseph Barenberg. Jady Tidyman placed 2nd. Sam McMillan was also taken back to attend as the previous year's winner. We have a commitment this upcoming year to take back both Joseph as well as Gracie Ackles, who was elected as the new HSYF president. HSYF will reimburse their costs. Costs to send students is a concern as those costs have gone up. We will need to discuss and decide how many students we can afford to send. There are 4 students presenting tomorrow. A huge thank you goes out to our anonymous donor who donates \$1000.00 to help 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.

Sheridan Wilson, President of the UNL Range Club gave a brief report. They plan to attend the National SRM Annual Meeting and take Plant ID and ERMI teams.

Kortney Kronhofman, President of the CSC Range Club gave a brief report. They also plan to attend the National SRM Annual Meeting and take Plant ID and ERMI teams. On Jan 16th they are arranging a CSC Range Day. Thank you to NE SRM for the support.

Carson Rathje presented for Conchordia. The Ag Club is a new club on campus and they are working to build up the program and establish themselves on campus.

Old Business:

We briefly further discussed the Year of Rangelands and Pastoralist, 2026.

Chuck Butterfield is attending the meeting and will provide an update from the parent society.

There was discussion regarding possibly holding the National Meeting in Omaha in 2027. They are still contemplating dates and availability of venues in Omaha. There is also a potential to work with another Section, or the possibility of having a joint meeting with another organization such as the Wildlife Society.

Please communicate with Chuck and bring forth any concerns for the parent society. They currently have an active voice in the Capitol. They are trying to increase and improve programs such as the Student and Young Profession Conclave, and work with HR and hiring agencies so students can get qualified and mitigate hiring issues. They are trying to support the student

pipeline to many government agencies such as the Forest Service, BLM, and NRCS. They are working to get in touch with students who may not be familiar with or come from a rural backgrounds.

New Business:

The signs for the Excellence in Range Management Award given to producers need reordered. Jerry Volesky and Jeff Nichols would like to get bids or estimates to get a new supply of signs made. Motion passes.

Transfer of presidency to Kyle Schumacher.

Motion to accept Wyatt Kirwan as a new Council Member.

Thank you to Ben Beckman and Laura Rubeck

Motion to adjourn.

Respectively submitted,

Angie Petersen