

VIEWS FROM THE WATERSHED

Spring, 2022

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Chairman's Column by Stephen Williams

If you are familiar with the concept of Holistic Management developed by Allan Savory you know that one of the tools that can be applied to help us reach our Holistic Goal is Money and Labor (because they are linked – each can be exchanged for labor- they are grouped together in the HRM Model). Savory identified the three most basic sources of wealth our dollar represents. They are: mineral dollars, paper dollars and solar dollars. Whatever forms of wealth you control, success in achieving your goal depends on how creatively you use it. This is especially crucial for ranchers and farmers who depend on the solar wealth generated from their own land. An important characteristic is that solar dollars are the only form of wealth that can actually feed people. This requires the conversion of solar energy through plants that depend on water and biologically active soils. Only solar dollars will sustain humanity in the long run.

How about outdoor recreation and tourism? What type of dollars do these activities generate? They are the products either of human creativity and labor alone (paper dollars), or human creativity combined with labor and raw resources (mineral dollars). Various services fall into the paper dollar category. The service professionals do not actually make anything or produce the kind of elemental wealth that supports life, though they do sustain other service related jobs, and make life genuinely more comfortable.

I read an interesting article in the Spring, 2022, issue of RANGE magazine entitled “THE NEW WEST’S BIG LIE.” It was written by Jim Stiles, who was the founding publisher of the Canyon Country Zephyr, a periodical focused on environmental issues around Moab, Utah. The article addressed the current state of Moab after it exploded with “industrial tourism” which caters to the mountain bikers, rock climbers, ATV boulder crawlers and National Park visitors who are anxious to see the red sandstone in the canyon lands of Utah. Stiles postulates that all is not well in Moab as it deals with an anemic economy marked by low wages, exorbitant housing prices, rising crime rates and even more exponential growth ahead. He suggests that progressive environmentalists support turning all of the rural West into more Moabs.

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They believe it is the best way to “save” the West. He suggests you just ask the outdoor industry.

While the mainstream media and environmental propaganda machines grind out reports on the economic benefits of an industrial tourism economy, they never specifically say who benefits. He offers that it the deception – just who exactly prospers in the new West?

Stiles states the truth is these recently urbanized rural economies were rarely intended to benefit the citizens whose families founded small western towns more than a century ago. Generations gave their sweat and blood to make a life in these last remote corners of the West, and now, in the eyes of many, they serve no further useful purposes. For the New West, it is not a matter of helping these rural communities. It is about replacing them.

Stiles boldly states that most urban proponents ooze nothing but loathing for the rural population. They often attempt to collectively label the Old West as a mob of ignorant, racist rubes. But they ignore the fact that their own solutions create issues that go beyond race. They turn a blind eye to “institutional elitism,” the deliberate planned creation of a culture and an economy that excludes everyone, of any race, who lacks the financial assets to be a part of the newly transformed community.

Are you listening Patagonia? Caravans of ATVs and mountain bikes, and their aficionados, may bring in tax revenues from their visits, but these are paper dollars. They are not the solar dollars that actually feed people and sustain humanity in the long run. It is our farmers and ranchers who produce solar dollars generated from their own land. I recall a truism germane to this topic: “You can’t eat the scenery.”

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Chairman's Column

2022 is an election year for our Santa Cruz NRCD. There is one elected supervisor position to fill and two appointed supervisor positions. Andy Jackson (Rio Rico) is vying for the elected slot. Yours truly (Elgin) and Dan Bell (Nogales) look to be reappointed. The next time you see one of us how about an expression of your gratitude for their hours devoted to keeping your NRCD solvent and functioning.

There will be a Natural Resources Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth (NRCWAY) in July at the James 4H Camp on Mingus Mountain. Your Board approved funding recently for two scholarships to NRCWAY. This early exposure to a variety of natural resources, with hands on field exercises, may be just the impetus needed to steer a high school student to a college course of study in a natural resources field. You never know. Your next Rangeland Management Specialist may be a NRCWAY graduate.

With Covid on the decline and masks coming off it looks as though the Santa Cruz NRCD Education Center at the Santa Fe Ranch may be getting back in action this Spring. Your NRCD plays a big role in exposing grade school students to the wonders of nature and informing them of the role farmers and ranchers play in managing our natural resources.

Stephen Williams, Chairman

USDA Targets Funds to Help Producers Address Natural Resource Concerns Along Southern Border

Applications for this targeted funding will be accepted through April 29, 2022

PHOENIX, Arizona – Mar. 1, 2022 – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting applications through April 29th from agricultural producers [along the southern border](#) to address natural resource concerns caused by damaged infrastructure on agricultural operations.

Eligible producers [within the identified priority area](#) may apply for assistance to repair conservation practices that address the following resource concerns:

- Feed and forage imbalance
- Plant productivity and health
- Inadequate livestock water

This targeted initiative will not expand or significantly change an existing system. The intent is to repair existing infrastructure to the extent needed to address the resource concerns where existing practices have been damaged.

Eligible conservation practices:

- Fence
- Livestock Pipeline
- Watering Facility
- Pumping Plant (solar)

Applicants are asked to provide documentation, such as photographs, to support that the damage was caused by border related activities. Eligible producers and landowners interested in applying for this targeted assistance should apply by April 29, 2022, to be considered for funding.

To apply for assistance, contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center. Find your local Service Center at www.farmers.gov/service-locator.

Santa Cruz NRC D Represented at High School Forum by Stephen Williams



Nick Nekhtyar, Santa Cruz NRC D Stephen Williams Clay Berry, Redington NRC D

Nick Dekhtyer from Patagonia was one of two Arizona representatives to the High School Youth Forum, which was held in conjunction with the Society for Range Management's annual meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 6-10, 2022. His presentation was entitled "Borderlands Earth Care Youth: A positive impact upon rangelands of southern Arizona." Nick provided a power point presentation about his work with the Borderlands Restoration Network installing rock dam erosion control structures in southeastern Arizona.

Arizona's other Forum delegate was Clay Berry, whose presentation was entitled "Fire Effects on Sonoran Rangeland." He was sponsored by the Redington NRC D. His father is a Supervisor on the Redington NRC D Board.

Ten western and midwestern states sent delegates to participate in the High School Forum. The delegates were selected by their SRM Sections based on their outstanding performance at the Section's summer natural resources or range workshops. The Arizona Section/SRM sponsors the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop for Arizona Youth, where Nick and Clay were selected as the outstanding campers and earned their spots at the High School Forum.

As a participant at the very first Range Youth Forum (as it was known in 1968), that was also held in Albuquerque, I was provided an opportunity to address the Forum delegates. I congratulated them for demonstrating the leadership potential that allowed them to be selected as their state's delegates. I encouraged them to interact with their state's professional level attendees and solicit their advice about continuing their education in a natural resource/rangeland related field. As a retired rangeland manager I strive to introduce as many youths as possible to a career in natural resource management.

The Beneficial Impact to Rangelands Due to Grazing by Bill Schock

The great advantage of grazing livestock is that they convert grass on unproductive land, which would otherwise be wasted, into the many useful products emanating from them.

Livestock effect their pastures through mouth action, consumption, hoof action and deposition of manure and urine. Benefits of cattle grazing due to each action are wide ranging.

Mouth action removes both dead and live forage. Cattle prefer grasses and weeds to more woody plants. Instead of having upper front teeth, cattle have a hard leathery pad (known as the “dental pad”), so they graze by swinging their head after biting the grass. The grass is removed more by tearing than by slicing. This leaves some length of grass on the ground as their grazing progresses. A typical cow consumes around 27 pounds of forage per day, or almost 5 tons of forage per year.

Removal of dead dry forage (thatch) allows sunlight and moisture to reach the soil so regrowth of established grasses and forbs can flourish and seeds to germinate and grow. Increases in newer and more nutritious younger forage benefit both livestock and wildlife from antelope to birds and insects. Grassland birds require a grassland environment for breeding and foraging, as well as habitat for some native animals. Larger patches of open grassland support a more species-rich, abundant grassland bird community.

Fire fuels are removed as the cattle consume grasses and shrubs and trample plants with their hooves. This decreases the fires temperature and duration that could scorch the soil surface. Non-native grassland plants (Lehmann lovegrass, yellow bluestem) produce high levels of fine fuels, which are very flammable. Shrubs that invade ungrazed lands burn hotter and longer than grass in grazed grasslands.

Cattle manure and urine are rich in nutrients that benefit the micro-organisms in the soil. Grazing in large pastures of over 30 acres per cow spreads those nutrients across a wider area as opposed to feedlots and confined pastures. Organic components of feces and urine from grazing animals can build soil organic matter, resulting in improved structural stability and increased water infiltration rates and water-holding capacity.

Hoof action digs manure, urine, and dead plant mulch into the soil surface, where it can be more quickly broken down by soil organisms. Their decomposition provides much needed nutrients for micro-organisms that plants depend on for healthy growth. Hooves break the ground crust to allow more rain infiltration and stimulate the growth of grass. Cattle grazing can improve the diversity of grasses by dispersing seeds with their hooves and in their manure. Soil surfaces can become pocked from animals’ hoof marks especially when the surface is softened by rain, helping to trap seeds and moisture essential for establishing desirable vegetation. Pocking also can increase surface roughness in disturbed areas, slowing erosion associated with surface water runoff.

Soil compaction does not occur from extended grazing on pastures requiring 30 to 60 acres per animal unit month due to the short time the cattle spend grazing in one place. Soil compaction generally occurs only in areas around water and salt and along trails.

Without natural disturbance, grasslands will accumulate large amounts of dead plant material (thatch and litter) that can choke out new growth of grasses and forbs. Given a long enough period without disturbance, grasslands will often convert into brush dominated shrub lands. The shrubs inhibit the germination and growth of native and non-native grassland plants by shading out the sun and using the available water and mineral resources in the soil. This ultimately leads to reduced production, more bare ground, and increased sheet erosion. It is important to maintain sufficient grasslands because of the many species that depend on them for habitat.

NRCS Tucson Field Office New Employee - Yissel Martinez, Soil Conservationist

Yissel Martinez is the new Soil Conservationist on the team 7. Yissel was born and raised in a small agricultural town in Porterville, California. She worked and interned on crop and livestock farms around the area. She was raised in a family of farmers, where she heard the challenges and the decisions they must make when managing their operation. She hoped that this understanding would allow her to effectively empathize with and support farmers while moving forward with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) goals.

Yissel earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems from the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). During her time at UC Davis, Yissel gained several professional experiences including being a Viticulture Technician for a private vineyard in Napa, an E.A.R.T.H University intern in Costa Rica and a short-term research assistant in the Forrestral Lab on a project focused on improving developing drought-tolerant crops.

Yissel's main passion is agriculture. She also enjoys hiking, camping, and taking long walks with her dog, Arthur, during her free time. With her love for the outdoors, she is excited to start her career as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS, where she can apply her skills to help guide farmers and ranchers in sustainable practices and provide science-based solutions that benefit both the environment and the landowner.

Local Workgroup Meeting on May 10, 2022 from 9-11am.

A Local Working Group meeting will be held on May 10th from 9-11 am in the conference room at the Tucson NRCS Field Office: 3241 N. Romero Rd., Tucson. **The Local Working Group (LWG) is a public meeting that provides an opportunity for local landowners and agencies to collaborate and provide input that will help guide the conservation efforts of the Tucson Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office.** The LWG meeting provides a venue to discuss priorities and identify major resource concerns within our work area. Feedback from this meeting helps guide where we focus our program funding for next year. The following topics will be discussed during the meeting:

- Recommendations for new/revised practices needed, including adjustments to payment rates and caps along with innovative new ideas/technologies for conservation delivery.
- Top priority resource concern categories for Fiscal Year 2023.
- Ranking questions to ensure applications with the greatest environmental impact receive funding to address local resource concerns.
- Does the LWG want to specify areas of interest where we should focus funding to achieve higher levels of conservation?
- How can NRCS make improvements to deliver programs more consistently?

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(Continued from Page 5)**Local Work Group Meeting**

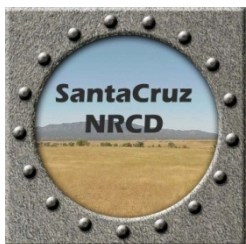
If you can't attend the LWG, please click on the link below, complete the Cooperator Questionnaire and email or mail to Alisha Phipps addresses below.

<https://santacruznrzd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/NRCS-Santa-Cruz-NRCD-Cooperator-Questionnaire-Spring-2022.pdf>

For additional information contact: Alisha Phipps, Rangeland Management Specialist,
alisha.phipps@usda.gov, Cell: 520 305-1913, Office: 520 989-5630
NRCS-USDA Tucson Office, 3241 N. Romero Rd, Tucson, AZ 85705

Calendar of Activities/Events

- May 10 at 9 am, NRCS Local Work Group meeting at NRCS Tucson field office, 3241 N. Romero Rd
- June 16 at 4 pm, SC NRCD Teleconference to review Arizona State Land Plans of Work
- July 14-15 Arizona Women In Agriculture Conference
- July 20-23 Arizona Cattlemen's Association Summer Convention
- August 4-5 AACD Summer Conference (Phoenix, AZ)
- August Arizona Section of the Society for Range Management Summer Meeting, Prescott, AZ
- July 25-29 NRCWAY Summer camp, Prescott, AZ.



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