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RNE R - News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management
By: Sandy Smart

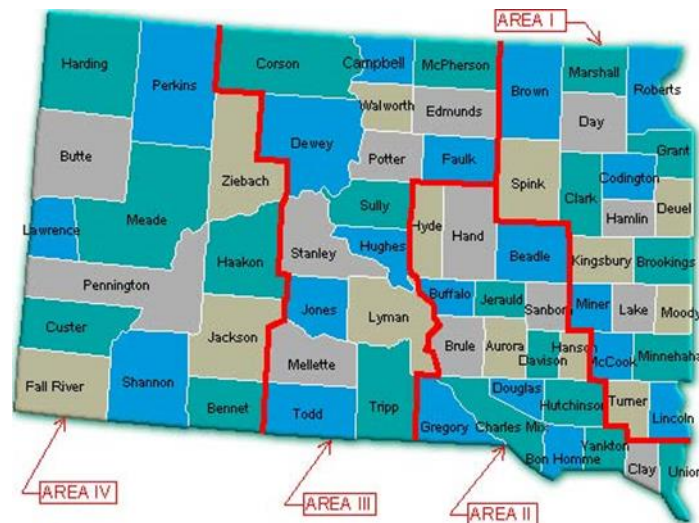
Every year the South Dakota Section of SRM collects nominations for the Excellence in Range Management award across four regions in South Dakota (see map to right). The one-page nomination form can be found online at

www.sdrangelands.com/awards.html.

Typically, operations are nominated by natural resource partners like the NRCS, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Pheasants Forever, US Fish and Wildlife Service, or SDSU. However, anybody can nominate an operation they feel is deserving. At our annual meeting in the fall, one operation is chosen among the nominees to compete at the

International meeting of SRM. Over the years, South Dakota has had several ranches win the SRM's Excellence in Range Management Award and is a testimony to the great land ethic of our hard working ranchers, their families, and natural resource partners supporting them. This year Dan and Cindi Conner, Belle Fourche, won the SRM Excellence in Range Management award at both the South Dakota and International SRM levels. In addition, you can watch a video of their story on South Dakota's Amazing Grasslands at <https://www.sdgrass.org/amazing-south-dakota/>.

In the summer, the previous year's area award winners host a tour of their ranching operation. These tours give the host family an opportunity to showcase their rangeland conservation efforts and natural resource partners an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate technical and financial assistance to those in attendance. This summer, the SD Section of SRM recently hosted three tours; Soelzer Ranch near Piedmont, Little Owl River Ranch (Gene and Besime Springer) near Timber Lake, and Namken Red Angus near Lake Norden. The fourth Excellence in Range Management tour will be held this fall at the Conner Ranch in conjunction with our annual meeting. It should be a great time.



Excellence in Range Management Award nomination areas in South Dakota.

Topics discussed and demonstrated at the three summer tours included rotational grazing, cross-fencing, water development, grazing cover crops, grassland establishment, tree and riparian management, ranching for wildlife, and drought management.

I can't always get to every tour each year, but I did attend the Namken Red Angus tour. One interesting practice I liked was how Jared Namken would plant their drylot to cover crops to keep the dust down when they wean their calves and background them in the fall.



Jared Namken discusses the use of planting cover crops in their backgrounding lot to keep dust down during the fall/winter backgrounding phase of their operation (Photo by S. Smart, 2019).