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- News from the SD Section of the Society for Range Management Range Camp by Emily Helms

The SD Section of the Society for Range Management hosted their annual “Young Professional’s Range Camp” in Belle Fourche, SD on June 28 – 30. This year’s range camp focused on riparian health and restoration, with a few other topics spread in. Participants included employees from Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, and South Dakota State University, along with some landowners. Between participants and instructors, there were about 50 people in attendance. The first day started off at the Branding Iron in Belle Fourche, learning about riparian systems, health and restoration, focusing on a new Western South Dakota Stream Guide developed by SDSU, TNC, and NRCS. The afternoon took the group out into the field to look at some riparian restoration projects. The group was able to see some beaver dam analogs, and other low-cost structures that help capture sediment, and repair riparian health.



One of the structures the group saw on the first day: a rock run-down structure that helps to stop a head-cut from eroding further.

The second day was a work-day! The participants rolled up their sleeves and were tasked to build some



One of the beaver dam analog structures built on the second day. This will help slow water, allowing sediments to deposit and helping to restore riparian area vegetation.

of the structures they saw the day before. The group was split into three teams and spent all morning “thinking like beavers” to build structures that would slow water and help mimic beaver dams that would help improve riparian vegetation over time. Thankfully the landowners, where the structures were built, love what the structures are doing on their spring-fed stream system. They ended up with 5 new structures along the stream’s stretch. A few other structures were built last year in this pasture, so after lunch the group took some time to discuss the merits of each type of structure. The afternoon was spent going over how to evaluate streams using the stream assessment tool from the Western SD Stream Guide.

The third day was a morning session that covered the typical range camp topics – soils, ecological sites, and plant identification. The day ended with a lunchtime presentation on virtual fencing strategies and other precision ranch management techniques that SDSU

researchers are testing out at the Cottonwood Research Station. Chad Blair also spoke to the group about his experiences with virtual fencing.

The Professional's Range Camp is held at the end of June every summer. The camp focuses on various rangeland management topics, and invites all interested parties (agency, NGO, landowner, etc.) to attend if interested!