

Greetings to the South Dakota Section of SRM!

I want to thank the membership of this section for your involvement in caring for South Dakota's rangelands. This is an endeavor that is very close to my heart, and I am extremely proud of the excellence I see around me in this group.

One of my favorite things about rangelands is the sense of timelessness they give me. I love standing where I can look in every direction, and not see any manmade thing except what I carried in with me. I love the subtle colors I see, the sound of songbirds, and the shifting winds under the limitless sky. I love the feeling that the scene is exactly as it would have looked a hundred, even a thousand years ago. But I know that in a way, what I'm feeling is an illusion, and that things are really changing all around me all the time.

In the rangeland management field, our profession changes every day. For example, when I started as a range conservationist (a very large number of years ago!), I headed into the field with paper maps, a plant book or two, a clipboard, and my lunch and water bottle in pickup truck to do my assessments. Today, we are applying a whole new level of technology and scientific rigor to managing rangelands. This is necessary because the intensifying need for ecosystem services from these landscapes is putting more pressure on them, and at the same time, the public is expecting more accountability in management. So a similar evaluation today might involve collecting multispectral data with a drone, and running statistical models with satellite imagery and multiple types of field data and information downloaded from the Internet. Discussions of management ideas include not only the range specialist and the grazing operator, but several different "-ologists", a statistician and a GIS specialist, as well as representatives of recreational, environmental and energy development groups.

I hope that as we rangeland professionals work in new types of teams, forming new types of alliances, we can appreciate the various perspectives, skill sets, and approaches we are exposed to. We may need to stretch a little to work with different types of people with whom we don't naturally see eye to eye. I hope that where we might be tempted to exclaim "They just don't get it!" we can instead learn to listen to new voices, learn new things, and open up to new people and ideas while making a strong case for our own point of view. That is the only way we can successfully meet the challenges of this changing world, to protect and nurture the landscapes we have inherited so that our grandchildren can someday stand where we stand today, and cherish these rangelands just as we do.