



# NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

## NDGLC Update from the Chairman

*Jerry Doan, Chairman NDGLC*

Here we are into summer already in North Dakota. My how time flies by! To say spring was interesting would be an understatement! Drought continues to hold a grip on much of the state, along with record breaking heat and plenty of wind. Grass has been very slow to grow forage and most hay fields are spotty. There have been some timely rains, but some have been huge downpours with considerable damage. We received about 10 inches of rain in a couple hours at our south ranch. It took out the road, our creek crossing, and five miles of fence. The rain was very welcome, as it filled many ponds and dams, and where good grazing management was in place, the soil was able to infiltrate a good amount. Even the huge McKenzie Slough area, which was bone dry, is now full because of the Long Lake Creek drainage. However, the extra work and stress of rebuilding has taken its toll on many producers with which I have visited.

As we look at plans to get us through the drought and other crazy weather events, I encourage you to look at long-term goals as you manage. We must be careful we don't over use these grazing lands and hurt the potential for recovery down the road. If you have been utilizing planned rotational grazing, you will have some flexibility built into the system to help get through. However, even the best managed systems have problems in extreme drought over a long period of time. We utilized forage winter wheat we planted last fall. Even though it wasn't a bumper crop, between it and grazing mixed alfalfa we normally hay, it gave us extra time to keep cattle off our native range.

Thinking about opportunities and not being afraid to try something different can help us all get through this drought. If we get some rain showers, annual forage crops can be a good source for forage. We planted all our cover crops earlier than ever this year. We have approximately 22 species in the mix and, because of the hot weather and hoping we can get in on some early season showers, we seeded them starting the first week of June. They have caught a couple showers and are coming up well. Hopefully, we can get some decent production so we can graze these crops in late fall and winter. Only Mother Nature knows how this will work out this year, but there is still time to plant warm season annual forages if you have received some moisture.

This year, we again learn about the importance of water development. I know of several producers hauling water, and that gets old in a hurry. Our pipeline system is a big savior this year, and water quality and quantity are so important in this heat spell. Please contact Trish Feiring or us as mentors if you have questions on water development.

NDGLC has been active in discussions with the current government administration about the 30x30 climate change initiative. Grazing lands can be a big part of the solution by storing carbon and building plant diversity. We, as a group, need to engage in these discussions to make sure government overreach doesn't impact our operations in a negative way. Most of the proposals are very vague at this point, so time will tell how this all shakes out.

I want to alert producers on a few upcoming events hosted by NDGLC.

- The annual summer tour will be at Brad Sand's ranch near Ellendale on June 24.
- An educational event at Jesse Kalberer's ranch on July 14 will discuss grazing, diversity, and the carbon cycle. This is a very important area as we, as producers, look at potential carbon payments on our grazing land.
- The North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award tour at the Dockter-Jensen ranch near Denhoff will be held on Aug. 25.
- Rangeland Health Training at the Black Leg Ranch near McKenzie will take place Aug. 31 through Sept. 1.

NDGLC and the Kronbergs held a great lambing school on June 1, with 40 participants near Forbes. Thank you to the Kronbergs and all that participated.

NDGLC also held an educational event at Gene Goven's ranch near Turtle Lake on June 6. The Grazing Coalition is working to educate as many people as possible about the importance of grasslands. Thank you to Gene Goven, Beckie Phillips, North Dakota Game and Fish, and Audubon Dakota, as well as

everyone else that helped and participated in this great event.

On Memorial Day of this year, we lost a true friend and valued partner in NDGLC. Kenny Miller was a founding member, board member, and mentor, and he had a wealth of knowledge on grazing management and regenerative ag practices. Kenny, Jay Fuhrer, Gene Goven, I, and a few others attended Allan Savory's Holistic Management School back in the mid-1980s. It was the beginning of changes for all of us. We will miss Kenny's wealth of knowledge and easy-going personality. We send our deepest condolences to Bonnie and his family!

Please stay safe out there! Agriculture is a dangerous occupation. NDGLC has set up a fund to honor Kenny's legacy. Please see the additional information below.

I wish you the best as you try to navigate through the extremes in weather we are experiencing. Please reach out to Trish Feiring or any of us as mentors to help wherever we can. We are all in this together!

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## NDGLC Kenneth Miller Memorial

On Memorial Day, the North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition (NDGLC) lost one of its founders and dearest friends, Kenny Miller. Kenny was not only a NDGLC mentor and board member, he was also like family to us and his knowledge and commitment to regenerative agriculture and holistic management was recognized nationwide. However, he still took the time to share his knowledge with anyone who asked or showed interest.



NDGLC Kenneth Miller Memorial was established to honor Kenny's legacy and will work with his family to determine how to best support his legacy. To make an online donation, click the button below, or make a contribution via check and mail to:

NDGLC Kenneth Miller Memorial Fund  
PO Box 1091  
Bismarck, ND 58502

[Donate Here](#)

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## Presentation Highlights Drought Outlook and Forage Production Strategies

*Kylie Blanchard, Clearwater Communications Staff*

In early April, NDGLC hosted a presentation by Dr. Kevin Sedivec, range extension specialist with NDSU's Range Science Program.

Dr. Sedivec's presentation, titled "Forage Forecast and Grazing Strategies for Potential Drought in 2021," explored the state's drought outlook and what producers can expect for forage production in the coming season. The presentation also covered future drought scenarios, as well as forage production and grazing strategies to use during a critical drought.

The presentation was part of NDGLC's "Munch on This" virtual series and is available for viewing on the [NDGLC website](#) or the [NDGLC YouTube channel](#).

To view a current state-wide drought map, [click here](#).

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## Field Update

*Trish Feiring, NDGLC Field Representative*

As Chairman Jerry Doan mentioned in his column, water for livestock has been concerning for producers across the state. If you would like assistance in developing a grazing or watering system, please contact me at 701-872-5888. I can work with you to develop and implement the proper system for your operation.

Last week, I spent two days with Dr. Allen Williams and Dr. Fred Provenza at a workshop titled “Enhancing Your Livestock Operation: Surviving in a World of Change.” We live in a world where people want recipes and prescriptions, but there is really only one thing each of us needs in order to install a good grazing system, and that is observation. Walk your pastures, document what is happening, put a plan in place, and, if it doesn’t work, readjust.

“Regenerative is a journey, not a destination.” -Dr. Allen Williams

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## Restoring Prairie with Regenerative Grazing: The Rider Ranch

*Amanda Starbuck, Food & Water Watch*

Jed Rider didn’t grow up raising cattle, but on an irrigated sugar beet farm near Trenton, ND. In high school, he went to work for a nearby rancher, and later married Melissa, whose family raised cattle and grains outside of nearby Alexander. This introduced him to conventional ranching in the Great Plains, where most cattle begin life on pasture-based cow/calf operations before being “finished” on grains in feedlots.

Managing Melissa’s father’s herd and helping his uncle farm sugar beets proved to be an impossible balancing act, and it began to take a toll on Jed’s health. At the time, his sister Kalie was finishing her master’s thesis on the health benefits of grass-finished beef. Their conversations around the health implications of different ranching systems led to a deeper one about holistic cattle operations. “That year, I quit raising sugar beets and started eating better and ranching better, and it just kind of exploded from there,” says Jed.

Soil health is at the heart of the Rider’s ranch. They move the 200+ cow/calf herd every one to three days during the growing season, leaving some vegetation behind and allowing it to regrow before it is grazed again. They bale fields not yet ready for grazing, providing winter feed; but unlike most ranches, they leave the bales in the fields and bring the cows to them. This allows the Rider’s cows to be on pasture even throughout North Dakota’s long winter months, where they are protected from the weather through coulees and shelter belts.

In turn, these practices have provided many benefits to the Rider’s land. “When somebody asks me how much rain I got, I say ‘all of it’,” Jed jokes, referring to improved water retention thanks to regenerative management.

Managed grazing can restore degraded rangeland, improve soil health, and avoid excessive manure accumulation associated with factory farms. Additionally, grass-finished beef systems have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and in some instances are carbon-sinks.

The Rider’s ranch, for instance, is virtually input-free. Cattle feed on pastures of perennial grass, much like the bison that once roamed the Great Plains. This is in sharp contrast to the industrial agriculture system, where large agribusinesses profit from technological and chemical “fixes” for problems stemming from poor land management. For instance, planting feed corn for factory farms on continuous monocultures makes these systems vulnerable to weeds. Agribusinesses peddle chemical herbicides, putting farmers on a never-ending treadmill that requires greater application rates and newer formulations when herbicide resistance predictably develops. As Jed succinctly puts it: “We as a society have an economy of making profit centers out of Band-Aids and treating symptoms of things.”

Jed knows firsthand the stubborn nature of farmers, many of whom are resistant to deviating from the practices used by their parents and grandparents. Even grass-finished beef was practically a “cuss word” when the Riders started out, an unconventional approach that to some seemed to eschew the state’s grain economy. However, Jed notes that “if agriculture doesn’t change, there’s not gonna be one.” Poor soil management increases the number of acres needed to farm, while also increasing overhead costs, including more chemicals and expensive machinery. “What kid can afford \$3 million in equipment to haul off and start farming?”

This is where farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing is invaluable. Jed and his sister Kalie serve as mentors in the North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, where they promote the benefits of regenerative grazing. “Farmers don’t want to go listen to someone who’s never made mistakes and is just getting their experience from reading a book,” says Jed. He hopes that the narrative around farming is changing, a crucial shift in order to mentor the next generation of farmers. “What kid is gonna want to go into something when all we do is complain about how awful it is... Let’s start telling some good stories.”

*This story was featured in a research project into how industry consolidation hurts farms and rural communities and what changes need to be made to create a more just system that provides farmers with living wages while meeting sustainability goals. The full report including this feature article can be found [here](#).*



## Events

### NDGLC Summer Tour - June 24

NDGLC will be hosting its summer tour at Brad Sand's ranch near Ellendale, N.D., at 1 p.m. (Central Time) Thursday, June 24. Topics include fencing, grazing management, grazing rotations, dung beetles, water development, and pros and cons of cover crops. Register for the tour [here](#).

### North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award Tour - Aug. 25

NDGLC, in partnership with Sand County Foundation, North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts, North Dakota Stockmen's Association, and American Farmland Trust, is hosting a tour at the 2020 ND Leopold Conservation Award Winner's operation, Dockter-Jensen Ranch, on Aug. 25 near Denhoff, N.D. More details will be available soon.

### Rangeland Health Workshop - Aug. 31 - Sept. 1

NDGLC, in partnership with National Grazing Lands Coalition, will be hosting a Rangeland Health Workshop Aug. 31 - Sept. 1 at Black Leg Ranch near McKenzie N.D. More details will be available soon.

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## Mentor Network

NDGLC has established a grassroots-based network of North Dakota grazing land managers who have agreed to provide guidance and counsel to interested ranchers and agency personnel on grassland management.

[Learn more](#) about NDGLC mentors.



# EASY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

*Are you a member looking for a way to get involved with NDGLC?*



**Like us on Facebook.** Liking us on Facebook and engaging with our posts helps us share our message with a new audience.



**Share your stories with us.** We want to hear from you. Please share your stories with us. Your experience is a great resource.



**Invite people to our events.** NDGLC hosts many events open to the public. Bring a friend the next time you come.

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## Become a Member Today!

The mission of NDGLC is to promote the health and regeneration of North Dakota's grasslands. Farmers and ranchers can become members of NDGLC for annual dues of \$30. Members will receive newsletters plus email notifications of pertinent events, legislation and other opportunities on a regular basis. Members may also attend field days and other workshops at a discounted rate.

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