



# Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

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In 2003, about 30 ranching families in northcentral Montana came together to resolve problems they faced. Since then, the group – the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance – has improved communications and relationships with government agencies and conservation groups while protecting ranching traditions.

RSA members worry that economic instability and the continued out-migration of young people threaten the long-term viability of agriculture on the northern prairies. Because both our rural communities and the abundant wildlife here are sustained in large part by ranching, our challenge is to create a vibrant, profitable, sustainable future for this region.

## Mission

We seek to promote the ecological, social and economic conditions that will sustain the biodiversity and integrity of America's northern mixed-grass prairie for present and future generations. We support cost-effective, sustainable conservation that features private and public cooperation in a working landscape stewarded by profitable family ranches and thriving rural communities. We employ collaboration, education, innovation and sound science to conserve and enhance the natural resources and pastoral heritage of the northern Great Plains.



## Purpose

1. Engage in collaborative conservation and community building.
2. Encourage ranching and other traditional livelihoods which will sustain our native grasslands and rural communities for generations to come.
3. Collect, implement and disseminate accurate information on the ecology and sustainable management of northern grasslands.
4. Promote understanding and respect for ranching and the critical role it plays in conservation.



*Ranchers won't survive in the 21st century if we keep riding our horses backward, wishing only for what used to be. We've got to adapt to the new world.*

– Leo Barthelmess, rancher and RSA member

## Programs

### Land Protection

- Development of a model for transfer of ranches between members of our ranching community

### Cooperative Land Management

- Grassbanking
- Beginning Rancher program



*Of course we take care of the land, because the land takes care of us.*

– Kevin Koss, rancher and RSA member

### **Programs (continued)**

- Cost-effective and incentive-based conservation
- Promotion of recreational opportunities

### **Consensus Building**

- Memoranda of Understanding with agencies and conservation groups
- Shareholder meetings to resolve resource or community issues

### **Science and Stewardship**

- Applied research on prairie management; monitoring to establish trends in vegetation and wildlife
- Participation in the MSU/MSGGA/BLM Undaunted Stewardship program
- Prairie, wetland and wildlife enhancement projects
- Weed prevention and control
- Prescribed burning program

### **Education and Outreach**

- Website, brochures and newsletters
- Reference library and educational opportunities for our community
- Interviews, presentations and tours

### **Partners & Resources**

- BEHAVE.net
- The Nature Conservancy & the Matador Ranch Grassbank
- Undaunted Stewardship
- MSU Weed Prevention Areas
- Malta Chamber of Commerce
- Ranching For Profit
- Working Landscapes Alliance

### **Ranchland Partnerships**

- Malpai Borderlands Group
- Nebraska Sandhills Task Force
- Blackfoot Challenge
- Madison Valley Ranchlands Group
- Country Natural Beef
- Quivira Coalition



*We love this land, we want to stay, and we will. But we need to find ways to bring back our young people, and to pass our hard-earned lessons onto the next generation so they can carry into the future our culture and traditions, and this land that we have given our lives to care for.*

– Janet Veseth, rancher and RSA member



## **Ranchers Stewardship Alliance**

*Working for a sustainable future of ranching on Montana's prairies*

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