

RREA funds allocated to South Dakota are used primarily for partial salary support of extension activities of one faculty (range extension specialist) and two technical support positions (rangeland outreach coordinator; research/extension associate). These funds have been leveraged by SDSU in developing educational activities attracting multi-agency support and extramural funds.

Prolonged drought during the past four or more years have required a multi-disciplinary response in educational programming. For grazinglands, that effort highlighted recently compiled historical research data establishing the overwhelming influence of spring (April through June) precipitation on growing season production. Suggested application was a drought response strategy which planned destocking “trigger dates” early in the grazing season. Unlike 2002, when local livestock sales increased in August in September due to destocking decisions, sales during May and June were elevated in response to spring drought in 2006, perhaps indicating more widespread awareness and adoption of this strategy.

The fourth annual South Dakota Grazing School was held in 2006. Total attendance at this 2 ½ day event now approaches 120 livestock producers and land managers responsible for management of more than 350,000 acres of privately owned grazingland. The School represents a collaboration of SDSU, NRCS, SD Association of Conservation Districts and the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition. The rangeland outreach coordinator serves as a liaison between SDSU and the Grasslands Coalition an active producer governed group and has facilitated educational efforts of the Coalition including a 2-day bus tour highlighting exceptional grazingland management attended by about 100 producers and managers annually. The coalition also promotes grazingland management and conservation through informational booths at state events and periodic presentations by nationally recognized speakers.

SDSU faculty have led a training program for forty community based extension educators and NRCS personnel in North and South Dakota, supplemented by funding from the North Central SARE program. This training has emphasized a holistic view of ranch management and a team approach to problem solving. Stewardship of grazinglands is a central focus of this training which is culminating in the development of comprehensive business/management plans for cooperating producers by teams of training participants. Publication of an extension circular facilitating the use of the “Balanced Scorecard” in ranch planning and management is an outgrowth of this training program.