



Rangeland Center News & Updates | Spring 2025 | rangelandcenter.org

Greetings from the Rangeland Center!

After a long hiatus, the newsletter is back with some exciting updates to share. Last month, Rangeland Center members gathered in Albion, ID to align priorities for the coming year and discuss the Center's new strategic plan. After an engaging and productive conversation with our members, we're excited to debut our 2025-2029 Strategic Plan at the upcoming Fall Forum in October.

In the meantime, read on for the latest research updates, events, and opportunities from the Rangeland Center.

Thanks for tuning in!

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

May 9: Pasture Management Workshop in Orofino

Join Rangeland Center staff, Scott Jensen and Tim Prather, and others for a hands-on pasture management workshop designed for landowners looking to improve their pasture systems. This program will cover key topics, including weed control strategies for yellow starthistle, wild rose, and ventenata, pasture establishment and renovation, and grazing utilization and monitoring to enhance forage quality and productivity. Experts will provide practical guidance on sustainable pasture management, helping you make informed decisions for long-term success.

To register for the event, visit bit.ly/clearwater_events >>>

May 22: Restoring Landscapes: From Seeds to Success (Monthly Webinar Series)

Rangeland Center Associate Director, Eric Winford is hosting a “lunch and learn” monthly webinar series on landscape restoration. The series began last month with a presentation from Levi Dawes of the Wildlife Habitat Nursery on riparian restoration and species selection. The next webinar will take place May 22 at 11am PT/12pm MT.

[Use this link](#) to register >>>

June 9-10 & 12-13: Grass ID Course at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch

Sign up to join Justin Trujillo, author of *A Field Guide to Grasses and Grass-like Plants of Idaho*, for one of two grass identification courses offered at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch. The course qualifies for 6 continuing education credits through the Society for Range Management and costs \$75.

Questions? Contact Justin Trujillo (jjtrujillo2003@gmail.com) **or Dr. Tracey Johnson** (traceyj@uidaho.edu) >>>

June 16-18: Monitoring Blitz at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch

Brush off your plant ID skills and spend time in the field at this year’s Monitoring Blitz! This event is an engaging three-day field experience where volunteers from U of I, federal and state agencies, conservation non-profits, students, and other colleges contribute to range research. The event starts the evening of June 16 with training and introductions and ends the morning of June 18.

For more information, [contact Tracey Johnson](#) (traceyj@uidaho.edu) >>>

September 9-12: Lost River Grazing Academy in Marsing/Homedale

The annual Lost River Grazing Academy is scheduled to take place Marsing & Homedale this September. More details about the event will be available later this summer.

October 2-3: Rangeland Center Fall Forum in Salmon

Mark your calendars for the 10th annual Fall Forum, hosted by the Rangeland Center in partnership with the McClure Center for Public Policy. The theme of this year’s event is “*On the Horizon for Idaho Rangelands*,” held at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center in Salmon on October 2-3.

Stay tuned for registration and more event details to come.

Rangeland Center Research Highlights & Updates

Post-Fire Grazing Study at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch



Increasing drought severity in western U.S. rangelands over the past 30 years has coincided with increased wildfire occurrence and severity. In particular, the sagebrush ecosystem has experienced the most dramatic increase in annual area burned. After wildfire, public land management agencies and livestock producers face tough decisions about livestock grazing and restoration. Generally, livestock are excluded from burned areas for two years post-fire, often resulting in forced herd reductions by producers. However, targeted grazing can reduce cheatgrass establishment, but empirical evidence is still needed.

In September, a fire burned roughly 4,000 acres at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch, providing an opportunity to leverage past research to address contemporary questions about livestock grazing management after wildfire. Dr. Jim Sprinkle, Dr. Tracey Johnson, Dr. Jason Karl, Dr. John Hall, Dr. Eric Winford and Scott Jensen will evaluate the effects of targeted grazing management during the first growing season after wildfire in re-seeded vs. unseeded areas with experimental grazing trials.

This project will advance understanding of how impacts of drought-related wildfire can be alleviated across agricultural and rangeland systems.

For more information on the project, contact [Jim Sprinkle](mailto:sprinkle@uidaho.edu) (sprinkle@uidaho.edu) >>>

Virtual Fencing: Unfencing Range & Grazing Management in Sensitive Riparian Habitat

Over 150 years ago, barbed wire transformed livestock grazing and management. Although wire fencing is effective, it can fragment landscapes, harm wildlife, and is a major cost to ranchers. Wireless virtual fencing couples location-based communication technology with an aversive stimulus delivered to the animal when it crosses a virtual boundary. Virtual fence systems offer exceptional management flexibility and reduce yearly maintenance requirements and eliminate obstructions for wildlife.

The Rangeland Center is engaged in virtual fence research on a number of fronts. Dr. Karen Launchbaugh is leading a team of researchers developing an alternative low-cost, low-

energy electronic fence system that relies on proximity or distance sensing and anatomically effective animal reinforcement. This innovation is a simplified, low-cost approach to virtual fencing that leverages animal physiology and behavior, proximity beacons, and lightweight electronic ear tags to manage cattle distribution.

[Watch this video update about the project](#) and [read this recent paper published in Rangelands](#) >>>

Dr. Melinda Ellison is also leading a team of Rangeland Center members engaged in virtual fence research in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management. In an effort to remediate degraded riparian areas and to limit livestock interference the BLM installed fences around sensitive riparian zones as long as 40 years ago, and in some cases, have not visited the areas since. Now researchers are exploring the long-term outcomes of those changes to grazing management and asking whether virtual fencing technology can provide a potential solution.

Stay tuned for more details from this study to come.

Rangeland Center News & Resources

Rangeland Center Monitoring Program

The Center's Collegiate Teams for Rangeland Assessment is a state-wide monitoring program that tracks and evaluates rangeland health and the success of restoration projects. The teams are undergraduate students rigorously trained in appropriate monitoring techniques that spend the summer traveling throughout Idaho. The program receives funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Bureau of Land Management, who pick sites and projects for the teams to visit. The program is led by Dr. Eric Winford and Dr. Jason Karl with support from the program manager, Kayla Hickey-Smith, and field crew leader, Dan Lauritzen. Initiated by Dr. Karen Launchbaugh, the teams program is now in its 9th year. Crews will start training for the summer monitoring season on May 19th.

Barn restoration project at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch

Managed by the University of Idaho since 2018, Rinker Rock Creek Ranch (RRCR) is a 10,400-acre working ranch in the Wood River valley. As part of a vision to establish RRCR as a world-class field station to study western rangelands, the University of Idaho is dedicated to improving the infrastructure at the ranch. To this end, work is underway to restore the historic barn located at the heart of RRCR. The vision for this 1,728 total square foot barn is to convert the old milking stalls and hay storage into student and community space, with classrooms, staff offices, and research labs. The project has received \$750,000 in federal funding, but an additional \$300,000 is needed to complete construction.



For more information on the project, contact the Development Director for the College of Natural Resources, Mary Ellen Brewick (mebrewick@uidaho.edu) >>>

After the Fire: Rinker Rock Creek Ranch post-fire recovery

In September 2024, the Glendale Fire burned more than 20% of Rinker Rock Creek Ranch, including the northern portion of Rock Creek, and tributaries in the East and West Fork, Long Gluch, Smith Creek, and Kent Canyon. Working closely with partners from the Nature Conservancy, Wood River Land Trust, and advisory board members, RRCR staff quickly developed a post-



fire restoration plan. Following the fire, 890 acres of private and state land were re-seeded with grasses, forbs, and sagebrush. In sections of Rock Creek and the tributaries impacted by the fire, over 100 post-assisted log structures were put into place. Repairs to the cow camp and other impacted infrastructure began this April. Using this fire as a research opportunity, several research projects will commence this field season, including the post-fire grazing study described above.

For more information about post-fire recovery at RRCR, contact Cameron Weskamp (cpacker@uidaho.edu) >>>

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences announces new Dean

The University of Idaho recently announced Leslie Edgar as the new Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Edgar has roots in Idaho, growing up on a family farm in Kuna. Prior to joining the University of Idaho, Edgar served as the associate dean of research for the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resources Sciences and the director of the Agricultural Research Center at Washington State University. The Rangeland Center looks forward to working with Dean Edgar.

[Read more about Dean Edgar's appointment >>>](#)

Rangeland Center in the News

[Private Forests and Herbicide Use | Idaho Farm Bureau Producer](#)

Rangeland Center Senior Associate Director, Dr. Tim Prather, explains the changes underway in how herbicides are used in areas designated as habitat for threatened and endangered species.

[Drone lab supports aerial-based research across disciplines | University of Idaho News](#)

The University of Idaho's Drone lab, led by Rangeland Center Director and professor Jason Karl, is an interdisciplinary research and teaching group located on the Moscow campus. [This video](#), produced in combination with the story, explores how drones are transforming research.