

SPRING 2017

 MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Spokesman

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY



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EXCITING TIMES IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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PAGE 13

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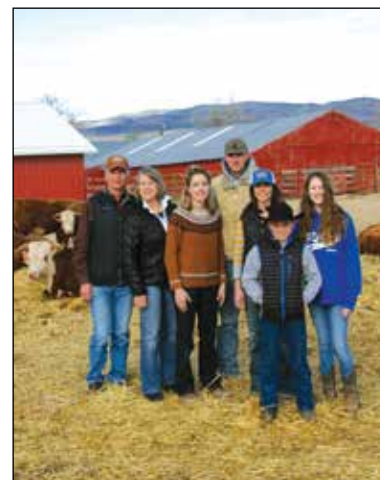
MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY

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ON THE COVER: The Cooper family,
Cooper Hereford Ranch.
Photo by Rebecca Colnar

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Hans McPherson
President, Montana Farm
Bureau Federation

“It is very rewarding to witness policy development all the way from the county level to its inclusion in the AFBF policy book. This is the backbone of Farm Bureau’s strength and continued success. I encourage all of you to get involved and participate in this exciting activity.”

A **White-Knuckle** Winter

Wowzer what a winter it has been. On the ranch front it seems all the cattle had hollow legs! Most ranches have reported using way more hay and cake than normal. Then, what about those ranches that start their calving in January! On the farm front, snow was so deep you could hardly get around; there was no way to move wheat to market with snowed-in roads everywhere. It seemed unless your business was ice fishing, everywhere you looked things were tough.

Seriously, we have all been working hard for the membership of MFBF since the last Spokesman. We had a large group attend the American Farm Bureau Convention in Phoenix. We were treated to great tours, inspirational speakers and educational workshops, as well as the all-important setting grass roots policy for the American Farm Bureau. It is very rewarding to witness policy development all the way from the county level to its inclusion in the AFBF policy book. This is the backbone of Farm Bureau’s strength and continued success. I encourage all of you to get involved and participate in this exciting activity.

Right after the AFBF convention we had Young Farmers & Ranchers “Calling on the Capitol.” This was well-attended and a great opportunity for young people to get an inside look of the workings of the people’s government in Montana. They had the opportunity to meet with the Governor, the Secretary of State, department heads from the Department of Livestock, Department of Agriculture and Fish, Wildlife and Parks. They had the opportunity to sit in on committee hearings and watch the legislators in action.

They met several legislators who encouraged them to get involved, telling them that being involved can make a significant difference.

Next up on this white-knuckle ride was the totally awesome FUSION Conference (Farmers United: Skills, Inspiration, Outreach and Networking) in Pittsburgh, PA. This conference involved the AFBF Promotion & Education Committee, the Women’s Leadership Committee and the Young Farmer & Rancher Committees - Montana was well represented in all areas. We had a total of 55 attendees at FUSION and they were well rewarded with high caliber speakers, workshops, tours and entertainment. It would be hard to have come away from Pittsburgh without being inspired by these young people. It gives one much hope for the future of rural America. Next year’s conference is in Reno, Nevada. Plan now to attend and let’s shoot for 100 attendees!

Last but not least, I am very happy to report our experts in Helena are doing very well. MFBF Lobbyists Nicole and Chelcie are doing an excellent job of pushing forward the good bills and often times keeping the bad ones from ever being heard.

I feel very blessed to serve as your state president and welcome any feedback you have for me. Having said that, be forewarned that in the next issue of the Spokesman we are going to concentrate on my favorite all time subject of “membershopping.” I want to excite, promote and train all of you to have a successful experience at this so we can be Montana Farm Bureau Proud moving into our Centennial Celebrations! Won’t that be exciting? Think Spring!!



The Road to Repair

As the 65th Montana Legislature grinds on, one of the big questions remaining for legislators is whether there will be an “infrastructure solution” included in the picture when the gavel falls at the end of the session.

The need for infrastructure improvements is not in question. According to the Montana Infrastructure Coalition, 34 percent of Montana’s major roads are in poor condition. Four hundred and twenty bridges are structurally deficient and more than 520 are structurally obsolete. Farm Bureau members don’t need anyone to tell them poor roads cost a significant amount to users through increased wear and tear on vehicles and that county road budgets are stretched thin as maintenance and repair costs continue to rise leaving our main means of getting to and from anything in poor condition. It is estimated that the cost to travelers is in the range of \$794 million annually. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is facing an \$847 million annual shortfall in what’s needed to make headway on highway improvements through 2021. Eighty-seven percent of that would be funded by the federal government if MDT comes up with a 13 percent match... and right now, they don’t have the funds to do that.

There are at least two thoughts on how Montana can generate the money needed to meet the federal match. The two main themes that are getting press so far are: 1) Cuts to the Department of Transportation budget in order to generate the match needed for the federal money. 2) An eight cent/gallon gas and fuel tax increase.

Cutting the Budget— Most Montana residents agree that there is fat that could be trimmed from most agency budgets and MDT is no exception. With a shortfall of nearly \$20 million to meet the federal match, cuts would have to be wide and deep. The Appropriations subcommittee last week cut

the MDT technology budget by \$9.4 million and cut 79 positions of the department’s 2000 employees which they say will leave them unable to manage their work.

Tax Increase— Representative Frank Garner from the Flathead has introduced HB 473. It would generate an additional \$61 million for state and local road work by raising the fuel tax from 27cents to 35 cents/ gallon. Garner in testimony indicated that the fuel tax hasn’t been increased for 24 years and fuel consumption isn’t rising nearly as fast as it has in the past, resulting in a highway fund that isn’t sufficient to cover the needed work. Garner’s proposed legislation sweetens the pot for local governments by channeling nearly \$24 million to cities and counties above what they currently are getting. Fellow Republicans Carl Glimm and 11 others have openly opposed a tax increase, stating that a gas tax is regressive, hitting the poorest of the state the hardest. In rural Montana, we know that those that live in rural areas and are required to travel long distances for basic needs are hit hardest by a gas tax increase.

Hanging over the entire picture is the governor’s budget which includes selling bonds to finance \$157 million in infrastructure projects across the state—mostly drinking water and sewer systems. There are preliminary talks between the parties and the governor’s office to strike a deal but there is concern politics will sink any infrastructure proposal.

Montana Farm Bureau will continue to monitor the legislation to insure that any final outcome is cost effective and does not negatively affect the roads that we all travel to make our living. We encourage you to contact your legislator and follow the Montana Farm Bureau legislative activities for the latest on the infrastructure picture.



John Youngberg
Executive Vice President, MFBF

“**Montana Farm Bureau will continue to monitor the legislation to insure that any final outcome is cost effective and does not negatively affect the roads that we all travel to make our living.**”

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“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Farmers and Ranchers Ready for Action in 2017

If ever there was a time for farmers and ranchers across America to get outside our fencerows, 2017 is it. Many of agriculture's major policy issues are in the headlines every day. It's time to engage.

We are encouraged by the quick attention Congress and the administration are giving to issues like regulatory reform and federal land management. Farmers breathed a collective sigh of relief with President Trump's executive order to withdraw the Waters of the U.S. rule and with congressional action to roll back the Obama administration's Planning 2.0 rule for federal lands. But we know the work is far from over on these and other issues facing America's farmland. Lawmakers need to hear from each of us, the very people impacted every day by the regulations and policies they create.

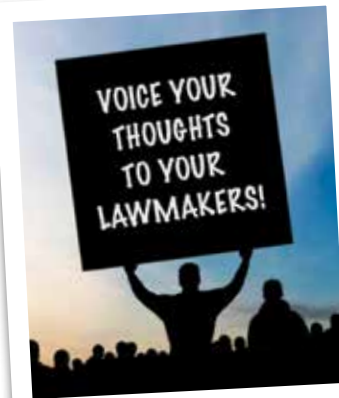
It's not enough to simply list what we do and don't want. We need to talk about how these issues affect our businesses and everyday life. And while we're excited to see movement on regulatory reform, that's not the only issue on the front burner for Farm Bureau. Access to new markets and a stable workforce are also top priorities. If we're going to see our rural economies prosper, farm and ranch businesses must be given room to succeed and grow. We

need to be able to hire the workers required to grow America's food. Farm Bureau supports keeping our borders secure, but we know what's at stake for agriculture if reasonable visa reform is left off the table. Already this year, demand for H-2A workers is up nearly 20 percent. Lawmakers need to hear from farmers like you who have seen crops go to waste because you couldn't find the workers you needed to keep your farm running. Farmers and ranchers are ready for a balanced solution that allows us to keep up with the demand for American-grown food.

Domestic and international markets alike are important for keeping U.S. farmers in business. American-grown products have a reputation for being the best in the world.

But being the best won't protect us from high tariffs or nonscientific trade barriers abroad. We need new markets that give American farmers and ranchers a level playing field worldwide. And no matter what you may hear about manufacturing, that's exactly what trade agreements have done for American agriculture. Take NAFTA for example: our agricultural exports to Canada and Mexico have more than quadrupled since that agreement was passed. With dropping commodity prices and farm incomes down, expanding trade is critical to the health of the rural economy. We already export nearly one-quarter of our output. We simply cannot walk away from the rest of the world and continue to prosper.

There are numerous verses in the Bible about the importance of witnessing and personal testimony. In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." American agriculture has a plentiful harvest of policy issues and elected leaders who are ready to listen. The workers are few, but we can accomplish a lot if we share our stories, our struggles and our desire to provide this nation with food and strength. Will you join us in reaping the harvest?



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Survival of the Fittest

BY MARIAH SHAMMEL

Doing anything with three kids in tow can be quite a feat; just ask Favorite Farmer. He isn't a man of many words but his facial expressions say it all. He's used to getting through his daily to-do list with focus, speed and efficiency, three words that no parent would ever use to describe their young children. So, when the four of us end up tagging along to help him out (I use that phrase very loosely), it takes about 2.3 seconds for his carefully laid plans to fly out the window and for me to start stifling my giggles.

Where Favorite Farmer's mantra is efficiency, mine is survival. If we make it home after attempting to help out and nobody's crying or bleeding, I deem the day a success and if we actually accomplish the task we set out to do and there are no tears or blood, there's really no point in continuing the day because it just got as good as it's going to get.

Every day during calving the kids and I load up in our Jungle Buggy (also known as a Ranger side-by-side) and head out to do chores. Favorite Farmer and his parents have a lot going on this time of year, mostly at the barn, so our three little humans and I try to do as much of the other daily tasks as we can, allowing everyone else to focus on other things. We fill the Buggy with snacks, books, good music and head out to check our "revival shed" (where bum calves and other moms/babies stay if they aren't quite ready to join the rest of the herd) and everything else that's been turned out, making sure the calves are healthy, the cows have recovered nicely from calving and that overall, things look good. When we don't have to head to town for preschool, we also feed the yearling heifers and bulls and do whatever else needs to be done.

I wouldn't consider it hard work, at least not physically, but it is time consuming, especially if I have other plans for the day, like doing laundry or cleaning house, (which always ends up being neglected this time of year, and pretty much every time of the year) because then we're

guaranteed to find a sick calf or a mama who can't seem to find her baby. Before we know it, we've spent the entire morning or afternoon with the cows...and looking for cool rocks or seeing how much mud we can splatter on the windows of our Jungle Buggy, but we don't usually tell anybody about that.

“We feel lucky beyond belief to be able to share these day-to-day moments with our kids and are trying to soak them up as much as we can before our coolness is forever lost to friends, vehicles and the dreaded opposite sex.”

Since the kids and I spend a lot of time on our own during calving, we tend to do things a little differently. For instance, we know that when we grain our heifer calves in the feedlot we should exude calmness, walk slowly and should definitely not yell... and we're really good at pretending to do that when other people are around,

especially Favorite Farmer. But sometimes he shows up when we're not expecting him and the kids are in mid-flight, racing down the road on their bikes, throwing snowballs at each other over the heads of the heifers. And just like that, we're busted. I always act like the mayhem is totally out of the norm but judging by the look he gives me (and the fact that none of the bovine beauties even bat an eyelash when a snowball lands an inch from their head), he's pretty tuned in to what we do when nobody's looking.

While Favorite Farmer would be mortified to know that our cows hear Dolly and the Judds blaring from our Jungle Buggy so often they could probably sing along, I would be bored to death if I had to go about my daily to-dos without the chaos of my three tornadoes alongside me. He and I may take different routes to get to our destination, but at the end of the day we always end up side by side, relishing in this craziness we call our life together. We feel lucky beyond belief to be able to share these day-to-day moments with our kids and are trying to soak them up as much as we can before our coolness is forever lost to friends, vehicles and the dreaded opposite sex. Each day is an unknown with these three hooligans but they're taking us on the journey of a lifetime and this is one adventure we're not going to miss.



Mariah Shammel with her kids in tow.

59th Annual Agents' Meeting Held in Sheridan, Wyoming

Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company recently held its 59th Annual Agents' Meeting in Sheridan, Wyoming. The annual conference includes recognition of those agents who achieved superior production and overall service



Mark Martin, Top Montana Agent

during 2016.

Mark Martin of Sidney, Montana, was honored as Mountain West's "Top Montana Agent" for his outstanding sales production.

An elite group of Montana agents qualified for Mountain West's President's

Club. This award is presented to those agents who were on goal in three lines of insurance: life, auto, and fire/liability. Those who earned this prestigious award are Julie Bramlet, Dillon; Jerad Grove, Butte; and Will Johnson, Missoula.



Julie Bramlet



Jerad Grove



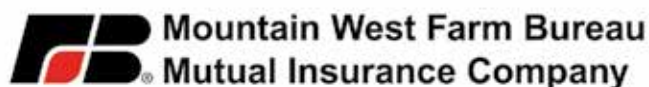
Will Johnson

Mountain West's President's Club

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Meet Cyndi Johnson, Montana Farm Bureau Vice President

Visit the Johnson's Desert Claim farm outside of Conrad, and wheat fields stretch in all directions. Try to find Cyndi Johnson and she may be in the combine or the tractor, but she also might be working on the farm books, attending a Farm Bureau meeting or participating in a civic event.

Cyndi, who was elected as Montana Farm Bureau Vice President in November, 2016, explains the amber waves of grain she sees now are not what she saw growing up. She was raised in Southeast Montana in Powder River country. Her family ran 300 pairs and the only farming they did was growing grain for feed.

"I thought I was a farmer until I moved to the Golden Triangle. That's when I found out what farming was all about," Cyndi says. "My husband, Ken, was born here, and we are farming land that was in his family. Our daughter, Sheridan, is a fourth-generation farmer. We have two other children, Darin and Mariah, with Darin helping on the farm as time permits. Ken's family homesteaded this as part of the Desert Land Act, so we call it Desert Claim Farm!"

Along with farming, Cyndi has been involved in several different community entities. "Politics runs in my family. I was a county commissioner for 12 years. We

belong to the local Chamber of Commerce, and I've been involved with baseball and softball for more than 30 years. I volunteer as a swim coach and started coaching volleyball. Sometimes I get involved in the local theater group because I enjoy singing and acting."

Her current job is executive director with the Pondera Regional Port Authority. There is no port close by, but in Montana, a law allows for local governments to create a port authority for economic development. Cyndi sees this as a way to work at adding value to agriculture.

"With Montana being the largest producer of pulse crops, adding value to the peas, lentils and beans before they leave the Golden Triangle makes economic sense," she notes. "It would be great to be able to have a place that could do fractionation of the peas—this is the

“I thought I was a farmer until I moved to the Golden Triangle. That's when I found out what farming was all about.”



Cyndi Johnson, newly elected MFBF Vice President, with immediate MFBF Past President Bob Hanson and newly elected president, Hans McPherson. Elections took place during the Montana Farm Bureau Convention in November in Billings.

process of separating the starch from the protein. Pea protein is used in animal food, energy drinks, and many other things.

This farmer believes that being involved in your community and in agriculture is important because, "you can't encourage change unless you are sitting at the table. If you won't go that extra mile, your



Cyndi Johnson helps with all aspect of farming including doing the books and driving the trucks.



Cyndi Johnson on the delegate floor at the American Farm Bureau Convention with Montana Farm Bureau member Kenny Hanson.



purpose for existence is limited to selfish personal satisfaction. I have a great life, great family and great friendships, and I believe sharing the joy of having that with other people is what it's all about. To me, the real purpose of existence is to have quality and spread success."

Cyndi has been involved in Montana Farm Bureau since she was a kid. "I've watched it grow into a highly successful organization," she says. "You might get sound bites from other organizations, but the one organization that makes a big difference is Farm Bureau. Agriculture is our history and backbone as well as our future. I can't think of a better organization to ensure that agriculture remains the most respected profession."

She echoes MFBF President Hans McPherson's goal of membership growth and retention along with member engagement. "We need more face-to-face contact with leadership and we need boots on the ground. Certainly, we do a lot of social media, but we also need to reach out to the folks who don't embrace that. We need to touch those potential members over a cup of coffee or by inviting them to a social. In Farm Bureau, we need to reach out from generation to generation so we stay a grassroots organization."

As for challenges facing agriculture, Cyndi answers quickly that the regulatory environment has become a burden. "There are so many rules what you can or can't do being passed down from the state and federal governments. Bureaucrats want to tell you what and how much and how far you can go. Ranchers are struggling with keeping public lands in production. The healthiest thing you can do for land is be a steward of it. Half the U.S. thinks the western U.S. wants to sell public lands," she explains. "That's a huge misunderstanding that needs to be resolved. Of course, right now low commodity prices pose an immediate challenge."

Cyndi's love of agriculture stemmed from being born into it. "A lot of people aren't that lucky. When I graduated from high school, I went into the health care field, but I was in a small community. I enjoy being part of a small community."

Watching something grow brings tremendous satisfaction, according to Cyndi. "Whether it's an animal or plant, that sense of satisfaction is huge. You don't get that when you work in a grocery

store. In agriculture, you can see that success with your own eyes and you are 100 percent responsible. I like my off-farm jobs because I like to help people. But there is no better satisfaction than watching something grow day by day. You learn about the cycle of life and the power of family and friends and community. Agriculture is so unique to deliver that experience."



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Silvertip Pork: Natural and Cured Pork Locally Raised and Processed

There's nothing quite like a good pork chop or tasty ham. Rhonda Hergenrider knows people agree, and is proud of her local product, Silvertip Pork. The 36-year-old works with her family on their farm in Bridger where they raise sugar beets, malt barley, cattle, alfalfa, corn, grass and, yes, pigs.

"My father, Randy, is no stranger to raising hogs, as he started a hog business in the 1970s," explains Hergenrider. "In the late 70s, he built a modern facility for his hogs and did well, but unfortunately in the 1980s, when pigs were worth nothing, he got out of that business. However, he always wanted to go back to raising hogs. I graduated from college in 2003 and about that time the interest in "local, natural" farm products was becoming popular, so we decided to get back in the pig business."

Rhonda traveled to Iowa to find pigs with good genetics. She returned with 12 gilts (female pigs not bred before) and two boars (male pigs). "We decided to raise a Yorkshire/Hampshire cross as they're a standard, good meat hog."

They planned to breed, farrow and finish the pigs using the existing hog facilities, have them processed, and sell the meat to local restaurants.

"It worked well because I was working for the local newspaper and sold advertising. I had contact with many of the restaurants. I asked to see which ones might be interested in our pork, and I got positive feedback. As we were able, we supplied a few of the restaurants in Red Lodge and Billings."

The Carbon-Stillwater Farm Bureau member explains that since pigs can have two to three litters per year, it's easier to have product year-round, instead of having an animal like a cow that only has one calf per year. A sow's gestation is three months, three weeks and three days, with piglets weaned at approximately four weeks.

Currently, due to the demands of a farrow to finish operation, Hergenrider purchases weaner pigs from a neighbor. She feeds them a ration of ground barley or ground corn and soybean meal until they are ready to be processed.



Ready to Market

With local foods gaining in popularity, Hergenrider keeps busy trying to fill orders. "Restaurants want consistency they can count on," she explains, adding that people like to order local food because it's part of the whole experience in dining.

One struggle for her is that restaurants may want a large quantity of one cut and not another. "It is essential to have a good relationship with the chefs. Most of the chefs who want local products understand your supply constraints. If you can't provide a restaurant with a consistent amount of food, they will turn what you



Take My Advice

Rhonda Hergenrider, who has the "local" Silvertip Pork business, offers advice to anyone who might be interested in joining the local foods movement:

- Do your homework.
- You need a base product you are proud of.
- Have a business plan and know your finances.
- Start small.
- Know you have something people want.
- Don't be afraid to try.
- Have an open mind; what you think you're going to have might end up being something else.
- Know your costs and build pricing. People will pay a premium for home-grown food, but only to a certain percentage.
- Work closely with your processor to find out prices that will have to be passed down.
- If you work with a restaurant, let them know you're not the Food Services of America, but have a specialized, home-grown product. Find out who you can work with, and who you can't. Remember, chefs come and go.

send them into their special."

Doing a budget is essential to success. "Local foods are not a big money maker, so be sure to figure out the cost of getting your meat ready for market and the time spent on marketing and product distribution," Hergenrider says, adding, "It's important to find your niche whether you plan to do local beef, poultry, pork or produce."

Today, she sells her pork to the Pollard Hotel in Red Lodge, as well through her website. "I did the farmers market for years, but now it works better for me to sell online. I like working directly with the public as I can talk to them about agriculture. I can educate them on farrowing crates (we only use right before the pigs give birth; it keeps the sow from lying on her piglets) and antibiotics (livestock producers use them when needed and they've always been labeled with a withdrawal period)," she says.

To find out more about Silvertip Pork, visit their website, www.silvertippork.com.





MONTANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION

2016 Annual Report

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Board of Directors are leaders who have a passion for agriculture. They bring a diverse set of perspectives together to unite the Foundation strategy of building agriculture awareness and understanding. Thank you to the following board members for their leadership and fundraising.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"Unless the system of law and policy which places the preservation of deer and other game above the production of food, and which permits and encourages depopulation of the country for the pleasure of the wealthy of this and foreign nations is completely reversed, this decline of population will rapidly accelerate." Lord Kennedy, President of the Land Court, Scotland 1916.

Although this comment describes the situation in the Scottish countryside 100 years ago, one can imagine this as a contemporary analysis of rural Montana. With so much land being purchased for recreation, land prices are increasing, the opportunities for our youth to remain in agriculture are shrinking and rural Montana populations are dwindling. Fewer students in our smaller schools and fewer customers for our rural businesses are resulting in an accelerated decline of our way of life. What can be done about this? MFB Foundation believes that we need to give rural youth the educational and leadership tools they need to be leaders for agriculture. We must preserve rural Montana and increase opportunities for economic development so that our youth have a reason to stay or a reason to come home.

In this annual report you will see how we are beginning to accomplish this and how we plan to increase our efforts exponentially. Montana Farm Bureau Foundation is investing your donations in youth leadership development and we are among the top tier of organizations when it comes to supporting youth through scholarships and training. We've begun to implement programs that will lead to economic development and investment in rural Montana and we will do more.

This winter I traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania along with 55 fellow Montanans, most of whom were under the age of 30, for the American Farm Bureau FUSION leadership conference. I saw firsthand the willingness of our youth to learn and invest their time in order to become leaders. I'm excited to serve as the President of the Montana Farm Bureau Foundation and my emphasis for this organization will be to make sure we don't let our rural youth down as they work to become the next generation of Montana agriculture. We will make sure they have the tools they need and we will make sure there is something to return to when they are ready.

If you are like me and you believe that the mission of revitalizing rural Montana and preserving our rural way of life is something that we MUST accomplish, then you will find in this report how we can make this a reality. Your donations, financial support through planned giving and your volunteer efforts can make all the difference in our world. MFB Foundation advisor, Wayne Lower, has a great article in the report describing our Foundation's toolbox of options that not only help in our mission, but help in your financial planning. Together, we can make sure that the young men and women of rural Montana have every reason to stay and prosper.



Hans McPherson, President



PROGRAM OF WORK

Providing Accurate Ag Education Materials



Montana Farm Bureau Foundation provided more than \$5,000 worth of agricultural education materials to classrooms and organizations throughout Montana. We gave out 10,000+ Food and Farm Facts, Ag Mags and pencils printed with farm facts.

Supporting Ag Education & Awarding Scholarships

MFBFo supports youth education and leadership development by working with organizations such as Montana FFA Foundation, Montana 4-H and Ag in Montana Schools. Our Foundation provided over \$10,000 in scholarships during 2016 so that Montana youth can receive the training and education they need.

Leadership Development

Our Foundation is in our 4th year of providing tuition scholarships for members of the REAL Montana program (Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership). Participants analyze complex issues associated with agriculture and natural resources while receiving intensive leadership training.

Young Farmer & Rancher Support

The Foundation awarded \$10,000 in scholarships and registration grants to Montana young farmers and ranchers who attended the 2017 FUSION (Farmers United: Skills, Inspiration, Outreach and Networking) leadership conference in Pittsburgh, PA in February. 55 Montanans gathered to be inspired toward greater advocacy for agriculture.



MINI GRANTS

As of October 1st, MFB Foundation has increased the amount offered for mini-grants from \$500 to \$1,000.

Here are a few examples of the Mini Grants awarded and projects supported during 2016:

Luther Ag Education Program

Luther School PTA - Students focused on the importance of wheat to Montana's economy, sheep production in Carbon County and jobs in Ag Tech and Ag Business.

Bovine Connection 2016

Bovine Connection Committee, Richland County - An educational program for cattle industry people in northeastern Montana. Topics covered were beef quality and stewardship, pasture health, heifer efficiency and culling alternatives.

Range Experiment Station

Melstone High School Ag Education Program - This mini-grant is helping in the construction of a range experiment station modeled after the Crazy Mountain and Musselshell River corridor. Students will be able to perform soil experiments, riparian landscape research, native plant studies, and even aquaculture habitat research.

Livestock Shelter Construction Project

Big Timber FFA Chapter - Our Foundation helped to purchase supplies so that FFA members lacking access to traditional ranch buildings could construct livestock shelters for their Supervised Agriculture Experience.

FOUNDATION VISION

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation envisions a future where agriculture is thriving in Montana, younger people are attracted to Montana's farms and ranches, urban and rural residents in Montana understand and support agriculture and the communities where Montana's ranch and farm families reside are healthy and vibrant.

Our Foundation has begun to implement programs that show progress towards this vision.

Support youth leadership development:

Our funding supports programs of the MFBF Young Farmer & Rancher program and organizations that are providing leadership development for Montana's youth. We've increased funding for scholarships to youth in agricultural related fields.

Providing a stronger voice for agriculture:

MFB Foundation continues to support leadership development programs such as REAL Montana and agricultural advocacy programs within MFBF. We provided top notch speakers who keep members up to date on priority issues.

Work to improve the economic viability of agriculture in Montana: We are helping to fund speakers on issues important to agriculture for the Rural Advocacy League at the University of Montana Law School. Increasing awareness of ag law issues and natural resource development issues from a landowner perspective will allow for progress in the courts and legislature to keep farmers and ranchers on the land. MFBFo is working with the MSU Entrepreneurship Center to develop incentives for agricultural entrepreneurship in Montana.



A Legacy of Giving - How can our Foundation enhance your estate plan?

*"If your plan is for one year,
plant rice.*

*If your plan is for 10 years,
plant trees.*

*If your plan is for 100 years,
educate children."*

-Confucius 515 BC – 479 BC

Isn't the quote to the left what the MFB Foundation is all about, educating children? We obviously want to educate children about agriculture but also rural values, respect, hard work and appreciation for what God has entrusted us with.

Below are three examples of how the Foundation can benefit you, your family and your community. When you help the Foundation, the Foundation has ways to provide you with income as well as tax benefits. Keep in mind there are other options to choose from.

GIFT TYPE

Bequest Goals: Bequests can be modified and assets remain in your control for a lifetime, plus you retain the total non-taxable value of the estate for your family.

Bequest Benefits: Reduce or eliminate estate tax liability and they are flexible.

Charitable Gift Annuity Goals: Stabilize current income with fixed payment; reduce income tax liability.

Charitable Gift Annuity Benefits: Charitable Income Tax donation; fixed income stream that is partially tax-free; Montana taxpayers qualify for endowment tax credit; avoid capital gains when using appreciated property.

Charitable Remainder Unitrust Goals: Provides solutions for appreciated assets; continue to generate income from assets; reduce income tax liability.

Charitable Remainder Unitrust Benefits: Avoid capital gains taxes, Charitable Income Tax deduction; income stream for life; Montana taxpayers qualify for endowment credit.

My friend and mentor Lew Zimmer has always said, "You can give your life's work to your children, charity or the government....pick two."

Scott Kulbeck and I will be hitting the road this year not with a "tin cup" but a tool box of ideas that will help you with your financial and estate planning. We hope you will open your minds as you open your door to us when we come calling. We are easy to get along with, and I think Scott takes his coffee black, just like I do! Warm Regards, Wayne Lower, LUTCF, Advisor to the MFB Foundation Board, Farm Bureau Financial Services

Invest in the Future of Agriculture

MFB Foundation is proud to announce a new scholarship and an opportunity for donors to leave a lasting impact on the education of Montana's youth. The Future of Agriculture Honor Scholarship, funded via a deferred charitable gift annuity set up by a very generous donation from Seed Source, Inc. of Toston, MT, is designed to continue into perpetuity.

The purpose of this scholarship is to assist students towards the completion of a degree in a field pertaining to agriculture with a special emphasis given to applicants who have shown ingenuity in agricultural production and advancement of small scale agriculture.

Currently this scholarship is awarding \$1,000 per year, but Seed Source, Inc. has set up the endowment in such a way that future donors can contribute and the scholarship will grow in the number given and amount of money awarded.

This type of contribution is a great example of how donations can support the wishes and goals of the Foundation and the donor while providing a significant financial benefit in the form of tax savings and future earnings for the donor. Contact MFB Foundation Coordinator, Scott Kulbeck (406.587.3153) to learn how you can take advantage of this type of program through Montana Farm Bureau Foundation. Help fund education for students who will be the future of agriculture.



MFB Foundation Executive Vice President, John Youngberg (left), accepts a major gift to establish the Future of Agriculture Honor Scholarship from Tom Helm of Seed Source, Inc. of Toston.

Get Your Foundation License Plate!



All of these great educational opportunities, grants and scholarships are funded in part by the proceeds the Foundation receives from its very own "Supporting Montana Agriculture" license plate. If you don't already have this plate on your vehicle, please consider upgrading the next time you renew your vehicle registration. Your County Treasurer's Office will have all the details.

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GOLD LEVEL SPONSORS: OVER \$1,000

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Mountain West Farm Bureau MIC
Northwest Counties Farm Bureau
Patti Davis
Seed Source, Inc.
Yellowstone County Farm Bureau

SILVER LEVEL SPONSORS: \$101 TO \$999

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McCone County Farm Bureau
Meagher County Farm Bureau
MSU College of Ag & Extension
Northern Ag Network
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Farm Bureau
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SCS Wraps

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Southwest Counties Farm Bureau
Ray Gallik
Tom and Sherri Cunningham
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What will your legacy be?

It's been a good life, but it's been a hard life. You finally have built something of value. Now it's complicated. It seems it will be as much work to pass it on as it was to put it together.

Would it be beneficial to have a confidential trusted advisor to sort it all out? Is it important to you both to provide for loved ones and promote your way of life and principals to future generations?

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation has some ideas to help you with both. They still appreciate small town values like, respecting our flag, believing the words "In God We Trust", and prayers before meals. Wayne Lower has been an active, supportive member of this organization for 27 years. Let him use his 37 years in the financial industry to help put these ideas to work for you.

It only requires a phone call or an email from you to get started. Feel free to reach out to either of us with your questions, concerns, or just to get a cup of coffee.



**MONTANA
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FOUNDATION**

Working in the Future of Montana Agriculture

C. Wayne Lower, LUTCF

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Scott Kulbeck

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Young ranchers keep ranching tradition alive

A visit with the Hamms

BY REBECCA COLNAR



A view from the Johnston Ranch.

When he was growing up on his family farm in the Central Coast of California, Tyler Hamm learned to appreciate agriculture. When his family moved to Montana in 1992, Tyler and his brother, Garrett, continued their enthusiasm for agriculture. Tyler earned an agricultural degree at MSU and Garrett also received an ag-related degree. They spent summers working on the family's leased ranch in Wilsall. Once Tyler graduated from college, he helped his dad for nine years but in 2013 the opportunity came along to work as ag manager at the Rocking C's Ranch on the Smith River west of White Sulphur Springs.

"That job involves handling the cattle as well as farming," explains Tyler. "We raise Black Angus. We artificially inseminate (AI) the heifers, and they calve in early March, then our bull-bred heifers and cows start calving. Our goal is to have a productive, healthy cow herd."

In addition, the young farmer



oversees the farming business which includes irrigated (pivots and flood) and dryland hay. "We hay the irrigated ground and native grasslands. I have one man who helps with the ag work full time, and there are other people here who will help, as needed."

After graduating from high school, Tyler

worked for the U.S. Forest Service fighting fires, but at the end of the fire season, he just wanted to head back to the ranch to help with the livestock. "In college, I started out with general studies, and then took an ag economics class and heard about the animal science program. Ranching has always been what I wanted to do, although I do question that when it's cold and snowy," the 33-year-old chuckles.

Tyler's wife, Mari Johnston, works at her family ranch which borders the Rocking C's. "I met her helping friends and neighbors work cows," he explains. A graduate of the University of Montana-Missoula, Mari returned to run the family ranch when her father was tragically killed in an ATV accident. The couple has been married for seven years and has two children, Emma, 5, and Taya, 2.

"My grandfather's family homesteaded a few miles north of where we live now," says

Mari. In the early 1940's my grandfather, Bud Johnston, and his brother Jim went out on their own and bought some land near where my grandmother's family homesteaded, which is where our summer pasture is. Over the years they bought more land and put together a nice ranch. In 1949 they bought property on the Smith River from the Ringling family, which is now our home place. In 1975 Bud and Jim split the ranch. My dad and his cousin came back to run each ranch. And now the third generation has come home to run the two ranches and raise the fourth generation.

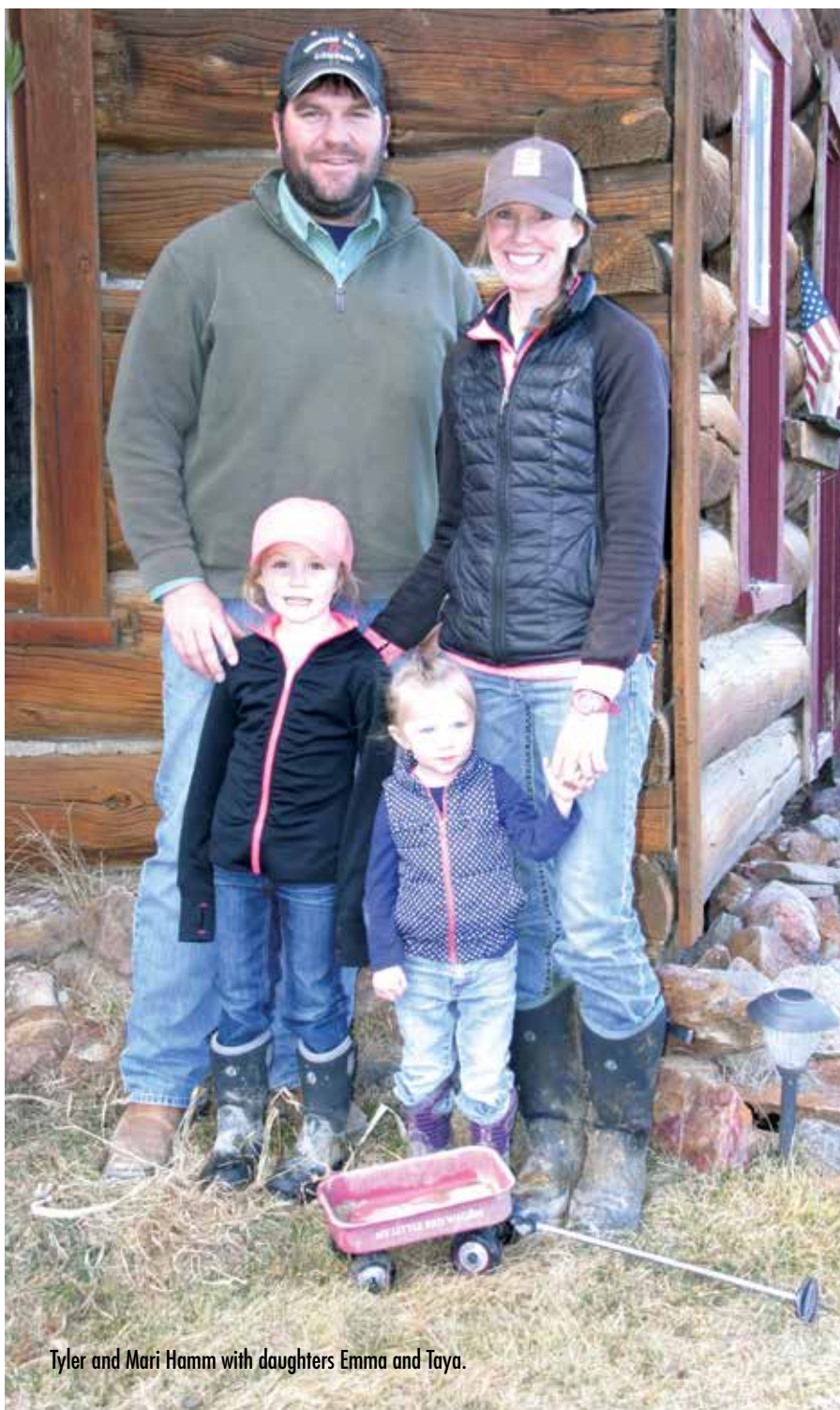
“When you grow up this way, you can't imagine living in the city.”

“I had always hoped to come back to the ranch, and when my father died a week before my graduation from college, that was the catalyst for me to return,” explains Mari. “My sister, Libby, worked as a dietician for two years, but then she opted to come back and help run the place.”

Certainly, the two sisters already had vast experience ranching. “When we were young we helped dad with the cows. When you grow up this way, you can't imagine living in the city. Emma has already learned to milk a cow and she helped pull a calf the other day. I love that the kids are with us all day, every day. The fun thing about raising kids on the ranch is they



Vaccinating calves is part of everyday chores in the spring.



Tyler and Mari Hamm with daughters Emma and Taya.

get to be outside, working with animals, learning a good work ethic.”

Speaking up for agriculture

The Hamms realize that being involved in agricultural organizations like Farm Bureau is essential. “One way it's important is dealing with issues like the

estate tax,” says Mari. “It is harder and harder for young people to come back to the home place. It's important to have a voice in Helena and Washington, D.C. on issues like the estate tax. It needs to be easier for families to pass their places on to the next generation. It's a way of life I would hate to see go away.”



Tyler Hamm with his youngest daughter, Taya.

Tyler is doing his part of being involved by serving as treasurer/secretary of the Meagher County Farm Bureau since 2013 and serving on the Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. "When I worked for my dad out of Wilsall, I was in Park County Farm Bureau and they had a strong membership. Once I moved to White Sulphur Springs, I switched to the Meagher County Farm Bureau and



went to their annual meeting. I've been working with our president, Alicia Wilson, to encourage members to be more active in our county Farm Bureau."

Being active in the county Farm Bureau is important. In 2016, Meagher County Bureau sponsored and had a float in the WSS Labor Day Parade and is planning to hold a summer picnic. "I'd also like to see District 10 YF&R host an event," the young man says.

Living 30 miles from the small town of White Sulphur Spring has its

advantages—the stunning scenery and rolling foothills of the Little Belt Mountains. The Smith River Valley boasts great fishing and floating. However, for many, being 30 miles from town, and 10 miles back on a gravel road, might be a disadvantage, but to the Hamms, it's heaven.

"You can't beat living in the country," Tyler says "In fact, it's to the point where I consider being in Bozeman being in the city!"



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Hereford Legacy in Willow Creek

Hard work and family traditions

BY REBECCA COLNAR

It's Tuesday morning just before the Cooper Hereford Sale in the tiny town of Willow Creek, Montana. For mid-March, it's a warm, pleasant day. Pickup trucks and cars are parked in fields while potential buyers, catalogues in hand, wander through the pens of bulls, studying birthweights, weaning weights and calving ease data. Cooper family members are at computers in the sale room registering buyers. Mark Cooper is bustling around the pens, ensuring buyers get a look at specific bulls. As 11:30 a.m. approaches, a line forms in the sale barn as attendees anticipate a tasty lunch of roast beef, mashed potatoes, corn, salad and dessert. The wooden stands begin to fill as everyone squeezes in to get a good seat to see the bulls and catch the eye of the spotter. Auctioneer John Goggins begins his quick rhythmic chant. Bulls enter the ring, calmly wander around, and exit when an opposite door is lifted. Yellow bidder numbers make fast appearances. There is excitement as bidders wave and the video auction online and phone bids are tracked.

During the sale, Mark Cooper sits with the auctioneer. Seated in the auction area is daughter Katie Cooper, who keeps track of the sales using an efficient, new computer program. Other Cooper daughters Kelsy and Natalie are in the back office printing out sales invoices and answering last minute questions.



The family: Mark and Cristy Cooper, daughter Katie, son-in-law Dave Hanson and his wife, Kelsy, with niece and nephew Sadie Schopp and Tad Cooper.

An hour and a half later, the bulls, along with a few cows and yearling heifers have been sold, buyers line up to pay and make delivery arrangements. The cooler of soft drinks and beer makes an appearance. Buyers stay to visit as nobody seems in a big hurry to leave the beautiful outdoor views and comfortable facilities. Two hours later, the buyer party will take place less than a mile away at the Willow Creek Café. Everyone will enjoy juicy steaks while listening to a local band led by Sam Platts who, with his talented band, play cowboy favorites.

The Coopers visit with buyers from as far away as Australia, Oklahoma and Missouri, as well as with local cattlemen and women from across the state. There is no better way to spend a spring day

than buying bulls and visiting with like-minded people.

The history

Recorded as the Silver Brook Farm by the County Clerk on November 28, 1914, the original homestead of 480 acres was settled by Frank Oscar Cooper. In 1946, his son Jack bought the land and continued to run a general farming operation for several years before purchasing his first foundation stock – 15 Line One females – from the U.S. Range Livestock Experiment Station in 1947. Unimpressed by the cattle generally winning in the shows during the 1940s and 50s, Jack set his mind to producing cattle suited for the commercial bull market. He understood



that range producers were looking for bulls with sound feet and legs and for animals with the inherent ability to put on pounds more efficiently than other cattle at the time. A forward thinker, Jack also realized that breeding cattle to preserve and amplify highly desirable traits would require performance testing, and thus began testing his cattle almost immediately. By 1957, when the Montana Beef Performance Association was formed, Jack, a charter member of the association, already had ten years of experience with performance testing with Line One Herefords along with his own meticulous record-keeping.

Today, the Cooper operation is owned and managed by Jack and Phylis' son Mark and his wife Cristy who work closely with the fourth generation (two of their four daughters, Kelsy and Katie, and son-in-law Dave Hanson). This year marked their 51st annual production sale, and over 100 years as stewards of the land. The family's goals for the ranch are very similar to when Jack started it all - a strong emphasis on performance testing and selection pressure on calving ease and positive carcass traits. "Our breeding program was founded over 70 years ago, and built upon the belief that by maintaining a strong performance line breeding program we could improve the gain ability and feeding efficiency of our cattle," says Mark. "Maintaining the Line One genetic pool has enabled us to increase the uniformity of our herd and to provide our customers with a selection of 80-90 yearling bulls that vary little in structure and type from top to bottom. In the years since purchasing our first Line One foundation stock, we've worked very hard to improve our herd to meet the current demands of our customers and the beef industry at large. By maintaining



Sale time.

an approximate 25 percent in-breeding coefficient Cooper's customers can rely on bulls that will produce a uniform set of offspring with predictable growth, powerful maternal traits, and balanced EPDs. (EPDs stand for Expected Progeny Differences which provide estimates of the genetic value of an animal as a parent). A stroll through the pens on sale day provides evidence that their breeding program has indeed withstood the test of time and remains focused on producing sound, functional cattle that thrive in all programs, registered or commercial.

The family stays busy year-round and believes strongly in the value of a hard day's work. Calving begins just before the first of the year and many hands are required to assist with moving snow, keeping barns cleaned, treating calves, sorting and moving pairs, etc. The weather in Montana the first couple of weeks

in January can be brutal so most of the calves are run through the barns before being turned out to pastures that are close by and enable a watchful eye to detect any sickness. January is also filled with many sale preparations that include clipping, photographing, ultra sounding, and completing a breeding soundness evaluation on all yearling bulls that will sell in their upcoming spring sale. It's a busy month and requires everyone to work long hours. "We all pitch in and lend a hand whenever possible," Kelsy explains, adding that "the ranch is fortunate to also have the help and expertise of Leroy Ballard who has worked for our family for 20-plus years."

Breeding season starts in early March and begins with placing CIDRs (Controlled Internal Drug Release used for synchronization of estrus.) in the cowherd and brainstorming the coming year's





breeding strategy. The Line One bloodline has remained closed since its inception and therefore requires intricate mating selections that ensure an in-breeding coefficient under 30 percent. Breeding stock is selected primarily from their own herd but also incorporates genetics from Holden Herefords and the Miles City Experiment Station. "We rely primarily on our own genetics and those raised by Holden Herefords in Valier. Continuing to operate this closed line of breeding requires trust in one another and in each other's breeding programs," says Mark. The Coopers began using artificial insemination in the late 1960s and have used embryo transfers since the 1970s as tools for trait selection and enhancement. In the last two years, the ranch has turned to InVitro Fertilization as another tool to advance their genetics and capitalize on desirable traits.

Outside the work required of their purebred cattle operation, the Coopers



The after bull sale party takes place at the Willow Creek Café.

keep busy during the summer months with haying and farming. The family grows winter and spring wheat as well as alfalfa. In total, the Coopers farm approximately 1,200 acres of irrigated farmland and close to 500 acres of dry land annually. Most of the hay is fed to their cattle, but each year they sell close to 1000 tons of hay to area ranchers. They also put up alfalfa silage which is implemented in their bull and heifer feed

rations after weaning, which occurs the Tuesday following Labor Day.

The Cooper family is proud of their heritage as performance Hereford breeders and it has always been the family legacy to keep the land in agriculture as it's handed from one generation to the next. "I think it's important to slowly pass along the responsibility to ensure a smooth transition" say Mark. "It was easy for my dad and me, and I expect the same with



Bringing in the bulls.

my daughters and son-in-law. We all get along."

In order to maintain the family legacy the Coopers have focused their efforts on land improvements rather than acquisitions and in striving for uniformity in their herd rather than increasing their overall herd size. "Bigger isn't always better," says Mark. The family displays acts of stewardship through implementing weed and rodent control, water conservation, and innovative farming and ranching practices into their business plan. Katie, a former Civil Engineer, focuses much of her time on improvement projects. The latest being a restoration project along the Jefferson River, the planting of numerous tree belts and natural windbreaks, along with a new center pivot design. In the spring of 2015 Katie was selected for participation in the REAL Montana Program where she is gaining the leadership skills and knowledge to represent the Agricultural and Natural Resources industries in Montana. She hopes to bridge the gap between producers and consumers and ensure these key industries remain at the forefront of our state's economy.

The Coopers stay abreast of advancements in their field through active participation on local boards and committees, including Farm Bureau where



Cooper Hereford's Mark Cooper with son-in-law Dave Hanson.

Kelsy and Katie serve as board members in Gallatin County. "Farm Bureau does a great job keeping us informed and educated on legislation and policy. Often times farmers and ranchers are too busy to play a role in Helena. Montana Farm Bureau serves as a voice for our local agricultural communities," says Katie. The family started hosting farm-to-table dinners on their property three years ago as a way to bridge the gap between producers and consumers. Guests dine al fresco under 100-year old willow trees while enjoying Cooper Hereford beef paired with other Montana grown products. "It's been a wonderful experience to share our land and heritage with the community," says Katie.

The sisters hope to impress upon young people that there is a lot of opportunity in agriculture. They've started with their nieces Sadie, Grace and Molly, and nephew Tad, all of whom spend a good deal of time at the ranch each summer. "We keep them busy," says Kelsy. "It's a fine line trying to teach them a good work ethic while at the same time ensuring they enjoy their time at the ranch." Certainly, with the family's enthusiasm for their ranch and agriculture, Cooper Hereford Ranch will be in good hands for a long time to come.







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Ruey Barnett: Insurance Agent and Mentor

BY REBECCA COLNAR

Mountain West Farm Bureau Agents are known for going far above what the average insurance agent does. That's because MWFBMIC agents understand agriculture and the ties between the insurance company and the Montana Farm Bureau Federation.

Ruey Barnett was born in Evansville, Indiana on a small farm that grew wheat, soybeans, corn and hay. Barnett grew up helping with the farm until his father got an oil field job in Montana and the family moved to Glendive in 1971. He graduated from high school and met his wife of 42 years, Marla. Their kids were born there, too.

"After high school, I worked 20 years for Buttrey Foods all over Montana. They were a good company, and had been around for 100 years when I was working for them," Ruey remembers. "However, when they asked me to move to North Dakota, I said no thanks, and went on to work for an office supply company. It was based out of Williston, but I lived in Glasgow, working for them for 8 years. I was their chief salesperson."

After eight years, however, the company said Barnett was making too much money and needed to slow down the

“Life is constantly in change and your policy needs to adjust with you.”

sales. Because they had been through the oil boom of the 1980s, they decided this time they would play it safe and not expand," Barnett explains. "I decided to look for another career that would honor my efforts. I looked around and thought 'those insurance guys seem to do well for themselves and still have time to umpire ball games!'"

Barnett chuckles that it was a State Farm Agent, whose son worked for Farm Bureau, who recommended he pursue an agent job with Farm Bureau. "I sent an email. The next day, Tom Cunningham



called and Lew Zimmer paid me a visit. It seemed like the right fit and I completed my training and testing and became an agent in Glasgow in 2002."

Since their grown children and grandkids live in Gardiner, the Barnett's decided a move to southwestern Montana would be a good thing. "We moved to Bozeman 10 years ago, when Lew retired. I was an agent, but part of their purpose of bringing me to Bozeman was to have a mentoring office here."

The office in Bozeman basically got a two-for-one, as Marla was hired in the claims and administration office and serves as Cunningham's personal assistant, as well as being an agent coordinator on Farm Bureau membership issues.

Barnett says what he likes most about his job is, "meeting people's needs and helping them in their deepest moment of need, and explaining the attributes of insurance. We give checks when people need them the most."

He enjoys working with farmers and ranchers all over the state. "Part of the reason I was hired was that I not only had computer skills, but had a farming background. I knew a combine from a hole in the ground!"

As for advice, the Bozeman agent says

it's important to find a company and agent that honors the relationship you have with that agent. "Your agent knows you, you know them and you'll want to visit on a regular basis," he says. "Life does change. Kids have kids, people pass away, you buy a new house. Life is constantly in change and your policy needs to adjust with you."

Part of the reason the Barnetts came to Bozeman was to work closely with the Federation. "It's important to have a presence in the Farm Bureau building. (The insurance office is just one door down from the Federation.) We value our relationship with the Federation. The message we give is the Farm Bureau story. The insurance company and the Federation are certainly tied together."

In his free time, Barnett umpires youth baseball. The Barnetts are very active in the Belgrade Alliance Church. He enjoys fishing, mountain biking and being around family and friends. "Another hobby is cleaning my garage," he chuckles. "I move things from one side to the other."

His closing thoughts: Insurance is not the price you pay, it's the relationship you have with your agent and that company.



Exciting times at the Nation's Capitol

When you become involved in Farm Bureau, your life opens up to some truly exciting experiences. That's what members attending the American Farm Bureau Advocacy Conference and Issues Advisory Committee Meetings discovered on a late February trip to Washington, D.C. The highlight of the trip was presenting Montana Senator Steve Daines with the Friend of Farm Bureau Award just before the Senator hurried off to confirm former Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke as the Secretary of Interior. Although the group didn't have time to go through the channels to get into the Senate Chamber to watch, they did observe the confirmation from Zinke's former

Congressional office in the Longworth Building with his staff and later his Interior staff gave them a grand tour of the Department of the Interior Building and Zinke's office. In addition, they had a productive visit with Sen. Jon Tester.

The members coming into town for the AFBF Issues Advisory Committee Meetings included Tom DePuydt, a farmer and rancher from Saco, Federal Lands; Gary Heibertshausen, a sheep rancher from Alzada, Environmental Issues; Larry Switzer, a cattle rancher from Richey, Market Structures; Turk Stovall, a cattle rancher from Billings, serves on Animal Care; and Bruce Wright, a farmer and food processor from Belgrade, Farm Policy. All



A good visit with Senator Jon Tester.

Advisory Committee members discussed a variety of agriculture issues specific to their area of interest, seeking to provide direction and solutions.

"This was an amazing trip to D.C.," noted Bruce Wright. "Our committee had a good meeting on the Farm Bill, and workshops at the advocacy conference focused effective communications with Congressmen and other elected officials. At our visits on the Hill, everyone we met



In Ryan Zinke's former Congressional office watching live as he is confirmed Secretary of the Interior.



Jennifer Bergin flashes a smile at the PAL graduation.



Senator Steve Daines receives the Friend of Farm Bureau award in his office in Washington, D.C. Pictured left to right are Turk Stovall, Joy and Tom DePuydt, Senator Daines, MFBF National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf, Bruce Wright, Gary Heibertshausen and Larry Switzer.



Gary Heibertshausen, center, with Larry Switzer talks about federal land management during a meeting with the Department of the Interior staff.

with was interested in our comments and concerns."

Another highlight? Seeing Montana District 3 Director Jennifer Bergin (who is also on the MFBF and AFBF Promotion & Education Committees) graduate from the Partners in Advocacy Leadership (PAL) class. PAL provides advanced training to the organization's rising stars, with the goal of developing powerful advocates for agriculture and cultivating leaders who can help Farm Bureau advance its policy goals.

Government at work in Helena, MT



One of the great member benefits of belonging to Montana Farm Bureau is the opportunity to work closely with elected officials in Helena and Washington, D.C. When the legislature meets biannually, the MFBF has two full-time lobbyists studying bills, meeting with legislators and governmental agencies and spearheading action alerts. This year, MFBF held three events: the Young Farmers & Ranchers Calling on the Capitol, the Council of Presidents and the MFBF Calling on the Capitol, open to all members. At each event, agency visits included the Department of Livestock, Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Department of Agriculture. They met with the governor, the secretary of state and the state auditor. Everyone had a chance to sit in on a Floor Session, as well as sit in at a hearing. Some members testified on important bills, including HB 155, the Seed Bill, that protects a farmer's right to make his own planting decisions. Legislators were invited to breakfasts and dinners, allowing members to spend one-on-one time to visit about rural issues and agriculture.

Council of President attendees heard several speakers in an afternoon program



MFBF President Hans McPherson visit with Ben Thomas, Director of Agriculture.



Lewis & Clark President Karl Christians with Rep. Becky Beard, HD-80 at dinner.

before heading to the Capitol and agency meetings the following day. The presidents were enthusiastic about the program.

"MSU Economist George Haynes had a good message that although commodity prices are low, stay positive," noted Jillien Streit, president of Hill-Liberty-Blaine County Farm Bureau. "The Fat-Free meeting segment was great in providing good tips, like sending out an agenda ahead of time. It was good to meet our other county president as well."

Lewis & Clark County Farm Bureau President Karl Christians noted that the lecture on running a good meeting was helpful.



Don Steinbeisser, Jr., explains his support of HB 155 to members of the Senate Ag Committee. Members Jill Streit and Rhonda Hergenrider testified, as well.

"Keeping the communications going, keeping a positive note and moving the meeting along was good to hear. In addition, it was great to have meals where we could easily visit with the legislators."

Dawson-Wibaux County President Gene Evans found the time spent with State Auditor Matt Rosendale interesting, as he talked about the land board and health care reform. "The access we have with the heads of these different government agencies is very impressive."

Legislative Breakfast:



(top) MFBF District 10 Director Patti Davis and Rep. Alan Redfield, HD-59. (Above) Rep. Geraldine Custer, HD-39, with MFBF District 1 Director Troy Kurth.



MFBF Public Relations Director Rebecca Colnar, Senator Duane Ankney, SD-20 and MFBF District 3 Director Jennifer Bergin.



District 4 Director Lee Boyer, Sen. Mike Lane, SD 17 and Rep. Seth Berglee, HD-58.



Rep. Barry Usher, HD-40 and MFBF President Hans McPherson.



Rep. Ray Shaw, HD 71, MFBF District 2 Director Rhonda Boyd, and Sen. Jeff Wellborn, SD-36.



Sen. Ryan Osmundson, SD 15, visit with past MFBF President Dave McClure.

Legislative Session Wrap Up

The 2017 Legislative Session is now well past the halfway mark. Several bills that MFBF supports have made it all the way through the process including HB 286, a bill that allows the Livestock Loss Board to reimburse producers if they have livestock killed by mountain lions, in addition to wolves and grizzly bears, and HB 305 which allows counties to set bounties for predators to be paid in their counties. Many others are very close to making it through the process. SB 155, the Seed Bill, which allows agricultural seed to be regulated at the state level only, preventing a county-by-county patchwork of rules and regulations, has passed the House and Senate and will soon be on the Governor's desk awaiting

his signature or veto during the last week of March. HB 410, a bill that increases vehicle registration fees to increase funds for noxious weed control, was taken off the table in the House Agriculture Committee. It seems that HB 410, along with HB 343, the Montana Wildlife Habitat Improvement Act which allows the use of federal funds to combat noxious weeds and restore wildlife habitat, will continue their way through the process as the two bills of the Session that will help combat noxious weeds in the state. Similarly, several bills have been introduced to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). While we support the concepts put forward by these bills and the wish to do our part in fighting AIS, MFBF opposed



HB 622 and SB 363 in their first hearings because we hope to see amendments that will make the funding structure more broad-based and fair.

Many MFBF opposed bills have officially been stopped. HB 243 and HB 262 threatened private property rights by forcing access across private property. HB 419 removed the requirement that wild bison be certified as brucellosis-free before sale or transfer. They were all tabled in committee and missed the deadline for transmittal.

Your Montana Farm Bureau Century Club dues ensure that our good work in Helena continues even after the last bill is voted on this session.

Calling on the Capitol/Ag Days

MFBF held its final Calling on the Capitol of the session in Helena March 21-22. What made the COTC especially meaningful was the first day of the event was National Ag Day, which was kicked off early with the MFBF Women's Leadership Committee serving cinnamon rolls, breakfast burritos, fruit and coffee to legislators at Capitol. Following breakfast, the group met with the new Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen. They discussed the role of ag education in Montana's schools, vocational education, funding for rural school and the superintendent's role on the State Land Board.

Next stop was DNRC, where the group met with Ray Beck to discuss Montana's aggressive campaign to stop the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species. "Whether they come in on the trailers or hulls of recreational boats, or from the water in an angler's bait bucket, several non-native invasive species have found their way into Montana's water bodies. Their presence can cause severe damage to local ecosystems, industry including the ag industry, and tourism," Beck explained. Currently, the DNRC and Fish, Wildlife



On the Capitol steps.

and Parks are working hard to prevent the spread of aquatic mussels. For more information on aquatic invasive species visit fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/species/ais/.

The group of about 15 Farm Bureau members and 8 Miles Community College collegiate members also visited with the new director of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Martha Williams, as well as Secretary of State Corey Stapleton and Supreme Court Justice Jim Rice. Attendees were able to sit in on House and Senate Floor Sessions, testify at committee hearings and have dinner with their legislators.



Legislators stop to enjoy breakfast hosted by the MFBF Women's Leadership Committee.



Meeting with the new Fish, Wildlife and Parks Director Martha Williams.



Alena Standley, MFBF Western Regional Manager, with Women's Leadership Committee members Deb Bricker and Bonnie Jones.

Young Farmers and Ranchers: Bridging the Gap

BY SKYLAR SHIRLEY

As a current junior in college, it's near impossible to stay active in my family's ranch. I'm located at the University of Montana Western, 320 miles from my family's property, which makes participating in calving, feeding and doctoring a rare occasion. I joined my collegiate Young Farmers and Ranchers club to continue advocating for the world of agriculture that was no longer my backyard.

The Montana Farm Bureau and Young Farmers & Ranchers has provided a platform which allows for myself and other college students to continue to learn, network and advocate for the agricultural industry. One of these amazing opportunities was to attend the AFBF 2017 FUSION Conference.

In February, 55 members of the Montana Farm Bureau attended the FUSION Conference in Pittsburgh, PA. This conference allowed members to participate in educational sessions, tour local agricultural operations, listen to



(Left) Skylar Shirley before the Discussion Meet. (Above) The entire delegation from Montana that attended the FUSION Conference.

motivational speakers and partake in professional networking. Each state was allowed two representatives to compete in the Collegiate Discussion Meet, a competition that reflects a committee discussing issues that the agriculture industry faces.

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One session covered using our smartphones, iPads and tablets on the farm or ranch with information on apps to help organize life on the farm. Discussions included weather apps, travel apps, calendars, and even record keeping. Our smartphones hardly leave our sides, so it makes sense to integrate them into our farming and ranching practices.

The tour that UMW students Baylie Johnson, Karin Zehm, Treygon Olson and Skylar Shirley attended was visiting Deerfield Valley Farm and Maize Valley Winery. While touring the farm, members learned about the farm operation by listening to speakers talk about seed and fertilizer production, their grain elevator and machinery. Deerfield Farms got started in 1959.

Maize Valley Winery got their start in the 1960s. They currently offer a variety of handcrafted wines, beers and foods that come from quality, fresh and local ingredients. On this tour members learned about how to brew beer, produce wine and got a tour of the operation. The University of Montana Western's collegiate YF&R president Baylie Johnson said, "It was an amazing opportunity to tour different agriculture areas in both Pennsylvania and Ohio. The whole time, it seemed as if everyone on the tour bus was comparing the farm ground to what they have back home. It was neat touring a farm that focuses on grain production and then a winery because I have never seen the production side of either of those industries because I have always been involved in the cattle industry."

Although this was my third time attending this conference, each trip has been an educational experience full of personal and professional growth. I cannot wait to see what the future holds, but I know that Montana Farm Bureau and Young Farmers & Ranchers will play a large roll, no matter what I do. They help me continue to follow my passion of advocating for agriculture.

Skylar Shirley, a UM-Western Collegiate Farm Bureau member, shares her thoughts on attending the FUSION Conference in Pittsburgh in February. Skylar was a Montana competitor in the YF&R Discussion Meet at the event. MSU Collegiates and Miles City Collegiates were also in attendance. The conference included state Women's Leadership Committees and members of the Promotion & Education Committees—55 Montana folks in all.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher Committee will be hosting a regional ag tour for YF&R-aged members from across the state. **This year the tour will be held April 21-22 in the Dillon area.** Tour stops are still being confirmed so check out the MFBF YF&R Tour event on Facebook to stay up-to-date as more details come in. A block of rooms have been set aside at the Fairbridge Inn at a special event rate of \$89/night. Contact them at **406-683-3636** to make your hotel reservation and **ask for the Farm Bureau room block.**

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COUNTY NEWS

Lewis & Clark County Farm Bureau is planning a farm fair for fourth grade students from East Helena May 16. The committee plans to have 15 educational stations including dairy, poultry, sheep, soils, 4-H and more.

Big Horn County Farm Bureau is planning to host an "agricultural career day" at schools in Hardin and Lodge Grass. Professionals representing a variety of jobs from banking to journalism and equipment sales to genetics will discuss the skills and rewards of careers in ag.

Phillips County Farm Bureau participated in an educational program about agriculture in Great Falls schools March 31. They will host Great Falls students in Malta May 5 when the group will not only visit the American

Prairie Reserve but visit with area ranchers and Phillips County Farm Bureau members.

Southwest Counties Farm Bureau showed their support by attending the UM-Western College Rodeo Banquet in Dillon March 31. Several **UM-Western Collegiate Farm Bureau** members are on the rodeo team.

Fergus County Farm Bureau had an ATV station and grain safety station at the Fergus County 4-H Ag Safety Day April 4 at the county fairgrounds.

Broadwater County Farm Bureau will hold a raffle for their scholarship fund at the Broadwater County Conservation District's Ag Banquet.

On March 30, **Sweet Grass County Farm Bureau**, along with the Crazy Peak Cattlewomen, held a Taco Feed Fundraiser to help their neighbors to the south who suffered many losses from the recent wildfires. **Sweet Grass County Farm Bureau** members will help with Montana FFA State contests to be held May 1-3 in Big Timber. They anticipate 800-plus FFA members from across the state to be in Big Timber competing in Food Science, Forestry, Floriculture, Horse Evaluation, Veterinary Science, Job Interview, Marketing, Ag Issues and Ag Communications Career Development Events. On May 6, Crazy Mountain Fiber will showcase wool production in the area. **Sweet Grass County Farm Bureau** will participate in this first-ever event in Big Timber with a membership display booth.

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DATE	SITE	CITY
22-Apr-17	VFW 1548	Libby
24-Apr-17	Faith Free Lutheran Church	Kalispell
25-Apr-17	Polson Foursquare Church	Polson
26-Apr-17	First Baptist Church of Bigfork	Bigfork
27-Apr-17	Whitefish Church of the Nazarene	Whitefish
28-Apr-17	Joe Meagher Memorial Civic Center	Cut Bank
29-Apr-17	Knights of Columbus 1493	Great Falls
01-May-17	Fifth Avenue Christian Church	Havre
02-May-17	Malta City Hall	Malta
03-May-17	Elk s Lodge Post 1922	Glasgow
04-May-17	St Leo s Catholic Church	Lewistown
05-May-17	East Gate Wesleyan	Billings
06-May-17	Lighthouse Christian Center	Miles City
08-May-17	Family Christian Center	Laurel
09-May-17	Valley Bible Church	Billings
10-May-17	Joliet Community Center	Joliet
11-May-17	Rock Creek Resort	Red Lodge
12-May-17	Big Timber Lutheran Church	Big Timber
13-May-17	Hope Lutheran Church in Bozeman	Bozeman
15-May-17	Livingston Christian Center	Livingston
16-May-17	Belgrade Church of Christ	Belgrade
17-May-17	AOH Hall	Anaconda
18-May-17	Race Track Volunteer Fire Department	Butte
19-May-17	Knights of Columbus 844	Helena
20-May-17	East Helena United Methodist Church	East Helena
22-May-17	VFW Post 1087	Great Falls
23-May-17	Ruby s Inn and Convention Center	Missoula
24-May-17	Hamilton Assembly of God Church	Hamilton
25-May-17	Solid Rock Church	Missoula

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Agriculture Educational Design Contest

The Ag in Montana Schools Design Contest Award Luncheon took place March 24 during Ag Week. This year's theme for the contest was Show Me and Teach Me about Montana Agriculture! The event recognized elementary students from across Montana who have created a design and slogan that promotes various agricultural topics that are important to Montana. Each grade had a selected winner. Winning entries were printed on placemats and other items.

During the event AMS President Helen

Hanson was recognized for her many years of service to AMS, including serving at the helm as President for the past six years. Many thanks to Helen for her dedication to this excellent program. Farm Bureau members will recognize Helen as MFBF's "First Lady" when her husband, Bob, served as MFBF President.

Superintendent Elsie Arntzen and Director Thomas announced the transfer of the Department of Agriculture's "Agriculture in the Classroom" program to the Office of Public Instruction. The



Poster Contest winners.
Helen Hanson being honored at the Ag in Montana Schools Design Contest Award Luncheon.

Agriculture in The Classroom program provides schools and communities with educational opportunities to learn about agriculture in a fun and effective way, and seeks to instill appreciation for local agriculture and food production.

Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman: Conservation Heroes of the American Heartland

REVIEW BY WILL RODGER, AFBF COMMUNICATIONS (*Editor's Note: Dusty Crary is a Montana Farm Bureau member*)

Miriam Horn's "Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman: Conservation Heroes of the American Heartland" (Norton, 394 pp., \$27.95) could be the most important book about agriculture you'll read this year – maybe ever.

General readers have been misled by a parade of not-so-smart books from writers who want to change our broken food system. Armed with little more than reflexive outrage and bromides gathered from the far left, activists have decided to remake the world in their image: tranquil, vegetarian and oh-so-green.

Horn, who herself works for the pragmatic Environmental Defense Fund, hits back, detailing with real precision the everyday things that farmers, ranchers and others do to feed us all while nurturing their fields, ranges and habitat. Best of all: Her subjects are hardly outliers, but typical of a new generation of people who work the land for the future as much as the present.

We get to know Dusty Crary, a 50-something rancher from northwest Montana who is both a producer of beef and everyday activist who has helped preserve large swaths of the range and its habitat. Working with everyone from the National Rifle Association to the Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited, Crary has gathered together a band of ranchers who raise beef while restoring lands that too often have been over-grazed or abused by mineral and oil development.

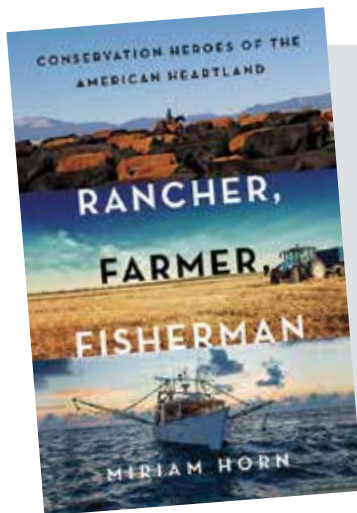
Crary feeds his cattle on rotations so the land never becomes so trampled it will not support the indigenous flora and fauna of the region. He guards against wolves and bears that could threaten his herd. But instead of trying to eliminate them,

he's made peace with the world around him. He knows predators will usually avoid ranches as long as easy pickings – carcasses of calves that die during or shortly after birth, for instance – aren't within easy reach.

Crary has sold development rights in perpetuity to conservation groups, assuring a future for

actually beginning to – ever so slowly – build new topsoil.

Horn contrasts the bounty of no-till with what Knopf rightly calls the "massive damage" done to soil biology by the implement that has defined farming for millennia, the plow. And plowing, she notes, remains the technique of choice for most organic farmers who find themselves



“Horn contrasts the bounty of no-till with what Knopf rightly calls the “massive damage” done to soil biology by the implement that has defined farming for millennia, the plow. And plowing remains the technique of choice for most organic farmers.”

ranching on his land as well as a guarantee the land he cares for today will remain wild and open for generations to come. But implicit in all of this is a sobering observation: The age of self-regulating nature is gone for good. The best anyone can hope for is a managed landscape that maintains what can be preserved while still permitting human activity.

Justin Knopf farms several hundred acres in the fragile grasslands of Salina, Kansas, just as generations of his family did before him. College-educated and an avid learner, Knopf rejects the false, binary choice between organic and conventional farming. His third way combines GMO corn and soybeans, cover crops, wheat and more to manage land that had become shockingly depleted after decades of use. Unlike his father and grandfather, he plows only occasionally. The result of his own no-till revolution is a rich, dark, loamy deposit that does not erode but is

in a game of no-till catchup with their more conventional cousins.

Even big business gets a nod. Merritt Lane, CEO of Canal Barge Company, has worked tirelessly to reverse the worst damage caused by Mississippi River levees that no longer feed the vanishing wetlands on which so much of agriculture and fishing still depend. And Horn writes, lyrically at times, of people like fisherman Wayne Werner and shrimp consultant Sandy Nguyen, who fight nature, refinery pollution, excess waterborne nitrogen and more just to survive in their blue-collar communities.

The Mississippi ties all these heroes together in its watershed. More important than geography however, is the ethic these citizen activists share. They know that no matter what Washington technocrats may decree, they themselves must step forward to keep natural resources healthy and abundant.



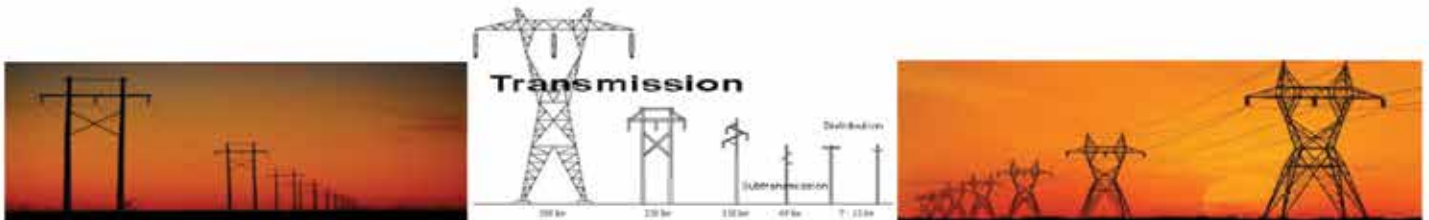
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