



Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable Activity Report: Federal Fiscal Year 2009 (FY2009)

- Developed Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable strategic plan for the next five years, 2009-2013, including prioritization of tasks for FY2009. Evaluation of indicators and conceptual model content for applicability to climate change issues on rangelands was a key new component of the strategic plan. A brief review of SRR indicators in the context of climate change found the full suite to be applicable.
- Worked with SRR funding agency partners to allocate resources across FY2009 priority projects, including identification of tasks to be performed in-kind by agency partners in lieu of additional funding for FY2009. SRR's budget has not increased in 9 years, and factoring in inflation means that funding has actually decreased. SRR leadership continually strives to find ways to do more with less to ensure that momentum is maintained for this group of committed volunteers; SRR's participants, representing over 50 organizations, are not paid for their contributions to SRR's efforts.
- Coordinated with Heinz Center to review revised content of their latest report with regard to the grasslands and shrublands (rangelands) chapter; specific attention was paid to their intended treatment of climate change in upcoming projects. This relationship ensures that SRR will not be 'reinventing the wheel' by duplicated rangeland related projects that the Heinz Center plans to pursue.
- Coordinated with the Arizona State University Consortium for Science, Policy, and Outcomes (CSPO, with offices in Arizona and Washington DC) to discuss review of current climate change policy and areas for improvement as SRR begins to engage in the climate change issue.
- SRR participated by invitation in an effort initiated by CSREES and the NASULG titled the Working Forests and Rangelands Roundtable during November 2008. Efforts were originally focused on identifying common ground to highlight the importance of these resources. After developing an issue paper, the ad-hoc group put the effort on hiatus due to lack of resources and lack of committed interest.

- Completed publication and distribution of the Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable booklet, Sustainable Rangelands Ecosystem Goods and Services, available on the SRR website at <http://sustainable.rangelands.org>. This publication builds upon SRR's indicator work and evolves the SRR conceptual model of rangeland social, economic, and ecological integration to address goods, services and core processes. Implications for monitoring, management and policy cycles are also discussed.

- SRR produced and presented a scientific poster paper titled, "*A Conceptual Framework & Monitoring System for Rangeland Ecosystem Goods, Services & Processes,*" at A Conference on Ecosystem Services (ACES), hosted by FS and other agencies and organizations in Naples, FL during December 2008. Conversations are underway with both EPA and FS organizers to ensure that SRR continues to participate with this specialized group of ecosystem services experts.

- Worked with SRR agency partners (FS, BLM, and NRCS) to schedule and coordinate the Oregon Multi-Agency Pilot Project (MAPP) rangeland assessment review. Nine scientists and statisticians not previously affiliated with SRR convened at the Ecological Society of America offices to discuss improvement and expansion with agency experts from Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) and National Resources Inventory (NRI) programs.

- Convened the Ecosystem Services working group to begin discussion of a follow-up, peer-reviewed publication integrating SRR's ecosystem services work, as well as SRR indicators and the SRR conceptual model, with emerging climate change and renewable energy issues. Following development of a publication outline and writing assignments among 9 SRR authors, a 20-page draft document has been produced. This article is scheduled for submission by the end of FY2009. Conversations between Ecological Society of America leadership, in affiliation with the SRR Steering Committee, and *Bioscience* editors indicate that this journal will be interested in printing this piece.

- SRR hosted a poster exhibit at the Society for Range Management 2009 annual meeting in Albuquerque. One poster described the SRR rangeland ecosystem services work, including: categorization of goods, services, and core processes; illustration of the use of indicator-based monitoring data in adaptive management and the policy cycle; application of the SRR conceptual model for the Leon River Restoration Project in Texas; and templates for use by ranchers and technical service providers evaluating ecosystem services for alternative incomes streams at the ranch level. The second poster summarized 17 indicators which form the framework for SRR's ranch sustainability

assessment process, and discussed utility of monitoring data to inform a business plan.

- Continued SRR partnership with Wyoming State Grazing Board, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, University of Wyoming Extension Service, and Wyoming Business Council to test implementation of SRR's ranch sustainability assessment on Wyoming family ranches. Pilot ranchers have begun data collection and have also collaborated with Wyoming Business Council to develop their first formal business plan for their ranch. Each of SRR's three funding agencies have identified staff members to work with SRR and participating partners to develop a handbook useable for these ranch level sustainability assessments.
- Worked with leadership of the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) to promote SRR's ranch sustainability assessment framework, which will be the centerpiece of SRR participation at the 4th National Conference on Grazing Lands, during December 2009 in Reno, Nevada. An oral session and an exhibit will be featured, as well as a companion oral session organized by the Wyoming Business Council. This SRR project also will be featured at the Society for Range Management annual meeting in February 2010.
- SRR worked with a web designer and the Society for Range Management to re-design the site and host it on SRM servers at <http://sustainable.rangelands.org>. The SRM servers offer more space and flexibility with regard to content and access to web-based information, incorporating linkages to SRR's new Facebook and LinkedIn pages.
- SRR was an invited participant in the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars and the Howard Baker Center for Public Policy workshop on climate change, convened by invitation during June 2009 in Washington DC. Subsequent conversations with leadership identified a need for future work focused on agricultural aspects of climate change and future collaboration is tentatively planned as financial resources permit. Woodrow Wilson Center anticipates linkages with their food security programs and Baker Center is eager to act to inform evolving agricultural policy.
- The Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable conceptual model working group was excited to see peer-reviewed publication of their paper, "*An Integrated Social, Economic, and Ecologic Conceptual (ISEEC) Framework for Considering Rangeland Sustainability.*" This paper came out in the August 2009 edition of the Journal of Society and Natural Resources (volume 22, issue 7, p. 593-606).

- The indicator revision process begun by SRR last fiscal year is ongoing. Indicator specialist and SRR Steering Committee member James Bernard continues to work with the 64 indicators to verify their relationship to ecosystem services, but also to identify and explore separation of nested indicators. For example, several of SRR's indicators are actually comprised of 2 or more measurements reported simultaneously. Revision review workshop(s) are of interest to SRR, however resources remain a limiting factor.
- The Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable began conversations with prospective partners and funding agencies to identify appealing themes and messages for a sustainable rangelands information and education session to be held early in 2010. The primary purpose of this event is to raise awareness of rangeland inventory and monitoring needs, using critical issues like climate change, loss of open space, wildlife habitat, and water availability to highlight the importance of rangeland resources. Potential partners include powerful environmental organizations such as Environmental Defense, World Wildlife Fund, as well as production-oriented groups like the National Association of Conservation Districts, Public Lands Council, and Family Farm Alliance; the intent is to try to build upon existing relationships.
- The Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable developed and presented a poster paper at the annual meeting of the Ecological Society of America, held during August 2009 in Albuquerque, NM. The SRR poster titled, "*Rangeland ecosystem goods and services as a bridge between social, economic, and ecological systems and processes,*" highlighted the natural connections between core ecological processes on rangelands and the rangeland goods and services upon which people depend. The poster was well-received, and SRR may develop partnerships with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through their ongoing ecosystem services assessment efforts; two EPA workshops are planning during FY2010 and SRR has been tentatively invited to participate.
- Additional tasks and topics addressed at the upcoming SRR meeting, scheduled for September 22-24, 2009 in Portland, Oregon, include: identification of expanded indicators as manifested in MAPP protocols; evaluation of climate change scenarios w/ SRR's recently published conceptual model; prioritization of next indicators for addition to MAPP protocols (Water, wildlife, soil); exploration of what data can be remotely sensed; and discussions about effective integration of social, economic, and ecological data. Over-arching issues to keep in mind at SRR's Portland meeting will include climate change and energy development. Discussion of SRR's upcoming 10-year transition to the University of Wyoming will also be a topic of much interest and excitement.