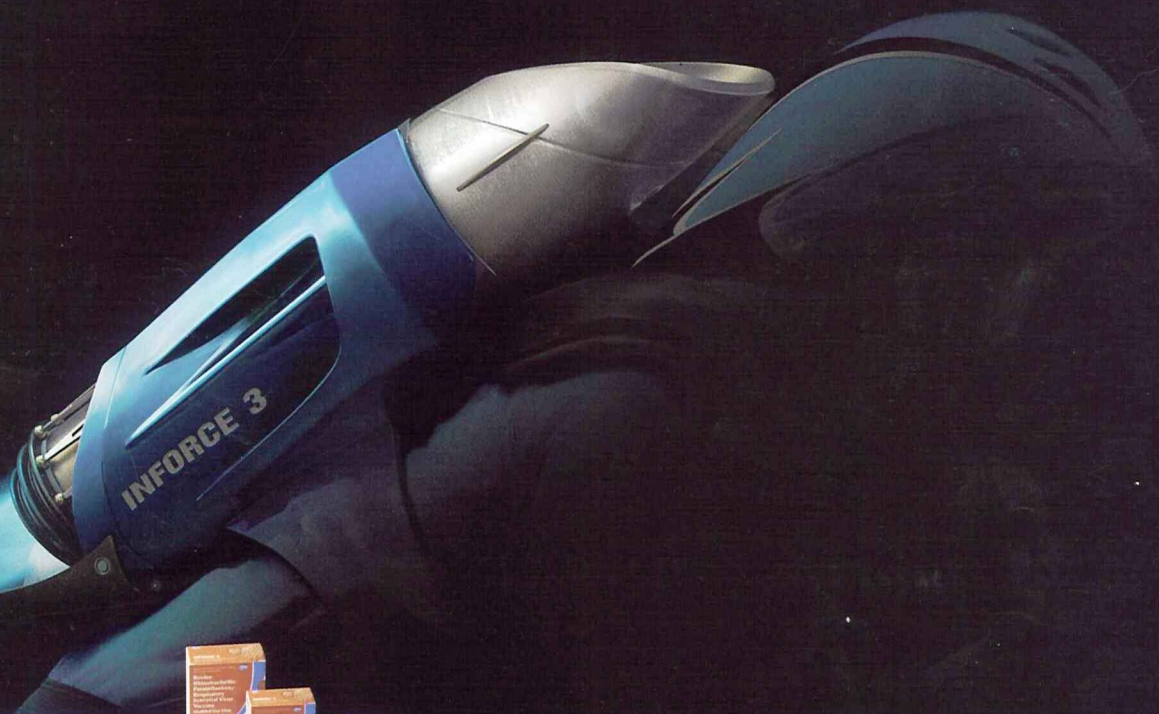


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The Magnificent

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Seven diverse cattle operations are among regional honorees of the 2010 Environmental Stewardship Award.

BY JAMIE MAY, SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Seven outstanding practitioners of land and animal stewardship will vie for the 2010 Environmental Stewardship Award to be presented at the national cattle industry's winter meeting in Denver, CO, in February.

Honoring producers who have been innovative environmental leaders, the Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) is presented annually by the

National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the National Cattleman's Foundation, and sponsored by Dow AgroSciences and USDA's National Resource Conservation Services (NRCS). Nominations for 2011 awards are now open. Learn more at <http://www.environmentalstewardship.org>.

The seven regional winners are:

Region I

Cleremont Farm, G.P., Loudoun County, VA

Cleremont Farm is a commercial Angus cow-calf operation in Upperville, VA. Since its founding in 1957, three generations have strived to grow and cultivate conservation practices to best care for their Angus cattle, land and water.

Ann-Mari Lindgren Horkan and her sons, Carl Lindgren and Tony Horkan, manage and own the farm, honoring the stewardship efforts of her husband, the late George Horkan Jr., and family friend, the late Lorna Talbot. Their operation, dotted with protected streams, mixed-grass pastures, riparian buffers and 1,000 acres of hardwood forest, has become a standard for environmental practices in Virginia.

The farm is located just 50 miles southwest of Washington, D.C., in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which is part of the municipal water supply for the nation's capitol. Though they face no local, state or federal environmental regulatory re-



quirements, they voluntarily implement conservation practices. They take pride in the farm's water quality, pledging that it will leave cleaner than it entered.

Along with their dedication to water preservation, Cleremont Farm has:

- Practiced stewardship techniques such as rotational grazing, soil testing, nutrient-management planning, wildlife corridors and food-plot plantings.

- Managed intersecting streams either through their own expenses or cost-share programs, including

fencing livestock out of waterways.

- Harvested timberland on a 20- to 25-year rotation and nominated 130 acres as riparian buffers for wildlife conservation.

- Partnered with NRCS and the Loudoun County Soil and Water Conservation Service to develop conservation plans; soil plans date back to the late 1950s.

- Supplied water to cattle through spring-fed or energy-free water troughs piped from existing wells. In emergency or drought years, cattle actually pump their own water from the streams using nose pumps.

Region II

Deseret Cattle & Citrus, Orange, Brevard and Osceola Counties, FL

Deseret Cattle & Citrus is a diverse cow-calf operation spanning 290,000 acres of pastures, forests and wetlands in central Florida's Orange, Brevard and Osceola counties.

The ranch, home of the largest cow-calf herd in the country, is managed by Erik Jacobsen and owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Deseret runs over 44,000 cows, 1,300 bulls and annually weans 32,000 calves, in addition to citrus, sod production, row crops, fishing and hunting enterprises.

Constant challenges with population growth and water management have pushed Deseret to become world-class sustainability leaders, and they have proven themselves as both cattle ranchers and land



managers. In the 1980s, they began pasture renovation by planting deep-rooted grasses to stabilize soil and increase organic matter, and utilizing annual controlled burns to rejuvenate native vegetation.

Their stewardship practices have continued to expand, including the promotion of sustainable land practices. Deseret Cattle & Citrus has:

- Grazed cattle on a rotational system. Cattle are allotted four acres/head and are rotated every two weeks.

- Monitored and managed its wildlife populations, recording over 380 species of wildlife on their land.

- Led the region in water-planning partnerships in order to protect limited groundwater. They also built storm water retention areas to improve the ranch's runoff quality.

- Advocated land-management practices by proudly showcasing their operational practices and stewardship to the public. Their visitor center has hosted over 500 tours and welcomed over 1,500 visitors in 2009 alone. ▶▶▶

Region III

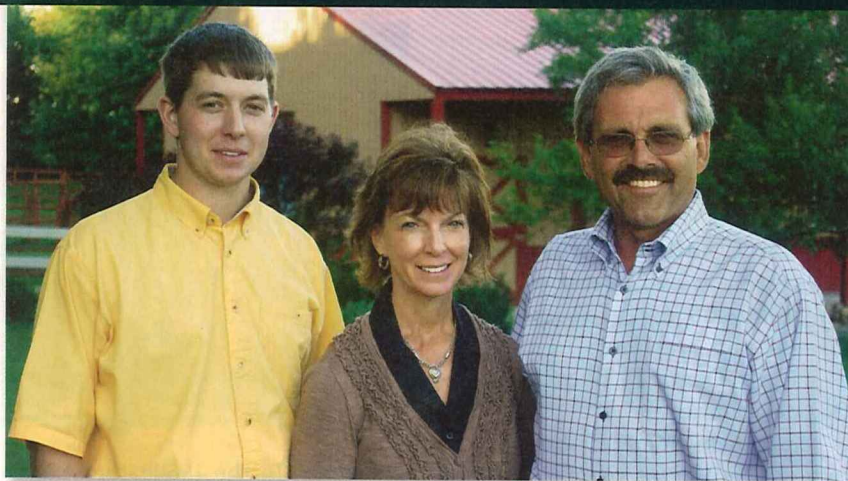
Couser Cattle Co., Nevada, IA

Couser Cattle Co. of Nevada, IA, is a multi-faceted operation annually finishing 5,000-6,000 head of cattle and farming 5,000 acres of corn and soybean seed.

Bill and Nancy Couser, owners of the second and third-generation operation, maintain a business philosophy that balances both profitability and land sustainability. They've been innovative leaders among Iowa cattlemen and have focused on practical solutions for environmental needs.

Bill has actively partnered with environmental agencies and universities in research and pilot projects. With these partnerships, Couser Cattle Co. has:

- Developed a pilot system that replaced an effluent basin with a series of vegetative treatment areas (VTAs) and infiltration systems to



treat feedlot runoff to an acceptable standard.

- Built a mono-slope style feeding building that directs rainfall away from a new pen and allows more feeding capacity, resulting in decreased runoff and increased value of manure for fertilizer.

- Hosted multiple field days and welcomed students and guests to their feedlot. They also test new products, including an innovative

biomass harvester, which transforms corn stalks and cobs into new forms of feed, fuel and bedding.

- Partnered on a 50-million-gal., local-investor ethanol plant in 2006. Located just seven miles from Cousers' feedlot, the operation plays a major role in the efficiency and practicality of this process. They supply grain to produce the end product and also feed the by-product, completing a full-circle, farm-to-feedlot process.

Region IV

JA Ranch, Bowie, TX

JA Ranch includes an 800-head purebred Hereford cow-calf herd, a small group of Angus-sired cows and a stocker setup.

Located 75 miles northwest of Fort Worth, TX, the ranch is owned by J.K. "Rooter" Brite Jr. and family of Bowie, TX. Their rocky soil conditions and limited rain already provides them with challenges. But, combine that with their location within one of the state's most valuable waterways – Trinity Watershed, which provides over 11 million Texans drinking water – and it becomes clear that JA Ranch has an overwhelming obligation to be stewards of their land.

JA Ranch has implemented practical, commonsense environmental practices that ensure the longevity and uniqueness of this geographic area. Their cowherd is the main land-management tool, and they utilize intense rotational-grazing



systems to improve the quality of grassland.

Clearly, they are environmental leaders and to constantly improve the natural environment, JA Ranch has:

- Implemented an active conservation plan in 1964. Practices include prescribed grazing and burning, installation of riparian buffers and pipelines to slow water runoff and bush control.

- Utilized healthy pastures of

native grasses to keep runoff clean and allow rainwater to be reabsorbed into the aquifer.

- Operated under a volunteer, self-imposed water quality management plan since 1990 and tests regularly show that JA Ranch exceeds drinking water standards.

- Renovated ranch stock ponds to include an island to encourage the presence of waterfowl. Additionally, brush and trees grow along creeks to create wildlife habitat. ▶▶▶

Region V

Mesa De Maya Ranch, Branson, CO

Mesa De Maya Ranch of Branson, CO, runs a 500-head Red Angus commercial cow-calf operation on 48,000 acres in Southeast Colorado. Their majestic setting of prairie grass, elevated mesas and twisting red canyons combined with limited yearly rainfall impels them to be effective grass managers, as well as cattle ranchers.

Mesa De Maya Ranch is a fifth-generation ranch owned and operated by John and Carolyn Doherty, along with their son Joe, and his wife Lisa. Over the years, they've become champions of stewardship and visionary leaders in the industry. "Tiny" Doherty, John's mother, was a pioneer in the Soil Conservation Service's Great Plains Conservation Program – being one of the first enrollees.

As part of the program, the Dohertys have focused on native for-



age maintenance and sustainable water uses. Early on in the partnership, they implemented practices such as pitting pastures for water retention, cross fencing and using windmills to distribute water. They also graze their cattle on a rotational system so that at least two-thirds of their land is being rested at any given time.

To continue to support and improve local stewardship projects, the Mesa De Maya Ranch has:

- Financially supported NRCS and shared or paid for the costs of 78 dams, 50 miles of buried pipeline and 100 miles of cross fencing across

their land.

- Funded programs for the Branson/Trinchera Soil Conservation District to train land managers on livestock handling, range management and controlled burns.

- Housed and transported Colorado State University scientists during a two-year biological study in parts of ranch. The study's only occurrence of nesting peregrine falcons was found on their land.

- Launched a pilot study to investigate ways to treat tamarisk in large watersheds. Provided funds, labor, housing and transportation to participating groups.

Region VI

TN Ranching Co. and Tavaputs Ranch, Price, UT

TN Ranching Co. and Tavaputs Ranch, Price, UT, is a cow-calf and feedlot operation managed on 350,000 acres of private, state and federal land.

The ranch has a rich history, passing down five generations since the 1889, and now owned and managed by Butch and Jeanie Jensen, son Tate and daughter, Jennie, and partners Jim and Kennel Jensen. Through generations, Tavaputs Ranch has strived to continuously improve resources, a critical practice in a drought-prone area.

Continuing past traditions, the 1,200-head cowherd winters in deserts in southeast Utah and summers on high-plateau mountain ranges; their dependence on the land makes resource management their first priority. Tavaputs Ranch has



even made major operational adjustments to promote resource security; for example, in 1990, they sold over 500 mother cows to manage range health during the drought year.

To further continue the institution of stewardship, Tavaputs Ranch has:

- Employed water collection and storage by developing springs and building ponds, especially in the arid regions. Additionally, due to the nature of their grazing permits, they truck in water during the entire winter season.

- Mitigated water pollution on their feedlot with a well for feedlot stock water and runoff ponds. Livestock are also fenced out of live water.

- Regularly maintained and cleaned ranch ponds, which periodically run dry forcing a natural grazing rotation based on pond cycles and water hauling.

- Shared their resources and environment with ranch guests, by regularly housing groups and invite guests to participate in ranch work.

Region VII

Sproul Ranch, Sedan, KS

Sproul Ranch, Sedan, KS, is a custom-grazing outfit located in the native tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills of Kansas. They currently raise 3,200 yearlings and some 150 mother cows on their 11,000 acres.

As new landowners in the region, Bill and Peggy Sproul transformed their battered pastures into beautiful and impressive tallgrass grazing systems that balance the needs of ranching, wildlife and plant diversity. These traditional ranchers have used innovative strategies to return the resources to original quality and natural abundance.

Both on and off the ranch, the Sprouls have become major advocates of land management. Bill currently serves as a five-year mentor to a local young rancher, teaching him conservation practices and ethics to prepare the young man to take



over his family-owned farm.

In addition, to improve the grassland ecosystem Sproul Ranch has:

- Removed 300,000 invasive trees to transform hundreds of shaded acres to open prairie, encouraging the re-growth of nutrient rich grasses.
- Fenced ponds to restrict livestock, while using natural springs and small pit ponds to provide drinking water to both livestock and wildlife.

- Teamed with oil companies to plug unproductive wells and remediate pollution around sites.

- Partnered with the NRSC and other agencies to monitor grassland health and used that data to develop a grazing plan with appropriate stocking rates and rotational plans.

- Assisted in monitoring wildlife health on their property, with a goal of increasing populations of Bobwhites and prairie chickens. ■