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## Humboldt County ranching family honored with international award

By Steven Moore, [smoore@times-standard.com](mailto:smoore@times-standard.com)



*The Lone Star Ranch off Kneeland Road has been honored with the 2016 Excellence in Range Management award from the Society for Range Management. Dina Moore and Jeffery Stackhouse of the University of California Cooperative Extension talk Thursday about how a sign acknowledging the award might be displayed outside the ranch off Kneeland Road. STEVEN MOORE — THE TIMES-STANDARD*



*Dina Moore helps Jeffery Stackhouse of the University of California Cooperative Extension gather a sample Thursday that will help estimate how much the range is producing. STEVEN MOORE — THE TIMES-STANDARD*

The power lines that parallel the Kneeland Road don't stretch to the Lone Star Ranch.

Mark and Dina Moore might be off the grid, but they run their ranch from a 21st century perspective, and they have been recognized for their efforts.

The couple are the North American winners of the 2016 Excellence in Range Management award because of their environmental stewardship, community support and collaboration with agencies and ranchers working on cooperative conservation. They are a little embarrassed with the attention, in part because they have neighbors who they say are just as deserving.

“We didn't go out looking for this,” Mark Moore said of the award.

The honor was bestowed by the Society for Range Management, a professional group and conservation organization dedicated to supporting people who work with rangelands and have a commitment to their sustainable use. The group was founded in 1948 and members include land

managers, scientists, educators, students, ranchers, farmers and conservationists.

The Moores were nominated for the award by Jeffery Stackhouse, a livestock and natural resources advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension for Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Despite the couple's reserve, Stackhouse said all ranchers should be implementing the range science and holistic resource management taking place on 5,000-acre Lone Star Ranch. What the Moores are doing is not adding to the expense of running the ranch, but it's helping to identify how the land can be used most productively, Stackhouse said.

"They're not doing anything that's groundbreaking," he said.

Until recently, the Moores would ship all of their calves destined for the human food chain as soon as they were weaned from their mothers. Their new strategy is to retain a number of stocker cattle, weaned calves fed and maintained until they have reached a desirable weight to be sold for beef production.

"It gives you flexibility to increase your numbers or decrease your numbers rapidly because you can load them on a truck and move them," Stackhouse said. "On years when we have a drought, and there's not as much grass, they can get rid of their stockers."

The key is finding the balance of how many head of livestock can be supported by the range without having to supplement the feed with hay from outside, an option Dina Moore said is unacceptable because it increases the carbon footprint of the ranch.

"We take advantage of our grass growth as much as we can," she said.

The Moores also have heavy equipment, logging and goat-rearing activities taking place as the couple finds a place for their children to make a living on the land as well.

The ranch house sits on a hillside several hundred yards from a ridge separating the Van Duzen and Mad River watersheds.

Son Jake and son-in-law Cody Sizemore work with the heavy equipment, and daughter Lauren Sizemore raises the goats, which graze Himalayan blackberry bushes, an invasive species. The 80 goats engage in targeted grazing that does not compete with the cows.

For the logging operation, the couple has a nonindustrial timber management plan, a long-term objective for creating a sustained yield.

“We can’t cut anymore than what grows in any 10-year period,” Mark Moore said.

The timber is cruised periodically to determine how much board footage is being produced, and the timber harvests are based on those figures.

The Moores are trying use a similar method to manage their rangelands. Stackhouse and the Moores have erected forage cages that allow the grass to grow freely. Stackhouse periodically clips the forage plots, and takes the clippings back to his headquarters. Moisture is removed to leave the residual dry matter, which is what the cows need to thrive.

Using the right formulas, the plot samplings can be extrapolated to determine what the entire range is producing based on the amount and timing of the rainfall.

“It’s not just how much rain we get, but you also have to take into account when the rain falls,” Mark Moore said.

The plot clippings are not as exact as cruising a timber stand, which is done to estimate the board footage of a forest before a timber sale.

“Same concept, not anywhere close to exact. Very, very rough,” Stackhouse said with a laugh. “It’s not perfect, but if we do this for 10 years, it can give us an average.”

With that data, the Moores will be better able to determine how many cows they can keep on their range without overloading the resource.

Dina Moore is one of the contacts for the Yager/Van Duzen Environmental Stewards, a collaboration of ranchers who formed the nonprofit because

federal regulators identified the watershed as having too much sediment. The members worked together to reduce how storm runoff was adding to the sediment in the watershed. The group has replace culverts, created waterbars and taken other measures to ensure water is distributed more widely, carrying as little sediment as possible.

The Moores also have been involved with organizations from the local to national level including Humboldt County Resource Conservation District Board, Kneeland School Board, Humboldt Cattlewomen's Board, Regional Water Quality Control Board and Partners for Conservation.

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