

Undaunted Stewardship®

BACKGROUND

Undaunted Stewardship® is a multi-faceted, public-private partnership that helps preserve Montana's rural economy, history, and natural resources. Through its Undaunted Land Steward Certification program, Undaunted Stewardship® recognizes farms and ranches that practice sustainable environmental stewardship on their private and public grazing lands. The certification program also educates landowners to help them make better resource management decisions. From 2002 until present, 57 ranches have been certified, comprising more than one million acres of Montana's rural landscape. Undaunted Stewardship® also developed a unique, incentive-based approach that protects historical sites on private agricultural lands without transferring them into public ownership. Eleven sites have been protected to date. Kiosks at each site provide historical interpretation and inform visitors that historical site preservation, agriculture, and environmental values can be compatible. This message also is delivered to landowners and the urban public via public service announcements on radio and television, seminars and workshops, newspapers and magazines, and the worldwide web.

Issue & Situation

Agriculture is Montana's largest industry, and agricultural landscapes provide many of the amenities that make Montana such a special place – abundant wildlife, open space, clean water, and scenic beauty. Private agricultural lands also contain many of Montana's most significant historical sites. More than 10 million tourists visit Montana each year to experience these amenities, and the 2005-2006 bicentennial celebration of the Lewis & Clark Expedition focused even greater attention on Montana's landscape. Undaunted Stewardship® capitalized on this opportunity to link public interest in natural resources and historical events with public education about the role of agriculture in preserving these natural resources, scenic vistas, and historical sites. Undaunted Stewardship® also recognized that with so many guests coming to visit, there is a constant need for agricultural landowners to "keep their house in order" because their natural resource management is always on display.

In the broader view, Undaunted Stewardship® recognized that rational discussion and debate is required before a democratic society decides which land-use policies are appropriate on either public or private lands. And because what's "right" and what's "wrong" are value judgments, a democratic society's land-use decisions represent the collective value judgments of its citizens. Responsible value judgments about natural resource policies require a well-informed citizenry, informed by reliable scientific data. But thanks to ever-increasing technology, fewer and fewer people are directly involved with the production of food or fiber, or understand the necessary processes. As urban citizens become further removed from the land that supports them, they lack personal knowledge or experience to help them understand and evaluate alternative natural resource policies. Undaunted Stewardship® sought to inform this nation's largely urban public that modern agricultural practices, environmental values, and historical site preservation are not mutually exclusive and that cooperative conservation strategies can be used to sustain the environment, history, economy, and culture of Montana and elsewhere.

Stakeholders & Input

Undaunted Stewardship® originated from strategic planning discussions among prominent Montana agricultural organizations and MSU Extension. An Executive Committee comprised of representatives from MSU's College of Agriculture, the Montana Stockgrowers Association, and the federal Bureau of Land Management, coordinates the statewide public-private partnership. In addition, a Guidance Council with representatives from 17 other conservation and agricultural groups provides oversight.

The Executive Committee and Guidance Council contribute continuous feedback and evaluation of the program. In 2006, the program also was reviewed by 30 MSU Extension field faculty.

Undaunted Stewardship[®] has 2 primary goals, to: 1) demonstrate that agriculture and environmental values can be compatible, and 2) inform people (landowners, policymakers, urban citizens, and others) about cooperative conservation strategies that can be used to sustain and enhance the environmental, social, historical, and economic values of agricultural landscapes.

Extension Focus & Research Base

Through its Undaunted Land Steward Certification program, Undaunted Stewardship[®] publicly recognizes farms and ranches that practice sustainable environmental stewardship on their private and public grazing lands. The certification program also educates landowners to help them make better resource management decisions. Education occurs while collaborating with landowners and others to develop or refine ranch management plans, and via traditional educational outlets of workshops, seminars, newsletters, and newspaper and magazine articles. The most up-to-date, research-based technical information is used. Certification standards are patterned after the certification program of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC 2001).

Interpretive displays at historical sites, public service announcements and news features on radio and television, youth camps and workshops, newsletters, magazines, and newspapers are utilized by Undaunted Stewardship[®] to inform urban audiences that environmental stewardship, historical site preservation, and Montana agriculture can be compatible and often, in fact, are mutually dependent.

Undaunted Stewardship[®] also recognizes that the economic sustainability of farms and ranches is necessary to preserve the open space, natural environment, and historical sites on private agricultural lands. In response, Undaunted Stewardship[®] provides technical assistance to farm and ranch businesses wishing to establish or expand tourist-related enterprises, such as bed and breakfasts, wagon and horseback trail rides, recreational cabins, and campgrounds. These enterprises also provide opportunities for the business owners to inform tourists directly about the compatibility of agriculture and environmental values.

Multidisciplinary & Collaborative Components

Undaunted Stewardship[®] is a public-private partnership comprised of 20 agricultural groups, conservation organizations, and government agencies. As mentioned above, the MSU College of Agriculture, the Montana Stockgrowers Association, and the Bureau of Land Management comprise the Executive Committee that decides policy, programming, and budget. Program oversight is provided by the Guidance Council that is represented by 17 additional organizations: American Rivers, Missouri River Stewards, Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Montana Association of State Grazing Districts, Montana Cattewomen, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, Montana Farmer's Union, Montana Governor's Office, Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana Land Reliance, Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission, Montana Public Lands Council, Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Wool Growers Association, Rural Landscape Institute, The Conservation Fund, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. One often over-looked success of Undaunted Stewardship[®] is that the Guidance Council is comprised of representatives from groups who a few years ago might not have agreed to meet in the same room together, let alone collaborate in the public-private partnership that is Undaunted Stewardship[®].

In the certification program, state and county MSU Extension personnel work together with individual landowners and others, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Rancher's Stewardship Alliance, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Educational efforts related to certification and ranch recreation involve MSU Extension specialists from several disciplines, including range management, agronomy, agricultural economics, animal science, water quality, wildlife, and economic development. In the historical site preservation and interpretation program, MSU Extension works closely with the Montana State Historical Preservation Office, Montana Department of Commerce, Bureau of Land Management, and Montana Department of Transportation to locate and interpret the historical sites, and to construct the interpretive exhibits.

Innovative Approaches

The Undaunted Land Steward Certification program is the only grazing land certification program of its kind in the nation. The certification process provides unmatched educational opportunities to work with landowners and others to directly affect on-the-ground ranch management. In addition, the certification process enables MSU Extension to serve as the catalyst for cooperative conservation among landowners, conservation organizations, and government agencies. In one case, a ranch family was able to significantly improve water quality without regulatory penalties from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Elsewhere, two ranches collaborated with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and U.S. Forest Service to design cattle grazing strategies to enhance winter elk habitat on their private lands. In another example, three absentee, conservation-oriented ranchers who do not own livestock provide livestock forage to second- and third-generation family ranch neighbors in need of forage at reasonable rates. In turn, the conservation-oriented landowners help preserve the ranching culture and open space provided by their neighbors, and sustain healthy lands on their own and their neighbors' ranches. Similarly, 14 ranches enrolled in a land bank program with The Nature Conservancy where ranchers receive access to rangeland forage with discounted lease rates in return for being certified Undaunted Land Stewards of their home ranches.

Undaunted Stewardship[®] developed a unique, incentive-based way to protect historical sites on private agricultural lands without transferring them to public ownership. Historical Site Preservation Agreements compensate farmers and ranchers for: 1) preserving the natural landscapes surrounding historical sites on their private agricultural lands, and 2) providing limited public access to these sites. The high-quality interpretive displays largely eliminated landowner complaints about trash and trespass that previously occurred near their historical sites. Exhibits at each site provide historical interpretation, and provide an innovative way to inform visitors that historical site preservation, modern agricultural practices, and environmental values can be compatible. This educational message has been delivered in unconventional ways to the urban public via public service announcements on radio and television, newspapers and magazines, and travel brochures for tourists.

Another example of innovation was a DVD developed in collaboration with the Rural Landscape Institute. The DVD, entitled "Path to Eden", has been distributed via realtors, land trusts, and others (including MSU Extension), and targets new ranch owners in Montana who commonly are either absentee landowners from other states or recent emigrants to Montana. The DVD features Tom Brokaw, a Montana ranch owner himself, and informs new landowners about the customs and culture of rural Montana, the challenges of managing weeds, water and wildlife, and the educational resources available from MSU Extension and other organizations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES

Certification and Education

Fifty seven ranches have been certified as Undaunted Land Stewards, comprising more than one million acres. All 57 certified ranches have implemented at least one change in their grazing management and/or resource monitoring practices as a direct result of the certification process. In addition, Undaunted Stewardship® has preserved 11 historical sites on private agricultural lands and provided historical interpretation and public access to these 11 sites. Visitor interviews at the interpretive sites indicate that the exhibits effectively convey the educational message, and that visitors modified their opinions about ranching and livestock grazing after viewing the exhibits. Visitor-use surveys conservatively estimated that more than 6,000 people visited the interpretive sites. Impacts from the public education campaign via mass media have not been quantified, but public service announcements have aired on every major television and radio station in Montana. Articles have appeared in every major newspaper statewide and several popular magazines. Feature articles also appeared in newspapers nationwide, e.g., the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *New York Times*. Finally, 14 ranch businesses have added or expanded a recreational enterprise with help from Undaunted Stewardship®.

Scholarly Products

- Certified 57 ranches encompassing more than one million acres (deeded, lease, federal, state)
- 11 interpretive exhibits (4-6 display panels per site)
- Received the 2005 Bureau of Land Management Advisory Council for Historic Preservation Partnership Accommodation
- Received the 2006 Western Extension Directors Association Award of Excellence
- 2 trade show displays
- 2 DVDs (one was an award-winning short documentary)
- 5 presentations describing the Undaunted Stewardship® program at regional and international conferences in Montana, Texas, Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia
- Web site: www.undauntedstewardship.org
- 2 travel brochures for tourists:
 1. "For Undaunted Travelers Only"
 2. "Prairie County Horizons"
- 1 brochure for certification program
- 52 popular press magazine articles
- 5 radio news features
- 3 television news features
- 3 newspaper news features
- 20 news releases
- 3 television PSAs
- 3 radio PSAs
- 14 newsletter articles
- 8 print media advertisements
- 44 presentations to youth/teachers
- 243 presentations to adult audiences
- 1 PowerPoint slide show and script highlighting Undaunted Stewardship® and its accomplishments
- 1 range tour for representatives of the media, lawmakers and progressive producers highlighting the importance of production agriculture to Montana and Montana values

- 1 searchable annotated bibliography summarizing all published research from 1985-2007 about the effects of grazing on riparian habitat, soil, vegetation, wildlife and weeds. This bibliography is currently being prepared for web access through Montana State University Libraries at <http://www.lib.montana.edu/>.
- Over 500 individual ranch visits
- Received one grant from National Park Service (Challenge Cost Share Program - \$20,000)

FUNDING – UNDAUNTED STEWARDSHIP®

Year*	Amount
2002	\$450,000
2003	\$900,000
2004	\$894,000
2005	\$887,000
2006	\$886,000
2007	\$0
2008	\$0
Total	\$ 4,817,100

* Federal FY appropriation

PERSONNEL - UNDAUNTED STEWARDSHIP®

Individual	Responsibilities	Years
Jeff Mosley	Co-PI	2001-2007
Jim Peterson	Co-PI	2001-2008 (not inclusive)
Jeff Jacobsen	Co-PI	2007-present
Merrita Fraker-Marble	Staff	2001-present
Brent Roeder	Staff	2002-2006
Tara Fisher	Staff	2003-2006
Lisa Schmidt	Staff	2003-2007
Heidi Olbert	Staff	2005-2006
Stephanie Sever	Staff	2005-2008
Cindy Selensky (Hogemark)	Staff	2006-present
Eric Wickens	Staff	2007-present
Rachel Frost	Staff	2007-2008
Carl Wambolt	Staff	2008-present

Note: This does not include hourly workers hired part time to work on the annotated bibliography, or professional contractors hired to construct and maintain the interpretive displays at the historical sites