

IDAHO RANGELAND

Resources  Commission

2018 Annual Report

As cattlemen and woolgrowers, we depend on a few things provided by Mother Nature to sustain our businesses. I know, that is probably one of the biggest understatements of all time considering the fact that quality forage is everything to us.

We growers all too often take it for granted that our livestock is raised and nourished on pastures and rangelands in Idaho. We feel that the rest of the human race should see our practices as an acceptable use of the land. Simple, sustainable, circle of life – it's been happening for hundreds of years in one form or another.

I feel that the practice of grazing is scrutinized by many and understood by few. Most of us in the business take pride in doing it right and learning ways to do it better. Although, if we get complacent in explaining our practices to the rest of the world, that will eventually get us in trouble. Some folks believe that grazing is a detriment to the environment. Water quality, wildlife species concerns, fire, conflict with recreation, all of these topics and more, well up biases in the population that create problems for ranchers.

Some believe that the practice of grazing is bad, and they are hell-bent on doing whatever it takes to erase us and our grazing practices from the landscape. Politically we may lose that argument someday if we don't educate and communicate with the public. Education and communication create understanding, forms new bonds with the public, and is always better than litigation. Bottom line, we have to tell our story!

View the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission as one of your best **advocates** if you graze livestock. IRRC educates and communicates with folks, mostly outside of the ranching world, to promote you and the safe, scientifically supported practices of stewardship, and the responsible use of rangelands. We provide signage and public awareness through the Care/Share program. We **advocate** for you by providing educational programs for K-12 students throughout the state. We **advocate** for you by supporting FFA Range Education. IRRC co-sponsored the International 2018 Envirothon in Pocatello this year. We **promote** what you do on the ground with 40+ Life on the Range video features on our website at idrango.org.


Gretchen Hyde, our Executive Director, has talked to many organizations this year to promote and educate on **your behalf**. She has presented at the Idaho Climate Summit, Idaho Environmental Forum, Idaho Science Teachers Association, several Idaho legislative committees, and two UI advisory boards just to name a few. We work closely with the University of Idaho to educate and promote rangeland awareness. Our mission is to foster understanding by creating collaborative partnerships to sustain healthy rangelands. IRRC promotes cooperation with federal and state agencies. We are a forum for all topics pertaining to range. We are your Public Relations Department in the grazing world.

We **advocate** for you on a budget sustained by you, our own industry, at a rate of 10 cents per AUM on public grazing and 2 cents per acre on privately owned rangeland. The average price paid in Idaho for our **advocacy** costs you somewhere between the price of a hamburger and the cost to shoe your favorite horse. We are part of your industry-support team in Idaho. The goals of the IRRC are:

- To increase public understanding that Idaho's rangelands are a renewable source of important consumer products and environmental values.
- To provide, coordinate, and disseminate factual information about the economic and environmental aspects of grazing management practices and partnership conservation projects that enhance rangeland health and stewardship.
- To **promote** public support for Idaho's livestock industry.
- To help achieve and maintain a healthy livestock industry through responsible rangeland stewardship.
- To **advocate** balanced use of rangeland resources.

The IRRC appreciates your support and welcomes your attendance and input at our meetings. We are here to serve you, the grazing public, and those who utilize the rangelands of the great state of Idaho.

Royce Schwenkfelder, *IRRC Chairman*



Who Advocates for Your Grazing Practices in Idaho?

International Envirothon Competition



Gretchen Hyde
Executive Director

As school started this fall, teachers returned to the classroom looking for new and better ways to engage their students. IRRC assists our K-12 teachers by creating opportunities for students to learn about where they live, where their food comes from, and how important caring for the land is to ranchers in the great state of Idaho. This is a crucial part of IRRC's mission – providing quality, locally produced educational materials about ranching and rangelands for K-12 students.

Idaho teachers have more expectations placed on them every year, so it's critical that the materials they use help reach their goals of student learning. Hands-on educational activities which relate to where they live is one way to create a unique experience that will stay with the students for a lifetime.

Field trips, agriculture expositions hosted by local FFA chapters, natural resource days, and classroom presentations are just a few of the ways IRRC contributes to the enhanced learning opportunities for Idaho students. The IRRC was created by the Idaho Cattle Association, the Idaho Wool Growers, and the Idaho Rangeland Committee in the mid-1990s to focus on educating students and the public who didn't necessarily grow up on a ranch or a farm about rangeland management and ranching in Idaho. Providing grade-level materials, learning opportunities for teachers, knowledgeable presentations, and field trip experiences will help the next generation of citizens support livestock production on Idaho's public and private rangelands.

This summer, the International Envirothon Competition came to Pocatello, Idaho. An ambitious team of enthusiastic educators hosted teams from 43 states, five Canadian provinces, and two Chinese provinces. The teams had to win their home state contest to qualify for the event. The competition includes written tests, oral presentations, and hands-on learning stations.

This year's "current environmental issue" was western rangelands. The IRRC and the University of Idaho stepped up to create the study guide, tests, and learning stations for the event. Special thanks to April Hulet, Rangeland Extension Specialist, University of Idaho, for her hard work, knowledge, and organizational skills! Several rangeland professionals from NRCS, USFS, BLM and other agencies also came out to help with the training day. The experience included a fun field tour day in Soda Springs with the help of local farmers and ranchers who fed and entertained these ambitious students.

Since many of these students come from the eastern U.S., this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Comments from a few of these highly intelligent kids were priceless—one asked me what a cow pie was (he thought it might have been a special mushroom). Many felt their skin was going to peel off in our dry climate. It was an amazing learning experience for these very motivated kids.

Every year, schools around Idaho host outdoor natural resource or agriculture days. I'd encourage ranchers and natural resource professionals to become a part of the experience of teaching the next generation about what you do. This is very rewarding and enlightening experience. We have ready-made materials and activities to assist you with any of these opportunities.

I encourage you to contact the IRRC office at (208) 398-7002 or email me at ghyde@idrange.org if you want more information about helping us with education outreach. Thank you!



A Busy Year for Life on the Range

It's been a super-busy year for the Life on the Range (LOTR) crew in 2018.

We started out the year launching a tribute story about Weiser ranching icon Phil Soulen and the Soulen family sheep operation. As former Idaho Wool Growers Director Stan Boyd points out, "those sheep never see a truck," traveling hundreds of miles from winter range in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area to the Payette National Forest north of McCall, following the green.

The LOTR crew spent a year traveling with Phil and Harry Soulen and their herders as they moved their sheep to higher ground, and we documented the different stages of animal husbandry along the way – shearing, range-lambing on spring range, trailing to summer range, and shipping.

The 27-minute video is titled "Incredible Journey: Phil Soulen leaves a legacy of success with extensive sheep operation." You can find it on LifeontheRange.org. Our congrats to the Soulen family for building an impressive family business and giving back to community.

The Soulens suffered significant losses to wolves this year on summer range in the Payette National Forest, and a record number Idaho producers also experienced direct predation by wolves to their livestock. Since wolf reintroduction in 1995, more than 425 ranchers statewide have experienced direct predation by wolves.

Confirmed wolf kills this year included 128 cows and calves, 112 sheep, 3 guard dogs, 2 llamas, 1 horse and 1 goats, according to USDA APHIS Wildlife Services.

Over the last two years, the LOTR crew has been traveling across Idaho talking to cattle ranchers, sheep ranchers, Idaho Fish and Game officials, sportsmen, wolf-hunters and wolf-trappers to research and produce a 5-part series about the impact of wolves statewide since 1995. The series is expected to be completed by the end of 2018 and launched in early 2019.

The wolf series will be timely because of the record numbers of direct predation on livestock, which seems to indicate that wolf populations are reaching an all-time high in the state, while spreading to

adjacent states. Our series also details many of the unexpected consequences of wolves stressing-out livestock, in terms of reduced weight gains, reduced pregnancy rates, cattle bunching up to defend themselves instead of spreading out on the range, cattle attacking herding dogs, big game animals spending more time on private land valley-bottoms in the summer, and more.

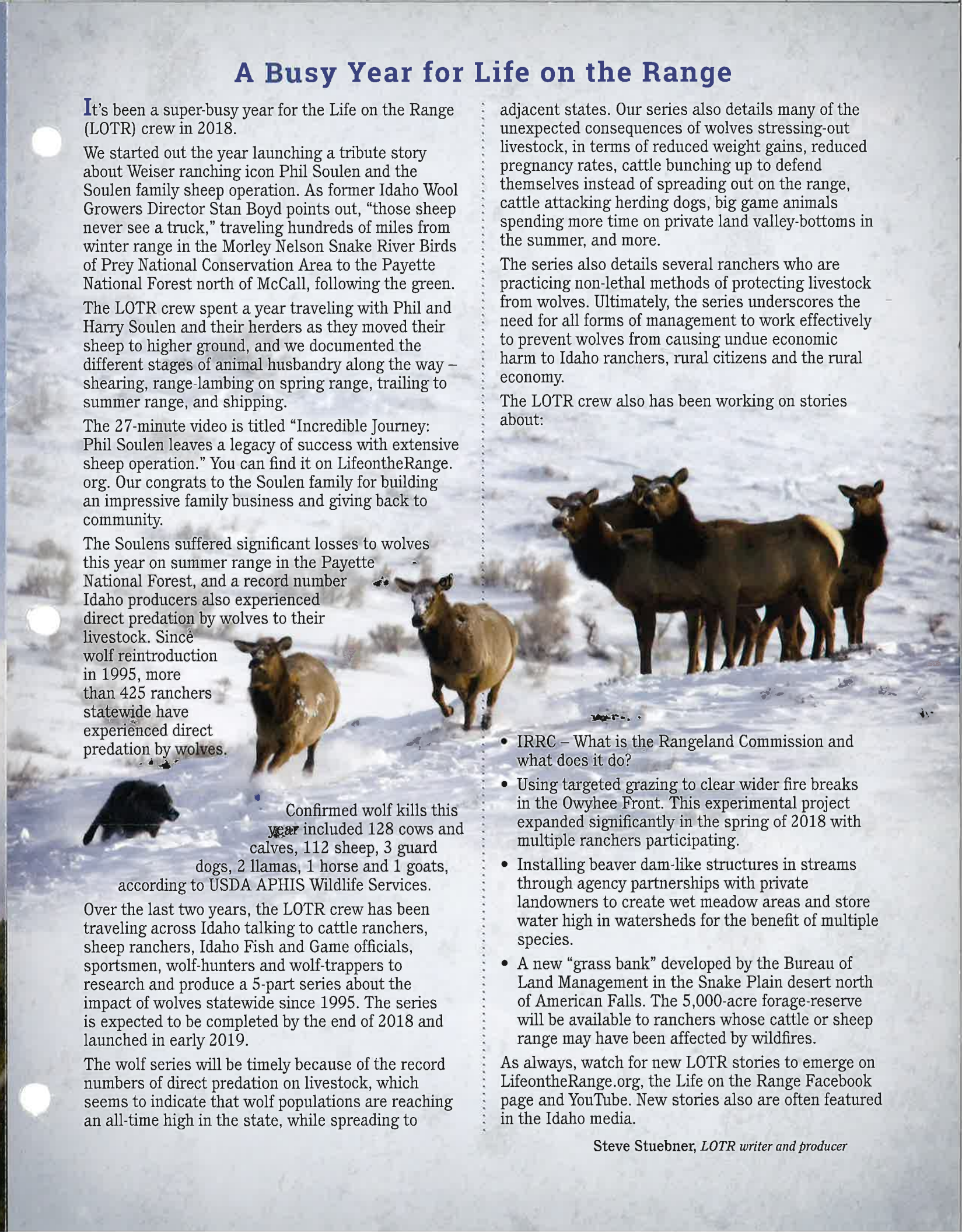
The series also details several ranchers who are practicing non-lethal methods of protecting livestock from wolves. Ultimately, the series underscores the need for all forms of management to work effectively to prevent wolves from causing undue economic harm to Idaho ranchers, rural citizens and the rural economy.

The LOTR crew also has been working on stories about:

- IRRC – What is the Rangeland Commission and what does it do?
- Using targeted grazing to clear wider fire breaks in the Owyhee Front. This experimental project expanded significantly in the spring of 2018 with multiple ranchers participating.
- Installing beaver dam-like structures in streams through agency partnerships with private landowners to create wet meadow areas and store water high in watersheds for the benefit of multiple species.
- A new "grass bank" developed by the Bureau of Land Management in the Snake Plain desert north of American Falls. The 5,000-acre forage-reserve will be available to ranchers whose cattle or sheep range may have been affected by wildfires.

As always, watch for new LOTR stories to emerge on LifeontheRange.org, the Life on the Range Facebook page and YouTube. New stories also are often featured in the Idaho media.

Steve Stuebner, LOTR writer and producer





IRRC Revenue

Total Funding \$300,137



Like us on Facebook!
facebook.com/Life-on-the-Range

The IRRC appreciates every dollar contributed by ranchers, landowners, and partners. This year includes a couple of grants for a project that will be up and running next year. A traveling educational trailer will be available to take to schools, fairs, and other educational opportunities. The trailer is in production this winter to be unveiled in Spring 2019.

IRRC's educational, public relations, and research programs would not be possible without the support of the ranching community. The license plate is another source of funding which goes directly into the educational campaigns. The IRRC works hard to get the most out of every dollar.

IRRC Board and Advisory Members:

A volunteer board of five voting members, appointed by the Governor, governs the IRRC.

IRRC Board Members

Royce Schwenkfelder, Chairman
SS Cattle Company
Cambridge, Idaho

Todd Holbrook, Vice Chair
Holbrook Ranches LLC
Bancroft, Idaho

John Peavey
Flat Top Sheep Company
Carey, Idaho

Ross Goddard
Goddard Cattle Company
Tendoy, Idaho

Darcy Holmick
Simplor Livestock
Grandview, Idaho

IRRC Advisory Members

BLM Idaho State Director

Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director

Idaho Department of Lands Director

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director

Governor's Office of Species Conservation Director

Natural Resource Conservation Service, Idaho State Conservationist

US Fish and Wildlife Service Idaho State Director

US Forest Service Forest Supervisors

University of Idaho College of Natural Resources Dean

University of Idaho College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean

University of Idaho Rangeland Center Director