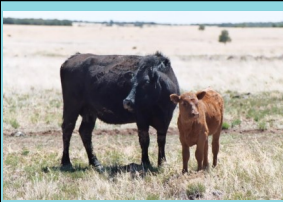


Ground Truth



A Publication of the Diablo Trust - A Northern Arizona Collaborative Grassroots Land Management Team



The Diablo Trust is a 501(c)(3) land management team created in 1993 to promote the social, biological, and economic sustainability of 426,000 acres of intermingled federal, state, and private lands southeast of Flagstaff, AZ, by engaging in a collaborative stewardship process that is in harmony with the natural environment and the broader community.

The phrase "Learning from the land and sharing our knowledge, so there will always be a West" captures our mission.

Ground Truth is the publication of the Diablo Trust, mailed free-of-charge to everyone on our mailing list. If you would like to be added to or removed from the mailing list, please contact us at:

Diablo Trust
PO Box 3058
Flagstaff, AZ 86003
info@diablotrust.org

Contributors are solely responsible for the content of their articles, and the opinions expressed in the articles, linked materials, and comments are not necessarily those of the Diablo Trust.

Talk from the



By Bob Prosser, Bar T Bar Ranch

Judy's grandfather Boss Chilson arrived in Arizona from Texas in 1890. Within a short time he settled south of Payson AZ. The next two decades he built up ranches from Sunflower to Rye. In 1924 he felt like the summer would be better spent in the high country and acquired the Double Circle allotment on the Mogollon Rim. Today you know this place as Moqui Campground. This began a century long family tradition of acquiring ranchland in Coconino County.

Ninety-nine years later, April 21, 2023, was a milestone for our ranch. We formally installed a board of directors, made up of Judy and I, our sons, Spencer and Warren, Duane Coleman, Stacy Davies, Tom Field, Ph.D., and Chuck Phillips, who we all know. Our mission is to be in the ranching business another 100 years and have the 5th generation

involved. We are excited to formalize this transition to the next generation. We are very grateful for where we are. It has taken many hours of work to get here. Our first goal is to build an effective management team.

Most of Arizona has received near record moisture from last summer to now. The grass is greening up and growing and, by the time you read this, the lower country will be a sea of orange from the Globe mallow in bloom, an Arizona Highways photo, I'm sure.

We are so blessed to have the moisture and pray the 30-year dry cycle is turning. With all the water it has caused problems for many in Arizona. Below is a photo of Anderson Mesa the first of April. It looks like Minnesota. Like everywhere else the water must go somewhere.

Continued on page 4



Anderson Mesa, looking like "Minnesota" after a record winter.

Photo credit: Prosser Collection

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Join Us for the Annual Campout Under the Stars!

Aug 12th-13th • 4PM Saturday—10AM Sunday • Ashurst Run
on the Flying M Ranch

Pre-Campout Monitoring Info Session
on the Flying M Ranch, 2PM—4PM

Catered dinner and breakfast

Please bring a side dish or desert to share for dinner

* Please see Diablo Trust website calendar for details *

Bird Spotting on the Flying M Ranch



Photography by Flying M
Cowgirl, Sheila Carlson

Common Name

Western meadowlark

Scientific Name

Sturnella neglecta

Habitat

Grasslands, pastures, meadows.
Forages on the ground, feeding
on insects and seeds. Often
probes in soil with bill.



THE REASON GOD MADE FIRE.
ARIZONA RANGE RAISED BEEF

Order Local Diablo Beef

*Range raised and fed on native, wild vege-
tation on a family ranch in N. Arizona*

Diablo Beef is offering ground beef directly to
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Bar Ranch is featured in some of our favorite
local restaurants such as Diablo Burger and
Wil's Grill. To order, contact Ellen Parish at

localazmeats@gmail.com

President's Message

By Ellen Parish

WOW, what a winter we had. At my home in Mormon Lake we had over 200 inches of snowfall and while the moisture is needed and appreciated it does bring a few challenges. These challenges are felt across our region and are a normal part of living on the Colorado Plateau, however, normal does not mean easy. The challenges of weather, population growth, development, watershed protection and surface water availability, wildlife habitat, soil health, community engagement and education, succession planning and collaboration with agencies and stakeholders are all topics we are familiar with at Diablo Trust. These too are normal issues for us and again, normal does not mean easy, yet we are dedicated to facing these challenges.



Due to exciting winter storms, we had to postpone our annual meeting. I'm happy to announce that we have rescheduled the event for August 12th and our previously scheduled speakers will be there! You can read more about them and the fantastic work they do on pages 8 to 10. I look forward to seeing you all in person for an engaging and informative discussion as we learn new ways for ranchers to work together in cooperatives for the benefit of their land, animals, families, and communities.

Diablo Trust is celebrating 30 years of work as a nonprofit and looking back at our history. Many of you have participated in events over the years, chaired committees, joined us for meals, worked on land projects, shared your knowledge and opinions at meetings, supported Diablo Trust with both time and donations, provided enthusiasm and ideas that have propelled our continued work. We will begin work on a historic timeline which will include documents, photos, videos, and stories. As we begin this project we are looking for any of these items you have and are willing to share with us. Our goal is to have a timeline on our website where anyone can look back over our history. We are looking for someone who has the expertise to create such a timeline. Please reach out to me if you have ideas regarding this exciting project.

Ellen Parish, Board President

From the Office

By Corinne LaViolette

The seasons are changing and we see evidence of that here in northern AZ and elsewhere on the landscapes we call home. This is my first time writing a "From the Office" for the Ground Truth. I moved into the Program Manager position with Diablo Trust at the end of last year just in time for our big winter. Though I have lived in northern AZ for over 20 years, this year the change in seasons comes with a greater sense of appreciation for northern AZ landscapes, having had the chance to visit the Diablo Trust ranchlands.



Though much of my time in the last several months has been in the office, the times outside of the office when I visited the Bar T Bar and Flying M Ranches have been eye opening and enriching in ways that I couldn't have imagined. In February, Judy Prosser welcomed me to the Bar T Bar for a tour of the ranch and as we drove around the land Judy told me stories including a story about the big winter of 1967 and the impact that winter had on the pronghorn herd as well as life on the ranch for Judy and her family. Judy's love for ranching and the land is palpable. On that day in early February, we saw a herd of elk that we estimated to be over one hundred individuals. It was a beautiful sight with Anderson Rim as the backdrop. On a day in early April, I found myself out of the office and on the Flying M Ranch with the AZGFD for FRSG rangeland monitoring. Snow melt runoff made Grapevine Canyon unpassable and what is a road looked more like a river that day. Though the wind was blowing the FRSG crew trudged on and Kit Metzger took the time to share her knowledge of forage plant species.

I look forward to more connections and collaboration. I want to extend my gratitude to all of you who have contributed to this newsletter and to all of you who have played a part in the Diablo Trust mission in the last 30 years and in the last few months. Summer fun is ahead, and we hope to see you at the Annual Meeting and Annual Campout on August 12th to 13th!

*Corinne LaViolette, Program Manager
Email: info@diablotrust.org*

Talk from the Bar T Bar Ranch *Continued from page 1*

Last fall we lost 14 of 19 dirt tanks on our place north of Joseph City due to flooding. We have not had time to really look at the summer country, but we know the high levels of water will have caused extensive damage. Haylake received record flooding and we lost fences, ditches, and forage. We are committed to making these repairs, but it will take time. To have water all over the summer country and lakes full is wonderful.

We have completed our conversion from our previous radio system to RanchBot, a satellite-based real time well, generator, and storage level operation and monitoring system. Look them up on the web at RanchBot.

Additionally, we have 3 solar conversions in process with AZ Game & Fish, NRCS, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Deer Foundation on the Forest and Winter Country. This will provide a more robust system for live-

stock and wildlife. Our sincere thanks to all our partners for making this possible.

Diablo Trust has played an important role in 31 of the last 99 years. The collaboration and commitment can be seen directly on the landscape through the vegetation treatments totaling over 50,000 acres of the vast rangelands, to the dependable water developments and diverse ecosystem that provides us economic opportunity. Our new board has the same commitment to Diablo Trust. Thanks to the Diablo Trust, our committed employees, and our neighbors, the Metzger's, for all you have done to make this happen.

Judy and I have a deep respect and love for this landscape and are looking forward to the future for our family.

Thanks, Bob and Judy Prosser

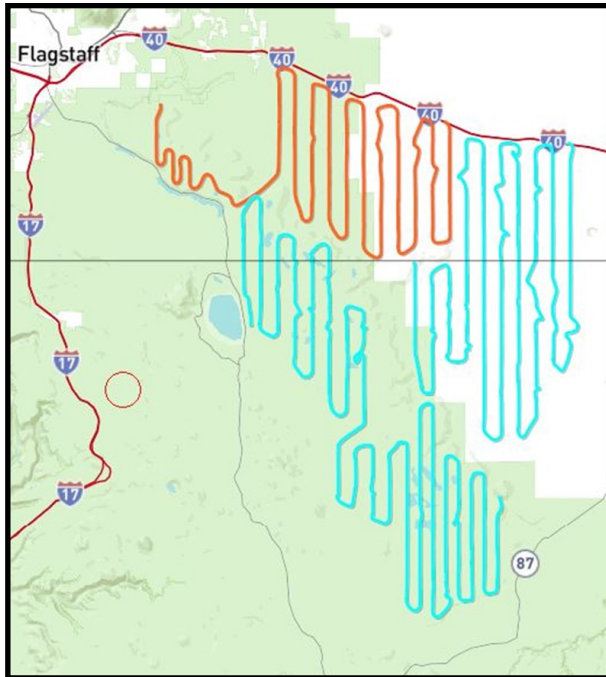
Spring Images on the Flying M Ranch, Photography by Sheila Carlson, Flying M Cowgirl



Monitoring Pronghorn Populations

By Nate Ragan, AZ Game and Fish Department Wildlife Manager

Scaled map of survey flight transect lines



Pronghorn antelope herd seen from air during survey flights



Image and map provided by Nate Ragan, the AZGFD
Wildlife Manager for unit 5B since 2019

Unit 5B is currently one of the best antelope units and one of the most sought-after tags in the state. The odds of drawing a unit 5B antelope tag in 2023 was less than one percent, unless the person applying had more than 29 bonus points. Each year at least one special tag holder harvests an antelope buck in unit 5B. I'd like to say the population is doing well because of the Wildlife Manager, but you all know that's not the case. A lot of the credit for the success of the antelope population should go to the Flying M and Bar T Bar ranches. Both ranches have cattle operations on antelope summer and winter range and have been making range improvement's that benefit wildlife, especially antelope since the beginning of time (at least that's what Bob and Kit say).

During the recent two-year drought, which saw far below average precipitation with almost no monsoon sea-

son, the fawn recruitment was well below average at around 22 fawns per 100 does (AZGFD guidelines are 35-45 fawns per 100 does). However, during that same time period the buck to doe ratio remained stable while surrounding game management units declined. Fortunately, the population was able to recover quickly with great monsoon moisture in 2021 and 2022 and during the last survey period unit 5B had one of the best population estimates in several years. Fixed wing aircraft is used each August to complete antelope survey flights on both Diablo Trust ranches. One mile transects are typically flown in traditional antelope habitat while classifying fawns, does and bucks. Above is a scaled map of the survey flight transect lines starting near Meteor Crater to the east and Mormon Lake to the west, followed by a group of antelope as seen from the airplane. Can you classify them all?

Getting to Know...

Aaron Mayville, Forest Supervisor of the Coconino National Forest

Aaron Mayville became the Forest Supervisor of the Coconino National Forest in February 2023. Originally from San Diego, CA, Aaron has lived and worked all over the nation and world before settling here in Flagstaff. He studied geology at Boston University, was stationed in San Diego, Hawaii, and Japan as an Officer in the Navy, received a master's degree from the University of Melbourne in Australia, and has worked with the Forest Service in Washington DC, Bozeman, MT, as well as Vail and Fort Collins, CO. In 2018, Aaron and his wife, Jodie, came down to the Coconino NF for a temporary assignment and couldn't wait to return permanently. He's an avid guitar player, NBA fan, and enjoys most every outdoor activity that public lands afford. Aaron shared that he's excited about working with the incredible staff on the Coconino NF and is thrilled to help manage such iconic landscapes from the San Francisco Peaks to Red Rock Country.



Born in: San Diego, CA

Occupations: Forest Supervisor and previously served as a Deputy Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, Naval Officer, and Blockbuster Video clerk.

Current heroes: Lennon–McCartney

Movies recently enjoyed: Top Gun: Maverick (Go Navy!)

Favorite hobbies: Electric and acoustic guitar

Fondest outdoor memories: Backpacking the Narrows in Zion National Park at age 13. Set me on a course to work in public lands.

Favorite ranch recipe: Elk tenderloin cooked over a campfire

Favorite western movie: The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance



Favorite quote: “A public official is there to serve the public and not run them.” Gifford Pinchot's first maxim to guide foresters in public office.

Arizona Agricultural Institute

By Taylor LaRavia, Assistant in Extension, Agricultural Literacy and STEM, U of A Cooperative Extension

The formerly known Summer Ag Institute (SAI) has been revamped to the Arizona Agricultural Institute (AAI). The Arizona Agricultural Institute offers two opportunities for teachers to experience and learn more about Arizona agriculture with the AAI 1.0, which is held in June, and the AAI 2.0 which is held during the winter or fall growing season. This is a program of The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and is sponsored by Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy.



Teachers attending the 2023 Winter AAI, Credit: U of A Extension

AAI 1.0 provides highly interactive, multi-day tours designed to teach K-12 teachers about food and fiber production and to help them incorporate that knowledge in the classroom. AAI combines hands-on learning about agriculture with practical curriculum development. Participants receive continuing education units or professional development hours (CEUs, PD) and free classroom materials that are aligned to Arizona's Academic Standards. AAI 1.0 is an annual program held over the summer in Maricopa County.

In February 2023, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's Agricultural Literacy program and the Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy held their first Arizona Agricultural Institute 2.0 in Yuma, Arizona. Teachers were able to see why it is called the winter vegetable capital of the world! *Continued on page 7*

AZ Agricultural Institute

Continued from page 6



Educators attending the Winter 2023 AAI, including a FUSD science teacher that Diablo Trust sponsored through a grant partnership with the ACF. Photo credit: U of A Extension

Fourteen teachers from 10 of Arizona's 15 counties, who teach over 1,500 students annually, attended AAI 2.0 this year. Pre- and post-surveys were conducted to measure the teacher's change in knowledge in 7 areas: familiarity with greenhouse production, citrus production, agricultural workers and work conditions, leafy green harvesting and packaging, food safety, the date industry, and the beef industry. In all areas, an increase in knowledge occurred.

While AAI 1.0 will remain focused on agricultural production in Maricopa County, the new AAI 2.0 program will revolve around the state to showcase the many different and unique agricultural regions that Arizona has.



Teachers in a greenhouse during the 2023 Winter AAI
Credit: U of A Extension

Thank You to All of Our Donors!

Diablo Trust is a donation-funded organization, and much of what we do could not be accomplished without contributions from our caring community. This year on AZ Gives Day, Diablo Trust raised over \$1,500! These funds will help support our events and programs. Thank you for your generous contributions and for making AZ Gives a success!



AZ Event Highlight

AACD

Arizona's Conservation Districts' Annual Conference
2023

August 8th and 9th in Tucson, AZ



The Annual Conference is a platform for conservation education and networking. Attendees provide input on natural resource concerns and educate the public about the value of agriculture.

For more information visit,

aacd1944.com/annual-conference

History of Country Natural Beef Land Stewardship and the Power of a Like Minded Group

Article Contributed by Dan Probert, Marketing Director of Country Natural Beef

A Preview to the Diablo Trust Annual Meeting on August 12th, 2023

Country Natural Beef (CNB) was started in 1986 by a group of like-minded, Central Oregon ranchers that needed the power of a group to lift them above the struggles of the infamous Farm Crisis of the 1980's, skyrocketing interest rates, battles with environmentalists calling for "Cattle Free by 93" on public lands and the challenges of increasing the productivity of their individual ranches. The 13 original ranches met at a Holistic Resource Management course that Allan Savory facilitated. Those were the humble beginnings of a cooperative that began by marketing 3 head of natural cattle per week to what is today the largest rancher owned beef cooperative in the nation which currently markets 60,000 animals annually.

To say that the 37 year journey has always been smooth would not be accurate and some would say a downright lie but with the tenacity of the group along with the help of some of the best facilitators in the west, this group of ranchers that now numbers over 100 scattered across the west has been able to find common ground and chart a path forward that has endured some of the most difficult of circumstances. Most recently the extreme challenges that covid presented.

It is a set of core principles and shared values that have held the group together over the years. This is summed up in our **Mission Statement** that has kept us all pulling in the same direction:

The purpose of Country Natural Beef is to provide a simple, stable, and profitable means for its members to market their livestock.

Country Natural Beef as an organization will excel at developing markets which best utilize member's livestock and at translating cost and carcass data into information which assists members in making sound management decisions.

By striving to market their livestock in sustainable manner, the members of Country Natural Beef will take care of and respect the customers, communities, and lands which sustain them.

This guiding statement has allowed our members to be aligned around a common purpose. It also allows CNB to work together, as a group, to highlight some of our most important attributes. What were callouts that made us different in the early years are really becoming baseline in natural markets. "Never Ever" which means no added hormones, antibiotics and fed a vegetarian diet have become essentially baseline for a natural beef program. Today, CNB differentiates ourselves with key attributes which will enable our company to hold or grow market share into the future. We see the key differentiators for CNB to come under three main attributes:

A company that is rancher owned and grass roots driven. Consumers want to support family ranchers rather than multi-national companies. We continue to refine ways to highlight the fact that monies spent on CNB products flow back to the rural ranchers and their communities.

Animal Welfare continues to be a key concern of consumers. CNB works with the Global Animal Partnership and our retailers in telling our story about an arm's length animal welfare audit for each of our ranches.

Consumers need to know they are supporting regenerative land practices by buying our products. Grazewell, the name of our regenerative ranching program is far and away our most differentiating attribute and the one that is likely most difficult to replicate by a larger meat company. The fact that we have transparency and control from the ranch the animals were born on all the way to the retailer gives CNB a more credible and unique story to give us leverage in the marketplace.



Country Natural Beef Land Stewardship *Continued from page 8*

The term Grazewell™ was coined by one of the great CNB ranchers and land managers Jack Southworth. The compound word itself summarizes the holistic management philosophies of CNB ranchers. As the consumer preferences have changed and the cattle industry changed, Grazewell™ evolved into an unpublished code of ethics for regenerative ranching practices by CNB members. In pursuit to formalize the land ethic in 2021, a key group of CNB ranchers began working on a comprehensive program that would be suitable for adoption by its members. They also knew that it must be validated by key scientific methods that were relevant to livestock grazing and be a program that could be endorsed and verified by key conservation leaders. Outside advisory team, Northway Ranch Services, was hired to assist in the research, design, and development of the vision and the word Grazewell™ was formalized into a program by early 2022. To date, over half of the CNB ranches have begun the onboarding process with over 35 ranches completing the baseline land assessment process.

Quote from James Rogers - Northway Ranch Services



“Working directly with CNB ranchers, we are proud to help develop, from the ground-up an effective and credible means of assisting ranchers to get where they want to meet the market with a strong

commitment to land stewardship. This is much more than simply adopting a suite of practices or coming into compliance with regulations or policies. Regenerative Ranching is a mindset and a journey of improving ecological literacy, broadening the view and sensitivity of management actions to the larger ecosystem, and ranchers sharing their experiences with peers. CNB and their membership has a rich history of being leaders in the agricultural industry and this is one more example of how they can inspire others that better land management practices will not only help their bottom-line but improve the function of the landscapes they have the privilege to manage.”

What is regenerative? Grazewell™ defines regenerative as any practice, process, or management technique, which serves to enhance the functioning of the systems on which it relies. This includes increasing the functioning of core

ecosystem cycles such as energy, water, and minerals by enriching biological function. It also includes improving the economic and social systems of the ranching operation. In other words, any practice that makes the land, community, and bottom-line healthier year after year is *regenerative*. In this way, the determination of whether something is truly regenerative is based on outcomes and not practices alone, which distinguishes Grazewell™ from most sustainable/conservation agriculture efforts.

Grazewell™ Framework

The theoretical foundation in developing the framework of Grazewell™ is most vividly captured in this Ralph Waldo Emerson quote:

“As to the methods there are a million and then some, but the principles are few, the man/women who can grasp the principles will come up with his/her own methods.”

To clarify, Mr. Emerson is likely talking about *planning* and *practices* in his mention of “methods.”

Grazewell™ is not a program that focuses on practices rather it is a program that is built, first and foremost, on the producer understanding ecosystem processes and soil health principles through intentional investment in education and time observing their landscape. Grazewell™ allows the planning process and practices to remain flexible and relevant to the context of the ranching operation and once specific actions are determined and implemented, observations from those actions are recorded on an annual basis. More robust field monitoring is carried out on regular intervals to verify if objectives are being achieved. This entire process is accounted for with excellent record keeping, support from technical service providers, and regular audits. Additionally, the annual management actions and practices are iterative as to accommodate for changing conditions and support continual learning and progress towards objectives.

The Framework begins by defining the Ecosystem Processes, Soil Health Principles, and Program Objectives and then moves to establishing the context of each particular property, a baseline ecological assessment, and then a series of opportunities for the rancher to participate in learning how to better manage their landscape.



Country Natural Beef Land Stewardship *Continued from page 9*

Enrollment

Enrollment into Grazewell™ begins with spatially mapping each individual ranch property to give a geographic outline and reference of producer's private and public land. The map is used to create a composite dataset with information regarding number and type of acreage under member management. From this process a clear understanding of geographic context and scope of the area under management is established. After geographic boundaries are mapped, the land base is analyzed using public data from USGS National Land Cover Database and the Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP), (<https://rangelands.app>). A report is created for each property which summarizes change between years of bare ground, annual grass and forb cover, and perennial grass cover. This data allows each ranch to observe how the landscape condition has changed at a macro level over the last several decades and furthers the understanding of the context of their ranch. The final requirement for enrollment is to complete an onboarding survey which captures the current level of rancher understanding, interest, and ecological knowledge. This information will be used to document progress of the rancher and the entire membership over the years of participation with Grazewell™. The entire land base in which CNB operates encompasses an estimated 6.5 Million acres including both private and public land.

Monitoring

After Enrollment is completed, each ranch is visited by an approved ecological advisor that helps the rancher establish base line monitoring sites. These locations are established with the curiosity and management of the rancher in mind and have been specifically called out as Management Learning Locations (MLL). These sites are geared towards providing the rancher, staff, partners, and the approved advisor a place to specifically document baseline data and establish ecological objectives for the location. Often there are specific management actions that can be identified and implemented in this location to move the ecological condition in a positive direction. Specific management actions are implemented over the course of the next several years with return site visits and reassessment of condition. The main metrics that are measured include bare ground, water infiltration, soil organic matter, plant diversity, and soil organic carbon. These measurements as well as the implemented management actions will

be tracked over time. These same assessments are tracked at pasture locations where CNB partners send their cattle for the final phases finishing phase.

Learning

The Grazewell™ program is founded with increasing ecological literacy by all involved, ranchers, retailers, and customers. The rancher learning is accomplished with workshops, field days, peer to peer learning groups, webinars, and literature. The basis of the learning is from their own land by spending time with advisors and their peers' gathering data and sharing their experience from practices and experiments that are being implemented. Data that is gathered from the ranch properties is assembled and aggregated into maps and dashboards to share with retailers with the opportunity to discover positive change or even challenges that have occurred. Story maps are also created for each ranch and can be shared with customers and retailers alike to showcase operations and improvements that are taking place.



Country Natural Beef and Grazewell™ content for this article provided by Dan Probert. Dan is a Cattle Rancher and the Marketing Director for Country Natural Beef and a featured speaker at the upcoming Diablo Trust Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 12th, 2023.

Join Us for the Diablo Trust 2023 Annual Meeting on August 12th

Regenerative Ranching to Enhance Soil and Rangeland Health

9:30 am to 12 pm

at the Mormon Lake Fire Station

Learn more about Country Natural Beef, Grazewell™, and

Northway Ranch Services

On the Ground with Diablo Trust

Rangeland monitoring with the Forage Resource Study Group (FRSG) on the Flying M and Bar T Bar Ranches in April of 2023

Steve Cassady, AZGFD Land-owner Relations Program Specialist, collecting data at rain gauges on the Bar T Bar Ranch. *Image to right*



FRSG monitoring crew on April 3rd at Grapevine Canyon. *Image above*



Do you see a road? Generally this canyon is passable in early April. Not on April 3rd, 2023 after a record winter. *Image to left*



Diablo Canyon Rim



FRSG moving utilization cages

USGS researchers and NAU students visited the Flying M and Bar T Bar Ranches in May of 2023 to monitor RestoreNet Sites and to plan for treatment additions to research plots, for Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE) projects



Data collection at RestoreNet Plots



USGS RAMPS coordinator, Laura Shriver, identifying plants with an NAU student



Plant Identification



Though there was rain in Flagstaff, AZ a full day of data collection was completed on the Flying M Ranch

Diablo Trust



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Upcoming Diablo Trust Events

August 12th: Diablo Trust Annual Meeting—Regenerative Ranching to Enhance Soil and Rangeland Health, 9:30 am to 12 pm at the Mormon Lake Fire Station

August 12th: Ranch Monitoring Info Session with Northway Ranch Services, 2 pm to 4 pm on the Flying M Ranch

August 12th to 13th: Diablo Trust Annual Campout Under the Stars! 4 pm Saturday to 10 am Sunday on the Flying M Ranch at Ashurst Run

In the Fall: Diablo Trust Days on the Land with the Audubon Society



For further event information, please email info@diablotrust.org
Visit our website, www.diablotrust.org/calendar for more details and updates!