

## Meet the 2015 NGC Presenters

(in alphabetical order)



**Sage Askin**

Sage Askin is a young rancher headquartered out of Riverton, WY. He operates a diverse cattle and sheep ranch that is spread out on leased land across the state of Wyoming. Engaged to be married to his lovely fiancée, Faith Hoffman, Askin spends most of his time planning on how to maximize efficiency and profitability on his ranch while protecting the resource and growing the business.

He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 2012 with a B.S. in Rangeland Ecology and Watershed Management and related degrees in Soil Science, Agroecology, Reclamation/Restoration Ecology, Forest Management, and Wildlife and Fisheries Biology & Management.

Askin wants to emphasize that he is not alone, not unique, that there are opportunities out there for young aspiring ranchers to start up a business, and the best time is now. He encourages focus on marketing, stockmanship, genetics, and especially grazing management to be a successful rancher.

"By His grace and for His Glory"



**Russ Bloom**

Russ Bloom and his wife, Annette, have 5 sons (4 of which have or continue to serve in the military) and one daughter. They have built a 300 hd cow-calf operation, and farm nearly 1500 acres in combination with Annette's father, who is still involved part-time. One of the sons is the 4th generation to farm, and with 8 grandchildren, they are optimistic for a 5th!

Bloom is currently President of the Central Nebraska Prescribed Burn Association.



**David Boxler**

David Boxler is Extension Educator - Livestock Entomology at the UNL West Central Research & Extension Center in North Platte, NE. His responsibilities include providing regional leadership for educational programs and applied research/demonstrations for profitable and sustainable livestock entomology and rangeland grasshopper management. He has a B.A. in Botany from the University of Northern Colorado and a M.S. in Entomology 1980 from UNL. He is a member of the Entomological Society of America.

Michael Clarke, Berwyn, NE. No photo or bio information submitted.

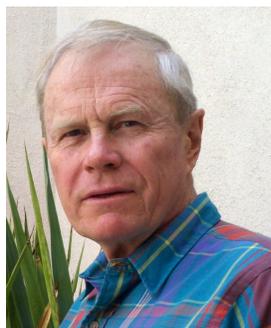


**Jerry Glaser**

(Photo credit:  
Curt Arens,  
*Nebraska Farmer*)

Producers of a fourth-generation farm, the farm/ranch operation of Jerry Glaser lies at the foot of the Sandhills in central Nebraska, about 60 miles north of Grand Island. It consists 750 irrigated organic crop acres and pasture to support 380 cow/calf and organic grass-finished cattle. We raise organic popcorn, corn, edible beans and grass alfalfa mix for our cattle. Our rotation consists of corn, beans, small grains and forage, followed by three to five years of grass-cover crops. We believe this rotation benefits the soils and builds up the microbes. We have invested heavily in building up our soils with organic products because we believe many of the health issues our country faces today are due to a depletion of vitamins and minerals in our food supply. High quality food must be grown from the ground up. If the soils aren't healthy, the plants, animals and food we produce can not be healthy either. With the crop rotation, we like to have something always growing on our land to support the microbes. We use cover crops to achieve this. The cattle complement the crops very well. Our goal is to produce a very nutrient-dense food product with the tools we have available.

Glaser earned a degree in Diesel Mechanics, which has been very beneficial for operating a farm. Married for 36 years, Jerry & Cindy enjoy traveling whenever time allows, and especially spending time with their almost 3 year-old granddaughter. They are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their grandson.



**Tony Knight**

Tony Knight received his BVSc from the University of East Africa in 1968, a MS degree from Colorado State University in 1971, and board Certification in large animal internal medicine in 1980. He joined the faculty of Colorado State in 1973 and served as the Chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences from 1986-2003. He retired from his faculty position in July 2012 and now lives in Tucson, AZ. His clinical and research interests include food animal medicine, plant toxicology, infectious diseases of large animals, and zoonotic diseases. As a master gardener with Pima County Cooperative Extension in Tucson, he continues to consult on plant poisoning. Knight has authored two books on plant toxicology titled: *A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America* and *A Guide to Poisonous House and Garden Plants*.



**Jay Parsons**

In July 2014, Jay Parsons joined the UNL Department of Agricultural Economics where he teaches Advanced Farm Management and Linear Programming as well as serving on the Grazing Livestock Systems faculty team.

Parsons grew up on a diversified family farm in western Nebraska. His first two college degrees were in mathematics, which he taught at the high school level in California and Colorado. After earning his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from Colorado State University, he taught several graduate level courses there in agricultural production economics, marketing, and business planning. He was also Co-Director of the Western Center for Integrated Resource Management.



**Duane Pelster**

Duane and Nancy Pelster represent the third generation to manage their Sandhills ranch land along the Cedar River near Ericson, NE. They helped pioneer rotational grazing in their area, and their approach to land management and grazing systems has resulted in good plant health that has weathered extreme conditions such as multi-year droughts. Their livestock operation and wildlife have both benefitted from the stewardship decisions made by this award-winning family that received the 2014 Nebraska Leopold Conservation Award.



**Nancy Peterson**

Nancy Peterson grew up in the Colorado Mountains with four brothers and 700 cows. She graduated from Colorado State University in 1979 with a DVM. She went back home to Yampa, where she built a solo mixed practice that was 85% cow-calf. Food animal production has always been her passion and the focus of her continuing education.

She married architect Rex Peterson in 1979. They have three children: Patrick who farms with them; Captain Galen Peterson, a West Point graduate; and Kate, an intensive care nurse.

In 1996, they had an opportunity to move to Nebraska, and in 1998, were able to trade a small amount of mountain real estate for a working ranch. Plum Thicket Farms was formed in 2007 when Patrick decided he wanted to come home and farm. They run 280-300 cows, often retaining interest in the steers through the rail. They are currently building a market for high quality two- and three-year-old cows with May-born calves at side. Patrick farms 2300 acres.

Peterson is active in the children's ministry at church and in Nebraska Cattlemen.



**Daren Redfearn**

Daren Redfearn has a 60% extension and 40% research appointment in the area of integrated forage-crop-livestock systems. Prior to his appointment at UNL, he was Extension Forage and Pasture Management Specialist at Oklahoma State University and also served as Forage Agronomist with the Louisiana State University Ag Center. He has authored and co-authored 30 peer-reviewed journal articles and proceedings papers, four book chapters, 57 abstracts, approximately 100 other non-technical publications and made almost 160 oral presentations to other scientists and stakeholders. He currently serves as Crop Science Society of America co-editor for Crop, Forage, and Turfgrass Management. His extension program focus areas are enhancing the use of crop residues and forage double-crops into existing beef production systems and implementing economical crop residue harvest and grazing methods. His research program emphasizes the development of management, production, and utilization strategies for annual forages used as forage double-crops, evaluation of the influence of crop residue management systems on forage double-crop establishment, and creation of unique crop residue management systems that facilitate use of forage double-crops.



**Derek Scasta**

John Derek Scasta joined the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management at the University of Wyoming in August of 2014 after completing a Ph.D. at Oklahoma State University. His doctoral research program focused on how disturbances on rangelands (such as fire and drought) and management (such as stocking rate and timing of grazing) influence cattle distribution, parasites, plant community composition and structure, plant succession, shrub regeneration and production. Prior to time in Oklahoma and Wyoming, Scasta worked for 7 years as an Extension Educator in Texas. His experience with fire includes conducting 38 prescribed fires in 3 different states. Fires ranged in size from 0.1 acres to 340 acres and included the following fuel types: Tallgrass Prairie; Sand Sagebrush/Mixed Prairie; Cross Timbers; Fescue Invaded Prairie.

Scasta is a Certified Wildland Fire Ecologist through the Association for Fire Ecology and a Certified Professional in Rangeland Management (CPRM) through the Society for Range Management. He has published research related to fire and grazing in the following journals: Fire Ecology, International Journal of Wildland Fire, Rangeland Ecology and Management, Botanical Studies, EcoHealth, Southwestern Entomologist, and several others.



**R.P. Smith**

R.P. Smith calls himself Nebraska's Homegrown Humorist and Cowboy Poet. He is the fourth generation to raise cattle on the Pine Crest Ranch in Custer County, NE. R.P. says Pine Crest Ranch, which marked its centennial in 2006, still isn't a real big place; he just comes from a long line of stubborn and persistent people. The commentary and poetry that R.P. shares are a by-product of the beef industry, and have been processed by reciting for ruminates, relatives and ranchers.

R.P.'s material is inspired by his family and what's going on at the ranch, giving his work an authenticity and down-to-earth quality that strikes a familiar chord with his audiences, regardless of their occupation. He has found that humor and a firm faith that God is in control are mighty important tools to have when life takes an unexpected turn.

One of the biggest unexpected turns in R.P.'s life has been the many opportunities he has had to present his stories and poetry. He has shared his talent in 16 states and has even slipped over the border into Canada.

He also hosts a weekly radio program, "Homegrown," which features his own poetry and commentary along with showcasing some of the talented folks he has met in his travels. The program is also available on the web at [rpsmith.us](http://rpsmith.us)

R.P. is always glad to get back home and wait for the next inspiration to come. When he is stricken with a new idea, he tries it out on his wife, the dogs and replacement heifers, and when he wants a tough audience, his six children.



**Mitch Stephenson**

Mitch Stephenson is a Range and Forage Extension Specialist with UNL based at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, NE. He received a M.S. in 2010 in Range Science from UNL where he evaluated the effect of rotational grazing methods and time of grazing on livestock performance and vegetation characteristics in the eastern Nebraska Sandhills. Following his time at UNL, he worked as a rangeland ecologist in Wyoming and Nevada where he assisted livestock producers in developing sustainable grazing management plans and range vegetation monitoring reports. He completed his Ph.D. in Range Science in December 2014 from New Mexico State University where his research was focused on targeting cattle grazing with low-stress herding and low-moisture block protein supplement and evaluating factors that affect cattle grazing distribution behavior, grazing site selection, and social association patterns within cattle herds. Following his Ph.D., Mitch worked with the University of Nevada, Reno as a post-doctoral researcher evaluating the use of livestock grazing as a tool to reduce annual invasive grass biomass on a landscape scale.



**Scott Stout**

Scott Stout has been in the ranching business all his life. He grew up in the Sandhills near Burwell and moved to southwest Nebraska when he attended Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture and majored in feedlot technology. When he married in 1999, he went into business with his father-in-law on the family's 500 head cow/calf operation. They farm 600 acres of alfalfa and corn ground and operate 10 sections of native range in the Loess Canyons. He is a burn boss for the Loess Canyon Rangeland Alliance. He and wife, Morgan, have five children.



**Dirac Twidwell**

Dirac Twidwell is Assistant Professor and Rangeland Ecologist in the UNL Department of Agronomy and Horticulture where he teaches the Great Plains Ecosystems course and the Ecosystem Monitoring and Assessment course. His research interests include social-ecological resilience to extreme disturbance (e.g., fire) and climatic events; resilience, hysteresis, and thresholds in alternative states and their applications in ecosystem management; trade-offs of changing land use and disturbance regimes in coupled human-natural systems; forecasting threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services; disaster avoidance and wildfire management at the rangeland-urban interface; and integration of science in natural resource policy and management.

Twidwell received a B.S. in Biological Sciences from Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri-Rolla), M.S. in Rangeland Ecology and Management from Oklahoma State University, and Ph.D. in Ecosystem Science and Management from Texas A&M University.