

# Nonprofit secures funding for regenerative ranching program

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**  
Capital Press

PORTLAND — A Portland-based conservation group is forming what it says will be the country's largest program to support regenerative ranching across the West.

Sustainable Northwest received a \$488,500 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to roll out the initiative, partnering with Country Natural Beef to help ranchers adopt grazing practices that build healthy soils and improve water retention.

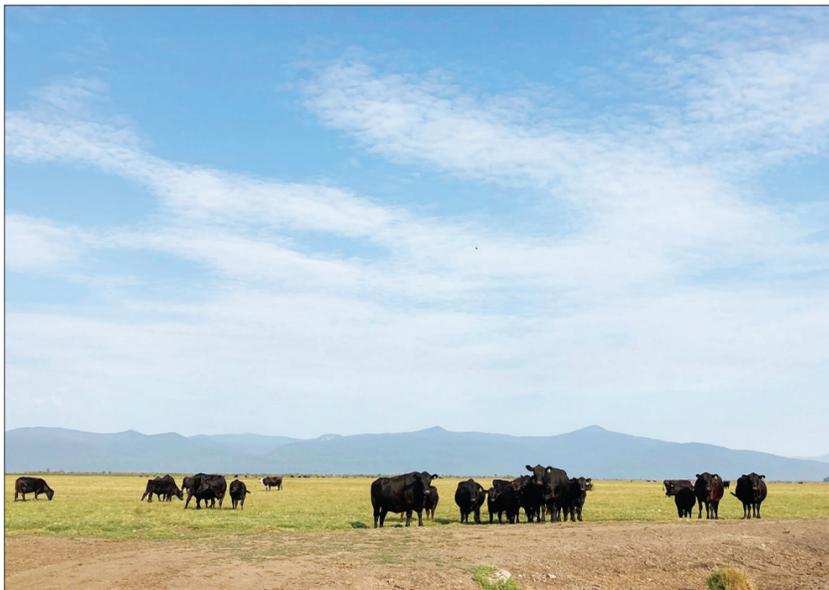
The program aims to include 100 ranches and 6.5 million acres of rangeland by 2025.

"When we think about regenerative (agriculture), we really start with the soil," said Dylan Kruse, vice president of Sustainable Northwest. "If you have healthy soil, you'll have a healthier landscape."

For example, rotational grazing is a strategy that falls under regenerative ranching. Livestock are rotated frequently between pastures, allowing forage plants to recover and deepen their root systems.

"You get increased carbon sequestration, you get better water filtration and capture, you get better nutrient management and better forage production," Kruse said. "That can help the bottom line for ranchers."

In late 2020, Sustainable



Sustainable Northwest/Contributed Photo

**A ranch in the Klamath Basin. Sustainable Northwest received a \$488,500 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to roll out what it says will be the country's largest program to support regenerative ranching across the West.**



Kruse



Probert

Northwest was awarded funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to put some of these practices to the test on four Oregon ranches. That project is still underway.

But Kruse said they wanted to go bigger. There is no single, large-scale program looking at regenerative

ranching, which he sees as a gap in the market.

"This regenerative space is just exploding right now," Kruse said, citing more than \$50 billion in U.S. organic food sales in 2019. "Responding to those demands is really significant."

Country Natural Beef, a ranching cooperative based in Redmond, was founded on the premise of marketing naturally raised beef to local consumers. The co-op today has 100 members in 14 western states, and sells beef to natural and organic supermarkets including

Whole Foods and New Seasons Market.

Dan Probert, a Wallowa County rancher and the marketing director for Country Natural Beef, said the alliance with Sustainable Northwest makes sense for their members.

"We want to call out the attributes that we have that are important to our consumers, so they feel good about the products they pick," Probert said, adding that ranchers today face increased pressure and competition from plant-based meats among environmentally minded shoppers.

Probert Ranch is one of the four operations currently working with Sustainable Northwest under the NRCS grant. The ranch has about 21,000 acres in the Zumwalt Prairie near Joseph, divided into more than 100 pastures to facilitate rotational grazing.

Probert said he thinks of regenerative ranching as a "triple bottom line" — promoting healthy cows, healthy people and healthy land. With the new regenerative ranching program, he said Sustainable Northwest will provide them with objective data to validate these claims.

"We use extensive monitoring to tell if we're moving toward or away from our objectives," he said. "We know we have to be ahead of the game in that space."

Steve Moore, executive director of the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, said the program "provides an innovative, sustainable solution that helps our natu-

ral landscapes thrive while simultaneously growing local business."

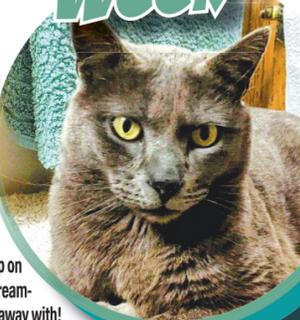
"Ranchers in the Pacific Northwest play a vital role in helping our region thrive but face a variety of challenges, including development, climbing costs, climate change and more," Moore said. "Organizations like Sustainable Northwest are doing important work to help support the individuals and families who run these spaces."

Kruse, with Sustainable Northwest, said the group plans to hire a new regenerative ranching program manager by the end of March. They will then get to work enrolling the first cohort of ranches in the program, mapping their properties and developing individual grazing plans.

"It's voluntary, it's incentive-based. For us, that's good conservation," Kruse said. "It's good for the community, and it's good for the economy."



## Pet of the Week



MEET BLUE!

Blue is a 3 year old (approximately) Russian Blue, neutered, male. He is up-to-date on vaccines, dewormed and is litter box trained. Blue is a laid back big boy who enjoys nights filled with Netflix & Chilling or just curled up on the couch with a good book. Blue is dreaming of someone he can purr the night away with!

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## Crash:

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we will issue an update."

Emily Smith, director of communications for St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, reported that as of 3 p.m., the hospital received six patients from the crash.

"The patients' statuses are unknown at this time," she reported, "and no information on ages etc. is available to the media at this time."

Smith also explained how St. Anthony responds to these kinds of crises.

"When we receive word of an incident like this, the hospital activates Code D, or disaster response," according to Smith. "Available staff (off-duty) are called and asked to come in based on current personnel needs as well as staffing for the next shift. Patients are seen in the emergency department as well as other care areas of the hospital as appropriate for their level of injury. We have an extensive disaster plan that is drilled with local emergency response teams to ensure we are prepared for situations like this when they arise."

### Pendleton Convention Center provides respite

The Hyatts said emergency personnel checked on them often, and they appreciated that. And many of



Carter Hyatt/Contributed Photo

**The engine of this Nissan Pathfinder ended up on the asphalt after the vehicle crashed Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, into a semitrailer on Interstate 84 about 21 miles east of Pendleton. The family inside the Nissan were OK. Oregon State Police reported the car was one of 98 vehicles involved in crashes that shutdown the eastbound and westbound lanes of the interstate for an extended period.**

the other people in the crash helped each other, they said, offering water and making sure people were OK.

"There were people, regular people," Marjorie Hyatt said. "All that was really nice."

When school buses arrived to carry the Hyatts and so many more off the mountain, they said they had to cross the median to the eastbound lanes. Marjorie banged her knee on the fence, but firefighters were right there to help. And when they got on the bus, she said, the OSP trooper who was the person to check on them assisted

them onto the bus.

The buses took groups to the Pendleton Convention Center, where its manager, Pat Beard, said the while the facility was holding events that day, it opened rooms for the people in crash and provide what hospitality it could while they waited for rides from family or friends or made arrangement for other accommodations.

The center also served as something of a base of operations for law enforcement, Umatilla County Public Health and more. Beard praised the coordination he witnessed between the different groups.

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