

IDAHO  
**RANGELAND**  
Resources  Commission

2021 Annual Report

## Sheep crossing Idaho 55 goes national on NBC-TV Today Show and NBC Nightly News

Each year, more and more people have been coming to watch Wilder rancher Frank Shirts' bands of sheep cross Idaho State Highway 55. In April 2021, it was off the charts!

We had a huge turnout of people come to watch, and so many cars parked along ID 55 that Shirts and his herders barely found a place to move the sheep off Idaho 55 into the Eagle Bike Park.

Gretchen Hyde and I dashed around and tried to keep onlookers off the road, so the sheep could pass by. It was really hectic and hard to manage the people!

The night before, I asked our Life on the Range videographer Chris Ennis if he could shoot drone

footage of the sheep crossing while his wife, Suzanne, shot ground-level footage and I took still photos. Turned out to be a good move!

Chris' drone footage got 235,290 views on Facebook, went viral, and was broadcast on the Today Show and NBC Nightly News on April 22. You can find a link to the Today show report and footage on the Life on the Range Facebook page.

This was the biggest single media hit we've ever had in our work for IRRC.

We heard a lot of comments like "Wow, only in Idaho."

Pretty cool!

Steve Stuebner



## A few words from our Board Chair Darcy Helmick

Hello, as my first year of Chairing the IRRC, I wanted to take a minute to introduce myself. I was nominated to the board by the Idaho Cattle Association, and appointed by Governor Otter. I was raised on my family's cattle ranch in Mayfield, Idaho. I have a AS in Business Management/Entrepreneurship, College of Southern Idaho; BS in Range Livestock Management, University of Idaho; and Masters of Public Administration w/emphasis on Natural Resource and Environmental Policy, Boise State University.



Darcy and family

I started off my career in range, working seasonally for the Bureau of Land Management in Boise for seven years as wildland fire fighter, fuels program and operations. I then worked as a range specialist for the Idaho Department of Lands for 1.5 years, and then moved to the private sector as a rangeland monitoring specialist for Simplot for four years before moving into the Land Manager position here in Grand View in April 2014.

As the land manager for Simplot Land and Livestock, it is my responsibility to manage all public land activities for Simplot entities. I work with ranch managers and public land management agencies to manage grazing on public lands. I review, participate and comment on land planning documents impacting Simplot Livestock Company. I attend meetings and collaborate with agencies to protect and enhance wildlife and special status species habitat while maintaining viable ranching operations on public lands. I am involved in five different Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, I'm the public lands chair for the Idaho Cattle Association, Idaho Board Member for the Public Lands Council, and a graduate of Leadership Idaho Agriculture.

It was a great pleasure to be nominated and approved to Chair the IRRC, though the timing was by no means ideal - in this second year of the coronavirus, we are trying to stay close to our families, keep things on track on the work front, and continue to move forward with our priority projects for the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission.

But then Mother Nature dealt us quite a blow this spring and summer when we got very little to no spring rain, and triple-digit temperatures hit us in early summer, creating what water experts have called an "exceptional spring drought," which had a major impact on livestock producers in Southern Idaho and created tinder-dry conditions on our rangelands.

Nothing like a super dry year like this one to remind us all about the value of water! Fortunately, we made it through the hot and dry summer months without any major wildfires



burning up more natural resource range, at least in Idaho. While that was a huge positive for us here, the massive wildfires from our neighboring states still left the entire valley in a wake of smoke a majority of the summer, a reminder, that catastrophic fuel loadings, increase in public pressure, and drought continue to put a stress on our fire-fighting resources.

As ranchers, we definitely have seen the ripple effects of a major increase in recreation use in the Urban-Rural Interface, where we have watched new UTV riders aimlessly searching for places to go play, sometimes driving up private driveways or trespassing by mistake ... or perhaps they hadn't done any homework before they took off for their outdoor adventure, to livestock waters being tampered with by an individual looking to score some water to set up a blind near....and the gates.... Always the issues with the public and the gates!

Concerns about a large number of "newbies" causing issues in ranch country in the Urban-Wildland Interface seemed like something we needed to address from an information/education perspective – our core mission. Officials with the BLM and the Forest Service had similar concerns about "bad behavior" issues such as litter or human-caused fires, as did Idaho Fish and Game and Idaho Parks and Recreation. So we thought it would appropriate to partner with the Boise National Forest on three Life on the Range videos to provide basic information and positive tips to recreationists of all kinds about how to conduct themselves when visiting our public lands and rangelands. We also partnered with the Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership on an in-depth "Know where to go – before you go" video and story that has been getting excellent traction so far.

On the education-outreach front, it's been difficult to schedule trainings and events due to covid restrictions, and many of our outreach efforts had to switch to Zoom or virtual platforms. In some circumstances, doing the virtual events is just not as effective as in-person outreach, but it's really the only choice we had at the time.

We are eager to use our new I-Roam trailer and I-Roam curriculum to share with Idaho's K-12 schools and kids, and hope we will reach a point soon where in-person activities will be the norm, once again.

We're excited to partner in a study about public perceptions on various rangeland issues. This statewide research project, which includes all three Idaho universities, includes questions asked by IRRC in earlier polls. We look forward to reviewing the results in detail, comparing the data to previous studies, and utilizing them to draft our strategic plan for the next five years. We will also work closely with our partners to continue working together to keep Idaho's rangeland – well, rangeland!

Darcy Helmick, *IRRC Board Chair*

## **Idaho Rangeland Livestock Symposium coming up Jan. 11, 2022**

The University of Idaho Rangeland Center and University of Idaho Extension will be hosting a virtual symposium on Jan. 11, 2022, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The symposium will feature a number of excellent speakers talking about different aspects of coping with drought and water shortages, as well as wildfires, range management and market issues.

There also will be plant identification contest at lunchtime with prizes for the winners. IRRC is a long-time partner of IRLS.

Please watch for more details on the IRRC event page.  
[idrange.org/events/](http://idrange.org/events/)

# Introducing our Board Members



## Jerald Raymond – Menan Rancher

Jerald Raymond is a fourth generation rancher in Eastern Idaho.

Jerald was born in Rigby and raised in Menan. He's a graduate of Rigby High School and attended Ricks College. He's actively involved in all aspects of the livestock industry - artificial insemination (AI), embryo transfer, cow-calf management, and feedlot sectors of the livestock industry.

Jerald received a livestock industry service award from Ricks College. He's past president of the Idaho Cattle Association, a former Jefferson County Commissioner, and a former member of the Idaho House of Representatives. He's also engaged in local civic and church activities.

Jerald has been married to Cheri for 44 years; they have six children and 24 grandchildren.



## John Peavey – Carey Rancher

John Peavey is a lifelong rancher and former State Senator from Carey. He served in the Idaho Senate from 1969 to 1976 as a Republican and from 1978 to 1994 as a Democrat.

From a young age, Peavey worked on the ranch founded by his grandfather, U.S. Senator John W. Thomas.

The Peaveys have a cow-calf operation at the Flat Top Ranch, now run by John's son, Tom, and a sheep operation, run by his grandson, Cory Peavey. John has three children. He's been married to Diane Josephy Peavey for more than 30 years. John and Diane started the Trailing of the Sheep Festival 25 years ago, an event that has been ranked as one of the Top 10 Fall Festivals in the United States.



## Dawn Holmes – Indian Valley Rancher

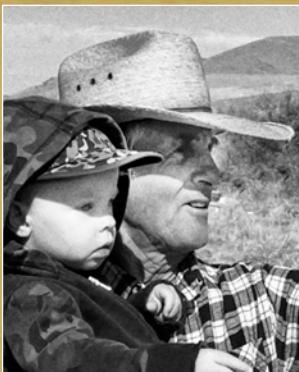
Born into a family with farming, dairy cattle, and livestock on both sides, after moving as a young child, I grew up and graduated in 1982 from Meridian, Idaho when there was only one high school there. After graduating from the University of Idaho in 1986 and 1987 with degrees in Animal Science and Agricultural Education, I went to work for the ASCS, now called FSA, the Farm Service Agency in Council, Idaho.

I met and married my husband who ranned with his family in Indian Valley. After having our first child, I became a teacher in Council and taught agriculture and other subjects for more than 20 years. Now, RJ, who was that child, and I own that beautiful ranch we call home.



Photo: Michael Edminster

## Board Members, continued



### Merrill Beyeler – Leadore Rancher

A graduate of Boise State University, Merrill has been a teacher, coach and rancher, based out of Leadore, Idaho.

Today Merrill and Sharal with their three sons and their families own and operate Beyeler Ranches LLC, a cow-calf and yearling operation. The ranch runs 800 head of Angus cattle on 4,800 acres of private lands, and on 30,000 acres of state and federal public lands administered by the BLM and Forest Service. Five generations of Beyelers have called the Lemhi Valley home.

Merrill is a founding member of the Central Idaho Rangeland Network and an advisory board member for the University of Idaho's Rangelands Center and Rinker Rock Creek project. Merrill is a former state legislator.

In 2013, Beyeler Ranches received the BLM's National Rangeland Environmental Stewardship Award, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's award for Significant Contribution in Support of the Pacific Coast Marine Fisheries Resources. In 2015 Merrill received the Idaho's Governor's award for Excellence in Agriculture for Environmental Stewardship.

## Good Shepherd Monument unveiled for 25th anniversary of the Trailing of the Sheep Festival

The Trailing of the Sheep Cultural Heritage Center, Inc., is pleased to present the sheep industry and the Wood River Valley community and beyond with The Good Shepherd Monument. The display, by sculptor Danny D. Edwards of Danny Edwards Bronzes, includes 11 life-sized bronze sculptures featuring eight sheep, a sheepherder, horse and dog. It has been installed on the landscape strip at Roberta McKercher Park facing Highway 75 in Hailey.

This monument is a lasting tribute to the sheep ranchers, producers, herders and the generations of families and communities who support them. Bronze sculptures were chosen for their long-life and beauty for all to enjoy for many years to come. This project is our gift to the community, the industry and a tribute to its 150+ years of history in the Wood River Valley.

IRRC has been a long-standing supporter of the Trailing of the Sheep Festival since it started 25 years ago. Carey rancher John Peavey, who founded the festival with his wife, Diane Josephy Peavey, serves on the IRRC board of directors. IRRC also contributed to the bronze sculptures.

*"We have been so fortunate to benefit from the partnership, collaboration and generosity of IRRC over the life of the Trailing of the Sheep Festival. We are especially grateful that they chose to support The Good Shepherd monument as it represents a commitment to this special gift for the community, the sheep industry and all of the ranchers and their families from the past, present and into the future,"* shared Laura Musbach Drake, Executive Director of the Festival.

For the 25th anniversary event, the goals and objectives remain the same - preserving the stories and history of sheep ranchers and herders, celebrating the rich cultures of the past and present, and entertaining and educating all about the production of food and fiber that have sustained local economies for generations. The Festival is a unique, extended weekend that celebrates the culture, folk and traditional arts and history of Idaho's sheep ranching families highlighting the principal contributors - the Basques, Scottish and Peruvians.

Thank you to everyone who makes the Trailing of the Sheep Festival possible every year. It's important to remind everyone in the Wood River Valley and beyond about their history and heritage.

# Education Update

Dr. Karen Launchbaugh teaching Coeur d'Alene kids about Sage Grouse and livestock connections



The world of education was forced to reimagine and reevaluate many things that were often taken for granted in the past year and a half. Students are mostly back in the classroom, but things are different. Field trips are difficult due to lack of bus drivers and substitute teachers. Educational leaders and teachers continue to meet virtually. Many are tired and frustrated by this while others are finding ways to expand their learning opportunities in the digital world.

The IRRC partnered with Idaho Ag in the Classroom and Idaho Project Learning Tree to continue offering virtual courses this year called "Idaho Natural Resources." This "sampler" of curriculum and online materials allowed teachers from all parts of Idaho to come together learn and share how they will incorporate the lessons into their classrooms. The benefit of these courses is to reach many teachers who are not able to participate in person or travel to workshops.

The I-ROAM educational trailer and four I-ROAM tents are now available statewide to bring rangeland education to Idaho students. I-ROAM ambassadors traveled to Rigby, Coeur d'Alene, Soda Springs, and many places in between.

FFA student, Linzy Christensen, led Rigby 3rd graders through the I-ROAM tent



Dr. April Hulet leads teachers through I-ROAM lessons during the annual Weiser workshop

In October, the state FFA Rangeland Career Development Event (CDE) was hosted in Homedale. This event had one of the largest turnouts with 18 teams from all over Idaho competing on a windy hillside in Owyhee County. The top five teams will travel to Oregon in November for the Western National Rangeland CDE to compete against teams from Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho.

More exciting news—the IRRC is now co-hosting two AmeriCorps positions through the University of Idaho 4-H STEM program. A part-time position is held by Lindzy Christensen, former Rigby FFA member in the picture above, is now attending College of Southern Idaho. Tashina Bennett is full-time out of the Burley area. She grew up in Blackfoot and has an animal science degree from Kansas State University. This grant-funded partnership pays a stipend to the members and financial support for continuing education. These two positions along with other contracted ambassadors are available to bring the I-ROAM educational experience to students in all parts of Idaho.

Contact IRRC for more information and to get your school or event on the I-ROAM schedule.

Gretchen Hyde, *IRRC Executive Director*



FFA Rangeland Career Development Event



# Life on the Range – special focus on Recreation/Access issues

We've all seen a rapid increase in outdoor recreation use in the last two years, and perhaps some of you have witnessed "bad behavior" incidents that followed that uptick in use such as littering, trespassing, improper disposal of human waste, irresponsible OHV use, and human-caused wildfires.

Officials with the BLM, Forest Service, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and IRRC all have been worried about what we've been seeing and wondering if this is going to be the "new normal?"

In hopes of providing more information and education about those basic outdoor issues, IRRC partnered with the Boise National Forest to produce three videos to complement public outreach work being done by the 2021 Recreate Responsibly Idaho campaign.

Our first story focused on Range Tips for Recreationists – things like packing out your litter, how to open and close livestock gates, why it's important to open and close gates, showing respect for livestock facilities such as water troughs, corrals (don't camp in corrals!), what to do if you encounter livestock on the road or on the trail, and showing respect for all users of public lands.

We interviewed responsible recreation users and ranchers to explain what people should do, which seems more effective than agency officials telling everyone what to do.

All of those reminders fit nicely under the Care/Share theme that's been promoted by IRRC for years. "Many people who recreate on the Boise National Forest on a regular basis understand that they need to care for the resource and share it respectfully with others for generations to come," our story said.

"That's our beautiful forest. It's inescapably important to keep it clean and nice," said Nate Dallolio, who we met at the Bender has been riding motorbikes in the Boise National Forest for many years.

We want to thank ranchers Jeff Lord, Charlie Lyons and Clay Davison for helping us out with these stories.



Our second story featured anglers and ranchers working together in the popular South Fork Boise River corridor in terms of when cattle graze there in the month of May (early season), and how Davison and his crew push cows out of the camping areas on weekends to reduce conflicts. Michael Gibson of Trout Unlimited explained

what anglers should expect when they go to the South Fork and to be respectful to other users, including livestock.

Davison also worked with the Boise National Forest to install a new user-friendly gate near the Danskin boat ramp that makes it easier for anglers to access the river and prevent cattle from going in that area.

Our third story detailed many of the bad behavior issues going on with campers and anglers in the South Fork Boise River corridor, issues that we're seeing statewide. The story focused on the positive, providing proactive tips on how to do the right thing.

In our fourth story on the recreation/access theme, we partnered with the Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership to do a story/video about "Know where to go – before you go," a piece that provides many tips on trip-planning and how to negotiate areas with mixed land ownership.

All of those stories were shared on the Recreate Responsibly Idaho web site, [recreate.idaho.gov](http://recreate.idaho.gov), which should increase visibility and help reach a broader recreation audience than we might reach on Life on the Range. The Idaho Department of Commerce has been spending about \$300,000 on paid media to drive traffic to the RRI web site.

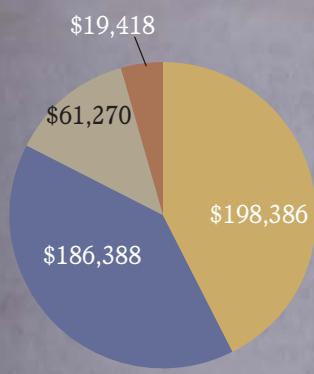
This fall, the LOTR crew has been working on a documentary about the new multi-agency Cheatgrass Challenge initiative. In the spring, we're planning a 10-year anniversary story about the importance and value of Rangeland Fire Protection Associations across Southern Idaho.

To see our stories, go to [idrange.org/life-on-the-range](http://idrange.org/life-on-the-range). Thanks for watching and please share with your friends!

Steve Stuebner, writer and producer of *Life on the Range*.



Total Funding \$465,462



- █ Assessments
- █ Grants
- █ License Plate
- █ Other



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## IRRC Board and Advisory Members

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

### IRRC Board Members

- Darcy Helmick, Chair**  
Grand View, Idaho  
**Jerald Raymond, Vice Chair**  
Menan, Idaho  
**John Peavey**  
Carey, Idaho  
**Dawn Holmes**  
Indian Valley, Idaho  
**Merrill Beyeler**  
Leadore, Idaho

### IRRC Advisory Non-Voting Members

- BLM Idaho State Director*  
*Idaho Fish and Game Director*  
*Idaho Department of Lands Director*  
*Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director*  
*Office of Species Conservation Director*

- Natural Resource Conservation Service, Idaho State Conservationist*  
*US Fish and Wildlife 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*

## IRRC Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Finances

The IRRC appreciates every dollar contributed by ranchers, landowners, and partners. The IRRC is audited annually and presents the financial statements to the germane legislative committees. Grants and assistance agreements augment the IRRC budget. IRRC supports the Life on the Range outreach program, underwrites with proactive messages about rangeland and ranching on NPR in Boise and Pocatello and is active on social media. Local grant projects are funded by IRRC and are available for 2022 as well.

The education, public relations, and research programs would not be possible without the support of the ranching community. The “On the Range” license plate is another source of funding which goes directly into the educational campaigns.

### Care/Share Campaign Continues

As Idaho's population increases so does recreation on rangeland. The IRRC's Care/ Share campaign is designed to minimize conflicts between livestock producers and

recreational users. IRRC provides educational signage to ranchers and land managers for point of contact education. Order signs on the IRRC website ([idrange.org/ranchers](http://idrange.org/ranchers)) or emailing Gretchen Hyde at [ghyde@idrange.org](mailto:ghyde@idrange.org).

