

# IMPACT



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## Developing the Nancy M Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center to Serve Idaho

### *The Situation*

The Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center (NMCREEC) is a gift-in-progress from the Auen Foundation of southern California. The Center is unique in the University of Idaho system. It fills a gap in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences' (CALs) ability to conduct research and extension programs in pasture management and beef cattle production at the "ranch scale." In addition, there are opportunities for educational and research projects in wildlife and environmental sciences.

The Auen Foundation gift is composed of 1,100 acres. It lies at the north end of the Big Flat (about 6 miles north of Salmon), nestled under the Continental Divide. At the dedication celebration in August, the Foundation increased the gift from 925 to 1,100 acres. Out of 1,100 acres, about 750 acres are in 32 fields. The balance is in farmsteads, ponds, roads, and ditches. At the time that CALs assumed operation of the station, most of the fences had been removed to facilitate haying operations.

The current holding has been a dairy, sheep farm, purebred Hereford operation, hay ranch and cattle ranch at different times. It is composed of at least 3 smaller farms. The Corps of Discovery must have crossed the NMCREEC on their way to the Pacific Ocean. The white cliffs at the north end of the Center are described in the journals. The last commercial operation of the facility was by the Auen Foundation, as a hay farm. The Center's name arises from the wish to honor the memory of Mrs.

Auen's mother, Nancy M. Cummings. The Center is irrigated with Salmon River water through the Big Flat Ditch Company. The facility was originally flood irrigated, but was converted to sprinkler irrigation by the Auen Foundation. Two 60 HP and two 75 HP pumps pressurize 4 mainlines. The Center has upgraded 5 wheel lines and 32 hand lines to one pivot and 22 wheel lines, with an assortment of hand lines to cover the corners of irregularly shaped fields. The water table varies from less than 1 foot to over 50 feet.



### *Our Response*

The Center is being converted to a cow-calf operation used to investigate beef cattle and irrigated pasture management. The conversion process involved the donation of cattle, herd building, redevelopment of the fencing system, upgrading the irrigation system and the construction of a new shop-classroom facility.

Over 100 head of beef cattle have been donated by Idaho livestock operators. The artificial insemination breeding program has provided additional high quality animals. In the spring of 2006, the Center will calve 270 cows.

A new shop and classroom facility was completed in the summer of 2006 and hosted the dedication celebration in early August. Completion of the classroom facility enables the station to host classes and retreats. Abundant wildlife, existence of invasive plant species, and other resource features provide a potential to investigate and demonstrate a variety of agricultural, environmental and community development issues.

## ***Program Outcomes***

The NMCREEC is hosting activities while in development, including the Lost Rivers Grazing Academy (LRGA) and beef cattle research.

Current activities include:

### *Research*

- Synchronization of beef cattle for timed breeding
- Ultrasound early detection of carcass quality in beef cattle
- Electronic identification of beef cattle
- Survey of bovine disease reservoir
- Genetics of residual feed intake
- Alfalfa Variety Trials
- Pasture Materials Trial
- Summer Calving to Reduce Costs and Stress

### *Extension*

- Lost River Grazing Academy
- Pasture weaning of beef cattle to reduce stress and disease
- BEHAVE Training the Trainer Workshop
- Lemhi County Master Gardener Program

### *Education*

- Salmon Junior High School Science Days
- University of Idaho Internships
- Japanese's Agricultural Training Program

One project on investigation of goats to manage noxious weeds has provided a local cattle operator with two new businesses. Alumni of the LRGA report improved pasture harvesting efficiency, and one alumnus credits the program with keeping him in business.

## **The Future**

Future projects on elk depredation, early life determination of carcass quality, and the demonstration of fencing, watering and irrigation systems are anticipated. Potential upgrades to the facility include a pasture livestock watering system, new livestock facilities, small feedlot and conversion of existing headquarters facilities to academic and administrative offices.

## **Thanks**

The Center would like to recognize the contribution of the members of the production advisory committee. This group works with the Center management and volunteers their time and expertise in development of a new research, extension and education center in trying economic times. The Center would also like to thank beef cattle producers of the state of Idaho that donated cattle, expertise and machinery to help bring the station to "full capacity." The contributions of the many volunteers that assisted with the Youth Education Days (especially Darlene Wolfe, Shannon Williams and Jeannie Withers, who organized the volunteers and made the program possible), have been invaluable.

The University and College of Agricultural and Life Sciences would like to express thanks to the Auen Foundation for their generous gift of the property, and monetary support to upgrade the infrastructure of the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center. Without the Foundation's vision and support the NMCREEC would not have been possible.

## ***For More Information***

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