

# MONTANA STOCKGROWERS ASSOCIATION

# ANNUAL CONVENTION and Trade Show

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

### PRESIDENT



#### **Jim Steinbeisser, Sidney**

**Industry Involvement:** Jim Steinbeisser currently serves in the role of 1st Vice President of Montana Stockgrowers Association. He was elected to the position in 2018. He previously served as a Director representing the Northeast District.

Steinbeisser, along with his two brothers and one cousin, owns and operates VS Inc., a diversified farm raising several cash crops, feed for their feedlot, and wintering their cows. His father and uncle still participate on this family operation. The ranch where Steinbeisser lives is west of Sidney, while the farm and feedlot are located south of Sidney. Steinbeisser has been involved with the family operation full-time for 30 years. Steinbeisser and his wife, May Ann, have three children: Corbin, Liam, and Claire.

**Leadership Service:** He previously chaired NCBA's Information Committee and Issues Management Subcommittee. Steinbeisser served as president of the Montana Beef Council in 2010 and 2011. He was a director of the Montana Farm Bureau from 1990 to 1996, president of Mondak Stockgrowers from 2007 to 2010, past president of Richland County Farm Bureau, and president of Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Ag in 2002 and 2003. Steinbeisser is also the past president of Sidney FFA Alumni, past member of St. Matthew's Finance Council, and current director of the Foundation for Community Care.

### 1ST VICE PRESIDENT



#### **John Grande, Martinsdale**

**Industry Involvement:** John Grande currently serves in the role of 2nd Vice President of Montana Stockgrowers Association. He was elected to the position in 2018.

**Leadership Service:** He previously served as the chair of the Montana Stockgrowers Foundation.

### 2ND VICE PRESIDENT



#### **Lesley Robinson, Dodson**

**Industry Involvement:** Lesley is a fourth generation Phillips County rancher. She and her husband Jim have been married for 35 years and ranch near Zortman. They have a commercial cow/calf and yearling operation, and both she and Jim have ranched their entire lives. The family-run ranch has been in the Robinson family since moving from the Miles City area in 1958. Their daughter Kirsty and her husband John own and operate a ranch near Riverton, Wyoming.

**Leadership Service:** Lesley has served as president of the Phillips County Livestock Association and Phillips County CattleWomen, was on the MSGA Board from 1996-2000, served on the Montana Beef Council and as Education Committee chair, and was on the MSGA Foundation Board for 8 years. Other leadership positions include the Phillco Economic Growth Council Executive Board, Bear Paw Development Executive Board, Phillips Transit Authority Board Chair, State Director for Congressman Greg Gianforte, Montana Board of Dentistry, Joint Powers Trust Board Executive Committee, Montana Assn. of Counties Public Lands Committee Chair, National Assn. of Counties Executive Board Western Region Representative, Nat'l Assn. of Counties Public Lands Committee, and Western Interstate Region Board President.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** "The challenges in the beef industry somewhat change but we seem to continue facing similar challenges that the generations before us also faced. Marketing our products and increasing demand is always a challenge, including ensuring we receive prices that are equitable.

"We continually have outside threats to our livelihoods that we have to find ways to minimize or neutralize. I'm from Phillips County so I could list several examples of this. Our ranch is checkerboarded with public lands. My first trip to DC in 1996 was

## Lesley Robinson, Dodson Continued..

with the Montana Public Lands Council. We visited congressional offices and told them our story to try to lessen the impacts to public lands grazers that were being proposed by that administration. These issues come and go based on the views of each current administration. "It is important to stay informed and involved in all aspects of our industry. Meeting with and getting to know the people that we work with on all levels is very crucial to being successful. Building respectful relationships on the local, state and federal levels are imperative. I'm not saying that you have to agree but respectfully disagreeing goes a long way. Our ancestors braved the obstacles put before them and I feel if we stick together we will continue to brave the storms in our industry."

## WESTERN DISTRICT



**Bob Sitz, Harrison**

## SOUTHEAST DISTRICT



**Monty Lesh, Miles City**

**Industry Involvement:** Monty and his son Wyatt run a commercial Angus herd, branding 300-500 heifers and running 300-500 head of grass cattle. He has been involved with cattle most of his life as a cow/calf and yearling operator, as well as doing backgrounding and finishing. His wife Sherry and other kids Megan, Katie, and Shayla have also been involved over the years. In addition, Monty owns Lesh & Company LLC, a real estate brokerage that handles ranch, farm, commercial and residential properties, and Frontier Consulting LLC that provides financial consulting, marketing and ranch management strategies for ag producers.

**Leadership Service:** For 21 years Monty was an ag/commercial lender and bank president in Montana and North Dakota. He has served as chair of Holy Rosary Healthcare, chair of the Miles City Housing Authority, Montana History Foundation board member, MSU MAES Advisory Board member, and has been involved in various chambers of commerce and service clubs.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** "Private property rights, water rights, environmental regulations and restrictions, and international trade."

## SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

### Rusty Ellis, Red Lodge

**Industry Involvement:** Rusty was born and raised in a family ranch operation. It is a commercial cow/calf, stocker/backgrounder operation. He and his wife Cheri have three grown children: Alvin IV, Nichole and Jacob.

**Leadership Service:** He has served as director and past president of the Beartooth Stockgrowers, was president of the Animal Science Club, President of the Rod and Gun Club, and served on the Luther School Board.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** "Labor, market consolidation, and the cost of entry into the business."



**Dusty Hahn, Townsend**

**Industry Involvement:** Hahn Ranch is a diversified, family-owned agricultural corporation that has been in business 112 years in Broadwater County. Hahn Ranch strives for high volume, highly efficient livestock and crop production. A cow/calf ranch, irrigated farm, small feedlot enterprise, and a trucking company comprise the core of the company's business. There are currently three generations living on the ranch, two of which are actively involved in operating and growing the business. Dusty serves as an "operations manager," and works hands-on with all aspects of the company. He also oversees seasonal employees and focuses on effectively organizing operations.

**Leadership Service:** Dusty is an advisory committee member for Broadwater Co. Extension Service's Rancher Roundtable program, served as vice chair and chair of MSGA's Water Subcommittee, and has been trustee, vice chair and chair of the Montana Stockgrowers Foundation. He was a delegate to the NCBA Young Cattlemen's Conference, and participated in the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management Excellence in Ag leadership program.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** The biggest challenge to the beef industry in the next ten years revolves around the same challenge we have faced for the last 100 years: politics. As agriculturalists, we have a very keen focus on the physical and economic forces and influences that pressure our business. However, we do not always focus on or have a good grasp of the influence that politics play in our lives and our industry. The beef industry needs great leaders to navigate through the pitfalls of complex issues, opposing viewpoints, and unfavorable legislation. Leaders in the beef industry will be at the forefront of negotiating favorable policy at the local, state, federal, and international level. They must be the face and the voice of those they are representing. I believe most agriculturalists would rather stay in the country and do what they do best: produce. However, leaders must step forward and represent these interests.

We all recognize the successful marketing campaign, "Beef... it's what's for dinner." When speaking about politics, this saying is often used: "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." So it is imperative that we, as leaders, are involved in the political process to make sure that we have a seat at the table, and it's beef that's for dinner, not beef producers.

## **Brent Sinnema, Manhattan**

**Industry Involvement:** Brent has been involved with the ranch his whole life. His dad split the ranch from his brother-in-law in 1980 and they worked together until 2004 when he died of cancer. They farm about 1000 acres of crop land each year which includes hayland. About 1/3 of their acres are irrigated, the balance being dry land. They have 250 mother cows that summer on National Forest. His wife Kim is a great support and encouragement, but she was not raised on a ranch and she won't be baling hay anytime soon. Brent has four children: Reuben, Caleb, Joshua and Jabin. Currently he works with his son Caleb and they try to keep ahead of all the work that the place requires. Jabin helps when he is not in school which seems to be more lately.

**Leadership Service:** Brent has served as a director for the Gallatin Co. Beef Producers for 6 years and was president for 3 years (2005-2014). He's served on the Custer Gallatin Working group for about the last 4 years. He has also served on the church board for three 3-year terms and served four years on the Manhattan Christian School admissions committee.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** "I believe that we need to keep our businesses running in the black fiscally amid political, economic, and environmental pressures. Tell our story, that we do care about the land our water and our livestock. This story is not fictional but biological in nature. We are defined by our work and must defend our lifestyle. We are food producers and we take that seriously. During the last few months I have had more inquiries about purchasing beef than ever before but no volume for processing to meet this demand. 'We cannot see around the corner, but we should try to prepare for whatever is coming,' said Wyl E Coyote."

## **NORTHEAST DISTRICT**

### **Perri Jacobs, Malta**

**Industry Involvement:** Perri is the fourth generation of a family-owned and operated commercial cow/calf enterprise located in South Phillips County. They graze cattle on private land with associated BLM allotments. They are bordered on the south by the CMR National Wildlife Refuge and on the north by the American Prairie Reserve. They have farm ground they recently leased to a beginning organic farmer, which has allowed them to concentrate on their cattle business. They employ one full-time person, but otherwise it is Perri and her husband Lee who work together to sustain and grow their 100-plus year-old family ranch.

**Leadership Service:** She is a member and past president of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** One important issue facing ranchers is generational transfer. Whether that is to the next generation or finding that young producer when there is no next generation. We need to continue to work to foster, mentor, and engage our young producers and minimize the barriers so they are successful now and forever. Communicating to producers the variety of tools that are available to assist them during this transition is important. Encouraging them to use the tools is the challenge. Thoughtful succession planning requires significant time and effort. The lack of a thoughtful plan can cause fewer and fewer young producers to enter the business. Consequently, the ownership of land becomes concentrated into fewer and older hands where the lack of a transition plan can cause this land to end up in the hands of a non-agricultural entity.

Another issue is the need to market beef as born, raised and processed in the USA and better yet in Montana. Covid-19 has provided us with a tremendous opportunity to work within our industry and with partners to significantly increase our processing abilities for small scale operations. I think we can all agree that we have seen an increase in the desire, right here in Montana, for the consumer to know the origin their beef. They desire a quality product which we are very capable of delivering, but can we get it processed? We need to work to develop not only the processing business but working within the Montana education system to develop the vocational training necessary to supply those processors with quality, trained employees.

Market volatility is an ongoing issue with no clear answers. Many of us remember the recent high markets of 5-6 years ago and scratch our heads at the good ol' days. That is certainly not where we are today. I certainly don't have the single best solution. However, it behooves us as individuals and members of MSGA to work with partners inside and outside the industry plus our legislators, locally and nationally, to develop policies, legislation, regulations, etc. to minimize the volatility that exasperates us today.



### **Lon Reukauf, Terry**

**Industry Involvement:** Lon's grandparents homesteaded near his ranch in 1910 and raised eleven children. His parents began the current operation in 1958, and he helped manage the ranch throughout his life except during college at MSU-Bozeman, where he earned an Agriculture Production degree. He and his wife Vicki returned to the ranch in 1982 and helped grow the ranch roughly six times as large as it was originally. They have a son Thane and daughter Dr. Lynze Franko. Along with their son and daughter-in-law, they run mostly a cow-calf operation consisting of Black Angus-cross cattle. They keep replacement females with some AI and have retained ownership of calves and finish them in custom lots. They also purchase feeders to finish. Lon has 38 years of commodity futures trading experience. Their ranch has been a long-time Fish, Wildlife and Parks Block Management participant. They have implemented an extensive rotational grazing system with numerous proactive conservation methods and were the 2016 State and Region V Environmental Stewardship Award winner.

**Leadership Service:** Lon has served as director of the Southeastern Montana Livestock Assn., served on the Prairie County Weed Board, was a Montana Range Days speaker, an Environmental Stewardship Ranch Tour host, and has been president, secretary and director of the Terry Roping Club. He was a founding steering committee member and chair of the Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, served as representative for several counties on the Big Dry/Powder River Resource Area BLM Management Plan, and was chair of Montana Young Stockgrowers. He is a member of the National Public Lands Council.

Lon is current chairman of the Prairie County Land Planning Board, founding member of the Prairie County Predator Board, Past Master and current Secretary of Terry Masonic Lodge #74, and past Elder and current Deacon of Terry Community Presbyterian Church.

**Challenges facing the beef industry:** There is a bottleneck at the beef processing phase of our industry that creates a huge

## **Lon Reukauf, Terry Continued..**

farm to retail spread in prices. We need more ranch-direct sales to consumers as capitalism does not work without competition. I'm a vigorous supporter of the beef check off because continuing investment in product development and promoting the image of beef is extremely necessary for our future. Environmental regulations such as governmental climate change policy may be an opportunity or a complete disaster so we must be wary. The next few years, the biggest challenge for our ranch will be grasshoppers.

# **HOW TO VOTE**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION**

Voting is simple and secure, follow these three easy steps:

1. Type in the secure link from the letter you received from MSGA into your web browser, to launch the voting website. You will have also received an email with this same information.
2. Enter your Voter ID and Voter Key to **Login to Vote**.
3. Select your preferred candidates and then click on **Submit to Vote**.

Votes must be placed by **Friday, November 13, 2020** to vote for officer candidates and candidates in your district. You may only vote once.

Thank you for your participation in this election and the support of Montana Stockgrowers Association!

Any questions can be directed to the MSGA office at 406-442-3420.

