



FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE AMERICAN WEST

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The Farm & Ranch Recreation Resource Center

Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Agriculture to Energize the Economic and Ecological

Viability of Family Farms and Ranches

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An Initiative of the

Cook Center for Sustainable Agriculture in the American West

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Vision

Family farms and ranches in the Northern Plains and Northern Rockies are economically viable, are enhancing the health of the land and open space, and are integral to sustainable rural economies and communities.

Family-scale farms and ranches are integral to the character, economy and quality of life of rural communities. The **Farm and Ranch Recreation Resource Center (FARRRC)** will enhance economic sustainability in **Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado.**

Mission

The FARRC's mission is to diversify revenue streams, through farm and ranch recreation, for families and individuals whose principal livelihood is derived from production agriculture. This may include land enhancement strategies that are inherently sustainable.

The **Farm and Ranch Recreation Resource Center (FARRRC)** will enhance the economic viability of family-scale farms and ranches in the region by creating supplemental revenue streams based on farm and ranch tourism. Success with this enterprise will help ensure the long-term viability of family-owned agricultural businesses, rural communities and a way of life that has provided much of the cultural and economic foundation of the character of this country. Following success of the regional model, **FARRRC** will grow into a national platform supporting an effective agritourism marketing system for farmers and ranchers throughout the country.

Overview

- **The Farm and Ranch Recreation Resource Center (FARRRC)** responds to the *economic imperative* that faces family-scale farmers and ranchers today. The macroeconomics of global-industrial agriculture threatens to overwhelm the viability of American family-scale operations.
- Marketing *recreation* as a landscape commodity, private landowners can position themselves cost-effectively to share lifestyle experiences and private-land open spaces with paying guests.
- *Marketing* is the greatest challenge facing family agritourism. How can the small-scale operation, alone, muster the marketing horsepower necessary to mobilize the vacationing public? Conversely, how can the urban traveler be assured of finding just the perfect fit with a family farm or ranch?
- **The Farm and Ranch Recreation Resource Center** will enhance market advantage and provide services for producers who offer recreation on their properties as a “landscape commodity” for economic diversification.
- Envisioned as a producer-owned, self-sustaining marketing association, the **FARRRC** will:
 - mobilize consumer demand by creating large-scale marketing horsepower;
 - structure a consumer-friendly linkage and reservation mechanism to enable the recreating public to access farm and ranch recreation providers;
 - supply technical assistance to member producers; and
 - develop strategies to resolve tough issues, such as liability insurance pooling.

Underlying Consumer Values

As the superficial allure of much of modern commercial culture wears thin, American and international urbanites want an enjoyable learning experience in America's rural heritage – and are willing to pay for it. Vacationers are attracted to agritourism because it offers them an opportunity for:

- Appreciating the agrarian heritage of our country.
- Experiencing authentic cross-cultural opportunities when traveling, on vacation, or recreating.
- Food literacy.
- Interacting with and observing wildlife, as well as farm and ranch animals.
- Having an outdoor, healthy, and active experience.
- Learning while recreating and having fun on vacation.
- Finding/rediscovering family roots.
- Helping the family farmer or rancher, both in work-related activities and financially.

Farm and Ranch Recreation activities include:

- Participate in farm and ranch operations, like branding, harvesting, cattle drives, etc.
- Horseback riding.
- Hiking, walking.
- Fishing.
- Upland bird or big game hunting.
- Wildlife viewing / habitat improvement.
- Conversations about rural living, growing food, future of agriculture, etc.
- Photography.
- Relaxation.

Development Strategy

- **The Cook Center for Sustainable Agriculture in the American West**, a Bozeman, Montana based not-for-profit organization, will design, develop and organize the framework for the **Farm & Ranch Recreation Resource Center**. Once established, the Center will spin off to become a separate and distinct entity, controlled and operated by its producer member-owners.
- The first two years of development and operation will be supported by outside funding. As soon as possible thereafter, the **FARRRC** will convert to a self-sufficient business enterprise, operating on a value-for-value basis of commissions, memberships, etc.

Institutional Functions

1. Marketing

- Ongoing market research
- Advancing the brand identity
- Website development
- Furthering the brand identity
- Marketing Initiatives: PR; Advertising, driving prospects to website
- Consumer education

2. Booking Structure

- Consumers will book their farm/ranch reservations through a web-based, user-friendly **FARRRC** linkage system.
- Rancher/farmer members will be inventoried and indexed in the system database.
- System will be modeled after existing models in South Africa, New Zealand, etc.

[Institutional Functions, continued]

3. Technical Support Program

- Assist producers wanting to get into agritourism business through multi-day training programs and on site consultations.
- Provide web-based support and training resources.

4. Quality Assurance Implementation and Monitoring Services

- Establish, maintain and update standards used in defining each classification category
- Research and characterize all member offerings within standardized classification categories.
- Monitor membership to ensure each are meeting/exceeding standards for the category in which they are operating.
- Classification scheme:
 - a. Overnight stay programs:
 - i. Homestead
 - ii. Pioneer
 - iii. Frontier
 - iv. Outpost
 - b. Day visitation programs:
 - i. The Schoolhouse
 - ii. The Harvest
 - iii. The Range Rider

[Institutional Functions, continued]

5. Networking

- **FARRRC** will maintain ongoing efforts to link, integrate and be a part of relevant components in:
 - a. Agriculture
 - b. Tourism
 - c. Education
 - d. The Health Food Business
 - e. American History

Need for market research

- Market characterization/exploration
- Market segmentation
 - a. identify target markets
 - b. what motivates each market
 - c. how to reach each market
 - d. market positioning
- Product design research for key segments

Branding for a National Identity

- Goal: Farm/ranch recreation will be an active consideration in every consumer's travel planning.
- Create an overlying marketing slogan like "Got Milk?;" "Beef: It's What's For Dinner;" "The Other White Meat."

[Branding for a National Identity, continued]

- Develop consumer awareness such that they “must” spend time on a real ranch or farm along with their other vacation activities, like sightseeing, fishing, National Parks, horseback riding, river rafting, hiking, wildlife viewing
- Create broad recognition that this is a national initiative – a national priority given the underlying values.
 - a. tying people to the land
 - b. communicating with people who work the land.

The Future

- Target: 2007-08.
- Based on successful implementation of seven state model – develop and pursue a National Initiative for Farm and Ranch Recreation.