



August 29, 2012

Quivira Coalition Clarence Burch Award  
Attn: Catherine Baca

Dear Catherine, Quivira Coalition staff and award judges,

I am writing to nominate Joe Morris for the 2012 Clarence Burch Award. Enclosed please find the nomination letter as well as three letters of recommendation from the following individuals:

Sallie Calhoun, Paicines Ranch  
Grey Hayes, Elkhorn Slough  
Steve Dorrance, Dorrance Ranches

Contact information for Joe Morris is as follows:

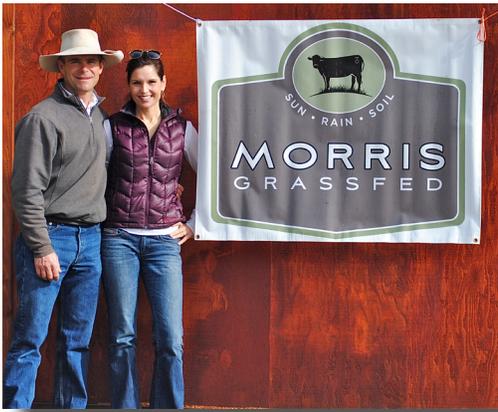
Morris Grassfed, aka T.O. Cattle Company  
500 Mission Vineyard Road  
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045  
info@morrisgrassfed.com  
(831) 623-2933

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information. Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RB", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Renata Brillinger, Executive Director  
California Climate and Agriculture Network  
PO Box 1366  
Sebastopol, CA 95473  
(707) 823-8278



## Nomination of Joe Morris for the Quivira Coalition Clarence Burch Award

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Joe Morris, with his wife Julie, has owned and operated Morris Grassfed Beef since 1991 when Joe took over the management of his grandparent's 200-acre ranch near San Juan Bautista, just south of San Jose, California. Today, they lease an additional 7,000 acres and run 250 cows to serve their grassfed beef direct marketing business, as well as approximately 1,800 stockers.

Joe comes from a lineage of ranchers stretching back five generations, the most recent of which was his grandfather who ranched into the 1980s. He is deeply influenced by the vaquero tradition that grew out of two complimentary influences — the indigenous skills of Native North Americans in using animals to take care of the land and the horsemanship of the Spanish settlers in California. The tradition emphasizes caring equally for the well being of the land, the animals and the people, recognizing their interdependence and its potential to produce beauty.

### **Innovative and sustainable methods**

Joe has been inspired and educated by ranchers, biologists and community builders from around the world including experts in holism, decision-making, business management, livestock and horses and consensus building. The primary common quality of those he has learned from is that they incorporate practices that produce peacefulness, harmony and thriving communities.

One of the specific methods he uses is holistic grazing planning, a practice he learned from Allan Savory. This has resulted in a widespread resurgence of native perennial grasses on his grasslands where he has seen a shift from European annual grasses to perennial bunch grasses and oaks as well as greater water holding capacity of his rangeland soils.

For the past 20 years, Joe has used holistic decision-making to steer the use of his ranching tools toward his vision of a thriving community. For example, he uses conventional fencing and water systems to manage large and dense herds of cattle and goats to mimic the grazing patterns that herds of herbivores used as they co-evolved with California's native grassland ecosystems over millennia. He has redesigned water systems that pipe water from where it collects in historic catchments on the land to the locations he needs it to support his herds. His use of fencing has allowed the watershed to thrive, allowing periodic but limited access to livestock so plant biodiversity is restored and maintained across the range, and particularly along creeks and wetlands. By intensively and adaptively managing water and grazing patterns, he gets higher rangeland utilization, maximal forage productivity, and enhanced ecosystem health.

Joe believes that the relationship between ranchers and livestock should be guided by thinking that produces actions that enhance the capacity of the land to support plants and ensure additional stores of soil organic matter, microbial activity and soil life. In this sense, the carbon cycle is the driving force, and its management ensures many co-benefits such as climate change mitigation, water retention and increased productivity.

### **Educational activities**

Joe has become something of a spokesperson in his region for the value of local food and the importance of understanding the connection between ranchers, their animals, the land and the broader community.

One of the most important vehicles for raising awareness about the role of livestock for maintaining healthy land is the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) aspect of the Morris Grassfed operation. The business currently serves about 800 members in the greater Bay Area and increasingly in Southern California. They also direct market their meat at seasonal farmers markets in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties. Joe views the direct marketing business as both an opportunity to educate consumers about their interconnections with ranchers and the ecosystems



that they steward, and also as an indicator and reflection of what the community needs, wants and will support in their food system. He sees the CSA as integral to the ranch's success and to the health and viability of their broader community. They use a [website](#), newsletter and Facebook page to communicate with members, and have produced several short educational videos (<http://www.morrisgrassfed.com/about/photos-video>).

Over the past decade, Joe has hosted perhaps two thousand people at the ranch, including researchers, students, conservationists, and people generally interested in food issues and food systems. For example, he hosted and gave a tour at the Spring 2011 annual meeting of the Central

Coast Rangeland Coalition (of which he is a founding member) attended by about 130 people, focused on rangeland management and the water cycle. Later in 2011, he hosted a workshop for approximately 75 people featuring Peter Donovan of the Soil Carbon Coalition to explore the impacts of Holistic Management on soil carbon sequestration.

Joe makes time for speaking at conferences and workshops such in January of 2012 at the EcoFarm Conference when he spoke at a workshop called "Healthy Land, Healthy Animals, Happy People". He has also offered a summer class on holistic decision-making, ranching and livestock handling for students from the California State Polytechnic University on his Watsonville ranch. Joe has also been featured in several newspaper and journal pieces including:

- Featured in the trailer for a new PBS series "[Food Forward!](#)"
- [Sustainable ranching renaissance takes hold in Northern California](#) (San Jose Mercury News, May 2012) — "In the process of raising our grass-fed beef, we're using the animals to create rangeland that sequesters carbon, holds more water, and generates biodiversity," Joe Morris says. "That's the essence of sustainability. We can't do it any other way."
- [Dry winter ropes ranchers](#) (Wall Street Journal, March 2012) — Quote from article: "Rancher Joe Morris, who is known within the local ranching community as an expert on sustainable grazing to prevent damaging grasslands...says ranchers 'are trying to come up with creative solutions for how to deal with fickle Mother Nature.'"
- [Local grassfed ranches take root: Making healthier choices for animals and people alike](#) (edible Monterey Bay, Spring 2012)
- [HM2 - Holistic Management Squared](#) (In Practice, a publication of the Savory Center, July/August 2004)
- [Profile of Joe Morris](#) (Fremontia, a publication of the California Native Plant Society, June 2004)

### **Use of the collaborative process in resolving land stewardship conflicts**

Joe has employed the collaborative process regularly in many aspects of his business and in his community. Two examples are provided here to illustrate the effectiveness of his skill and role in moving towards constructive land stewardship approaches.

In 2003 in San Benito County a ballot measure was introduced by a small group of community members with little familiarity with farming and ranching and a narrow and rigid perspective on land use. If passed, the measure would have rezoned agricultural land and negatively impacted the agricultural community, and it led to a heated debate between ranchers, farmers and political conservatives defending private property rights on one side and more traditional conservationists on the other. At Joe's initiative, Jeff Goebel was brought in to provide expertise in conflict resolution and consensus building. The outcome of the process, in addition to building trust among community stakeholders and diffusing the specific conflict, was a process that is ongoing to this day called Vision San Benito. The project encourages and facilitates participation of all residents in decisions that improve the community's quality of life using community meetings, social media and surveys to gather input from residents to help develop a comprehensive vision for San Benito County. (As a sidenote, Joe's wife Julie has since become the Executive Director of Vision San Benito, which was adopted by the Community Foundation for San Benito County who took responsibility for the project and provided funding.)

A different and more recent example of Joe's leadership in using the collaborative process took place in 2011 after a high rainfall year that produced abundant yellow starthistle, an invasive grassland species. A property owner neighboring some state park land that Joe grazes cattle on became concerned and agitated about the weed flush, and exerted pressure on both Joe and the state park to respond aggressively to combat the weed problem. Rather than react with heavy-handed weed suppression techniques, Joe and the park's resource ecologist used a collaborative process to come together, take stock of the situation and explore the best and worst outcomes of their management decision options. They established a set of positive goals (for example, improving biodiversity) to lead to the best outcomes and adjusted Joe's grazing strategy. Specifically, they enhanced the amount of litter covering the ground and negotiated a lease with a goat rancher to control the starthistle and generate some income. The neighbor has been reasonably appeased and the starthistle problem is under control.

### **Leadership in promoting and achieving ecological and economic health on working landscapes**

Joe was one of nine or ten ranchers, scientists and conservationists who founded the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition with the goal of improving their understanding of how to maximize rangeland health and production. His contribution has been mainly focused on providing consensus decision-making tools and using holistic goal setting to achieve desired outcomes. Since its inception in 2003, the group continues to convene regularly.



Joe and Julie Morris both serve as farmer advisors for the California Climate and Agriculture Network, a coalition that advocates for policies that provide resources for farming and ranching practices that provide climate and other environmental and health benefits.

Joe also provides consulting for others who want to implement a holistic approach to land stewardship and livestock cultivation — in which the ranch and environment are an interconnected whole — and he has inspired other ranchers to adopt holistic practices.

### **Implementation of new ideas in resource management projects**

Joe has negotiated several arrangements with public agencies such as state parks and wildlife refuges in which he receives reduced lease rates in exchange for grazing cattle to achieve resource management goals. In fact, half of the land Joe grazes is publicly owned, proving that he is able to not only operate an economically viable beef production business but also provide valuable ecosystems services. Joe has also used grazing as an alternative land management tool to burning, for example on land that had been purchased by a State Park motorcycle area. The Park had proposed to use fire to reduce the fuel load, but the neighbors to the area objected. In searching for a solution one of the neighbors and Joe proposed a grazing program that would reduce the fire danger while maintaining the beauty of the area. This proposal became the grazing program that is still in place today on the Park, eighteen years later.

Should Joe receive the Clarence Burch Award, he plans to invest it in two interrelated projects focused on more effectively using his cattle to manage the land for carbon sequestration, water infiltration and beauty, and on expanding his educational impact. He wants to increase the stock density of his herd to optimize the use of the tool of animal impact, but this requires additional labor, so he would like to start an intern program to cost-effectively add more labor and also to train young people in Holistic Management. In combination with increasing the stock density, Joe wants to expand his collaboration with Peter Donovan at the Soil Carbon Coalition by adding more soil carbon monitoring transects on his land. Finally, working with Peter Donovan and Jeff Goebel, he wants to continue raising awareness in the ranching community about the opportunities ranchers have to achieve multiple benefits from more effective management of their role in the carbon cycle.

*Grey Hayes, PhD*  
*Grassland Ecologist*  
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*(831) 728-8050*

Catherine Baca  
Education and Outreach Director  
Quivira Coalition  
via email: [cbaca@quiviracoalition.org](mailto:cbaca@quiviracoalition.org)

August 20, 2012

Dear Ms. Baca,

I am writing to offer my strong support for Joe Morris to receive the Clarence Burch Award offered by the Quivira Coalition. Joe is an outstanding example of everything that this reward seeks to recognize. In fact, he has been instrumental in founding and then leading a very successful group, the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition, which reflects the Quivira Coalition's model here on California's central coast. Through Joe's leadership and wisdom, the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition has grown to attracting at-capacity crowds to bi-annual meetings fostering the 'radical center' that Joe has introduced to the group. As a member of that group, and as a grassland researcher and conservationist, I am well qualified to attest to Joe's strong qualifications for this award.

I serve as Chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the Central Coast Rangelands Coalition; Joe serves with me on that committee. Together, we have designed bi-annual, day long programs that have demonstrated aspects sustainable rangeland management to hundreds of individuals over the past 8 years. Attendees include the diversity of people key to sustaining our rangelands including ranchers, land owners, government regulatory agency personnel, conservationists, scientists, educators, water managers, etc., etc. On occasion, these programs have featured Joe's exemplary work as a rangeland manager on the diverse and healthy rangelands he manages, but, more often, Joe has helped guide the agendas and processes for these meetings and has been an active participant, helping many to better understand the need to integrate economic, social, and ecological factors in sustaining rangelands here in California. Evaluations of these meetings suggest the tools that Joe has guided the group through have helped set the group apart and have been instrumental in building a cohesive, trusting community from what would otherwise be a more typical divisive, non-communicative culture.

As a grassland ecologist, I can attest to Joe's ecological stewardship of several disjunct, smaller, and difficult to manage parcels of high conservation value. Joe's superior and innovative rangeland stewardship is remarkable from any scale. From a satellite, the land Joe manages stands out as having more biomass in comparison to surrounding cattle-grazed lands; here in California, this biomass can serve to make livestock production more resilient and can also serve to protect the soil and watershed processes. Touring these sites, as I have done with hundreds of field trip participants, it is easy to notice the wealth of biological diversity that is largely otherwise missing on the surrounding lands. Even those less familiar with the wealth of California's species diversity notice the richness in species, the diversity in habitats, and the vibrancy of wildlife on this land that Joe manages. At the scientific research plot scale, using precise, long term measures, I have found Joe's management to conserve species and to maintain the cover of our native perennial grasses in contrast to others' management in these same rare ecosystems.

I have seen not only the ecological effects of Joe's work on the aforementioned properties, but also the social and economic effects of this work. These parcels span public and private ownership, and Joe must navigate a variety of variously informed owner's goals to achieve success. Joe has worked with all owners as an educator and as a collaborator, implementing new and innovative management regimes, lease arrangements, and approaches to collaboration.

In sum, I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award in California, and I am very active in the community that would feature such individuals. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss my recommendation.

Very Sincerely Yours,

Grey

August 27, 2012

Sallie Calhoun  
Paicines Ranch  
PO Box 8  
Paicines, CA 95043

Dear sirs:

I am writing this letter in support of the nomination of Joe Morris for the Burch Award. In my experience he meets the criteria listed for the award and is a fantastic example of the Radical Center. His work on behalf of the land he manages, the community, and the broader grassland ecosystem has been tireless, innovative, inspiring, and effective.

I first met Joe in 2001 shortly after purchasing a nearby ranch. I had read Alan Savory's book and was excited to meet a holistic management practitioner. I will never forget my first pasture walk with Joe, as I realized that perhaps it really was possible to have a significant positive impact on the landscape through the management of livestock. He was so articulate, thoughtful, and passionate, that it was an unforgettable experience.

In the eleven years since that first meeting, I have had many opportunities to see and work with Joe in a variety of situations. He is a patient consensus builder, known throughout the community for a strong commitment to positive change and a better community. Joe's work on the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition demonstrates his commitment to the broader grassland ecosystem. His efforts to connect ranchers, academics, and public land managers in productive ways have been tireless, and though I know he is often frustrated, the success of the CCRC shows that he has had a large impact in central California. He has taken on the task of managing public lands in a challenging environment and is always at meetings and training classes to participate and share his learning. He has consistently been out in front on planned grazing, holistic decision making, understanding carbon in ranching, consensus building, and other innovations that are important to land stewards.

Joe has served as inspiration to me as I made the gradual transition from living room suburban environmentalist to committed cattle rancher land steward, and I will forever appreciate his help and influence on my journey. I know that he has had a similar impact on countless others, whether they be land stewards, public land managers, or community residents. I wholeheartedly support this nomination.

Yours truly,

Sallie J. Calhoun

August 23, 2012

Catherine Baca  
Quivira Coalition

Dear Ms. Baca and award judges,

I have known Joe Morris for the last twenty plus years. I first knew him as a pocket knife packing cowboy that was looking to run some of his own cows. With lots of enthusiasm he embraced Holistic Management. I wondered why someone starting out would be so receptive to some new way of running cows. I come to find out I really did not know much about Joe Morris.

When I briefly describe Joe today, I say he is married to Julie, and they have two children. He works and lives close to his parents near San Juan Bautista California. He produces beef and goat meat. The land under his stewardship is a combination of family owned, private leases, and public leases. The landscape under his management is becoming more diverse in species. Joe's community is large and diverse as evidenced by the diversity of people that have experienced Joe on his ranchland as well at community visioning meetings. Joe is a great teacher, and has an easy way of facilitating learning.

Some years ago sitting through the visioning process for San Benito County, I was taken by Joe's ability to seek consensus amongst people coming to the table with what appeared to be highly different ideas of what San Benito County was to look like. The outcome was favorable to the participants with a high degree of agreement as to the future. My daughter participated in a recent visioning process at the urging of Joe. I was curious as to what she came away with. She said she learned the value of being heard as well as hearing other people. She said that when Joe was facilitating, he let the person speak without interruption. People were put at ease that they were going to be heard.

I remember a few years back Joe saying the following:

"No one can own all this land and that is probably a really good thing. There can be a challenge to all interested parties to continue to learn and approach this enterprise of caring for the land, of stewardship, with what I would call "a required humility." Now no one knows it all and no one ever will. With that humility we can assume that we may not have all the answers, and we may need to be open to other people's wisdom."

It appears that humility is a first step in learning by other's wisdom.

Joe has been instrumental in formation and continuation of the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition. Joe usually asks to tell a bit about yourself, something you expect to gain from being here today, and how you are feeling at the beginning of a meeting he is facilitating. By the time everyone has had a turn at speaking, everyone is on equal footing at the meeting and at ease. During the spring and fall meetings this has help foster dialog between the attendees from the scientific, academic, and ranching communities. A few weeks ago after a CCRC steering meeting for this organization Joe was pretty excited to show off a crop of dung beetles that had joined his community. His enthusiasm is what got us out there in the hot sun. It was a first time for some us seeing actual dung beetles. As we huddled around, Joe poking the cow pat with his pocket knife, dung beetles bubbling out (his words), I was glad in addition to all the other things Joe has done over the years, he is still that pocket knife packing cowboy I first met.

Steve Dorrance, Partner Dorrance Ranches, L.P.  
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