



Soil Carbon Cowboys

#1 in a series of

Climate Restoration Solutions

A partnership of the Moral Action on Climate
and Biodiversity for a Livable Climate

(see www.bio4climate.org/solutions for others)



Soil Carbon Cowboys is an inspiring video directed by Peter Byck and produced by the Arizona State University and the World Bank. It tells the story of three ranchers, Allen Williams from Mississippi, Gabe Brown from North Dakota, and Neil Dennis from Saskatchewan, Canada. Each was driven by failing economics to find a new way to raise cattle. By transitioning away from chemically-dependent monocropped fields and free range grazing and towards multispecies “cocktails” of grasses, legumes, and other herbaceous plants along with “mobbing” of their cattle through planned grazing, they have become economically successful and are experiencing a net increase of the organic matter in their soils year after year. Other benefits include better adsorption of rains and consequent ability to weather dry spells, more nutritious forage for their cattle, happier cows, and now their farming is low stress. They are modeling their management practices after Allan Savory’s system of Holistic Planned Grazing.

If more ranchers followed similar practices, pastures and rangelands could take CO₂ out of the atmosphere and use it to build up carbon in the soil. The potential is very large (see boxes below).

What needs to be done? More ranchers need to learn from the example of these three ranchers and many others around the world who are finding they can become economically viable, produce a better product, and stop depending on chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides.

What can you do? Help spread the word. If you eat meat, shift your purchases to grass-fed/grass-finished beef so that you will help support these ranchers.

Method	A: Typical rate of T/C acre sequestered	B: Potential worldwide application	C: Potential PPM sequestered per year	Difficulty & Action Needed
“Soil Carbon Cowboys” – raising cattle and other herbivores using Holistic Management on pastures	1 Ton / Carbon per acre per year	10 Billion Acres of Pastures	5 ppm/yr (1 TC/acre x 10 Billion acres = 10 BTC/yr = 5 ppm/yr)	Medium Actions: Change the paradigm and management of how we raise cattle, sheep, goats; educate ranchers; consumers support grass-fed/grass-finished meats



For further reading / viewing / action:

Watch Peter Byck's *Soil Carbon Cowboys* video: <https://vimeo.com/80518559>

Here is a discussion of the *Soil Carbon Cowboys* on the Grass-Fed Solutions website – learn more about the three ranchers featured in the video: <http://www.grass-fed-solutions.com/carbon.html>

Here is a March 3, 2015, *New York Times* article about Gabe Brown – “Farmers Put Down the Plow for More Productive Soil”: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/science/farmers-put-down-the-plow-for-more-productive-soil.html?_r=0

The Soil Carbon Coalition is a nonprofit organization working to advance the practice, and spread awareness of the opportunity, of turning atmospheric carbon into soil organic matter. <http://www.soilcarboncoalition.org/> (see their “Soil Carbon Challenge” and consider supporting their efforts)

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