

# The Echo-Chalk Creek Range Owners' Protective Association

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THE Echo-Chalk Creek Range Owners' Protective Association is an organization of landowners within a portion of Summit County in northern Utah. Association lands include the drainage of Chalk Creek, a part of the Echo Creek drainage and the drainages of several smaller canyons. The area includes approximately 350,000 acres, of which about 99 percent is privately owned, and about 99 percent is range land. The association is incorporated under the laws of the State of Utah, and is non-profit in nature.

The purposes and objectives of the Association are numerous but are primarily concerned with mutual assistance in the protection and preservation of our lands, livestock and improvements. We, as individuals, own these lands, we pay taxes on them, and depend upon them for our livelihood. The products of these range areas contribute materially to the well being of our communities, our county, our state and country. We feel that, in addition to our personal investment in our ranges, we also have the responsibility of preserving the productiveness of the lands and watersheds.

In the past, many of us have suffered costly damage to our property from trespassers. Some of the damage was done wilfully and some as a result of carelessness. At any rate, we feel that we can no longer suffer such damages. We have taken steps toward the prevention of abuse of our lands. We are working toward a better understanding between

ourselves and others who, on occasion, use our lands for one purpose or another.

The organization of our Association was the target of considerable criticism and comment from various individuals, mostly sportsmen, who accused us of throwing a "king size" monkey wrench into the big game problem and also of closing a huge area to hunting, for our personal gain. This was not the case, however, as many of these same people found out when they took the time to learn what the Association was trying to do.

Actually, instead of closing a large area to hunting, the Association opened thousands of acres of choice hunting grounds which formerly had been closed to hunting by the individual owners.

According to figures released by the Utah State Fish and Game Commission, a total of 4,804 sportsmen hunted in the Coalville Unit during the regular buck season of 1949. The Coalville Unit coincides almost exactly with the boundaries of our Association. This deluge of sportsmen represented one hunter for every 73 acres of land and that is a lot of hunters. These same hunters, according to the Fish and Game Commission, took a total of 3,358 bucks from our lands and that represents a lot of deer, too.

According to the law, the deer belong to the state. We landowners have only the privilege of feeding these deer for twelve months out of every year. None of us object to furnishing the feed for a

reasonable number of deer but we do object to the damages and troubles we have had during the "harvest" of the deer crop. Most of the troubles are caused, we are sure, by a relatively small percentage of the hunters. Most of the hunters are true gentlemen and they are our friends. It is from the minority that we need protection.

We have had many reported cases of theft of cattle and sheep. A number of our animals have been killed or injured on the range. Water troughs have been shot full of holes. Equipment has been stolen. Cabins have been looted and damaged. (Some uninvited overnight "guest" used the flooring of a cabin for firewood rather than walk 100 feet to the woodpile.) Our fences have been cut, and you know what happens to a good tight woven wire fence when it is cut. Trucks, automobiles and jeeps have traveled our private roads in wet weather and literally "plowed" them up. The resulting ruts often developed into nasty gullies. Several infestations of noxious weeds have definitely been traced to hay, grain, or bedding straw brought onto our ranges by hunters and campers. Some of these things may sound trivial, but they amount to quite a lot to us and, of course, we have had to foot the bill.

We do not blame all this damage onto the deer hunters. Much of it is done at other times of the year. The prevention of such damages and abuse is one of the objectives of our Association. We operate yearlong as guardians of our lands and not just during the hunting season. We have not closed our lands to the public. We do not deny the use of our lands to anyone who has good reason to use them. We do, however, want to know who is on our property and his reason for being there. We have issued trespassing permits for those people, including hunters, who

wish to use our lands. Sample copies of the bylaws of the Association, and of the deer tag used, are available on request.

The protection, posting, patrolling and regulation of trespass on our lands costs money. From our own pockets we financed the organization of the Association. For the operation expenses of the Association, we have assessed the hunters a small fee. When informed of the purpose of the fee, practically all of the hunters have paid it willingly and have expressed themselves as being in favor of such an organization. Although the figures are not complete as yet, it appears that we had just as many hunters out as usual in 1950, so neither the fee nor the regulations of our organization kept them from their sport. Not only is it true that we had the usual number of hunters, but we also had the "cleanest" hunt in years. Only a scattered few reports of damages from the 1950 hunt have come in from the landowners.

As mentioned before, one of the purposes of our Association is to preserve the productivity of our range lands. We are proud of the good conservation work which is being done by the members of the Association. Most of the ranchers in our locality are carrying on some sort of conservation work. Some have gone much farther than others, but it is encouraging to see the trends toward range improvement on these privately owned lands.

To date, more than a third of the land within the Association boundaries is covered by cooperative agreements with the local Soil Conservation District and complete range and water conservation plans are being carried out on these in helping them to develop similar conservation plans for their lands. The range owners are making use of the assistance rendered by the Soil Conservation Districts, the Production and Marketing

Administration, the Extension Service and other agencies.

Conservation plans already being applied provide for proper use of the range forage in order that feed production will be maintained at a high level at all times. The conservation plans also provide for the establishment of such supplemental range treatment as sagebrush clearing, range seeding, waterspreading, fencing, stockwater developments, stock trails, fire guards, etc.

During the past few years, members of our Association have, for example, reseeded over 7,000 acres of range. Practically all of this seeding was done with ordinary farm machinery. We don't have a lot of level country to seed but we are certainly proud of the forage we now have growing on our range lands.

The private range owner must bear most of the cost of range improvement himself and must do the work with his own equipment and resources. He does

his reseeding and other range improvement work only as fast as his time and his finances will permit. He may be slow, but he is working in the right direction and is doing a good job as he goes.

To sum things up, the Echo-Chalk Creek Range Owners' Protective Association has many functions. It is an organization of private range owners who have banded together for the good of all. We feel that we have an organization which will be of great benefit to ourselves, to the sportsmen, to the farmers who depend upon the waters from our ranges, to the businessmen and to the public in general. We are ready and willing to cooperate with any group or individual to further a better understanding of one another's problems for the benefit of all concerned.

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Utah Section of the American Society of Range Management, December 2, 1950.



#### BRIEFS

The greatest undeveloped territory lies under your hat.



Opportunities are seldom labeled.—John A. Shedd.