

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Editorial

A Continuing Appraisal of Range Management

PREVIOUS editorials in the Journal have assessed the progress made by the Society in its short span of years. These have been appraisals of past accomplishments and suggestions for future progress. The Journal, being the medium for expression from those who have a primary interest in range management, is also the proper place for an evaluation from time to time of progress in the composite discipline we call range management.

No complete appraisal can be made at any one period of time. Range management is dynamic and is becoming increasingly larger in scope. The writer in the pages of the Journal once attempted to define range management and was challenged by many readers, all of whom had varying definitions. This is just an indication that range management is a broad body of knowledge bound together by a common goal—management of wild lands for profit or greater use by society whatever that use may be. When knowledge assembled from studies of soils, plants, animals and climate is correlated with the economic and physical environment superimposed by man's activities we arrive at range management. We are, however, prone to forget that man's activities are becoming increasingly important in their effect on the management aspect of range management.

The body of knowledge which we call range management was set upon its course about 50 years ago. Certainly there must have been a

need for specific study and application of these studies to management of range or wild lands. A look at the record will disclose many important research findings which have resulted in improvement of soil and forage conditions by management. Of equal importance, perhaps, has been the development of understanding between the land user, the rancher, the Federal and state governments, the wildlife enthusiast, and the public generally. These relationships do not exist in perfect harmony but the foundation has been laid. For this the American Society of Range Management can assume some degree of responsibility.

Management of the range is the end product of research and rule of thumb techniques. To coordinate effort leading to "management", we must know, at least approximately so, what the management goal should be. Additionally, the conclusion may be reached that any management goal presently envisaged is but an intermediate step to a changing use or demand for the land.

Of recent years the range manager has given increased attention to the attitude of society regarding the use and management of uncultivated lands. In the last analysis the objectives of our society will dictate the goal for the management of range lands. The manager who analyzes the operation of economic processes has taken the initial step toward the establishment of a management goal. For

private lands the immediate goal will be an economic return. For public lands the return may be a measurable economic return or a return of tangible benefit to the public. These are primary goals which must be preceded by prior goals. Good range management must precede the goal of greatest use or return from the land.

We can look back a few years when domestic stock used at will most of the western lands. There seemed no need for a consideration of any other use—the Nation demanded meat, hides, and wool. Production of livestock was the goal of range management at that time. Since then range management has become of age and does not consist solely of managing lands for domestic livestock production. Producing livestock from native forage certainly is a most important aspect but it has been supplanted in many areas by other demands made on the lands.

It would appear that on much of the western lands the primary goal will be to produce plant cover and



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forage for livestock production. This will be so regardless of whether the land is in public or private ownership. Nevertheless some range lands will be managed for other than livestock production. In this instance these lands will probably be in some form of public ownership. This is not so because public ownership is the only desirable type of ownership but because the multiple use demanded of the land is best served by a combined holding.

Examples can be cited where state agencies are purchasing privately owned lands to provide more range for big game herds. This is not just a whim of responsible public officials. They are acting in response to an economic demand of the people for greater access to hunting and recreation, and for which the return may be greater than for other uses. This is a problem of the management aspect of range management. Or is it range management?

This writer is not attempting to make a case for any particular type of land ownership. The point to be made is that we have approached the time when applied effort in the field of range management can logically be separated into two or more distinct activities. The alliance will be close but the intermediate goals may vary. Initially we might separate range management into range science and land management. Range science would include and provide the basic physical information necessary to adequate management of wild lands. This field is too comprehen-

sive to detail at this time. Land management should be the activity that correlates the basic information and adapts it to management goals. Land management should also set the management goals from studies of the economic and social requirements of society for the land. It matters little whether the manager supervises lands in public or in private ownership. The primary economic use of the land will dictate the management goal. In addition, the physical aspects of the land will affect the economic use to a large extent although not wholly so.

The gap between basic research and practical application to achieve a management goal for land is much narrower today than a decade ago. Nevertheless management techniques and management planning have not progressed at the pace set by basic research. Now more than ever before there exists a need for individuals trained to manage wild lands using the available scientific and economic facts.

Range management, as taught in the colleges and universities, places emphasis on the biological and associated animal sciences. This training is basic, but for those individuals interested in management in the sense used here, further training in the social sciences is necessary. Management of land to produce an economic return or to serve a specific goal of society is the final result of the applied management technique. Formal training in this aspect of range management has been neglected.

The Journal of Range Management should reflect the interests of the members individually and collectively. A study of past issues of the Journal indicates a dearth of articles on the "management" aspects of range management. Perhaps the land administrators and managers have not had the incentive to formal presentation of their knowledge. Must we lose a large body of knowledge which if disseminated would be indicative of the practical application made of basic research?

This short appraisal of range management is not presented as a critique of past progress or accomplishments. The many contributions made by research and the outstanding articles published in the Journal are proof of progress made in accumulating basic information. However, there appears to be a neglected area of activity in range management. This area of activity can be termed management science as contrasted to range science.

I believe the Society and the colleges and universities should give greater thought to development of the management aspect of range management. It is a field of activity that is not as precise as basic biological research. But it is in this activity that the fruits of range science can be realized and the best use of land can be planned and reached—*H. R. Hochmuth*, Bureau of Land Management, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR 1955 ANNUAL MEETING

Members who wish to present papers at the annual meeting in San Jose, California, January 25-28, 1955, are invited to offer them now.

Titles and approximately 200-word abstracts should reach the Program Chairman by August 1st to permit consideration by the Program Committee.—*Kenneth W. Parker*, Chairman, Program Committee, U. S. Forest Service, Agricultural Building, Washington 25, D. C.