Editorial

Objectives and Opportunities

The founders of the American Society of Range Management placed among its objectives, as a part of its constitution, the following reasons for organizing: "To stimulate discussion and understanding of scientific and practical range and pasture problems" and "to provide a medium for exchange of ideas and facts among Society members and with allied technologists..." These objectives are in close harmony with the functions of Local Sections. Among other functions, Local Sections are "to study local range and pasture conservation and management problems, to cooperate... with other local organizations in matters of common interest, and to bring about closer personal acquaintance and a spirit of cooperation..." Clearly, the founders of our Society intended that certain definite activities be undertaken, but wisely left it to local groups to work out methods best suited to time and place. Membership in this Society, therefore, carries responsibilities and also provides opportunities for group action in matters of range management.

Under our system of range management on public lands, many of the recommendations for management practices are made by advisory boards. The Society, drawing together as it does all facets of interest, training, and experience, on common ground, is collectively the broadest, most proficient, and least biased organization in its field at present. The Local Sections are one in philosophy with the Society.

Livestock advisory boards are sometimes vexed with problems of proper grazing. Are certain allotments stocked with the proper numbers, or at the best season? Is the kind of stock grazed the best suited to the allotment? Is an allotment improving, deteriorating or holding its own? What is the production of certain base property? The board needs information upon which to base its recommendation.

When a user considers that a ruling, with or without a recommendation from a board, is unfair, poorly based or prejudicial, he protests. Should his protest be rejected, he may appeal according to established legal procedure.

The protest is the point at which advisory boards might occasionally use the kind of help that Local Sections are, by nature, equipped to give. Local Sections might well take the first step. They should inform advisory boards of their willingness to designate balanced committees from their membership to meet on the land in question, with a representative of the Board, the user of the land, and the technician in charge. The whole group would then work together, examining and interpreting the range. This approach could be most fruitful only if all who were concerned had a sincere desire to apply the best technical information available to the problem and come to whatever agreement the evidence supported.

To take a simple but plausible example, let us assume that a ruling on livestock numbers because of alleged range depletion was being protested on the grounds that no range depletion exists on the allotment in question. The advisory board has invited the Local Section, to which the board members belong, to appoint a committee to help study the evidence in the field. The Local Section executive committee has appointed two members of its own section and one man from the adjacent neighboring section has accepted an invitation to help. One of the three has been appointed leader. They have assembled at an appointed time and driven to the range.

It is the responsibility of the leader to see that all points of view are freely expressed and all questions considered as fully as possible.
sible in the light of the evidence spread out at their feet. Progress should be from one point of agreement to the next. All points agreed upon by the committee and the entire group should be recorded before moving to the next question. A serious effort should be made to obtain complete agreement. Interpretations of the evidence should be reconciled. Where agreement seems unlikely, the question should be held for further evidence as the group moves over the range. Walking or riding may be necessary, and committees should be selected with this in mind. Key areas may be selected by those most familiar with the allotment.

Pertinent questions to be considered would include: (1) Is this definitely the allotment in question? (2) What are its boundaries? (3) What is the season of use? (4) Has there been any change in management of the allotment recently? (5) How has precipitation compared with normal during the past year and the last ten years? (6) Which of the species present are the least desirable? (7) Which of the species present are the most desirable? (8) Which of the species present are represented by the most size classes? (9) Which species have fewest juveniles? (10) Are there relic or lightly used areas nearby for comparison? If so, do they contain desirable species that are absent from much of the allotment? Are litter, rill marks, pedestalled grasses more or less than on the allotment? Are seed stalks abundant on the protected area this season? Are the grasses taller than ungrazed plants on the allotment? Are there more culms per bunch?

Answers to these and many other questions can be agreed upon by direct observation. Correct interpretations in most cases will be reached through thought and discussion. Unreasonable interpretations or dogmatic statements will not be supported by sufficient evidence.

Finally, all points on which agreement was reached by (a) the whole group, (b) the committee only, and (c) neither, should be listed for future consideration and use by any who may desire to use it.

No one is naive enough to suppose that this approach will be quickly adopted or sure-fire in its operation. It does seem to the writer to be a technique that should be given a fair trial. It is hoped that it will head off some of the hearings in which chances of agreement are less than by the "on-the-ground" method proposed here.

Other opportunities for service by Local Sections might be opened up through active efforts to establish permanent lines of communication with other organizations having related interests. Among these, in addition to Grazing Advisory Boards, may be numbered the state livestock associations, the farm organizations, and the associations of Soil Conservation District Supervisors. These contacts may be effected in many ways. One suggestion is that local sections invite these organizations to send an official representative to the annual meeting of the Local Section. Possibly a reciprocal relationship of this kind could be arranged in order "to cooperate with other local organizations in matters of common interest, and to bring about a closer personal acquaintance and a spirit of cooperation. . . ."

Local Sections can project their influence for range conservation into the next generation by cooperating with agencies which are working primarily with farm youth. Agricultural Extension Agents and vocational agriculture teachers are often at a loss for help in developing range management projects in the 4-H and F.F.A. programs. The Local Sections can fill a need here if they will provide local leaders for these range management projects. One or more sections have already taken this step. It will be very interesting to learn of their success. Regardless of slow progress and possible rebuffs, it would be well for all of us to keep the objectives of our Society clearly in mind, and their accomplishment as our goal.—Joseph H. Robertson, Associate Professor, Range Management, University of Nevada, Reno.

**RANGE SOCIETY OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 1956**

Officers of the American Society of Range Management elected for the year 1956 are:

**President:** John D. Freeman, Soil Conservation Service, Prescott, Arizona

**Vice President:** E. W. Tisdale, College of Forestry, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho

**Board of Directors:** 1956-58:

John M. Cross, rancher, Nanton, Alberta

Lyman L. Richwine, District Forest Ranger, Targhee National Forest, St. Anthony, Idaho