Cooperation And Planning — Keys To Development And Integration Of Public And Private Rangelands

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Highlight
Complex land ownership patterns in the West intensify problems of range resource management. In addition, demands for use of public rangelands are increasing. The livestock industry, public land managers, and other resource users must cooperate and share responsibilities for integration and development of all rangelands, public and private.

Grazing land management in the West is made more complex by land ownership patterns. Federal, state, and private land may be contiguous or intermingled. A ranch operation may be based upon integrated use of several ownerships. A ranch unit made up of multiple ownerships may well create a dilemma for either rancher or public land manager. Land owners and public land administrators may sometimes have different views or points of emphasis in regard to resource management. Full development and wise use of the range resource can become a reality only if all range users assume their proportionate share of responsibility and work together to effect "good resource use." In actuality, those classified as "other range users" make up the majority of rangeland users. This group consists of sportsmen, recreationists, rock-hounds, hikers, etc.

Everyone involved in management and use of the range resource must understand the complementary nature of intermingled public and private land; neither can be used nor developed to its potential without coordination of development and utilization of the other.

The role of the livestock industry in the economy of the West and the nation (Gates, 1964) should be well recognized, especially by the urban public. Many private lands now on tax roles would be of little value without their use in conjunction with public lands. These lands may also enhance the value of public rangelands, which by themselves may contribute little to the economy. Competition for use of all lands is increasing with public demand (Stoddart, 1965). Competition increases interdependency of public and private lands. These pertinent facts must be made clear to sportsmen and recreation-minded public lest they influence or force range management decisions out of perspective.

Demands of the public and the tone of the times have set the stage for a program of cooperation. The range resource consists of millions of acres of public and private land. A large majority of western rangelands are not producing at or near their potential level. Reasons for this are legend and need not be expanded here. The present situation and future demands need to be examined critically and a course charted to reach desired goals. Much thought has been given to range improvement, development, and management. Many range improvement projects now exist on both public and private land. The problem now is to insure integration of these improvements for maximum mutual benefit to both public and private interests and to plan wisely for future improvements.

Need for Cooperation, New Concepts, Planning, Research

One of the primary problems facing range users is the need for an intensified program of integrated improvement, development, and management on interdependent public and private rangelands. Everyone involved in use of rangelands must realize the need for a developmental program and be willing to cooperate to bring it about. Such a program may mean breaking tradition and taking a new look at some policies. It may mean some flexibility of programs where little now exists. It will require broad thinking, and perhaps most difficult of all, it will take acceptance of new ideas. Sometimes it is difficult to admit that what we have been doing for 40 years is not necessarily the best way. Both public and private interests must think seriously about those lands that lie beyond their own boundaries. Everyone must realize that decisions made for any piece of land have implications far beyond its borders.
The "unit management" concept must become a basic part of the thinking of all rangeland managers. "Unit management" implies that all lands utilized by a single rancher, grazing association, or game herd to provide a year-around feed source make up a single management unit. These lands are not always contiguous, but may be separated by many miles and thousands of feet in elevation. The fact remains, they are still a part of the management unit and each contributes to the whole. No real alterations in management should be made without full realization of their effects on the entire management unit. This being the case, collective planning involving all interested range users appears mandatory.

Other public land-management agencies could take note from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in their insistence on rancher participation in planning. In this case, participation would need to be expanded to include concerned recreation, sporting, and other interests. A lot of subsequent cooperation and understanding can be obtained by working jointly, from the day a plan is conceived, through its development and activation.

Programs that get public and private developments out of balance would be minimized by joint planning. It appears less than prudent to develop public rangelands far beyond present production capacity of private base property. It would appear more logical to encourage a program of balanced improvement on both public and private lands and plan together for their full development. More progress could be made in resource development with smaller expenditures of funds. New improvements would not be executed until plans were fully developed for their management and use. Development of the entire resource would be encouraged and sound management would become a part of the development and improvement, not just an afterthought.

Immediate effectiveness of a planning group will, in a large measure, be determined by the kind and amount of information available concerning the resource. Little real planning, from a resource standpoint, can be accomplished unless there is a sound basis on which to plan. A reliable inventory of the resource, based on ecological considerations becomes a basic need. Such an inventory should provide a "timeless base" on which to build soundly and wisely.

Research has a critically important obligation to provide the basic ecological knowledge and inventory methodology to meet the needs of intensive resource management. The Forest Service allotment analysis procedures, the Soil Conservation Service range site and condition methods, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs vegetation and soil surveys, represent steps in the right direction. The Bureau of Land Management has tested some of these and other ideas for use on their lands and are continuing actively to support research on inventory methods development. Experiment stations and universities need to take off from where we now stand and: (1) Develop the knowledge of range ecology that is needed, (2) help develop feasible methods for obtaining accurate ecological inventories of the range, and (3) train a larger reservoir of people in the use and application of this knowledge in intensive management.

Obviously, in view of increasing demands, too little effort is being expended on wild-land research. It seems paradoxical that while demands on these lands are increasing and large sums of money are being appropriated and spent on their development, relatively little money and effort is being spent on research, the thing most needed to lead the way in wise development of these lands.

The real factors and philosophies contributing to this apparent decline in research effort on wild-lands are difficult to assess. However, there are questions that should be considered. Has the present basic research binge contributed to this decline? Have we failed to demonstrate, to those who hold research purse strings, that the outdoors is as complex as any test tube? Why is it so difficult to see that many questions about this great and valuable resource will only be answered by scientists working in the field and on the ground? Whatever the reason(s), it appears that requisition budgets in research agencies involved in wild-land management are, in fact, decreasing. Many research administrators appear hard pressed to keep a research organization together—let alone provide them with a budget adequate to do the job for which they were hired.

If the research job necessary to lead the way for the development and management of rangelands is to be accomplished, all interested persons, ranchers, public land managers, and other users alike have a responsibility to make these facts known to administrators and politicians. In addition, they must demand that steps be taken to correct the present situation. Sound land management must be based on the needs of the resource and the people, not on political expediency.

What Can be Done Now

Despite the urgent need of suitable resource inventory techniques, it would be foolhardy to delay range development programs until suitable inventories are completed. Considerable information is now on hand. A beginning should be made with what is available. Must impor-
tant, all interested people must get together and work together. The habits of cooperation and constructive thinking must be developed. With cooperation as a fundamental groundwork, planning and carrying out improvements in development of range and related resources will come more easily as more technical information is made available. Interagency cooperative programs now in existence must be expanded and strengthened.

Financial agencies or institutions must be made aware and kept informed of resource development needs. A worthwhile program of integrated land management will require considerable capital, both public and private. Some lending agencies may need to revise their views on mid and long-term loans for range improvements. Loaning agencies, using livestock as primary collateral, may be inadvertently contributing to range deterioration brought about by overstocking. This situation may improve as more range and livestock trained men are employed by financial institutions.

Full advantage must be taken of already existing Farm Home Administration and Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service programs. Programs now exist where farmers or ranchers can, through pooling agreements, borrow money through the Farm Home Administration, and receive assistance through Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service for range improvements on group or association lands. Programs have also been considered where Farm Home Administration funds could be used to improve Federal rangelands.

All possible financial avenues, especially for private capital, need to be explored. Financial agencies have the responsibility to investigate needs of people they serve, understand the resource, and develop programs tailored to fit those needs.

The livestock industry and individual ranchers have come a long way in recent years. The hard-headed, hard-nosed individuals that put together a spread the hard way, asked little help and gave none are now the rare breed. Gone are those who believed that what belonged to the government, belonged to the first to get it, especially if it were he. Most in the livestock industry see and accept change. Demands on lands have put their "good ole days" far behind. The livestock man once in the majority is now in the minority, forced by the times to accept change, and cooperate with some with whom he used to quarrel. Stockmen must realize they hurt only themselves in refusing to objectively consider improved range management. Ranchers must recognize and meet their obligations to the resource. They need to complement improvement of public lands by keeping their own holdings commensurate, by willingly modernizing their range and pasture management, and improving their total feed utilization.

Ranchers have a responsibility to see the relationship of their lands to public lands. They must realize that all lands now being grazed by livestock are not well suited to livestock use, that changes are in order. They must recognize that grazing use is only one use, that some lands must serve additional uses to meet demands of an increasing population.

The livestock industry has a responsibility to give constructive criticism to all land use programs. It must not condemn for the sake of differing. It must stand ready to cooperate in rangeland management programs that stand to do the most good for the most people, in the long run. The place of the livestock industry on public ranges in the West may be largely determined by action of the industry itself (Stoddart, 1965).

State Game Commissions also have responsibilities in the development of range and related resources. They are single custodians of the greatest number of animals utilizing rangelands. Generally, these animals have no "base property", but depend on both public and private ranges for sustenance. Game managers, too, must be resource managers. They must realize, and more effectively publicize, the fact that game numbers must be kept in balance with the forage resource. They must stand ready to take necessary steps to accomplish that end. Game numbers are generally increasing. Demands for game are increasing. Range improvements and developments may significantly affect game populations. It is imperative that game managers take an active and constructive part in planning for integrated resource development.

Sportsmen also have an opportunity to contribute to development and management of western rangelands. They should continue to provide constructive criticism. Their opinions should be considered. However, groups or individuals with little real understanding of biological concepts of wildlife and range management should not overrule professionally trained biologists.

Federal agencies should inculcate into their thinking the need for integrated resource management. Staff at all levels must come to realize the interdependence of each land segment, public and private, upon the development and wise use of all. They must realize that even though their authority stops at a given boundary, their responsibilities do not.

A major responsibility of land managing agencies is to seek counsel from and cooperate with local people in development and management of the resource.
Agency personnel and range users must work together to co-operatively develop plans aimed at solution of problems that are mutually agreed to be important and solvable.

State universities have a responsibility to help in the development of cooperation among interested range users. They have an opportunity for training both individuals and agencies in cooperating and functioning effectively as a group. They must also contribute technical information on which to base sound management plans. In these times, it is practically impossible for the professional man in the field to keep pace with new information pertinent to his work. Universities and agencies should cooperate in development of short courses, workshops, and other training aids for up-dating and retraining professional men now in the field.

Universities through their Extension programs have a history of working with people in development of both human and natural resources. They must continue their educational programs at a high level of technical competency. Their services should be available to provide maximum contribution to the programs.

Conclusions

Many problems face everyone in the field of resource management. These problems are important to the public agencies, the rancher, the recreationist, the range manager, and all other resource users. All of these people must take a broader view of problems involved and expand their thinking. Universities and other research organizations must take a more active part in acquiring and dispersing information concerning development and improvement of range and related resources.

A program of integrated resource management is needed—badly needed—if rangelands are to be developed wisely. For a program to be successful, land management agencies must work with the people on the ground. Some policies and procedures may need to be critically revised before such a program is possible. Unless there is full cooperation and support of all user groups, any program involving them will, in the long run, result in only partial success or even in complete failure.

Summary

1. Demands are increasing for use of range and related resources.
2. Most of these lands are capable of producing far in excess of present production.
3. For maximum benefit, both public and private land must be developed under the "unit management" concept to provide an efficient year-around feed supply for grazing animals, consistent with other demands on the land.
4. Public and private rangelands must be considered an integrated resource and managed for maximum benefit.
5. Management decisions made for a given piece of land have implications far beyond its boundaries.
6. Cooperation and support of all interested users is basic to program success.
7. Land managing agencies, state universities, the livestock industry, and others have definite responsibilities and opportunities in program development.
8. Research is needed to lead the way in resource development.
9. Allocations of research funds need to be changed to better meet current needs.
10. Concepts discussed do not usurp rights of any agency or individual, but recognize needs and stress cooperation in their accomplishments.
11. Interagency cooperation in decision making processes needs to be intensified.
12. The program discussed may be a break from traditional land management and development patterns. Breaks from traditions are often essential for progress.

LITERATURE CITED