

## RANGE RENEWAL—A locally directed effort at Resource Development<sup>1</sup>

DON COOPS

*Rancher and Board Member, Surprise Valley Soil Conservation District, Cedarville, California*

### Highlight

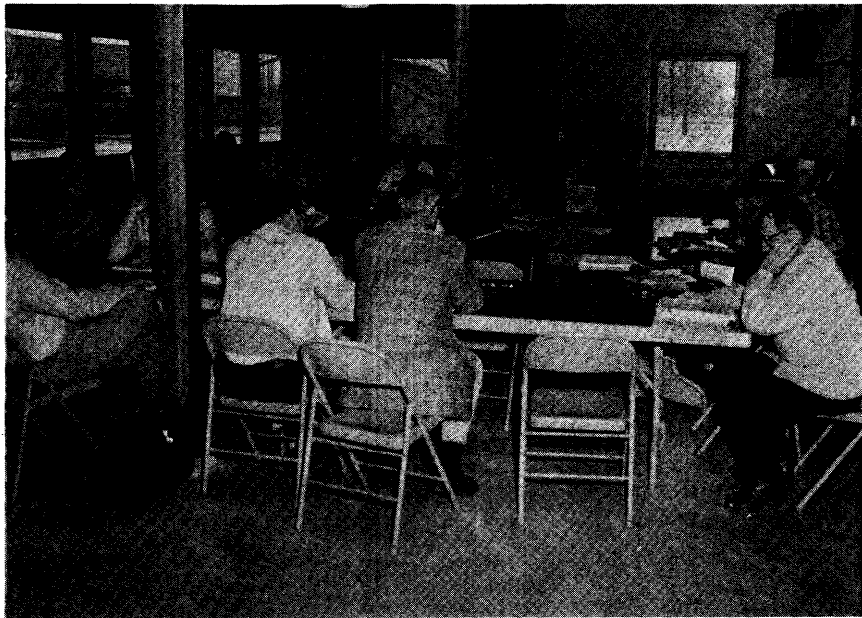
Range Renewal is a program in which interested individuals and groups of the community and public agencies plan and work together to accomplish resource conservation and development more rapidly. It involves direct Congressional appropriations to involved departments. Each group or agency must participate and be in a position to finance its part in the coordinated planning and development work agreed upon by all.

Over the years we have all seen many attempts by many interests to carry out resource development and management programs in the intermingled public and privately-owned lands of the West. These programs have had to deal with many varied ownerships and jurisdictions and a multitude of interests. Too often, however they accomplished only limited objectives, because the program was responsible only to a limited interest group.

The truly successful programs all had one common denominator—the active interest and support of the local people.

In our western states where the Federal Government actually owns some 50 to 80% of the land area and privately owned parcels are intermingled in somewhat of a hodgepodge pattern, it is no doubt hard for some to imagine that there are many local people and that there are local interests. With the multitude of Federal agencies, bureaus, and boards and the involved state and county departments and commissions it is easy to see how these public servants many times are the only ones to emerge from the confusion with a program.

We believe that we, in our small area of the western range country, are laying the foundation for a realistic and practical development program. It is called "Range Renewal",



Advisory group developing Range Renewal program in northeastern California.

and is defined as an accelerated, community-inspired and directed, range and related resource-development program that includes all interests, and is centered around direct Congressional appropriations to the Federal agencies involved. State and local agencies also participate by their programming on a project basis.

I believe that the failure of many programs has often been due to lack of consideration of the local people's wishes and further that the local people have not made their wishes known in a solid plan. One of the problems that prevents a total interest program where agencies of both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior are involved, is the lack of a coordinating mechanism between the two departments.

There have been examples of local leadership strikingly demonstrated and the results of what real efforts by local people can produce. In the West, probably the most significant was the creation of the "pilot" soil conservation districts and their making of the word "coordination" into something practical and realistic. The Northeast Elko Soil Conservation District of Nevada is probably the best example of what local people can actually do when the inspiration, enthusiasm, and need are present. Coordination of plans and actions in a project that is prodded

along with determined local people has produced results beyond the expectations of all. And on the results side of the picture we see, in addition to more grass, better wildlife and recreation and more income for the local people, and a new and better working relationship has emerged that includes understanding the other fellow's or agency's point of view.

In looking for a local group to sponsor or carry on a coordinated program it becomes important that this group must represent the involved area without selfish interest. We think that a soil and water conservation district made up of representatives of the local people and dedicated to the preservation of our soil and water resources for the generations to follow is that group, and presents an image all across our land that is essential for good public relations. Dedicated and unselfish people make up these soil and water conservation district boards for there is nothing there for those not unselfish and dedicated. In district-wide planning and in a coordinated approach, reservations in the minds of those participating soon disappear and results follow. The skeptics are those who will not or have not tried working cooperatively with SCDs.

"Range Renewal" or as some suggest Range and Resource Renewal, is a program where the community

<sup>1</sup>Paper delivered at 18th Annual Meeting, American Society of Range Management, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 9 to 12, 1965.

interests and all others including the agencies, plan and work together to accomplish resource conservation and development faster than at the present rate, and adds only one thought to the coordinated district approach. That is, direct Congressional appropriations to involved departments, bureaus and agencies of the Federal Government to insure participation by them in the project without interference with or robbing from already existing programs and priorities. Each interest must participate and be in a position to finance its part in the coordinated planning and development work decided on by all.

In our Surprise Valley area of northeastern California and the adjacent northwestern range area of Nevada, each and every interest involved in our two-state, two-district, 85% Federally-owned area is represented on the advisory group that assists the Vya & Surprise Valley SCD boards in carrying forward this total program. We think that we are succeeding in breaking up many age-old departmental and agency conflicts, jealousies, and antiquated operating procedures that have hindered progress for years. We are beginning to understand each other and certainly now have a better program than ever existed before. We know we are bucking the status

quo and we have run up against an occasional individual who can see no reason for not following a route already in existence under one department or another. Without exception these people are only thinking of their own programs without recognizing that a district-wide resource renewal project involves many interests under both Agriculture and Interior, which must be coordinated if results are to be obtained.

I so far have not specifically mentioned wildlife and recreation, a most important part of Range Renewal plan. We think that these interests should receive particular consideration. It is our thinking that the public in general only really becomes interested in those things that affect them personally. And thru these two parts of a coordinated program *almost all* are potentially involved. People everywhere understand conservation and development of wildlife and recreation. In our area as in many others, projected figures show the tremendous increases in use by recreationists of all kinds that we must expect, for they and the increasing hunters and fishermen will be coming, and soon. Federal objectives are also in this same direction. We are now in the process of setting up a special game

management area in our district to actually manage the development and harvest of big game. Water development for fishing, recreation and irrigation, access thru private property, and road development are all important parts of the project.

We think this approach to resource conservation and development in areas of intermingled public and private land is the answer. If this is true, more districts with similar problems will develop projects not identical but alike in that the same principles of coordination will be used. There has been considerable interest throughout the west where district and agency people have discussed "Range Renewal". The need certainly exists for a coordinating group that all interests can work thru and which adequately represents the local people. Soil and water conservation districts can do this job.

In the months ahead we will be carrying this Range and Resource Renewal concept to Congress in the attempt to get the special funds for the agencies involved in the project. We also are prepared to seek and include the counsel of all interests in the project area. And—as the private land owners, and one of the public lands users, I am confident that the rancher will contribute his share.