Is Range Management a Profession?

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Highlight

There is a lack of understanding among range managers of the meaning of the word "professional" and little appreciation of the obligations which professional recognition imposes. Many range managers are sub-professional and range management may be a sub-professional vocation. If you want to be identified as other than a second class citizen, read on to see what you can do.

What is a profession? At one time, only a few vocations, such as law or medicine, were considered professions. A profession was a vocation which required a well-rounded education of its members. The professional's attitude was one of responsibility toward clients and a feeling of pride for service rendered. Professionals had special privileges of freedom from formal control and felt that their performance could be accurately assessed only by fellow professionals.

In recent years, the terms profession and professional have been given a broader interpretation. The terms have become identified with doing things for pecuniary considerations. Thus, we have "professional" ball players and golfers. Also, three general classes of professions have been proposed: (1) the "learned" professions, requiring at least three years of post-baccalaureate education; (2) the "baccalaureate" professions, requiring at least a Bachelor degree, and at most, not more than two years of graduate study; and (3) "technical" professions, requiring one to two years of post-secondary education (Spurr, 1968). Range management, if it is a profession, would probably be classed as a baccalaureate profession. However, the traditional and still prevailing image of a professional is a person who has mastered a certain body of knowledge, possesses expert skills, is committed to a life career, and observes high ethical standards. It is this image that resource management vocations such as range management have been seeking.

Recent information assembled at Utah State University in cooperation with the Office of the Executive Secretary of the American Society of Range Management indicates there is little understand of the term "professional" and little appreciation of the obligations which professional recognition imposes.

Professional Recognition

Why Professional Recognition is Desired.—Several motivations have been advanced for seeking professional recognition: (1) to share the distinction and prestige accorded members of a recognized profession; (2) the awareness that professional men normally encounter less sales resistance in marketing of their services; (3) to play some part in advancing the general welfare—in making the world a better place in which to live; and (4) as a tactic in intervocation struggles to reserve a certain sphere of activity for the vocation. These motivations on the part of those seeking professional recognition are reinforced by pressures of society for (a) better education and (b) a more intelligent application of the organized body of present knowledge (AIREA, 1967).

Criteria of a Profession.—Various criteria have been advanced to help identify a profession. A vocation is a profession if it:

1. is of vital importance to society;
2. commands an organized body of knowledge with which even the beginner must be thoroughly familiar before he can practice efficiently;
3. involves essentially intellectual operations accompanied by large individual responsibility;
4. is learned in nature and its members are constantly resorting to the laboratory and the seminar for a fresh supply of facts;
5. is not merely academic and theoretical, but is definitely practical in its aims;
6. possesses a technique capable of communication through a highly specialized educational discipline;
7. is self organized with activities, duties, and responsibilities which completely engage its participants and develop group consciousness; i.e., it has a professional society;
8. has definite standards of competence that it enforces as a condition of admission to membership;
9. has definite standards of integrity and conduct that it enforces upon its individual members (a code of ethics);
10. is composed entirely of experienced practitioners;
11. has a standard of good work (high standards of performance);
12. is more responsive to public interest than are unorganized and isolated individuals;
13. is recognized by the public as being a profession (adapted from AIREA, 1967).
Does Range Management fit the Criteria?—The fact that the concept of range management is not widely known lends credence to the belief that range management may not be an important vocation (criterion 1). However, the western range consists of between 600 and 700 million acres, and provides about half the feed for 22 million cattle, more than half the feed for 15 million sheep, and essentially all the feed for 4 million deer, one million elk and other game and wildlife. It is the watershed that supports over 30 million acres of irrigated land, provides water for industry, and for generating electrical power, and provides culinary water to 30 million users. It is also the recreational playground for millions of Americans. These uses of the range lands indicate that range management ought to be an important vocation.

There should be little argument that range management fits or should fit criteria 3, 5, and 6. There is probably some question if range management fulfills criteria 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. There is no accrediting of range schools (2), interest, not competence, is sufficient for membership (8), the by-laws state that the Board of Directors has the right to approve or reject membership in the ASRM, but gives no reasons for rejection other than non-payment of dues, and there is almost no barrier to a person with little or no training in range management being employed as a range manager, even for the federal government (9), although a "Proposed Creed" was published (Amer. Soc. Range Manage., 1965); experience is not one of the conditions for membership (10); nowhere in the ASRM by-laws is a work standard set (11); and the ASRM does not appear to be more responsive to public interest (12).

Even more questionable is the applicability of criteria 4, 7, and 13. It is fairly safe to assume that range management is not recognized by the public as a profession (criterion 13). The applicability of criteria 4 and 7 were evaluated in a poll.

Polls of Range Students

Graduates.—Fourteen schools graduating range managers were canvassed to obtain the membership status of former students (Table 1). Names of graduate and undergraduate students with a degree in range management were compared with records of membership in the office of the Executive Secretary. Of the students graduating in range management with a B.S. degree, only 42% are presently members of ASRM, 38% were never members. Twenty percent were members but have since failed to renew membership. Of students receiving advanced degrees, 72% are presently members, 19% were never members, and 9% have dropped out.

Of the schools in the undergraduate category, the highest percentage for former students presently members is 63%, the lowest is 13%. Of schools in the graduate category, the highest percentage of former students who are presently members is 87%, the lowest is 37%.

Utah State U. Graduates.—To ascertain the reasons for lack of membership, a questionnaire was sent to the non-members who had graduated from Utah State University over the past 15 years in hopes of gaining some insight as to why they were not members of the American Society of Range Management. According to the membership records of the Society, the students being polled had never been members or failed to renew membership.

The questions asked were of three major types: (1) attitude toward the Society; (2) attitude toward the Journal of Range Management; and (3) attitude toward the recent rise in membership fees. Seventy responses have been received and processed (Table 2). About 23% of the respondents reported a change in field of interest. Of the remaining respondents, about 27% felt that the dues were too high for what benefit was derived from being a member. On the question of meeting attendance,
Table 2. Summary (percentage values) of questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership—what discourages you from being a member?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. fees too high                                        27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. neglect, no reason                                   15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. no value to me                                       28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. no time to be active                                 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. no active section nearby                             7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. no comment                                           8%</td>
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Meetings—do you attend ASRM meetings regularly?

| Chapter | 6%  |
| Section | 23% |
| National| 9%  |
| none    | 57% |
| no comment| 11% |

Do you have access to the J.?  

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41% 6%</td>
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Should the Society publish both technical and popular journal?  

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>52% 18%</td>
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Do you consider the Journal:  

| a. too technical                           44% |
| b. not technical enough                    2%  |
| c. satisfactory                            35% |
| d. no comment                              19% |

Suggested changes:  

| a. less technical accent—more practicality 27% |
| b. lower dues                               7%  |
| c. closer contact with members              8%  |
| d. make it more professional                4%  |
| e. no comment                               54% |

most respondents (68%) indicated they did not attend any ASRM meetings or had no comment. Various reasons were given as excuses for not attending meetings. A few respondents mentioned that they had no active chapter nearby. Several employees of Federal agencies said that, as employees, they were not encouraged to go to meetings.

One-half of the respondents (53%) had access to the Journal. About one-half also felt that there were too many technical articles being published which were of no use to them as range managers. One-third (35%) found the Journal satisfactory as to technical and popular content. About one-half (52%) did not favor two separate publications, 30% favored two journals, and 18% had no comment.

The most popular suggestion made by those polled as a way of providing greater interest in the Society was to change to a less technical accent. There was a great desire to have more practical papers printed in the Journal with less emphasis on the mechanics of research methods. Most of the criticism seemed to be aimed at the Journal rather than the Society. It would be concluded from this that these former students only knew the ASRM from reading the Journal.

It can be further concluded from these polls that Range Management does not fit criteria 4 and 7. The majority of the practitioners are not constantly resorting to the laboratory or seminar (or the Journal) for a fresh supply of facts (4). Also, although self organized, the vocation does not completely engage its participants or develop group consciousness. In short, range management does not have a totally professional society (7).

Present Students.—Of the undergraduate students (Table 1), 38% had never been members. To help determine why students do not become members while in school or upon graduation, a poll of students presently enrolled in Range Science on the USU and Brigham Young University campuses was made. Fifty-one questionnaires were completed and returned; 39 from USU and 12 from BYU. Of those responding, 50% were members. When questioned about dues, 38% of those polled indicated increased dues were a hardship which prevented their affiliation (this hardship would probably also apply to recent graduates). Forty percent indicated they never attended ASRM meetings at all and 35% attended student chapter meetings only. Although participation was low, it was interesting that 57% wanted required accreditation of range schools and 63% wanted more range courses in Civil Service requirements. The poll indicated that students had little understanding of ASRM affairs.

Range Management Sub-Professional.—Based on the 13 criteria, Range Management appears to be a discipline which does not have professional status. Definitely, it is a discipline composed, at least in part, of sub-professionals. There may be individuals who are professionals in the truest sense of the word, but by and large, the vocation (composed of those who work for government agencies and those in other range related positions) is sub-professional. One of the greatest single pieces of evidence is that many of the practitioners are not interested in developing new concepts and fail to keep up with latest developments.

What Can Be Done

If range management is sub-professional, and if many practitioners are sub-professional, then those individuals who are genuinely interested in range management might ask: "What can we do about making the vocation into a profession and what can be done about the lack of professionalism?" Among the possible answers are the following:

1. Develop expertise: Expand the horizons of
range management to include more than just domestic livestock on “native” range. Range managers are, above all, range resource managers. Among the areas where range scientists and managers should have competence are wildlife range, range watershed, and recreation. This does not mean that the more traditional spheres of influence of range managers should be ignored. On the contrary, there is much work that will need to be done. The livestock industry perhaps has more capital invested per man than any industry in the United States, yet it has one of the lowest returns on capital of any industry. This indicates there is much work and reorganization to be done to make the domestic livestock industry more viable. However, it will take more than cliches and rules of thumb to help the livestock industry. It will take real expertise. Imagine where the level of expertise for heart surgeons would be if doctors didn’t read medical journals because they were too technical. If range managers were heart surgeons, we would probably still be wondering why the heart goes “thump-thump.”

2. Identify our Expertise: The area of specialization for range managers should be identified (Hooper, 1969) and both Civil Service and land management agencies should insist upon competency of training in this specialization for range manager assignments.

3. Promote Participation: Develop Society chapters to get closer to the mcmbrs. Have seminar or discussion group type meetings where timely and controversial subjects are discussed instead of the type meeting where only papers are read. Encourage more range rides and other meetings to get members together to discuss problems. Group consciousness is one of the avenues toward a more professional society and usually a person benefits from an organization in proportion to what he puts into the organization.

4. Provide for Continuing Education: Since professional training today is largely measured by academic achievement, have government agencies encourage attendance at chapter, state, and national meetings. Have short courses or refresher courses under the auspices of the ASRM in range management subjects including such aspects as public relations, personnel management, economics, psychology, sociology, speaking, and writing. The profession must be self elevating and should not rely on universities to offer short courses. In short, encourage new thought and a dynamic approach to range problems. This education program might encourage more range managers to read the Journal, instead of just saying it is too technical.

5. Have Several Grades of Membership in ASRM: Each grade would be for a different level of exhibited competence and for different occupations. Although there are legitimate arguments against several grades of membership (Spurr, 1968), grades of membership such as student, affiliate, associate, and fellow, with graduated fees may encourage more participation and a more professional society.


7. Publicize Society Activities: Report public service activities, scholarships, chapter, state, and national meetings. This will help advertise our expertise.

8. Reward Achievement: Give awards for the best article in the Journal. Perhaps expand the “Rancher of the Year” award of the sections to a national “Range Manager Award.” We have already a precedent for a “Certificate of Merit.” Let’s do a better publicity job so that we might advertise our expertise.

9. Try to do Something about the Environment in Government which Discourages Innovation and Attendance at Meetings: Professionals seek recognition from fellow members and expect to be judged by their peers with comparable training. This causes a dual loyalty both to the profession and to the organization (Sayles and Strauss, 1966). Students in range management show interest in advancing range management by wanting required accreditation of schools and more range courses on Civil Service exams. However, when these students get on the job, they seem to lose interest in their society and its advancement. This loss of interest may be, at least partially, blamed on bureaucratic red tape. Although there may be a dual loyalty, bureaucracy is not necessarily a bar to innovation and professional commitments (Wilen-sky, 1964). Since many range managers work for government agencies, bureaucracy may hinder, but need not by itself, prohibit the professionalization of range management.

10. Try to do Something about the Environment in Universities which Discourages Student Participation: Professionalism is, in the final analysis, a mental attitude. Formal education and degrees influence the potential competence which a person has. But, if education—at any level—does not instill a degree of responsibility or a professional state of mind which provokes the recipient to continually seek more competence within his profession, then the educational system must stand indicted of giving more concern to range management credit hours than to educating a range resource manager. We must educate a range manager who can command respect and recognition as a professional because he continually leads in the areas of education, research, and practice of the art, and who produces,
A Stocking-Rate Guide for Beef Production on Blue-Grama Range

R. E. BEMENT

Highlight

A stocking-rate guide for cattle on blue-grama range was developed at Central Plains Experimental Range. The guide is based on the amount of herbage left ungrazed at the end of the summer season as it relates to gain per animal and gain per acre. Maximum dollar returns per acre from yearlings were obtained when 300 lb of air-dry herbage were left at the end of the season. The average optimum stocking rate was 2.6 acres/yearling month.

Approximately 30 million acres of shortgrass range are grazed annually by livestock in the Central Great Plains. Ranching enterprises today are plagued with increasing operation costs and a plateaued level of income. This situation demands an increasing requirement for more efficient grazing practices. The quantity and quality of forage available to livestock, and the use they make of it, determine grazing efficiency. Grazing efficiency is readily altered by changes in stocking rate. At Central Plains Experimental Range, light-stocking rates result in high animal daily gains and low animal gain per acre; while moderate- to heavy-stocking rates result in low animal daily gains and high animal gain per acre.

This paper presents a stocking-rate guide for blue-grama range grazed from May 1 to October 31. The stocking-rate guide is not based on percent utilization but is based on herbage left ungrazed at the end of the grazing season. The amount of ungrazed herbage is a quantitative factor that can be readily recognized and related to gain per animal and gain per acre.

Methods

Central Plains Experimental Range, located 38 miles northeast of Fort Collins, Colorado, has an average annual precipitation of 12 inches. An average of 8.3 inches falls during the period May 1 to September 30. Blue-grama grass (Bouteloua gracilis (HBK.) Lag. ex Steud.) is the dominant forage species.

Grazing intensity-of-use studies with yearling Hereford heifers were initiated in 1940 and con-