

The American Society of Range Management and Conservation—What Does It Mean to Us?

On two occasions since September 1968, the American Society of Range Management has been asked to express itself officially on the meaning of conservation. It may be as surprising to you as it was to me to learn that this important word in the American vocabulary is not treated in our "A Glossary of Terms Used in Range Management."

Perhaps this is a reflection of the truth of Executive Secretary Colbert's statement in a recent letter to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in which he said that conservation "... is interpreted in so many ways by so many different people that it is scarcely amenable to open discussion, much less a satisfactory definition." I found it hard to believe that our committee on the glossary of terms would not have addressed itself to this problem.

While Colbert declined specifically to define conservation as the Society sees it, he wrote effectively of the "... basic concepts that must obtain in the management of rangeland resources." He summarized "... the real challenge in rangeland resource management" as follows; and in so doing he came mighty close to what conservation could mean to us as a Society, "to seek a comprehensive understanding of rangeland resources, and then to gather and evaluate information about these lands in order that their use can most effectively contribute to man's well-being."

Seeing a copy of this letter stimulated me to dig out a few paragraphs I wrote in 1967 on what I think conservation means or should mean to the members of the American Society of Range Management. Since this letter received limited distribution within the executive group of the Society, and in the interest of stimulating more thought by the membership, the following is what conservation means to me.

As conservation is practiced by the majority of members in the American Society of Range Management, the concept is synonymous with the effective management and wise use of natural resources in perpetuity. Effective management means the purposeful manipulation of use, user, and resource in line with the latest scientific understanding and technological advances as we seek long-term maximization of production from the resource. Wise use involves selection of the use or uses which, singly or in combination, will maximize the long-term contribution of renewable natural resources to the economic and social welfare of man as well as his aesthetic benefits. In the case of non-renewable natural resources, the concept implies the careful husbanding and non-wasteful use of these resources for the benefit of long-term society.

In all instances, this concept of conservation denies the right of the individual wantonly to exploit natural resources for personal gain or pleasure without regard to the needs of future generations who will be equally dependent upon those same resource areas. It also denies the right of governments through politically expeditious

policy or shortsighted exercise of the Right of Eminent Domain to similarly disregard the needs of generations yet unborn for food and fiber which well planned integrated management of all natural resources may yield.

Finally, our concept of conservation is best expressed in the two words, conservation management, a concept that carries an obligation to the resource, to the user, to the dependent industries, and to society.

Even in the case of aesthetic resources which are not "used" in the direct economic sense as a raw material for the production of economic goods, we emphasize the importance of purposeful management of the people who presume to enjoy recreational resource areas.

We are especially cognizant that conservation management may yield goods and/or benefits at a rate below the short-term maxima. In all instances where the best available information indicates that short-term maximization of production may result in a reduction of inherent site productivity, the conservation management decision should be made in favor of restraints that will insure maintenance of inherent site productivity and highest production over the long pull.

I hope that these thoughts will stimulate you to action with pen in hand. What does conservation mean to you? Can the American Society of Range Management reach a consolidated and effective statement on this important subject?—*Charles E. Poulton*, Director of Range Management Program and Professor of Range Ecology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon.

ASRM ANNUAL MEETINGS

1970—February 9–12

Denver-Hilton

Denver, Colorado

1971—February 15–18

Convention Center

Reno, Nevada