

President's Address:

Rangeland Is—

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Rangeland is a major land mass. Visualize if you will, that I am holding an apple in my hand which represents our planet earth. Visualize that I cut the apple into four equal pieces. Three of those I set aside because they represent the portion of earth's surface covered by water. The remaining one fourth is land. Now I cut the land fourth in half. One of those halves represents rangeland. This tells us two things. On one hand the earth's rangeland is finite. On the other hand it is a tremendous land mass. More importantly, it is a land mass that does so much more than simply hold the world together.

Rangeland is the watershed of this water-starved planet. Daily, water becomes increasingly scarce and increasingly precious for mankind. However, when properly managed, the rangeland watershed stabilizes, purifies, and stores more water. Any time water doesn't go into the ground where it falls, we're doing something wrong.

Imagine if you will that mankind succeeded in bringing to bear the knowledge that exists, that we reversed desertification and maximized watershed values worldwide. The collective effect on man's water supply alone would be awesome.

Rangeland is home for most wildlife. It is another major value to man. When properly managed, rangeland fosters species diversity. Properly managed, it is the central and essential component of natural ecological balance.

It is also where anti-hunting movements were spawned. Wildlife need to be managed, too, for ecological balance.

Rangeland is the American playground. Recreation is a major American pastime. Recreation takes dozens of forms on rangeland.

Rangeland is the mainstay of rural economics. Throughout the American west, county after county is dominantly dependent on its rangeland for its own economic base. I recently heard a detailed economic analysis of Madison County, Montana. It was demonstrated how rangeland provided 70% of the county's economic base—not the least of which was in the form of livestock grazing.

Rangeland is important to the global environment. Properly managed rangeland stores more carbon and emits less methane. Rangeland accounts for 13% of total terrestrial carbon on earth. Rangeland degradation is a major contributing factor to worsening global environment. Conversely, if properly managed, rangeland would be a major contributing factor to improving global environment. It is, in fact just as important to the global environment as are rain forests.

Rangeland is crucial to mankind.

Rangeland is crucial to saving the "Planet Earth".

Yet Rangeland is generally not thought about or is ignored—viewed as "wasteland".

Rangeland is always slipping into the background of the minds of nations' leaders and nations' budgets. It's always overshadowed by more immediate issues and problems. I'm preaching to the choir here, but the indisputable fact is, we simply haven't reached enough

folks, nor the right folks. We haven't reached them concerning both the importance of rangeland, and the importance of properly managing rangeland.

That leads me to a currently major SRM priority. That is our initiative to package and market the importance of rangelands. All of us in the profession take for granted this importance, but we simply have neither packaged nor marketed our message adequately for those not in the profession.

Therefore, I have asked the I & E Committee to make a concerted effort at packaging. They are going at it comprehensively, including the complex relationships to global environment. The committee has a target to complete the packaging by this coming Summer Meeting.

In the meantime, the Major Enhancement Task Group is working on the marketing end. They are gearing themselves up to receive the package by the Summer Meeting and work it into their overall efforts to market SRM, including the importance of rangeland.

Rangeland is driven by western urbanization. Urban growth, development, and encroachment on rangeland is progressing at an alarming rate. In the greater Reno area, growth is occurring at a rate of 4,000 people per month. In the Las Vegas area it is 7,000 people per month. California is growing at a rate of over 60,000 people per month.

Urbanization has brought new attention and new values to rangeland. Riparian is an example. The green zones along rivers, streams, lakes, and springs are the center of attention and the source of major issues. Upland rangeland is generally in better condition than it has been in this century. However, riparian areas continue to suffer from a high degree of degradation.

Riparian areas play a vital ecological role. The greenstrips are the lifeblood of rangeland. But they do not function alone. They function as one part of the total watershed. Therefore, we need to start at the top of the watershed to properly manage riparian areas.

We have known for many years that exclusion of livestock from poor condition streams resulted in dramatic recovery of riparian areas. This comparison was seen by many as an indicator that grazing and streams were not compatible. In reality, we were comparing no grazing to improper grazing. Research and on-the-ground demonstration projects now show us riparian areas can be restored with proper livestock grazing practices.

Rangeland is a controversial arena for the Endangered Species Act. The desert tortoise is an example. Upwards of 10 million acres of rangeland are impacted. The tortoise populations have been declining and livestock grazing is viewed as a major cause. Critics of livestock grazing have seized this opportunity to justify the removal of livestock from the arid public lands. However, the highest recorded tortoise densities coincided with or immediately followed the greatest levels of livestock use! The decline of desert tortoise populations over the past several decades has roughly paralleled the trend of decreased livestock grazing on public lands. This could suggest that livestock grazing does not play a role in the observed decrease in desert tortoise populations. Recent popula-

Cleary was president of the Society for Range Management in 1990. This address was presented at the Society's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in January 1991.

tion declines have been caused mainly by an upper respiratory disease syndrome.

Recommendations for livestock grazing in habitat management plans are currently based largely on anecdotal evidence and there is a serious lack of scientific data. A recent extensive literature search failed to produce a single refereed or peer reviewed reference with conclusive evidence of proper livestock grazing having a negative impact on the desert tortoise.

The SRM will henceforth take a more active role in species listing under the Endangered Species Act as well as in the development of recovery plans. In addition, SRM strongly supports long-term interdisciplinary research, demonstration projects, and intensive monitoring of grazing practices within desert tortoise habitat.

Rangeland is where Wild Horses and Burros have their own Endangered Species Act—The WH&B Protection Act of 1971. Tens of millions of acres of rangeland are impacted.

Wild Horses and Burros are to be managed in a manner to achieve and maintain a thriving natural, ecological balance on the public lands. Congress so stated in the 1971 Protection Law.

By far, the greatest obstacle to achieving an ecological balance continues to be the gathering and disposition of excess animals from the populations. On good feed, wild horse populations will about double in four years. Ample studies exist which bear this out.

Thus, if the goal is to sustain a total of 30,000 wild horses on public lands, about 30,000 excess must be removed every fourth year. If the goal is doubled to 60,000, then about 60,000 excess must be removed. The implications are staggering.

Setting the goal obviously carries with it immense responsibility. That responsibility is to gather and dispose of these excesses to assure maintenance of a thriving ecological balance as directed by Congress.

Traditional gathering and disposal strategies have been inadequate for the job. Costs have been enormous and there is currently no viable alternative for disposing of the unadoptable excess. Feed lots, fee waivers, and sanctuaries have all been tried and are no longer available.

I suggest there is a solution that has been applied in both the Susanville, California, and Burns, Oregon, BLM Districts that will provide the answers to both the cost and the unadoptable problems. In short, the solution is to quit gathering and removing unadoptable animals.

Using traditional gathering strategies, about 50% of the animals gathered are unadoptable. It has been demonstrated that with Herd Management, the unadoptable animals gathered can be reduced to near zero, while at the same time enhancing and maintaining herd integrity.

Herd management frees up funds to more adequately manage wild horses and other resource values, provides humane treatment to older wild horses that remain to live out their lives in the wild, and provides excess horses that are more desirable for adoption and domestication.

Herd management consists of five principles:

1. Retain desirable characteristics.
2. Removing undesirable characteristics from the gene pool.
3. Leaving breeding herd on range for natural life.
4. Removing excess from young.
5. Leaving sufficient young to offset death loss and sustain integrity of herd.

I refer to a publication entitled, "A Comparison of Management Methods for Wild Horses" by the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Program dated 12/30/90. The publication describes, analyzes, and compares management methods. It explains how Herd Management, from an overall cost standpoint, costs less than half what traditional approaches are costing.

I hope the management agencies will closely scrutinize Herd

Management for the opportunities it presents to "take the bull by the dilemma" and solve the exasperating Wild Horse problem!

Rangeland is where misinformation and misunderstanding prevail. For example, consider range condition ratings and terminology and look at sagebrush prone rangelands in the Intermountain and Great Basin regions. Frequently, we find that a high proportion of sagebrush dictates a poor or fair condition rating under current rating systems. But in the interest of wildlife habitat, the public resists using vegetation manipulation techniques to reduce the sagebrush component. Making that value judgment for wildlife is as it should be. The onerous part is that by definition the range is then held in poor or fair condition. The same public turns around and condemns the managers, the industry, and the range profession for not doing a better job of range management. They make that judgment by looking at the agencies' own range condition data and terminology which can be translated into a large part of rangeland being in unsatisfactory condition. This is happening notwithstanding the fact that tens of millions of acres of sagebrush, for example, are being held in their poor and fair condition class because that's what the American public wants. The range profession is damned if it does—and damned if it doesn't.

There is unquestionably something wrong with the range condition classification system that allows that double standard to exist. Therefore another of SRM's high priorities is our initiative to review and overhaul the system. The Unity in Concepts and Terms Task Groups is charged with this responsibility. They have the complex and challenging responsibility to develop range condition classification concepts and terms which are satisfactory to all agencies and our profession as a whole. The effort will be successful only if all agencies are united behind the outcome—hence, the Task Group name. I believe this is the single most important, and most difficult initiative during my watch.

Rangeland is now a major battleground: "Livestock Free by '93" has become the battle cry of the more extreme environmental groups.

Livestock grazing on public lands has been a traditional and respected use for many decades. In recent years, there has been a growing public awareness and concern for environmental quality and protection of wildlife, watershed, and aesthetic values. Grazing, when poorly managed, can be a destructive agent. When properly managed, it can be beneficial to the rangeland environments.

The more extreme environmental organizations have actively pushed for total removal of grazing on public lands. They argue that unrealistically low grazing fees have encouraged overuse of public ranges and that managing agencies have condoned mismanagement. There have been numerous cases of vandalism to fences and other range improvements and killings of livestock by the most radical.

In the other extreme, certain livestock industry representatives have professed "grazing rights" and advocated formal designation of public rangelands where livestock grazing would have priority over other uses. The most extreme of these advocates represent the "Sagebrush Rebellion" advocating State or private takeover of federal rangelands.

The SRM believes that neither extreme is correct, appropriate, nor in the public interest. SRM believes that grazing of public rangelands in a responsible and well-managed way is both appropriate and beneficial to other multiple use values of these areas.

SRM believes that grazing of range plants by both wild and domestic large herbivores is necessary to maintain long-term plant vigor and species diversity of range ecosystems. Domestic livestock provide a portion of the desired vegetation manipulation.

SRM is actively working with responsible leaders in the envi-

ronmental community as well as the livestock industry to promote coordinated resource management and full consideration of all resource uses and values on public rangelands.

We advocate "Use the range, but use it properly."

Rangeland is where we need to stop educating and start building understanding. People won't be educated by perceived adversaries.

Rangeland is where head banging is not working.

Rangeland is where partnerships are needed above all else. It is the epitome of where "no man is an island".

Rangeland is where people need to work together to *build* partnerships. To that end, Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) advocacy is another major SRM initiative.

In short, CRM simply means all interested folks "working together" at the local level to solve their range management and other problems. Simple enough to say—but sadly enough, it seems to be contrary to basic human behavior.

CRM is a process that can be adapted to any local situation. Successful application relies on the spirit of cooperation as much as anything. However, behavioral and group interaction techniques are also widely applied.

CRM is authorized by virtue of a National Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Extension Service. It is about twenty years old.

The Memorandum was updated in 1987. At that time, both the Memorandum and the process were strengthened by embracing

the Experimental Stewardship Program. The Stewardship Program was an intensive experiment to improve range condition through enhanced cooperation and coordination. The experiment was eminently successful and the effectiveness of CRM was substantially enhanced by inclusion of what had been learned.

SRM's advocacy role takes many forms. We work to improve techniques. We work to get adversaries to the table to use the techniques. We conduct training seminars to improve people's skills with these techniques.

We believe it is so much more productive and effective for people to work together than to fight. This has been proven time and again. We annually celebrate the successes of working together. We have a video library full of these success stories which highlight how the rangelands have been improved as a result of "people working together." SRM believes that CRM holds the greatest promise for building partnership and creating an endless stream of successes to celebrate.

Finally, **rangeland is**, where failure to work together will result in consequences too gruesome to contemplate. Experts will march in and determine local densities.

On the flip side—when we do work together we all gain so much—individually and collectively. The payoff is powerful. We will determine our destiny and will create that endless stream of success stories.

Remember the adage—"None of us knows as much about something as all of us!"

Thank you very much.