Outdoor Recreation in the Future of Public Lands

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Highlight

Range management's goal of increased profits from livestock production should be viewed within a broader context in which the professions dealing with natural resources try to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Range forage production from public lands can be maintained or increased under a well rounded resource conservation program despite land use restrictions for outdoor recreation.

The report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission contains three forecasts suggesting that public lands will not be immune to mounting demands for outdoor recreation: Twice as many people will be living in the United States by the year 2000. Demand for outdoor recreation will triple. Mobility and travel will undergo enormous expansion.

The Commission held it to be national policy to preserve, develop, and make accessible such quantity and quality of outdoor recreation as will be necessary and desirable for individual enjoyment. The Commission left it to future planning, however, to indicate the extent to which restrictions on commercial uses of land would be required.

Some believe that additional curtailment of the commercial use of public lands is essential to the well being of present and future generations. Others view any further restrictions in commercial public land uses as detrimental to economic welfare. A typical expression from this viewpoint is that any further use restrictions would be "an economic step backward"—that "the

West cannot afford such restrictions."

This paper explores estimated requirments for added outdoor recreation on public lands, brings together certain research information, and suggests certain standards for evaluating alternative land use proposals.

Demand for Recreational Land Uses

Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, Public Law 88-578 (1964), hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent in the next 10 to 15 years in acquiring title to outdoor recreation areas now in private ownership. About 60 percent of the Fund will be available for Stateadministered programs, and the remainder will be available for Federal agency administration. Not more than 15 percent of acreage added to national forests under the Act may be situated west of the 100th Meridian.

As land acquisitions begin under Public Law 88-578, sales of public lands chiefly valuable for residential, commercial, industrial, public, and crop uses will be made under the temporary authority of Public Law 88-608 (1964). Sales are restricted by the Act to areas covered by land use zoning enacted under State law.

Some 23 million acres in the National Park System and 14 million acres in the national forests have been set aside primarily for outdoor recreation and preservation of scenic, historical, and scientific values. Primary outdoor recreation uses occur in localities within other classes of Federal lands. Outdoor recreation as a full-fledged use of so-called "public domain" administered through the Bureau

of Land Management has been given formal legal sanction under Public Law 88-607 (1964) on an interim management basis pending implementation of recommendations to be made by the Public Land Law Review Commission, established by Public Law 88-606 (1964).

The extent of adjustments to facilitate future recreational uses of Federal lands will be influenced by general trends in recreational land uses in the country.

Federal. State and local public recreation areas in the United States will increase by the year 2000 to 95 million acres, compared with 46 million acres in 1950, according to an estimate by Clawson (1963). Clawson estimated the prospective reduction in areas grazed by domestic livestock at 20 million acres. He thought that this reduction might be offset by conversion of lowvielding Great Plains croplands to grass, but did not expect such conversion to be fully carried out

An over-all need in the United States by the year 2000 for 90 million acres of additional outdoor recreation land from which commercial uses would be completely or substantially excluded has been estimated by Landsberg, Fischman and Fisher (1963). They felt that meeting this requirement fully would involve enlarging the National Park system from 23 to 49 million acres; extending national forest primitive, roadless, wilderness, and wild areas from 14 to 57 million acres; and expanding State parks from 6 to 28 million acres.

Economic Impact of Added Outdoor Recreation

Much of the opposition to added outdoor recreation as a land use is based on a belief that established business enterprises would be upset and that wages, profits, and taxes would be reduced in the locality or region.

¹ The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

Commercial production would, of course, be reduced or eliminated on the site of any lands reallocated to primary outdoor recreation, but allowance must be given to offsetting effects. Offsetting effects include the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation maintained or added, and wages, profits, and taxes added from recreation-oriented businesses. Other kinds of impacts must be taken into account.

Much more must be known before economists can accurately track down the economic implications of land use adjustments. This is evidenced by conclusions expressed at the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation (1963) and in the report of the Federal Council for Science and Technology (1963). But no advanced research is needed to demonstrate that elimination of commercial uses from some lands does not necessarily result in lessened aggregate commercial production in the locality or region.

Some do not realize that outdoor recreation can play a key role in the economic growth of a locality or region. In Teton County, Wyoming, for example, tourist expenditures in 1958 were nearly \$7 million, producing a business of over \$12 million. This was 71 percent of the total business activity generated in the County (University of Wyoming, 1959).

Clawson, Held and Stoddard (1960) felt that the growth of exclusively-used recreational areas in the Intermountain States would be accompanied by growth in interregional money payments, much as a country like Switzerland benefits financially from the international tourist trade.

One of the incentives leading to industrial relocations to Western sites from other parts of the country is a comparative advantage in outdoor recreation opportunities for factory and office workers.



CAMPING ON PUBLIC LANDS IN COLORADO. A young angler cleans his catch beside his camp on the Arkansas River, where it flows through public land used mainly for livestock grazing and watershed protection. The lands are between Canon City and the crest of the Rockies to the West. BLM Photo by Jim Lee, 1962.

Of special interest to range management is the fact that forage resources on some public lands can be developed to offset lost forage use of other lands.

The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, in 1962, appraised the opportunity for range rehabilitation in selected areas. It was found that in Beaverhead and Madison Counties, Montana, for example, average grazing capacity could be raised from 194 to 278 animal unit months per section of land by making range improvements costing an average of \$5.65 per acre.

In a demonstration project known as the "Vale Project," (Malheur County, Oregon), the Bureau of Land Management estimates that the annual value of range livestock production on project lands can be raised by \$2 million through range, water, and soil management. The Bureau of Land Management estimated in 1962 that 2 million acres of public lands in the Western States could be economically seeded in a six-year program. Brush control on 2 million acres, construction of 14,500 miles of fence, and construction of 7,000 water control and conservation sites were projected, to be followed by additional work in subsequent years.

It has been estimated by some that between 25 million and 50 million acres of Western brush lands in various classes of ownership can be economically seeded to grass in a long-range program.

Points of View in Planning for Land Use

Contextual and conceptual differences in the ways people think complicate the communication of ideas concerning the impact of land use adjustments such as those referred to above upon individuals or groups of people.

Dana and Krueger, after studying the land resource situation in California (1958), wrote that the interests of individuals, of local communities, of the state, and of the nation in land ownership and management are not always identical. "What seems best for the present may not be best for the future," they stated. This observation may help to understand divergencies of opinion concerning future outdoor recreation uses of public lands.

The increasing attention being given by individuals, industry associations, and research organizations to uses of public lands augurs well for the democratic process. The fact that differences in viewpoints exist should not be considered inimical to the attainment of conservation objectives.

Among land use planning technicians who have found that people differ widely in the frames of reference they apply to planning for land use is Willhelm (1962) who observed the urban zoning sphere in Austin, Texas. He found marked differences between those who place emphasis upon existing economically valued conditions and those who emphasize arrangements designed to bring about future economic pursuits and land valuations under permitted land uses. He hypothesized that "economically oriented protagonists" rely on current conditions deemed economically relevant; whereas "protectionists" orient their judgments to a future-time conception in terms of the land uses they think should ultimately prevail.

It seems possible that some who reflect a "status quo" attitude toward additional recreation on public lands may have drawn conclusions within constraints of a static situation projecting today's population, level of living, and habits of life indefinitely into the future. Their judgments may not reflect an appreciation of emerging resource demand and supply problems from a broader viewpoint.

Allocating public land resources to different uses is becoming an increasingly complex task. Those responsible for allocation must face the effects of change in the United States from mainly a rural culture to mainly an urban one, and the challenge of population explosion.

The challenge facing stockmen was well put by Stoddart and Cook (1964) when they wrote: "Federal land administrators do not create these demands; they merely try to resolve the problems of increased need for our restricted resources. The stockman's problem is no longer one of how he can keep the other uses out, but rather a question of how he can keep grazing as an important part of the multipleuse of public lands."

This is not new doctrine. In 1950, for example, Saunderson wrote: "In the development of policy regarding future public or private ownership of lands of the public domain, careful consideration should be given to their public values and their conservation needs in the public interest. For the public lands of the West that are clearly multiple-use lands—and most of them are we face an important policy question of management flexibility in the making of adjustments among the uses and the interests, including the general public interest, of the users."

The problem of providing open space in urban areas and outdoor recreational opportunities in rural areas, including multiple land use, was considered by the Federal Council for Science and Technology (1963) as urgently needing socio-economic research. The Council pointed out that studies such as these in the socio-economic field related to land resources are very dependent on basic data and on physical or natural science data, which themselves are incomplete.

From a Federal governmental standpoint, definitive evaluation of general requirements for future outdoor recreational use of public and other lands must await development of the nationwide plan for outdoor recreation. The plan, requested by the Congress in Public Law 88-29 (1963), will "identify critical outdoor recreation problems, recommend solutions, and recommend desirable actions to be taken at each level of government and by private interests."

The national plan, under a target date of June 1, 1967, is being developed by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation of the Department of the Interior, in cooperation with other agencies.

Summary

Contrasted with the "status quo" viewpoint exhibited by some toward proposed displacement of commercial uses on some Western public lands is a conclusion by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission: "Today's challenge is to assure all Americans permanent access to their outdoor heritage. The fact that we live in a world that moves crisis by crisis does not make a growing interest in outdoor activities frivolous, or ample provision for them unworthy of the Nation's concern."

Intensive study is needed to permit intelligent judgments to be made on these complex questions. In the words of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission's report: "The Nation's outdoor recreation demands will be met only through wise decisions on resource allocation, sound planning, and effective development of facilities. These all require the support of thorough knowledge and extensive data — the product of research."

While additional knowledge is being developed, skepticism may

be in order when viewing peremptory statements that no additional commercial use restrictions on public lands are warranted in aid of outdoor recreation.

This is a good time to examine carefully all relevant facts and factors in each proposed land use adjustment and consider the alternatives and countervailing adjustments that are realistically available under the circumstances.

A common expression has been that the final goal of range management is efficient production of livestock — to help the stockman provide a living for his family. This expression has a place, but only within a broader perspective. Range management and the other professions dealing with wildlands must also try to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens generally in the use of wildland resources.

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