grass sod. Leaving the sod intact helps minimize livestock trafficability problems on wet natured soils. The basic management program carried out by Pren-tice has been adapted to cattle operations with over 2,000 brood cows and those as small as 25 head. This program is designed to maximize management inputs and minimize cash inputs, at the same time, optimizing forage and livestock production.

Wyoming’s Land Managers

Jim Schwartz

Wyoming encompasses nearly 62 million acres, of which 50 million are native grazing land. Of the 50 million acres of native grazing land, 42 percent is under private ownership. This rangeland is a valuable resource for livestock production, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and watershed protection. Nearly $500 million is generated annually by livestock production, including 1.3 million cattle and 750,000 sheep.

Some conservation practices installed by private landowners, though local conservation districts and with technical assistance from the Soil Conservation Service, include water development, grazing systems, prescribed burning, and reseeding. These practices improve the management and condition of the native grazing land and directly benefit the wildlife and livestock. Also, Wyoming’s rangeland is conserved for the use of generations to come.

Federal, state, and private land managers have all been responsible for the improvement in range conditions. One example emerged from the national concern regarding riparian management over the last few years. Wyoming land managers analyzed the situation and Wyoming is now one of the few states that have formed a “Riparian Association” in which environmentalists, agriculture producers, and professional societies assemble and work toward positive alternatives to make the riparian areas productive while still preserving their integrity.

A balance between wildlife management and natural resource management is responsible for the major increase in big game trends in Wyoming over the past six decades. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies, have shown farmers and ranchers how to significantly increase wildlife numbers. Most of the increase in elk, deer, and pronghorn antelope comes from the improvement of crit-

Wildlife Population Number (state totals)

Brush burning for improved elk habitat and livestock grazing.

Author is Range Conservationist, USDA, SCS, Cheyenne, Wyo.
For example, most ranchers operating in the 1940's in Niobrara County attest that pronghorn antelope were rarely seen in the region. Water appeared to be a major limiting factor in this arid area which curtailed the antelope population. Since that time, over 2,400 reservoirs have been constructed, 1,500 wells developed, and nearly 300 miles of water pipeline with 600 water tanks installed. Today, antelope populations exceed 8,500 in the same area for most of the year. This is a positive tribute to wildlife management agencies and private land owners.

Wyoming is recognized as a leader in range education in the western states. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H programs offer excellent learning opportunities in range management. Range judging and camps in the Big Horn Mountains near Tensleep also offer superb curriculum for Wyoming youth. Wyoming is also one of the few states to develop a practical manual for range and land management.

These educational activities teach others that "grazing" is not a bad word. Wyoming's plant communities evolved through grazing on native range, and these plants require proper grazing to remain healthy and vigorous. And this is a message Wyoming's land managers will continue to convey to the public.

Wyoming has come a long way in managing one of its most important natural resources. There is still a lot of work to be done. A big "hats off" to all of Wyoming's range managers!

To receive the range and land management manual, contact the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts at 2505 E. Fox Farm Road, Cheyenne, Wyo. 82007. Cost of the manual is $20. It includes sections on plant identification, soils, wildlife, range sites, and condition, range utilization and range planning.