

lay the groundwork for formal interchange between the two societies. Substantial, mutual benefits are anticipated as this relationship evolves.

The clear consensus among delegates was that the conference was well organized, intellectually stimulating, productive, and enjoyable. The Programme Handbook and Abstracts contains extended abstracts of the papers presented. The proceedings of group discussions and

various other information generated will appear in GSSA bulletins, and a number of the papers presented will appear in the GSSA Journal, the *Journal of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa*. These materials will be available from the Publications Editor, Pete Zacharias, Grassland Society, Natal University, P.O. Box 375, Pietermaritzburg 3200, Republic of South Africa.

The State of Range Management on Public Lands

Charles D. Bonham

I make no pretensions that the following is a complete analysis of the current state of range management on public lands. I am relying on my observations over the past 35 years.

I have witnessed the decline of range management as a viable discipline. In short, the range management profession began to reach its peak in the early 1960s. During this period public and political interest in allowing livestock grazing on public lands subsided. Soon, an indifference toward livestock grazing was replaced by demands for removing livestock from public lands.

Funding decreased at all levels of government including governmental agencies engaged in the oversight of public lands. The reduced funding provided fewer opportunities for employment as a range professional. The impact of declining support was not realized until the mid-1970s when universities offering range degrees noted a decline in enrollment. Potential students failed to see future employment opportunities. In turn, we in education failed to capitalize on the public's interest in environment and ecology. We gave only lip-service to the role of ecological concepts as applied to range ecosystems. Public interest in ecology, then, continued to influence opinion concerning public lands used for livestock grazing. Many people emphasized only grazing's negative impacts on these lands.

Range professionals regularly talk and complain to each other about the threat of loss of public lands to livestock grazing. Obviously, we should have been selling grazing's merits such as stability, diversity, and other ecological concepts that have been known for almost a century. Ranchers' and other range managers' knowledge of "sustained yield" is older than most grandfathers of those talking about the concept today. Yet, we have failed to inform the public that these concepts have

always been applied when the land is properly managed by range professionals. Instead, we have tried to defend the use of public lands by attacking vocal opponents rather than the problem. The problem is not that people want to eliminate grazing. The problem is that many people are uninformed about the effects of grazing on these lands.

We do not need to learn more facts about grazing and its ecological benefits. We need for information, already learned, to be taught. We should strive to get the truth out to the public, especially to decision-makers, or public lands will soon not be available for livestock grazing. We will not accomplish our goal by complaining to local or regional land management agencies or to one another.

Those of us employed as academics knew better, yet did little to ensure that ecological concepts were rightly incorporated into ecology courses. I include courses taught in range departments as well as those taught in traditional biology departments. We defaulted when we allowed the teaching of "ecosystem ecology" as if only "natural ecosystems" exist or should exist. We should have insisted that most, if not all, ecosystems are "domesticated systems" and will remain so as long as man is part of the system. We have always been engaged in the management of domesticated ecosystems and we still should be responsible for obtaining optimum production from each of them. The appearance of livestock in an ecosystem did not cause the system to become domesticated; man is a "domesticator" of all that can be used for his benefit.

The state of range management did not arrive at its fallen condition without a concerted effort by professional range people, both in land agencies and universities. Land managers did not keep current on new research results after receiving degrees. They were neither encouraged nor motivated by their respective agencies to implement new ideas. Therefore, even if these range pro-

professionals were so inclined, they could not offer any logical defense to establish the importance of livestock in maintaining stability of rangelands.

Academic professionals are the real culprits. Leadership in range departments did two things which I believe contributed to the fall of range management: (1) renamed their departments "range science" and (2) filled positions with staff that "could bring in research monies." The first action encouraged emphasizing abstract notions of basic sciences as if they had to apply to range management. This might have worked if in fact these sciences had concrete principles to offer in the teaching of range management course material.

A change in departments' names alone did not bring with it the incorporation of science into range courses. As an example of the basic science syndrome gone astray, consider the idea that range management could be taught as a science and that the range science courses should be taught in a format consisting of components making up an ecosystem. The approach failed to work because only parts of the system were addressed in courses on rangelands as ecosystems. For example, interactions of biota (livestock, wildlife, and man) were essentially omitted. Again, the most significant oversight occurred by implying that the system be addressed as a "natural" system, rather than in the context of a "domesticated" system. Meanwhile, courses in personnel management, marketing, law, engineering, etc., which have direct applications to range management, were ignored.

The second act by department leaders I call "chasing dollars," which neither promoted nor served to advance range management. "Dollars chasers" were ecologists,

not necessarily committed range management specialists, and the "dollars" were not available for "range" studies. Thus, department leaders did bring national and international reputations to individuals in their departments. But such recognition was not tied to findings in range management, rather to that of ecology for ecology sake. This result should not be surprising, for that's what ecologists do! Graduates from those range science departments are ecologists, not range management specialists. Is it reasonable to expect support for livestock grazing on public lands when in fact such use is not understood by those employed in range decision-making positions? We educated them to behave as ecologists.

Some people, of course, doubt that range management has fallen and some even believe that it is alive and in good health. They might even argue that a stable membership number in the Society for Range Management is evidence because it's holding its own. But we are not holding "our own" in keeping public lands open for livestock grazing (consider the "Livestock free in '93 movement) and educating the public that such use is an ecologically desirable one. Instead, some members of the Society express their doubts about our role in support of livestock grazing on public lands by suggesting that we abandon the words "range management" in reference to the professional society.

Throughout history, organizations, and with them ideas and purposes, have declined and fallen. The fall was not recognized as having occurred until well after the fact because no one involved in the organization was willing to acknowledge that a decline was in fact taking place. Is this the case for livestock grazing on public lands and with it the need for range management?

Moving?

If you are changing your address, notifying the post office is not sufficient to keep your journal coming on time. Please send your new address and the label with your old address to the Society for Range Management, 1839 York Street, Denver, Colorado 80206, USA.