

toring wildlife populations and public land will not be painless to any concerned. Some wildlife, for example, cannot be maintained on all public land that they once were. The grizzly and wolves are obvious examples. Other big game, such as elk, must be managed to subsist with other uses. But livestock permittees will feel the sharpest crunch, primarily because it will be economic.

There's no use kidding ourselves. Livestock use will be reduced more on federal public land. The only question remaining is where the public will allow those reductions to stop. In my opinion, some positive moves by the land management agencies, Congress, and the livestock industry can ease that loss.

First, I believe that livestock grazing must be eliminated on submargi-

nal land, not only because the public demands it, but because such grazing gives the industry a black eye. Second, in order to continue multiple-use grazing on all remaining productive rangeland, many allotments may have to be combined and distributed among fewer permittees, in order to maintain economic ranching units. Thirdly, no where will the public allow livestock to be allocated more than 50 percent of the forage available for animal use. And fourth, riparian areas must get more and better attention. They must be restored quickly. These are, in my view, some basic concepts that all must accept if livestock and big game are to prosper on federal public land.

Given these changes, in one form or another, then federal, state and interest groups can sit down and set

realistic goals, for both livestock and big game at equitable levels that protect the basic forage, land and water resources.

I suspect that a lot of the things which I have mentioned here will be discussed in detail during this meeting. It would serve us all well to listen, and to think about this issue and its solution, with our brains instead of our emotions.

Those of us gathered in this room have lots of common enemies out there. Animal rightists, antihunters, people who despise wildlife management. Then there's the huge 80 percent of the U.S. population who could not care less one way or the other.

Is it better that we face this faceless horde together, or separately? I hope this symposium will help us decide.

## The Habitat Partnership Program in Colorado

Joe Gerrans

**Livestock/big game conflicts** have been an issue for a number of years in Colorado. Considerable efforts have been made to provide relief and/or compensation for these conflicts. Two of the areas where adequate solutions had been lacking were rangeland forage and fence damage. During the winter of 1988-89 an increased level of concern and frustration on the part of the landowners surfaced towards the entire issue of wildlife and livestock conflicts. The frustration most often expressed was that it was unfair for landowners to support an ever increasing number of big game animals, particularly elk. The situation was further complicated by the uneven distribution of the burden. In some areas ranches are located where big game tend to concentrate only in the spring. They may suffer an impact on newly emerging vegetation and yet have no opportunity to

take advantage of those animals in the fall during hunting season. Other ranches may have those same animals only in the fall and may realize a substantial economic benefit from the lease of hunting rights.

Colorado's Habitat Partnership Program was designed to meet the Division director's commitment to the legislature and the State's agricultural industry to address conflicts with rangeland forage and fences resulting from big game herds (Lipscomb et al. 1991). The program was designed to encourage an atmosphere of partnership between wildlife managers, habitat managers, including private landowners, and users of the wildlife resource. Local committees are to be established to ensure appropriate public involvement, on a local basis, in identifying conflicts and recommending strategies to reduce, alleviate, or mitigate those conflicts. The Division has committed funds to implement those strategies. Private

land habitat issues are to be considered in the big game herd management plans. The emphasis for antlerless harvest is to be shifted to impact more of the animals that are causing the conflict and fewer of the animals that are not.

**Guidelines for implementing** the program were approved by the Colorado Wildlife Commission in January, 1990. Included in the guidelines were the methods to appoint local committees, identification of perennial conflicts, types of strategies that might be considered, and recommendations for development of a five year plan (Lipscomb, 1990).

Local committees were formed by the director appointing committee members based on nominations from the agricultural industry, State, and Federal agencies. Conflicts were to be identified in units of affected area which are 640 acres or larger which may involve one landownership, portions of one, or several. In order to

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facilitate administrative efficiency, on private land estimated average annual forage and fence damage must exceed twenty five cents per acre of affected area or twenty percent of the grazing value, whichever is less. On public lands not grazed by livestock the management agency must make a finding that the range is overused. On public lands grazed by livestock the land management agency must make a finding, consistent with an approved multiple-use plan, that big game is using a disproportionate share of forage resources. Conservation Reserve Program lands or any lands similarly leased for conservation purposes or subject to conservation easements may be included in conflict areas for distribution management hunts and range improvement projects only.

**Some general types of strategies** were identified for the committees to use. The first was distribution management hunts. These are special hunts that can be held during a specified time period. For the past two years this time period has been from August 15 through January, excluding the regular big game season. The

purpose of these hunts is to target specific animals at the time and place they are or may in the future cause conflicts. Licenses in the distribution hunt are for cows and does only, but the director may approve the taking of bucks and bulls to solve a specific conflict. Licenses are valid in a designated hunt area and for a specific time period. Once a hunt area is defined, ranches within the area are given special application forms each year which guarantee issuance of a license when brought to a Division office along with appropriate fee. Concentration problems which are primarily on public land are addressed using hunters chosen through our drawing processes for game damage licenses.

**Range improvement projects** were another strategy recommended. This category includes projects on private or public land designed to affect the distribution of big game animals during normal conflict periods. Projects can include artificial seeding of desirable forage plants, fertilization, weed control, brush manipulation, silvicultural treatments, and burning. Improved grazing management sys-

tems (including pasture fencing where necessary) and salting are also projects included in this category.

**Direct cash payments** to offset losses is another strategy. This category includes lease payments to landowners for forage and fence damage on private lands by concentrations of big game animals. This strategy is used only where it is either not feasible to use distribution management hunts or range improvement approaches to deal with those concentrations or they have failed to work. Any other strategies consistent with the spirit of the program may also be considered subject to Wildlife Commission approval.

**The end product would be** a five year Big Game Distribution Management Plan. During the planning stage of the Distribution Management Plan the Division will select a preliminary big game population objective for each area and present that at a public meeting. The recommended objective takes into consideration the habitat information gathered by the committee and comments from all interested publics. This population



On June 18 of the following year strips where the fertilizer was applied are evident. (Photo by Chuck Cesar, BLM).

objective is to be used by the local committee in developing the Distribution Management Plan. The committees provide an opportunity for private landowners and public agencies to identify conflicts on their lands. The local committee will draft their plan based on the conflicts identified and strategies recommended to solve those conflicts. The draft plan will be presented to the Wildlife Commission and public comments will be taken. After considering the public comments, the committee and the Division will make a final recommendation to the Wildlife Commission regarding the plan. Once approved by the Wildlife Commission, the plan will be implemented.

**Two prototype areas** were identified, one in Middle Park and one in the North Fork of the Gunnison River, where the program would be tested (Gerrans 1990) (Sherman et al. 1990). Committees were put in place in each of those areas. The committee then identified and mapped the conflict areas. After identifying the conflicts and determining possible strategies, each committee developed a Big Game Distribution Management Plan. Both prototype Distribution Management Plans were approved by the Wildlife Commission and implementation was started almost immediately (Lewis et al. 1990) (Sherman et al. 1990).

**In order to fund the program** the Division has annually committed five percent of the big game license revenues attributable to the Habitat Partnership Program area averaged over the last three years. The five percent figure is updated annually. Other sources of money are available from State and Federal agencies along with private corporations, organizations, and individuals to assist in implementing the program. Volunteer time is also used on projects.

**In the initial stages** of the program a statewide evaluation committee was appointed to oversee and monitor the effectiveness of the local prototype committees. Once established, all committees will operate as a body throughout the life of the program. Additional five year Distribution Management Plans will be developed as

the present plans expire.

Both prototype committees prepared a report to the statewide committee which addressed accomplishments and changes they felt were either necessary or that they had implemented in the original guidelines (Gerrans 1990) (Sherman et al. 1990). In January of 1991 the statewide evaluation committee provided a report to the Wildlife Commission evaluating each of the prototype areas (Lipscomb et al. 1991).

**The statewide committee** used four criteria to assess the success of the planning phases and initial implementation processes. Did all interests agree they are being treated fairly? Do they believe the process is moving toward solution of problems? Has communication between interests improved, and finally, is the flexibility of the program sufficient to allow adjustments as necessary?

Using comments from both participants and observers, the committee found that the first three criteria have been met. The plans from the prototype areas, that were developed using differing tactics, also pointed out that the fourth criteria has been achieved. One area of concern was that current efforts for monitoring habitat condition and forage production and use may not be sufficient to support wise decisions on population objectives for big game animals. Efforts are being made to address this concern.

The program guidelines recommended by the evaluation committee in that January 1991 report differ somewhat from the original guidelines (Lipscomb 1990). One of the first recommended changes was in the makeup of both the local committees and the evaluation committee. It was felt that local committees should have a member of the big game license buying public on their committee. The recommendation was made that a member of the USDI Bureau of Land Management and a range extension specialist from Colorado State University be added to the statewide committee. All recommended committee changes have been implemented.

**Some of the conflict area** definitions were rewritten. On private lands, a conflict area is one where the landowner believes an excessive concentration of big game animals is causing a problem in the management of his rangeland. On public lands, a conflict area is one where the land management agency makes a finding that the level of wildlife use, or the combination of wildlife and livestock use is inconsistent with the long-term ecological objectives of the approved Land or Resource Management Plan.

Strategies were reviewed and additional strategies were recommended. One was to improve fences at major wildlife crossing points to reduce long-term costs of fence repair. Streamlining payments of eligible small damage claims or providing fencing material in lieu of a claim was another. This strategy is an attempt to speed up the game damage process on small claims while cutting down on the paper work.

**Some additional considerations** were also recommended in developing the Distribution Management Plan. One of the "fits" that must occur in this planning process is the relationship between the Distribution Management Plan and the Data Analysis Unit Plan. The Data Analysis Unit plan is also a five year plan that establishes the herd objective for a particular area in the state. The statewide committee recommended a method in which to incorporate both plans to accomplish that objective (see chart). Generally the Habitat Partnership Program area boundaries fit closely with the Data Analysis Unit boundary. It is felt that in order for either plan to work, they must not only consider numbers but must take into consideration forage availability and maintenance of productive range resources. Also, consideration must be given to the objectives of the affected land manager. The herd size objective may not be totally acceptable to all interests but there must be substantial effective agreement between the affected parties to work with the objective for the five year period covered.

While initially it was felt that the

expansion of this program would occur, no one had been able to estimate impacts on manpower of all agencies represented. After reviewing those impacts, the process is intended to move throughout the State of Colorado in an orderly planned manner. Continuous monitoring and evaluations of the program will be carried out along with fine tuning to accomplish the objectives. So far the program has shown

great promise, but the future will tell how successful it will be.

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*Two-page appendix. After one year of operation the steps shown are the ones to be used by future committees in coordinating their Distribution Management and Data Analysis Unit plans.*

#### Appendix B: Process for developing Data Analysis Unit (DAU) Plans and Distribution Management Plans (DMP's).

##### STEP 1: POPULATION DATA ANALYSIS

*Division of Wildlife summarizes information on population performance and trends.*

##### STEP 2: HABITAT DATA ANALYSIS

*Habitat Partnership Committee and Federal Land Management Agencies summarize information on habitat conflicts, and conditions*

##### STEP 3: IDENTIFY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES

*Obtain input from all interests on goals for population and issues relevant to those goals. Identify management alternatives to address issues.*

##### STEP 4: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE

DRAFT  
DAU  
PLAN

#### APPENDIX B: CONTINUED

##### STEP 4: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE

DRAFT  
DAU  
PLAN

##### STEP 5: HPP COMMITTEE PREPARES DMP PLAN AND COMMENTS ON DAU PLAN

DMP  
PLAN

##### STEP 6: DRAFT DAU PLAN AND DMP MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

##### STEP 7: COMMENTS ON DRAFT PLAN EVALUATED

##### STEP 8: DRAFT DAU PLAN REVISED

##### STEP 9: DAU PLAN AND DMP PLAN TO COMMISSION FOR APPROVAL

FINAL  
DAU, DMP  
PLANS

##### STEP 10: FEDERAL AGENCIES REVISE LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS AS NEEDED

AMENDED  
LAND USE  
PLAN