

Thoughts on the *Journal of Range Management*

By Gary Frasier

I started publishing in the *Journal of Range Management* even before I became a SRM member because I thought the *JRM* readers were the audience that I wanted to reach. At that time the review/revision process was much less formal than today. The manuscript got lost several times in the review/revision process before it was accepted. After acceptance there was a wait of almost 2 years before it reached print. Some of my colleagues said I was making a big mistake to publish in *JRM* as it had a very low scientific credibility in their estimation. I was shown several published articles that had serious scientific flaws. I was a good friend of SRM President-elect Jack Bohning and when I showed him the problem he appointed me to the *JRM* Editorial Board with the instruction "see if it can be improved." I have been associated with *JRM* ever since in one capacity or the other. My entire effort with *JRM* has been to meet the instructions of Jack. I can say without a doubt that the problems we saw over 20 years ago do not exist today.

How does this fit into the current discussions of *JRM*? There was a time in the not too distant past when many Federal field employees (NRCS, BLM, FS) could not go to SRM annual meetings without taking some kind of leave and paying their own way. The Agency Administrators did not support the SRM at the field level. What a change at Casper in 2003. There are many reasons for this change in attitude. I personally believe that part of it is because the Agencies have come to trust the scientific credibility of SRM that is documented by its publications and specifically by the *JRM*. We (SRM) do not want to lose this.

I have a personal experience where information that was published in *JRM* is being used and accepted as scientific fact in resolving resource management conflicts. This credibility has nothing to do with the name of the journal, only that it is a credible scientific publication. This would not have happened in the past.

As a research scientist of 42 years I was always

concerned about the "scientific rating" of *JRM* with respect to acceptance by my peers in promotion and tenure panels. There was a time when it was not very high. This problem has diminished in the past 10 years. There are many researchers, Federal and academia, who have advanced in status yet have extensive publication records with *JRM*.

I, as Editor of *JRM*, receive several manuscripts a year where the authors state they are up for promotion/tenure and the acceptance of their papers will enhance their chances. This has been from researchers in all disciplines, range science, hydrology, ecology, etc. They are not concerned that *JRM* is not an ecological, or range management, or some other special group publication, only that it is a recognized scientific publication. This would not be the case for a new publication that is just being started, irrespective of the title, i.e., Range Management Science, Range Ecology, etc.

The SRM membership is a very diverse group. This causes problems in many areas because of the different perspectives and what an individual wants to get from their membership. This diversity is also true within the *JRM* publication. There is a concern that we should not publish certain types of papers because they do not fit some peoples' idea of "range management." There is also a concern that as an international organization we do not have adequate representation or recognition in the international scene. We currently have 3 non-U.S. members on the *JRM* Editorial Board. There are a significant number of papers submitted from other countries for publication consideration in *JRM*. We are getting these papers because we do consider topics outside of the normal "range management" category. We publish the Abstracts of our papers in Spanish (a few in French and Portuguese). We do have an international reputation. We are getting relatively high scientific level papers from foreign countries, most notably, Argentina. This was not true a few years ago. Their level of writing has made dramatic improvement. This is a credit to

their desire to publish in *JRM* and the extra effort of SRM Associate Editors to work with foreign scientists whose first language is not English.

We are the premier source of information on many topics. There are specialized journals on most topics covered by *JRM*. It is only in *JRM* that you can get a broad perspective of the entire system whether it be public rangelands, mixed land ownership operations in the Intermountain regions, private farms in the Midwest, or improved pastures in South Africa.

Papers published in the *Journal of Range Management* are being cited by authors in other publications. We do not have to solicit articles for

publication. Authors submit articles for publication consideration in *JRM* because we have the readership they want to reach. Most authors have come to learn the scientific level required for publication. As a result we do not get the "junk" papers.

The future? We need to strive to improve the scientific quality of the *Journal*. This only comes from diligent effort on the part of the *JRM* Associate Editors. Not a name change. Not a change in topics. We should consider all topics related to the management of the natural resources, native or improved. Any changes to be more single focused will dilute our standing. Our strength is our diversity.