harvesting area were a small portion of an extensive wood-
land. Integrated pest management is a continuing necessity 
in energy harvesting.

Grazing management is essential if the site improvement is 
to have a change for successful establishment and eventual 
persistence of desirable forage species. This means that 
initially livestock must be excluded to assure seedling estab-
lishment. After establishment, the harvested and revegetated 
site has inherently different forage production from any 
remaining woodland, creating a problem in grazing animal 
distribution.

Public land management agencies have been overwhelmed by the sudden increase in demand for areas to be 
used by private citizens for fuel wood harvesting that little 
consideration may have been given to the design and execu-
tion of harvest plans, or post-harvest revegetation and 
management.

Despite the big upsurge in demand for fuel wood from 
public lands, a segment of the public may view such harvest-
ing as destruction of a non-renewable natural resource. The 
uninformed public may view juniper or pinyon trees that 
have invaded shrub/grasslands as a natural part of the envir-
onment. Knowledgeable land managers know that this is not 
true, but this will not lessen the public outcry.

Prospective
An acre of western juniper woodland with 60 trees per acre 
and trees 30 feet tall can produce through fuel wood harvest-
ing (10 cords/acre) energy equal in heating value to 1,800 
gallons of fuel oil or roughly $1,800 per acre at 1980 prices. If 
we view this as a method of financing rangeland improve-
ment, there is a tremendous chance to improve and stabilize 
many acres of rangeland. Many people have forcefully 
spoken out on the need to improve our degraded rangelands. 
Congress has passed a rangeland improvement bill, but funds 
to accomplish this improvement have been lacking. Woody biomass for energy in return for rangeland improve-
ment may offer a means of accomplishing at least a portion 
of the needed rangeland improvement.

Forage Is up in Southern California

Ricardo Gonzalez

The available forage trend in southern California forests is 
on an upward swing. This means that forage on public lands 
is increasing. This increase is not due to good range man-
agement, but rather, this upward trend is related to factors 
affecting the rancher who uses these lands. Let us examine 
the factors that have had a tremendous effect on the rancher 
the past 10 years.

Taxation is a factor that has affected everybody in the 
country, but more so for the southern California rancher. As 
urbanization moves out towards the rangelands, the system 
used for assessing value of urban land is used on a compara-
ble basis for rangelands. Thus, the rancher who has more 
land will pay more taxes.

The livestock market within the last 10 years has been so 
erratic that a rancher stands a better chance in a Las Vegas 
gambling casino. This high cost of feeds, veterinary care, 
ranching operation, and maintenance reduces the net value 
of the rancher’ product. Even more so, when the true value of 
beef-on-hoof is not even close to the price paid at the super-
market, then one wonders where it all is going to end.

Family tradition is another factor that is eroding away. No 
longer is the rancher’s son willing to experience the hard-
ships of making a living on the range from Sunday to Sunday. 
And why should he, when there is a 40-hour work week, with 
weekends off, and stable careers as lawyers, brokers, truck 
drivers, plumbers, state and federal employees, etc., waiting 
for him out in the real world.

If by chance the family tradition is not eroded when the 
head of the family dies, then the surviving heirs have to face 
the burden of inheritance taxes. This burden is satisfied by 
either selling part or all of the ranch unit.

There is another concern, catastrophic wildfires and air 
quality that has initiated an extensive fire suppression effort. 
Out of this effort has come brush encroachment onto range-
lands and the loss of an active tool for range improvements.
In other words, there has been too much fire protection.

New laws have come into the picture too. The environmen-
talists have screamed “preservation” at Washington, D.C.,

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