The Future Demands a Joint Effort

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The passage of several Congressional Acts during recent years (National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Range Land Improvement Act of 1978) has resulted in a profound impact on Federal Agencies entrusted with managing public lands, and users of these lands, especially the livestock industry.

One of the most useful instruments in responding to the effects of this legislation, for both the Federal agencies and the livestock industry (i.e. grazing permittee), is the Allotment Management Plan.

The development, implementation, and operation of a successful long-range management plan is beneficial to both the grazing permittee and the public land managing agency. The basic objective of this management program is to provide for proper use of the forage resource, while incorporating provisions for other resource needs.

The mutual development of a Management Plan by the rancher and agency, can result in advantages for both involved parties. A much better understanding of the resource production potential can be acquired through technical analyses of the grazing allotment. Through range improvement funds generated from a percentage of grazing fees returned to agencies, more guaranteed financial assistance can be available for necessary range improvements. Perhaps most important is the mutual understanding by the rancher and agency, of the other’s objectives, considerations, and needs, resulting in proper management of the grazing allotment and its resources.

The backbone of the long-range management plan is the grazing system. A successful grazing system requires a great amount of thought and effort, from both the rancher and agency.

The purpose of the grazing system is two-fold: number one, it must benefit the phenological requirements of the forage being managed on the range, and yet at the same time, it must benefit, or at least not be detrimental to, livestock production or income potential over the long run.

A grazing system must be “tailor-made” for each grazing allotment. There is no single grazing system which can be applied across the board to fit all grazing allotments. Yet there are some basic principles that apply to all grazing systems:

1. There will never be a grazing system which will correct an overstocked range.
2. There is no grazing system that can correct ranges with poor grazing distribution due to lack of certain necessary range improvements (water, fences, brush control, etc.).
3. Constant monitoring and often stocking adjustments are necessary after implementation of a grazing system.
4. A grazing system must consider the livestock operator’s type of operation, kind and class of livestock, and the requirements of the vegetation being managed.
5. Flexibility in the grazing system is necessary to make needed adjustments due to such things as changing market conditions, droughts, fires, etc.

With these principles in mind, it can not be stressed enough, the importance of the livestock operator becoming fully involved in developing the grazing system. Who should better understand the needs of the livestock operation than the rancher.

Knowledge and abilities of both the agency officials, and the rancher is of little value until a mutual desire to accomplish the development of a functional grazing system has been established. This is created when a personal relationship of mutual understanding, creditability, and respect is established between the agency official and the rancher.

Only after this atmosphere has been established, can the necessary communications and careful plannings take place for the proper management of a grazing allotment.

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