

Can Range Management Objectives Be Attained within Political and Judicial Systems?

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Rangelands are primarily affected by 3 independent, but interacting, forces. These forces are economic, climatic, and biologic. When the three independent forces adversely impact the rangeland resources, the affected people trigger a [fourth] dependent force. The [fourth] force is the judicial or political process by which major land-use decisions have frequently been made. Although this process has produced several laws aiding rangeland management, resource management by legislation or judicial mandate has not always provided the best solution. How can range managers control these forces affecting rangelands and use them and the political-judicial systems to further professional objectives?

Before we can answer that question, we first need to define the objectives of rangeland management and agree on some basic assumptions about economic, climatic, biologic, and political forces affecting management. As members of the Society for Range Management, our professional objectives are to: (1) develop an understanding of range ecosystems and the principles applicable to the management of range resources; (2) assist all who work with range resources to keep abreast of new findings and techniques in the science and art of range management; (3) improve the effectiveness of range management to obtain from range resources the products and values necessary for our welfare; and (4) create a public appreciation of the economic and social benefits to be obtained from the range environment.

Economic assumptions are that the prices of meat, wool, fence posts, fertilizer, chemicals, machinery, money, and everything else are really not known very far in the future. Prices may be higher, very much higher, lower, very much lower or about the same 10 years from now as they are today. Within those 10 years, prices could be at any of those points and will not usually all change at the same time. Prices affect costs, benefits, and returns, which are all therefore unpredictable.

Climatic assumptions are that we will continue to have weather and talk about it and manage it but slightly. There will be drier times, drought, wet seasons, very wet seasons and similar seasons but none which are normal and no two that are exactly alike. On western rangelands there will be more dry years than wet ones. Tree ring data show extremes, cycles both wet and dry, but nothing really to base predictions upon except each is different and the weather is neither getting wetter nor drier.

Biological assumptions are that plants and animals will be affected by climate and by the management provided. Rangeland production can be doubled in the nation. Production varies seasonally due to climate but also as affected by the plant's health and ability to respond to changes. The plant's ability to respond depends on its characteristics, health or condition which are all affected by past climate and management. Animals can be managed. Livestock are one product from rangelands which enter the economic stream. Other rangeland products have economic return but usually their advocates do not feel that their total benefits enter the economic stream (all livestock benefits are not economic either as the pastoral scene has value).

Political and judicial assumptions are that people who are dissatisfied can use the legislature or the courts for change. Please note that it is only persons who are not satisfied that activate the political-judicial system. People without complaints rarely contact their State or Congressional representative or initiate judicial actions.

Thus of the four, range managers can manage only the biological forces. Of these, plants and animals, especially livestock, can be managed almost totally. We have the ability to manage for any plant desired within those capable of growing on a site and we set parameters on obtainable products depending on our selection of the plants. Through our vegetation management, we also affect water yield, soil loss, site stability, aesthetics and diversity of animal life. We can install rangeland improvements, such as fences and water developments, to affect use of available forage and adjust the season and length of grazing use to affect plant composition. Scientifically and technologically, we have an amazing amount of control over the biological forces affecting the rangelands.

The great tragedies result when the forces are adversely affecting rangelands at the same time. The Dust Bowl Days of the early 1930's are an example of a period when they were all adverse at the same time. Could this happen again? With high grain prices more grain could be planted and some on marginal sites which are more suitable as rangelands. With high interest rates, livestock operators could get into a financial squeeze-chute where they could not sell down to match plant production during the first dry season and still meet financial obligations. Operators live on trust that the next season will be better. They know from many years of experience that rangeland vegetation is extremely tenacious and capable of astounding response to favorable conditions. Unfortunately, however, drought or strong economic pres-

Editor's Note: Keith Miller presented this paper at the Calgary SRM meeting in February, 1982. Reprinting is for the benefit of the 4,900 members who did not hear it. Several in the audience suggested it be published in *Rangelands*. We agree.

sure can create a situation where long-term objectives are obscured by immediate needs. What would successional drought years do? With present economic conditions, many operators would experience financial disaster. Before they went under, many rangeland plant communities would be seriously stressed. After 3 years of drought, would the rangelands be in any better condition than they were during the Dust Bowl Days? In 1935, 8% of the short grass prairie was in good condition (Senate Document 199); in 1976, 15% of the plains grassland was in good condition (RPA 1980). After three years of drought, what percent do you predict would be in good condition?

We have to accept the fact that the rangelands cannot escape the adverse impacts of economic, drought, weakened plants and apathy of people simultaneously. Only by working with the forces affecting rangelands can we prevent the potential reoccurrence of our lands literally drying up and blowing away.

How, then, can we synchronize our efforts with the changing biologic, climatic, and economic forces, and motivate people to use the political system for rangeland improvement? First, we need to know what plants are obtainable on each site, potential uses of the site, and the land's anticipated productivity with each alternative available. We also need to make others aware of the potential of each alternative. While we agree with Mr. William Schroder (*Rangelands*, February '81) that range managers don't have exclusive jurisdiction over land-use choices, or the allocation of products to various uses, we do believe that range professionals are the only people who can provide rational alternatives from which

intelligent choices can be made. Professional knowledge of the alternatives can also be used to show people the potentials for improvement. If we can focus attention on long-term gains, as opposed to short-term use, we should be able to create discontent with the status quo and motivate people of all interests in rangelands to press for actions supporting rangeland improvement.

Second, we need to increase the potential of range improvement efforts by synchronizing them with the 4 forces discussed. Synchronization entails taking full advantage of favorable conditions for seedings, controlling undesirable species, or adjusting use or use areas and deferring treatments until conditions are favorable. We can achieve synchronized management efforts by developing the flexibility necessary to react with changing economic, biologic, and climatic forces. To be able to know what to do, where, and when, we need to build coordinated plans. Plans should be site-specific and responsive to known resource conditions and management constraints. They should contain facts on treatments needed, schedules for actions, what the opportune times for actions are, and the potential or expected results for each rangeland use.

Third, we can prepare for the future. We need to be prepared for the dry years and economically poor years that we know will come. Rangelands can survive hard times if they start out with strong, vigorous plants. We may not have as much control over the future as we wish, but we do have the ability to prevent a recurrence of the past. Each day improvement is delayed is an added day of opportunity lost and whose benefits can never be regained!!!

Nominations for Society Officers

Second vice-president and *two directors* are elected annually by the membership of the Society. Candidates are determined by the Nominating Committee members through direct contact with potential nominees and from those submitted by petition to the chairman.

The Nominating Committee, excluding the chairman, select by secret ballot the final candidates from the list of qualified nominees. Vita and support material **must be to the chairman by April 1, 1983** for the offices with terms from 1984 through 1986.

In accordance with the revised by-laws of the Society, "It shall be the duty of this committee to prepare a list of candidates qualified for the elective offices and to receive nominating petitions from the membership. . . . Proposed candidates nominated by petition. . . shall be included in the list of all prospective candidates being considered by the Nominating Committee, but their name shall appear on the ballot only if they are selected by the Nominating Committee in accordance with the committee's procedures and operating guidelines as approved by the Board of Directors." Each individual petition must be supported by at least 50 voting members of the Society.

All nominees shall provide a biographical sketch and a statement of willingness to be nominated and to serve if elected. **Forms for these may be obtained from the Nominating Committee chairman, Dr. H.G. Fisser, Division of Range Management, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071.**

When contacted regarding possible nomination, members are urged to be receptive and recognize their inherent responsibility to provide leadership in the Society business. Nominating Committee members are commonly met with responses of inadequate time or lack of interest from contacted persons. The elected positions in the Society do require commitment but usually not to an overburdening extent. Before refusing to be nominated, members are asked to seriously consider the needs of the Society and the role one might provide in its governing process.
