

In another area, rangeland management and federal coal policies have at times been at odds with one another. And given the tremendous boom in mining activity, it's not hard to understand why.

We have come a long way in recent years. The unique reclamation problems associated with strip mining on semiarid Western rangelands are beginning to be understood. Thanks to the contributions of you men and women in the range management profession, mined land reclamation is changing from an art to a science. The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 mandates certain reclamation standards. Its provisions require surface mining operations to restore the land to a condition capable of supporting prior uses. The approximate original contour of the area being mined must be restored. Topsoil must be replaced after mining. And care must be taken to minimize the disturbances to the quality and quantity of water in surface and underground systems. The new act also creates a reclamation tax to be used to reclaim abandoned mine sites. Again, Congress has the oversight responsibility to insure those concepts are achieved.

Let me conclude by acknowledging that my remarks have focused on but a few of the many challenges facing rangeland management. The critical point is that we are making progress.

Positive trends are evident which should advance your efforts. . . and your influence . . . in the decade ahead.

- There is a growing awareness in Congress of the importance of rangeland and the need to improve, preserve, and protect it through policies which promote proper management.

- Increased Congressional oversight should bring a far more precise efficient correlation between legislative intent and administration implementation.

- An increased realism is sweeping the country affecting attitudes on every subject from environmental protection to government regulation. America is coming of age and recognizing that we must make critical choices to maintain our standard of living and our environment.

We are going to have to rely less on spontaneous momentum, more on professional management, and thus, you in range management represent the wave of the future as well as the strength of the past. You in the Society for Range Management will play an increasingly important role in policy decisions. You will largely determine the direction of rangeland management in the 1980's. I can think of no organization more dedicated or qualified to assure this responsibility. Your competence has earned our confidence.

As a Senator, a Rancher, and an American . . . I salute you!

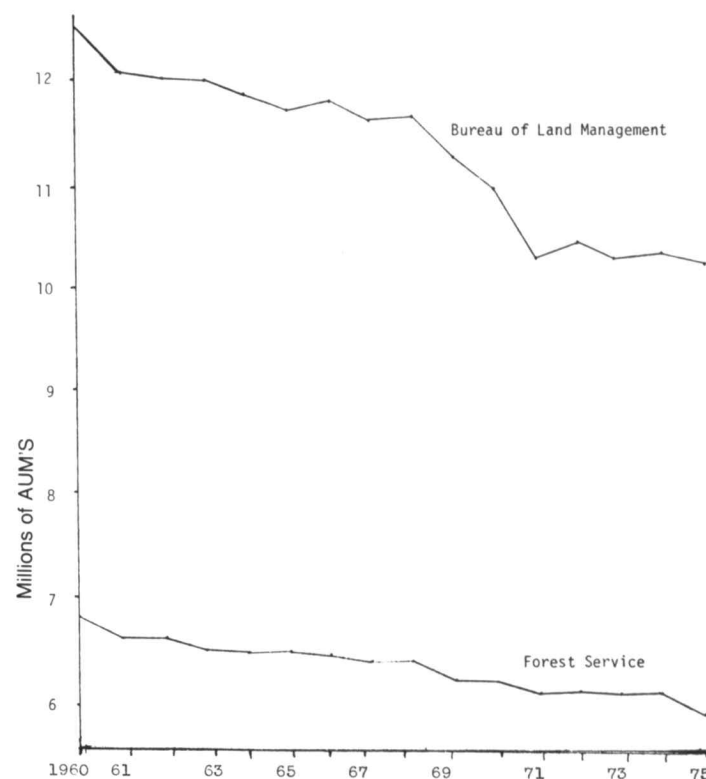
Livestock Grazing on Federal Rangelands—Going, Going, Gone?

E. Bruce Godfrey

Declines in the use of lands administered by various federal agencies by domestic livestock have been documented by several authors. For example, Clawson (1967) reported that the use of National Forest System lands by domestic livestock declined from a high of nearly twenty and one half million AUM's in 1918 to six and one half million in 1956. Clawson also reported that the use of lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) declined from nearly 16 million AUM's in 1944 to less than 15 million in 1964. Two of the primary reasons for these reductions were due to adjudications and changes in the class of livestock—sheep permits were generally changed to cattle permits at a ratio greater than five to one.

While the declines that occurred in the past were nearly inevitable, declines since the early sixties were not expected by many ranchers who had federal grazing permits. While reductions in use have not been large in many areas, the general trend in the use of public lands has continued to decline. Recently, however, many ranchers who have permits in areas where environmental statements are being written by the BLM are often faced with reductions in excess of 50%. These reductions can generally be interpreted as a second adjudication which could (will?) be faced by ranchers in other areas in the future. As a result, some ranchers have come to question their role as users of America's federal lands. While numerous reasons can be given for this apprehension, the following appear to be some of the major reasons why past and probably future reductions in the use of federal lands by domestic livestock may (will?) occur.

One of the major reasons why the role of livestock use on federal lands has been questioned arises from a difference of



Million AUM's of authorized or permitted use by domestic livestock on BLM administered lands and on National Forest System lands in the eleven Western states, 1960-1975. Sources: Public Land Statistics, Annual Grazing reports.

opinion concerning the importance of federal lands for domestic livestock grazing (Council for Agricultural Science and Technology 1974). For example, one BLM official recently wrote "... ranchers in the west who are dependent upon the public land for major portions of grazing for their livestock do not now, and never did have a comparative advantage in producing livestock at less cost than do their counterparts in the Midwest and Southeastern States." (Fulcher 1977). While little empirical evidence exists which can be used to support this position, it does reflect an attitude that exists among some members of the federal bureaucracy to the effect that all livestock can (should?) be removed from federal lands with little, if any, impact on the national supply of beef or lamb.

While few, if any, federal employers have a personal grudge against the livestock industry, several changes have occurred within the last decade which make many federal employers less sympathetic towards the use of federal lands by domestic livestock than they once were. First, an increasing number and percentage of students graduating in range and forest management as well as faculty members who teach within the university system come from urban rather than rural backgrounds. As a result many have little, if any, understanding of the problems faced by cattle producers and even fewer have wide field experience. This general lack of understanding is often compounded by the fact that some schools no longer require students majoring in forest or range management to take a summer session or field oriented classes that force students to view conditions as they exist "on the ground." Furthermore, many nonrange majors can qualify as a "range conservationist" with a minimum number of biological/botany classes. Many of these students do not take classes in livestock production. As a result, many range conservationists that are placed on the federal register are primarily concerned with the impact of management actions, such as grazing systems, on plant composition and cover with little, if any, consideration of their impact on livestock production. In fact, the primary goal of many ecologically oriented managers seems to be to get an area in "excellent" condition—i.e. climax composition—when one of several alternative seral stages may be more productive. This general attitude was perhaps most clearly articulated by the late Francis Colbert (1977) when he indicated that range was not synonymous with grazing by domestic livestock and that range was a "kind of land, not a land use." This general philosophical attitude has also become part and parcel of the curriculum of most "range schools." These schools and their associated faculty often emphasize the importance of the plant and soil sciences with little, if any, emphasis on animal science—one of the historic disciplines of range management.

This general attitude would not be pervasive, however, if the agencies had not implemented the planning systems that are currently popular. Under this system a "rangeman" is expected to plan for range, which does not necessarily mean livestock grazing. Under this system the livestock industry may no longer have an advocate for "their" use. In fact, many ranchers contend that no one fights for "their" use on planning teams—a situation which varies significantly from team members which represent wildlife, recreation, or wilderness interests. As a result, many planning teams are made up of "wilderness beasts," "wildlife beasts," "recreation beasts", and even "anthropological beasts" that commonly have personal as well as professional interests in the use they "plan for", while the "range" man often becomes a "forage beast" with little, if any, interest in domestic livestock production.

The allocations that often result from these planning team efforts are not without some justification, however. Most land administrators are faced with increasing demands by other user groups for priority. Most "multiple use" allocations do, however, represent reductions in livestock, timber, or minerals in favor of some recreation or preservation oriented interest group such as hunters, wilderness advocates, wild horse interests, or rock hounds. Three of the most important reasons why these demands have grown rapidly during the last decade is due to increased leisure time, disposable income, and free use of public lands by these interest groups.

Not all reductions in the use of federal range lands by domestic livestock can be laid on the steps of federal administrators, however. In some cases, it has become uneconomic—the fee and nonfee costs are greater than the benefits obtained—to graze federal lands. This is perhaps particularly true of sheep, as vacant sheep allotments exist in many forests in the West. Furthermore, some areas have received heavy use over time as a result of "common use" and trespass problems which have reduced the capacity of the area. In addition, some ranchers have found it profitable to subdivide the "home ranch" and sell smaller units to hobby ranchers, who do not depend on livestock production for a living.

Should the recent and historic declines in the use of federal range lands by domestic livestock continue, however, several implications arise that may not be expected by many members of the Society for Range Management. First, with decreased emphasis on livestock production, federal agencies will be hard pressed to justify increasing their staff of "range conservationists" in the eyes of most budget analysts as well as members of Congress. Thus, the current high demand for range graduates may be a bubble that is about to burst. Second, expenditures designed to "improve rangelands" will become increasingly under fire if justified only by statements such as "it's good for the land" or "it will improve the conditions of the area." Budget analysts will require hard facts concerning what these expenditures are actually buying. Third, reductions in grazing on federal lands, with increasing demands for livestock products, will place new and increased burdens on private lands. As a result public efforts that help private land owners (e.g. Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service) will probably yield returns that are greater than returns that could be expected from the expenditure of funds by federal land management agencies. In short, reductions in the use of federal lands by domestic livestock may be one case of "strangling one goose that lays golden eggs" if viewed from the perspective of the federal agencies. However, as in most cases, someone generally gains in these situations. In this case, ranchers grazing on private lands and agencies that are oriented toward the private sector will probably gain, while ranchers having federal grazing permits and federal agencies lose. From some people's view this change will be "good" from both sides of the fence.

References

- Clawson, Marion. 1967. The Federal Lands since 1956: Recent Trends in Use and Management. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore 113 p.
- Colbert, Francis T. 1977. Land use planning—a summary from the rangeman's point of view. *Rangeman's Journal* 4(3):74-76.
- Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. 1974. Livestock grazing on federal lands in the Western States. *J. Range Manage.* 27: 174-181.
- Fulcher, Glen. 1977. Economic issues and future resource planning on public lands. A paper presented at the forum on the Economics of Public Land Use in the West. Reno, Nevada. March 10-11, 1977.