Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I was delighted to see the article on management of annual grasses in the December *Rangelands* ("Cheatgrass and Grazing Rangelands," by James A. Young and Charlie D. Clements, 29[6]:15–20). It is long past due that the research community recognizes that management must be based upon what vegetation is present, not what one thinks should be present or hopes will become established.

Early in my career I was a range specialist for a nationwide project in Iran. I had been making estimates of forage production in many different areas of the country and had a pretty good idea of what the vegetation was like. One of the founding members of SRM came to Iran to give a presentation on grazing management but emphasized over and over that stocking rates and grazing management must be based only on perennial species. I knew that was an impossibility and finally walked out of the meeting. Since that time I have seen over and over areas where the only forage in any quantity consisted of annual species.

I have just shaken my head in dismay at the abandonment of crested wheatgrass as a viable alternative to

native perennial grasses in areas where it is viable for reseeding. I did my MS research in southeastern Oregon on a part of the Vale Project area. Crested wheatgrass saved much of that area from going the same way as southwestern Idaho, which is now almost pure cheatgrass. It is a real pity when political correctness gets in the way of rational management of our natural resources and I am afraid that is what has happened. Many seem to think that anything we do that is not totally "natural" is bad. When crested wheatgrass is seeded it allows gradual increase of sagebrush to a point and also allows many perennial forbs to grow. It is much better to have something that is not native but that is doing a reasonably good job in the environment than to reach for an ideal that can never be attained.

As a life member of SRM and having spent my working life in range management and closely related disciplines, I would urge much more practical research and more articles like the one by Young and Clements. I commend you for having published this article in *Rangelands*.

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