MANAGEMENT NOTES

Integrated Management of Public and Private Lands

DILLARD H. GATES

*Range Management Specialist,
Oregon State University,
Corvallis, Oregon*

Land ownership patterns intensify the complexity of grazing-land management. Frequently, a ranch operation is based upon the integrated use of several ownerships, each of which may have a different viewpoint or different objectives in regard to resource management. It is easy to understand how "operating for profit" a ranch unit made up of multiple ownerships may well create a dilemma for the ranch manager. The rancher should not have to face this problem alone. Everyone interested in the full development and wise use of our range and related resources should assume their proportionate share of the responsibility for resolving this problem.

The Problem

The magnitude of the problem, encompassing major portions of the United States, quickly becomes apparent to those interested enough to take a close look. The economic and sociological contributions of the range resource to the welfare of the nation is obvious. Some may feel that the livestock industry motivated by the profit motive should take the major responsibility and shoulder the major cost of development of the range resource. Certainly, the livestock industry must play an important role. It should take a major part in that phase of range resource development that contributes directly to industry income. The integrated development of public and private lands is a program of interested parties working together for sound development of the resource for the long run, and should offer opportunity both for profit for the individual operator and maximum sustained use of the total resource.

What Should Be Done

It would appear that for maximum development and utilization, a program of integrated resource management should be developed. Such a program need not relieve any individual or agency from the responsibility of wise management, or deprive any of their rights, or usurp their legal power. It would simply mean that all ownerships involved within any management unit would plan together for its wise development and use. It would mean that all ownerships must realize that any management decision made on a given piece of land has implications far beyond its boundaries. When given the opportunity, implicated ownerships may well contribute constructively to management decisions that would contribute to development of the total resource.

Acceptance of such a concept would mean acceptance of the fact that to some degree "we are all our brothers' keepers."

On a bit lower plane, it would also have value in a more practical way. Integrated development of all land, public and private, should provide maximum economic return to the individual, the community, and the nation. For example, it is difficult to justify extensive development and improvement of public lands under the guise of increased forage production when development of private land is lagging to such a degree that

base properties will not support increased production. On the other hand, operators may have developed private lands to about their potential and await improvement and development of public lands for further development. Balanced development of public and private lands, with funds extended by government or individuals, in a manner resulting in maximum returns, consistent with sound land use, appears to be a logical means of range resource development. In this kind of a resource development program, full consideration must be given to other interests such as wildlife, recreation, watersheds, etc. In other words, such a program as this would of necessity require sound overall initial planning.

How Could It Be Accomplished

A program of integrated resource management would necessitate an amalgamation of land ownerships to logical management units. Meadow lands, hay lands, pastures, and range lands of each management unit would be managed to provide an economical year-round forage supply for grazing animals. No operator or agency would or should think in terms of the productivity of an area by itself, but rather its productivity when integrated with all lands making up the management unit.

No new agencies need be created or laws passed for a program of integrated resource management to function. Sufficient flexibility exists in the laws dealing with management of lands. Administrative decision could set the stage for program modification to emphasize the idea. Some educational effort may also be required to obtain public understanding and acceptance. Mechanisms now exist in universities, experiment stations, extension services, and federal agencies to provide the educational assistance.

Our society will continue to become more complex. Population increases will exert pressures on our natural resources at an accelerated

rate. These factors will force the adoption of this kind of program sometime in the future. We who are charged with the responsibility for development of the range and related resource should take the leadership in developing such a program. We should take the leadership while there is still time for early planning and development of the range resource, for wise use in the long run.