



## New Task Force Attacks Range Problems

By Del W. Despain, Dr. Jimmy T. LaBaume and John A. Tanaka  
Range Research Task Force

To supplement range management research and extension efforts of the University of Arizona, the Arizona State Legislature in 1980 authorized a five-year project to evaluate current range management practices and to conduct applied research on current problems related to Arizona rangelands. A three-member Range Research Task Force (RRTF) was appointed to carry out the project. The RRTF functions under the auspices of the university's Division of Range Resources.

During its first year, the RRTF has participated in the development of allotment management plans for some 15 ranches or portions of them. Its role has varied from help in monitoring vegetation to the development and implementation of grazing programs and range improvements for individual allotments. The RRTF tries to ensure the full cooperation and participation of ranch owners and managers and appropriate government agencies. Several allotments continue to be jointly monitored by RRTF, ranch and agency personnel to track the effectiveness of management plants and to help identify research needs.

### Government Agency Interactions

In addition to working with government agencies in allotment management planning and applied research, the RRTF has also filled requests from various agencies for input into agency procedures and

Photographs: The UA Range Research Task Force has set up long-term monitoring plots to check range condition on Patsy Haydon's ranch near Florence. At left, task force member John Tanaka (standing) and Steve Cassady of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service list the plant species present in a measured sampling area. At right, UA range specialist Phil Ogden and Haydon identify a grass sample. (Photos by Guy Webster.)

policies and for critical review of public documents. Included have been reviews of environmental impact statements, analyses of procedures for setting stocking rates on public lands, and input into rangeland vegetation monitoring procedures and policies.

One task force member participates on the Arizona Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Monitoring Committee, an interagency group that reviews new and proposed range monitoring policies and procedures of the BLM. RRTF members are also working with agency personnel in the proper application of monitoring techniques recently adopted by the BLM in Arizona and by the State Land Department.

One of the principal keys to successful natural resource management is coordinated planning among all parties concerned, including the land users. The framework for coordinated planning has been established in Arizona. The RRTF is investigating the state-of-the-art of coordinated planning in Arizona as it relates to range management, with particular interest in the role of the principal land user, the rancher.

RRTF members are cooperating with the Arizona Interagency Executive Group in the coordinated planning system. This group includes administrators of the various resource agencies operating in the state and of the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts. RRTF members are also working with some local coordinated planning efforts.

## Applied Research

Through these activities the RRTF has identified several research needs on Arizona rangelands. The task force is conducting specific research projects to help meet some of these needs. Some of this research is funded or aided by public agencies or institutions.

RRTF research involves such projects as:

- Evaluating the sensitivity of rangeland monitoring techniques to change and variability over time
- Monitoring prescribed burns and seedings on pinyon-juniper ranges
- Observing the effectiveness of fuelwood harvesting followed by chemical treatment as a means of alligator juniper control
- Aerial assessment of semiarid rangelands
- Using goats to control mesquite, catclaw and creosote bush
- Studying the impact of elk grazing on deferred rotation grazing systems
- Testing grass and shrub species for revegetation of abandoned farm and similar lands in Arizona.

Many of these and other research projects are located on ranches where RRTF has helped with allotment management planning.

Although it has existed for little more than a year, the UA Range Research Task Force is already established as one of the primary representatives of the university in rangeland management concerns throughout Arizona. The task force will continue to cooperate with range management interests in seeking to provide information through research and education to help solve range problems and improve the management of Arizona's rangelands.