

UA Encourages Cooperation In Use of Public Rangeland

By Dr. Dave A. Bryant
Range Resources

Since 1977 the University of Arizona's range management extension effort has focused on the need for better communication and cooperation among range users—primarily rancher permittees—and regulatory agency personnel. Arizona has had a long history of rancher-agency disagreement and conflict. Recent allotment management planning efforts for public rangelands have rekindled many of the old fires of dissension and emphasized the need for improved cooperation.

The range extension program has been built around a series of statewide range management workshops for range users and regulatory agency personnel. UA range specialists have also given individual assistance to ranchers and agency personnel.

The UA Cooperative Extension Service has sponsored more than 60 range management workshops, short courses or field tours throughout Arizona since 1977. The 33 workshops in a three-phase effort have drawn an average attendance of 30 participants. Thirty range management tours, field days and short courses have supplemented the workshops, and have had 50 to 300 participants each. In all, more than 3,500 people have attended Arizona extension range management programs since 1977.

Phase I workshops focused on range evaluation methods used by federal agencies and aimed to improve communication between ranchers and agencies. At most workshops, Forest Service or BLM representatives explained their mapping techniques. UA range specialist Phil Ogden or livestock specialist Ed LeViness showed ways to measure forage production and use. Range specialist Dave Bryant told how to evaluate range condition and tell whether it is improving or declining. John Stair, UA extension wildlife specialist, explained the importance



UA team rides with rancher Stuart Anderson to help evaluate conditions on his ranch in pinyon-juniper rangeland east of Kingman. From left: Mohave County Extension Agent Rob Grumbles, Anderson, extension specialists Ed LeViness and Dave Bryant. (Photos by Ted Bundy.)

of riparian habitat, such as streamsid es and wet areas, and told how to evaluate riparian areas. Most of the Phase I workshops included a second day for hands-on field exercises. Local county extension agents participated in workshops in all three phases.

Phase II, begun in 1979, was a self-help program for public land permittees. These workshops encouraged permittees to take the initiative in designing and implementing the management plan for their own grazing allotments. Bryant and agency representatives told participants what types of information are helpful in compiling a plan acceptable to land management agencies. Such information includes records of plant, livestock and wildlife populations, records of weather, photos to document long-term trends in range appearance, and written ideas for managing the allotment. LeViness and Ogden described ways to get maximum grazing capacity and Stair spoke about wildlife concerns.

Phase III workshops started in January 1980. They have focused on the livestock management aspects of allotment management planning, with presentations by extension specialists, local county agents and agency representatives. These workshops have included information about cattle dietary requirements, plants poisonous to cattle, and evaluation of cattle diets by fecal analysis.

The workshops' encouragement of permittee involvement in allotment management planning led to the establishment of the UA Public Rangelands Coordinating Committee in 1979. This committee provided special assistance for developing allotment management plans that recognize the responsibilities of the agencies as well as the needs of ranchers and other user groups. Requests from several counties' Cooperative Extension Service advisory boards had pointed out the need for additional work in this area. The committee included an extension agent from each county and eight UA specialists in range-related fields.

The coordinating committee evolved into the Arizona Range Task Force in January 1981. This group encompasses the work of the three-member UA Range Research Task Force described elsewhere in this issue, but also coordinates all other range-related research and educational efforts of the university. It continues to give objective, professional help to range users and agencies. Workshops and other educational programs about range management also continue.

More than 50 individual requests for range management assistance have been received from ranchers and agencies since 1979. Extension assistance has been offered to fit the needs in each case. In some, university specialists have ridden over allotments with agency personnel and ranchers to evaluate range condition, trend and utilization. When appropriate, they have offered recommendations about grazing systems, nutritional supplementation and herd improvement. Most cases have also included help with developing a written management plan.

From the sites where assistance has been requested, 10 demonstration ranches have been selected for intensive monitoring and study. The ranches selected represent a cross section of geographic areas, vegetation types, land ownership patterns, economic constraints and management possibilities. This demonstration ranch program will provide Arizonans with an opportunity to view range management in action in their local communities. Tours, field days and publications will highlight demonstration ranch management programs.



Agent Grumbles and rancher Anderson check a newly placed rain gauge.