

recover naturally over a period of time; however, the wells from which the city drew its water supply depended on the watershed, and the supply was none too plentiful. In fact, it often occasioned concern of a water shortage. City officials and foresters agreed that restoration of the watershed cover would enhance the underground water table which the wells tapped. They felt that natural restoration needed to be speeded up, but the cost would be heavy and funds were not available.

The answer came in 1933 when the Civilian Conservation Corps was established. A CCC camp was built in the heart of the watershed and before the camp was closed in 1936, nearly 15,000 gully stabilizers had been installed, most of them using native rock. Cuttings and nursery stock, such as willows and cottonwoods, were planted to supplement the work of the stabilizers.

After the work was completed on National Forest lands within the watershed, the CCC camp force was transferred to the Soil Conservation Service. The SCS then planned and supervised similar work on lands on the watershed outside the Forest, including work on the Big Ditch. The watershed was then allowed to recover naturally, but improvement was slow due to the deteriorated conditions that existed prior to the initial attempts at protection.

### Present Watershed Management

The Silver City watershed shows how slowly range recovers after it has been abused. The hydrologic balance was completely upset. The watershed also provides an interesting contrast of rates of restoration. The portion in the Forest has become fairly stable due to enforced restrictions and controls, whereas, the privately owned lands have not been

so carefully managed and are recovering much slower.

As the watershed improved, so did the water supply, but not in proportion to the town's needs. Additional water sources were found outside the watershed and used to the point that now the primary purpose of the watershed is flood control with the old CCC structures being constantly maintained or rebuilt by the Forest Service.

Because of nonuse, the National Forest portion of the watershed has become abundant in both grasses and shrubs. Beginning in 1978, the Forest Service instigated a 3-year plan to allow limited grazing on a trial basis. Currently, 50 to 75 head of cattle graze on forest lands throughout the winter months to cut back on the brush and stimulate the grass. Also, a fuelwood cutting area was established two years ago to thin out some of the growth and open up the country to lower the fire hazard and encourage wildlife. For the same purposes the Forest Service will begin thinning brush this year.

### Possible Future Watershed Uses

As recently as 1974, attempts have been made to prevent mineral withdrawal on the watershed. Their lack of success poses a danger to the land, particularly considering the elevated prices of silver and gold. On National Forest lands, controlled fuelwood cutting and grazing continue.

On much of the privately owned lands of the watershed, houses are being built to accommodate the rising population. Workshops are being held to educate new homeowners of ways to maintain and improve the current status of the watershed.

In downtown Silver City a project is under way to establish a recreational riverwalk along the sides of the Big Ditch. ●

## *The Ballad of St. John*

Thomas Hatton

There's a legend that's told in the land wet and cold  
That lies twixt the Smith and the Eel  
Of a terrible weed done a terrible deed  
And the beetle that made it a meal  
No one knows just when to pasture and fen  
Invaded this horrible pest,  
But it spread o'er the range like a mischievous mangle  
A ruefully unwelcome guest.  
Like many a crook for its calling it took  
More than just one clever feint,  
But irony held and with decency felled  
Named itself after a saint.  
There's hardly an Angus and nary a Brangus  
Who's eaten this tortuous plant  
That ain't been made to itch like a son of a bitch  
And when trying to stop just can't.  
Now the ranchers cried out and started to pout,  
"Deliver us from this mess!"  
But St. John just scoffed and said "Your're all soft.  
You'd think I'd just come from Loch Ness!"

But the cattle still died and the ranchers still cried,  
The end was clearly in sight;  
Till along came a bug with a curious mug  
Claiming *he* could handle this blight.  
St. John got the word and flipped him the bird.  
"Just who do you think you are?  
I'm king in this land—thrive on loam, silt, and sand.  
What makes you think you are my par?"  
"I'm known as quite a diner—my name's Chrysolina—  
I hail from your very hometown  
And with fork and spoon and the light of the moon  
I intend to scarf you down."  
Neither leaf nor petal nor dust did settle  
For many a month thereafter,  
Just occasional pause to wipe off his claws  
With some hearty herbivorous laughter.  
If there's a happy ending it still may be pending,  
Chrysolina continues to munch.  
Though *Hypericum's* sweet there's still plenty to eat  
(The bug lacks a good knockout punch).  
So when problems arise with forage supplies  
Herbicides you need not extol;  
Just remember this tale and please do not fail  
To consider biologic control.

The author is a range management student, Humboldt, State University, Arcata, California.

*Editor's Note:* Sometimes we take ourselves too seriously. Maybe this enjoyable poem by a college student will lighten the approach.