

Director's Interview with the Society for Range Management

Editor's Note: *I think we are all interested in the views and viewpoints of the new Director of BLM. The questions below to Robert Burford, Director, Bureau of Land Management, were prepared by Clare Hendee, Floyd Kinsinger, and John Merrill. Hendee did the leg work to get them to the Director. Thank you, Clare.*

What are your three top priorities for the rangeland management program in BLM?

- A. Meeting the court-approved schedule for grazing EIS's.
- B. Improving rangeland conditions, and
- C. Minimizing short-term disruption and ensuring the long-term stability of the Western livestock industry and the economies of many Western communities dependent upon the public lands.

Briefly describe what you would like to accomplish in each.

- A. We plan to continue meeting the schedule while keeping costs down and adequately addressing the impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- B. As a multiple-use agency, BLM must consider rangeland conditions in the context of *all* rangeland resources. Our land-use planning and EIS processes are the tools we use to weigh values people place on public land resources. I feel the new Rangeland Management Policy will help us channel our limited funding and personnel into the areas with the most serious problems and where we can get the most cost-effective improvement.
- C. The Reagan Administration recognizes the critical need to develop energy and mineral resources on the public lands. I have recently reorganized the Washington Office of BLM to place more emphasis on energy and minerals. At the same time, we recognize the continued reliance of the Western livestock industry and communities on the public lands, and will strive to balance the local mix of uses as best we can to minimize short-term disruption. The livestock industry and other uses can best be stabilized by sustained-yield management of these resources.

How can the Society for Range Management be helpful in achieving your priorities?

The Society can help us in several ways:

- by providing timely and effective input to the grazing EIS's.
- by helping to educate Society members and the public on rangeland issues and multiple-use concepts.
- by disseminating results of research and interpreting these results from highly technical and scientific language

to language that is understandable and usable by non-scientists.

- by working closely with BLM Districts, State Offices and the Washington Office to select and interpret sound techniques for inventorying and monitoring rangeland conditions.
- by providing assistance to colleges and universities having curricula in rangeland resources so they can improve the quality of management application in graduate and undergraduate programs.

IS BLM adequately staffed and funded at the field level to achieve these priorities?

This Administration is committed to reducing the cost of government and balancing the Federal budget. We in BLM will do our share to identify ways and means to do the job that must be done under reduced budgets and personnel ceilings.

BLM and SRM came close to signing a contract which would provide "A Review and Evaluation of Methods of Measuring Trends in Range Condition on Semiarid Rangelands." Since such a review would be highly desirable to the resource managing agencies and the profession, what procedures might be followed to revive and advance the proposal?

We were not able to consummate that contract because of some budget problems and procurement policies concerning noncompetitive contracts. I have instructed all BLM State Directors to consult with colleges, universities, and extension services in their respective States to select and use methods and techniques acceptable to the industry and the academic community, as well as the BLM.

Would you be willing to use various meetings of SRM members, such as our Section meetings and national meetings, as a forum to explain rangeland management policies such as new grazing regulations, range improvement investment policy, grazing fees, wild horses and burros, etc.?

SRM meetings would be excellent opportunities to discuss rangeland policies. BLM has always been willing to explain its programs and policies with professional and public interest groups. The expertise of the Society's members has been, and will continue to be, an invaluable contribution to renewable resource management.

Would you comment briefly on these four items at this time?

New Grazing Regulations

We are proposing a number of revisions aimed at streamlining the regulations, removing unnecessary process-

oriented details, and updating them as necessary to agree with the new Rangeland Management Policy.

Range Improvement Investment Policy

The Bureau is testing an investment policy that directs rangeland investments toward areas that show the most potential for improvement in a cost-efficient manner. The specific criteria used are benefit cost ratio and rangeland resource conditions. These criteria are applied to rangeland improvement projects (a group of individual jobs) that are ready for implementation.

Grazing Fees

A formula specified by Congress in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA) of 1978 is used to determine grazing fees. PRIA also directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to evaluate the grazing fee formula and other grazing fee options and report to Congress no later than December 31, 1985. We are working closely with the Forest Service to design a grazing fee study which will address the concerns of both Congress and the livestock industry.

Wild Horses and Burros

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act requires BLM and the Forest Service to protect, manage, and control wild horses and burros on the public lands. To prevent continuing deterioration of the public rangelands and the wild horse and burro habitat, BLM is planning to round up approximately 11,000 wild horses and burros in FY 1982.

As budgets become increasingly austere, BLM will impose wild horse and burro adoption fees. Beginning January 2, 1982, a standard adoption fee of \$200 for a horse and \$75 for a burro will be charged.

In your brief tenure, what is your impression of the professional stature of BLM employees engaged in management of resources, particularly rangeland resources?

Our employees are some of the best in the profession. We have consistently hired the best qualified people with undergraduate and graduate degrees to fill our vacancies. They get exposure to complex management situations and must develop solutions to the problems in an often hostile environment.

What actions do you propose to take to maintain or improve professionalism among BLM employees in rangeland resource management?

Professionalism is more than dedication to, and knowledge of, a specialty. Professional employees must also be able to integrate that knowledge with other disciplines and arrive at reasonable solutions to the problems at hand. We will continue to encourage our employees to become actively involved in professional society organizations such as SRM, as well as to participate in workshops and seminars. In addition, we have initiated intensive training courses at our Phoenix Training Center to further the employees' knowledge of the BLM and the field of range management. We are offering courses for both newer and more experienced employees.

What are BLM's research priorities in rangeland resource management?

Our problem is usually not one of knowing what is required to meet the needs of the plants and animals. Rather, it is one

of identifying an abstraction called "the public interest," defining plans to achieve this "interest," and implementing those plans in a complex social, political and economic society.

Do you believe that rangeland research funds are adequate within research agencies and institutions to meet the research needs of the profession and managing agencies?

We probably never will have adequate funds to research all the questions raised by the BLM and the academic community. Research often raises as many questions as it answers. Our problem is not just one of getting more funds for research, but making sure that the funds we have are wisely spent on the most serious and pressing problems. As a land managing agency, we have to be sure that the research we fund answers our management problems and is responsive to the taxpayer.

In the past, BLM and SRM have not always enjoyed a harmonious relationship. What can SRM do to improve its relationship with BLM?

Our colleges, universities, and extension organizations of the United States have failed to keep pace with the changing demands on public land resources and statutory obligations of the Bureau. With the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), our status was changed from a land-holding agency to a land management agency. We have yet to be provided with applicable technology and methodology for inventory and assessment of large resource areas. The small-scale efforts employed in university research will not provide us with the technology and procedures that we need to apply to large-scale areas to meet our management responsibilities. Extension particularly has failed to educate land users in management of land and resources, but has concentrated on livestock-oriented education (livestock husbandry, brush control, fertilization, etc.).

Would you express BLM views on the use of herbicides on rangelands and on predator control?

Herbicides

It is Bureau policy to consider *all* vegetation management techniques, including herbicide application, when formulating plans for range management projects. Each technique is evaluated on the basis of environmental effects, safety, effectiveness and cost. Like the other techniques, herbicide application is used only when it is determined to be the best alternative. Herbicide application was selected as the best management technique for several large range rehabilitation projects initiated this year on Bureau lands.

Predator Control

Predator control is a tool in protecting livestock from coyotes and other predation losses. It is also a wildlife management technique to decrease losses on favored species. Predator control on public lands is a cooperative effort with the Fish and Wildlife Service, States, and the Interior agency with overall responsibility for predator control. We are working with the FWS to improve predator control services to ranchers. These efforts will result in:

- A. More expedient help to those requiring it.
- B. A more comprehensive partnership approach to predator

control problems through stronger State-Federal cooperative programs and increased extension education efforts with ranchers and farmers.

What is the place of economic and environmental considerations in rangeland management decisions?

Both are important. I would like to point out, however, that NEPA requires Federal agencies to analyze potential impacts of decisions on the *human* environment. The human environment includes the social and economic systems within which we operate, as well as the physical and biological systems. Most decisions we make have economic effects. Some may affect the economy of the entire Nation. Others, such as decisions resulting from a single grazing EIS, may have very little effect on the Nation's economy, but tremendous impact on individual livestock operators and communities within the EIS area. We recognize this, and attempt to consider both local and national impacts in the decision

process. Whenever possible, we consult, coordinate and cooperate with local interests, as well as national-level interest groups to resolve their concerns.

Since you are a prominent Colorado rancher, how will you bring about better relationships between BLM and the ranching industry?

I intend to continue to encourage increased decisionmaking at the ground level at our District offices. I feel our new Rangeland Policy allows for this, while giving additional consideration to the local problems and needs. I am also in favor of furthering our "good neighbor" policy to focus on cooperation, consultation and coordination with local interests. Our experimental stewardship program will also receive emphasis. This program recognizes the positive range management actions taken by the livestock operators which have resulted in improved rangeland conditions.

New Policy Procedure

The Board of Directors reviewed, revised, and approved procedures for Public Policy Formulation at the 1981 Summer Meeting in Bismarck. This is a significant action by the Board of Directors affecting every member of the Society for Range Management. It provides each member the opportunity to propose new policy, resolutions, and/or position statements, giving each member a stronger voice in charting the direction of the Society.

Society for Range Management Public Policy Formulation

The Society for Range Management is a professional organization composed of individuals with a common interest in the study, management, and use of rangelands and related ecosystems. The Society's objectives are set forth in the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Society. Section 6, Article XI of the Bylaws establishes guidelines for the formulation of policy which should be closely followed:

- (a) Formulation of policy should be a deliberate matter because of the diversity of groups within the Society, the breadth of its objectives and the way in which it is organized. Impetuous and hastily conceived policy statements can be disastrously divisive and reflect unfavorably on the Society.
- (b) Policy statements should relate to principle rather than to specifics or procedures . . .
- (c) The manner in which policy statements are made will need to be governed by prudence, foresight, and a sense of realism.
- (d) The Society can speak only for the profession of range management and not for the objectives and interests of any of the diverse groups represented within the Society.
- (e) On issues where the Society, Section, or Chapter is divided significantly in opinion, even though the issue is approved by majority vote, it would be unwise to express a position forcibly.
- (f) There are many kinds of issues on which it would be imprudent for the Society, Section, and Chapters to issue policy statements or to express an opinion.

The Society's Range Management Policy Statements express the basic SRM philosophies, and Policy Statements

must meet the test of the above guidelines. One means of achieving SRM objectives is by setting forth principles in the Policy Statements against which issues and positions are to be measured. Policy Statements are the basis for all SRM resolutions or positions on range management issues taken by officers, Sections, and Chapters.

For the purposes of SRM public policy formulation and implementation processes, as recognized in Section 4, Article XI of the Bylaws, the following definitions will be used:

Policy Statement—a carefully derived statement of principle to guide decisions and actions of the Society for Range Management.

Position Statement—an unequivocal statement of posture or attitude in regard to a specific issue within the parameters of a Policy Statement of the Society.

Resolution—formal expression of opinion based upon conclusions, which requests and encourages action to resolve a situation within the parameters of a Policy Statement of the Society.

Policy Statement Formulation Procedures

1. A Section or any active member of the Society may propose new policy for referral to the appropriate SRM committee and in turn to the Public Affairs Committee and Advisory Council for review and recommendations prior to consideration and action by the Board of Directors.

The Public Affairs Committee and Advisory Council will be responsible to the Board of Directors for reviewing and proposing changes in Policy Statements and will aid the Board in identifying situations which should be addressed as a policy, resolution or position statement.

Policy Statements are a function of the Society; Sections will not develop Policy Statements.

2. Policies of the Society for Range Management are adopted, amended or rescinded by referendum. Passage of a referendum issue shall be by a simple majority of those voting.