Communications

Of a Good Communicator

Harold F. Heady

WHEN ASKED TO GIVE AN INSPIRATIONAL for the Information and Education Communications Workshop at the 1984 Annual Meeting, Society for Range Management, in Rapid City, South Dakota, my first thought was to look for a prayer. It turned into a two-part sermon instead. I'm told that a sermon should never have more than three points, but two are even better.

Effective communication and leadership have much in common. Seldom can one be an effective leader without communicating. Effective communication is a key element in leadership. Leaders bring people together to make something happen. The skill is in bringing diverse views to common judgement for activities that none could manage alone. Change always has to be organized and communication is the leader's process for so doing. I also submit that effective leadership and influential communication induce a degree of tension. Loud and cheerful argument within the organization is desirable so that all points of view are analyzed and the final outcomes are at least partially agreeable to all. It seems to me that SRM and specifically the I and E Committee should develop programs that will identify leaders and facilitate their effectiveness.

MY SECOND POINT RELATES TO the first and asks: What are the target leadership audiences? The range profession puts tremendous effort into educational matters. As a Society, one can list Journal of Range Management, Rangelands, abstracts of meetings, programs of meetings, newsletters, brochures, benchmarks, speeches, displays, and more. As individuals we sell ourselves, or extol our range professional knowledge to make a living. One target audience of all this is the combined students, users and managers of land as exemplified by the youth camps, section field trips, and display booths at some other profession's annual meeting. We do reasonably well with this audience of fellow professionals, but SRM leadership has insufficient financial support to always be where needed.

A second audience might be called the administrative level people. It includes business and agency decision makers at federal, state, and local levels who interpret policy, whether that policy was stipulated by legislative statute or business affairs. Only a few of these people come from range management backgrounds. Those with ranch or professional experience perhaps need little persuasion to adopt the SRM viewpoint. What they do need is up-to-date information and viable support to help them in the competition with all the other decision makers or should I say, with the competing multiple users. All the natural resource decision makers constitute this audience and I'm concerned that we do so little for them.

The third audience is the group who sit at the top of the public pyramid. They are the policy makers who base their actions on their perceived needs of society. Almost none of these people have range management backgrounds. They are the politicians and their staffs in our society. Most of us have little contact with them. Somehow Range Management needs to communicate so that we don't hear questions of the type: "How many litters does a cow have each year and how many calves in a litter?"

STILL ANOTHER PUBLIC, one which I call the "missing audience," is a misty combination of the three just described with livestock interests given passionate attention. That audience is the target of such signed editorials as "The Overgrazing of Cattle Is Ruining Western Land" that recently appeared in the Los Angeles Times and another called "Sacred Cows at the Public Trough" in the Sacramento Bee. My first reaction to these is a letter to the editor, but that is a non-proposition for two reasons: It does not change the view of either paper or writer and it gives opportunity for a second editorial. The counter campaign should be aimed toward the audience of the editorials, which is the mostly urban populations and the political level of rule-makers representing them. The thrust should be that much public rangeland is greatly improved and that the successes are due to the range management profession and the users of the land. Surely, fat cattle coming from Fremont's "The Great American Desert" can be proved. But where do we find the proof that rangeland is in better condition now than anytime in this century? Where is the newspaper editorial or SRM advertising document that describes a rangeland management success story?

YOU MAY SAY THAT the I and E approach to all these audiences should be through the youth in grades K through 12 or even 16, but I'm not sure it is. Decisions and policies are made currently. We can not wait for youth to become senior decision-making persons. The range profession and SRM in particular need to do more for the policy makers and administrators without doing less for the first level audience.

The following paraphrased statements, while not a third item in this sermon, aroused a thought in which you too may be interested:

—Live communicators constantly change
methodology—dead ones don’t need to.
—Live communicators are a bunch of noisy people—
dead ones are fairly quiet.
—Live communicators are constantly deficient in staff—
dead ones have a surplus.
—Live communicators exceed their financial support—
dead ones have a balanced budget or more than they
spend.
—Live communicators support crusades—dead ones
wait for the Denver office.

—Live communicators move on faith—dead ones operate
with everything in sight.
—Live communicators evangelize—dead ones fossilize.
If you don’t like the word “communicator” try substituting
 groups like department heads, committee chairs, SRM
officers, professional societies, and even your spouse. I
should not end with this “bumper sticker” mentality but
there is a need for action and innovation so that we talk
less to ourselves and more to other audiences.

Youth Range Forum

White-Tailed Deer Management of the Edwards
Plateau of Texas

Carolyn E. Fey

Today, the Edwards Plateau of Texas produces large
bodied, beautiful, big-antlered bucks. This has not always
been true. Ranchers first had to realize that if they could not
grow food, they could not grow deer. This realization has
recently become evident with this “deer-factory” area of
Texas which supports in excess of 1.5 million white-tailed
deer. This is more than 50% of the white-tailed deer popula-
tion of Texas and is the largest white-tailed deer herd in the
United States. Proper management of these deer can provide
ranchers with an income that equals or exceeds the income
from livestock production. The leasing of hunting rights
results in a gross state revenue of more than $150 million
annually.

The Edwards Plateau, where my home is located, covers
24 million acres in west central Texas and is predominantly
rangeland with major ranching industries in cattle, sheep,
and goats. This area is a vegetational savannah with an
excellent mixture of forage plants—forbs, browse, and grass
such as sideoats grama, the state grass of Texas.

Nutrition, or the lack of adequate nutrition, is a major
problem of the white-tailed deer on the Edwards Plateau.
Ranchers and hunters have observed that a trophy buck
cannot be produced if nutrition is inadequate. Therefore, in
the management of white-tailed deer in the area, the rancher
must first consider food as the number one necessity and the
deer as the number two concern. This all goes back to “if you
can’t grow food, you can’t grow deer.”

Food grown to produce deer must fulfill 2 nutritional
needs—that for body growth as a primary need, with antler
development and reproduction as secondary needs. Deer need
between 13 and 16% protein in their diet for body growth, nearly dou-
ble the requirement of a cow. For antler growth, reproduction, and
body growth, deer need a mini-
um of .65% calcium and .56% phosphorus in their diets. Given
free choice and availability, the
diets of white-tailed deer usually
consist of 60% forbs, 30% browse, and 10% grass. Common
forbs eaten by deer are Engelmann daisy and orange snez-
menia. Little-leaf lead tree, Texas kidneywood, and many spe-
cies of oaks are frequent browse plants of deer. Deer rarely
eat grass. The small quantities eaten are only the tender
young shoots. Other grass parts are too difficult to digest.

Proper forage must be maintained all year, especially from
May to October, the period before the breeding season when
deer experience their greatest need for food. This time span
corresponds to the major growth period and is a very critical
period for fawn survival. Late winter may be a crucial time
too, when gravid does are developing fawns and bucks are
replacing antlers.

Competition for food is the greatest problem facing white-
tailed deer in the Edwards Plateau today. Since deer prefer
forbs and browse, their greatest food competitors are sheep
who eat mainly forbs, and goats whose diet is mainly browse.
Even cattle at times, may be competitors, but they are usually
complements to deer. Cattle graze the grass and the deer are
able to eat the browse and forbs which grow abundantly
when the grass is decreased.

Livestock, unlike deer, can adapt their diets to available
forage. Cattle switch their diets to choice browse when there
is a shortage of grass. Goats and sheep also easily switch
from browse and forbs to grass when preferred forage is in
short supply. Deer, unfortunately, are not so versatile.

Efficient range management programs are important to

Editor’s Note: This is the winning paper of the High School Youth Forum at the
Carolyn was also elected President of the High School Student Forum for
1984. Following high school she plans to attend Texas A&M University and
study range science and plant breeding. Her goal is to achieve a PhD.

For further information on the Youth Range Forum, readers should refer to
the article by Irene Graves entitled “History and Preview of 1984’s Youth
Range Forum” which appeared in the December, 1983, Rangelands.

Another paper on the subject of whitetail deer is the article by W.A. Malt-
berger, in this issue, entitled “Management of Whitetail Deer in South Texas.”

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