

Cooperative Management Agreements

Charlotte Yarrington-Ball

Cooperative: adj. 1. working or acting together willingly for a common purpose or benefit (Random House Dictionary of the English Language).

Contrary to popular belief, the relative size of the Federal Government has been declining steadily over the past few decades. In 1952, there were more than 16 Federal employees to serve 1,000 members of the public; today, there are about 12 employees. While this relative decrease in Federal employees has monetary advantages for the taxpayer, it has disadvantages for growing numbers of public land users, who have been steadily increasing their demands for access to and use of public land resources.

One proven method the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employs to meet demands for public land use—without larger appropriations and staffs—is to involve users in participative management. This method dates back to 1934, when the Division of Grazing (predecessor to the BLM) relied on informal boards of stockmen to help implement the Taylor Grazing Act. These boards helped to establish grazing districts, determine grazing privileges, and settle appeals.

For more than 20 years, the BLM has cooperated with State wildlife agencies in managing wildlife habitat. Through



Volunteer sportsmen from Yarrington, Nev., and a Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist lower a storage trough into place for a guzzler they are building on BLM lands to supply water needed for wildlife.

cooperative agreements, BLM and the States have been able to pool funding and resources to improve habitat to protect endangered species, increase wildlife numbers, and provide other benefits to wildlife resource users. Other user groups

have been encouraged to participate in public land management through a variety of volunteer efforts.

User participation also has been encouraged in laws related to public land management, beginning with the Taylor Grazing Act. The most recent Act—The Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978—established the ongoing Experimental Stewardship Program. Under this program, the BLM and the Forest Service are to experiment with rewards or incentives designed to encourage users to improve the condition of the public lands for grazing and



A livestock operator and a BLM range conservationist examine resource conditions in a grazing allotment. Outstanding operators may enter into cooperative management agreements that permit them to install range improvements and adjust grazing use while meeting or exceeding objectives for multiple-use resource conditions.

other uses. Stewardship arrangements emphasizing cooperative management efforts between land management agencies and livestock operators were specifically mentioned as an incentive.

In Experimental Stewardship Program areas, local livestock operators are working with other interest groups, involved State and Federal agencies, and BLM managers to explore mutually acceptable alternatives for attaining multiple-use objectives for the public lands. The results of this cooperation to date have been rewarding. In many instances, understanding and acceptance of another group's viewpoint are producing the compromises and trade-offs necessary for multiple-use management.

With success as the precedent, the BLM has initiated a Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) program. The intent of this program is to provide users with additional opportunities to participate in land management efforts by involving them in actual on-the-ground management. A CMA is a formal, written agreement between the BLM and a land user or user group for shared management for grazing,

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recreation, wildlife or another site-specific activity. For example, a CMA enables a wildlife group to share responsibility with the BLM for maintenance and improvement of wildlife habitat in a critical habitat area. Livestock operators may share responsibility for grazing management on their individual grazing allotments.



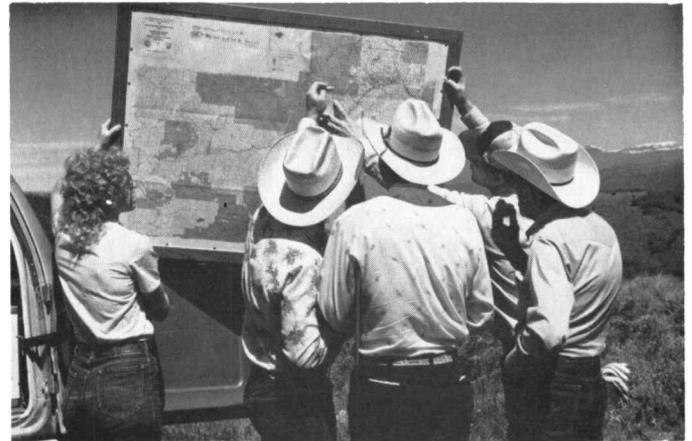
Ranchers may install cattleguards and other range improvements in accordance with permits or cooperative management agreements. Cattleguards help manage livestock grazing and eliminate gate problems incidental to recreational use of BLM lands.

The BLM exercises its ultimate responsibility for the land through the terms and conditions included in each agreement and periodic monitoring of resource conditions. A CMA does not allow a cooperator to manage, limit, or exclude other uses of an area nor does it exclude the cooperator from existing laws and regulations affecting public land use.

A major objective of the CMA program is to involve individual livestock operators in participative management. Many operators have improved resource conditions within their allotments by conscientiously applying grazing management practices that also accommodate others uses. The BLM believes these operators should be recognized for their efforts, both to reward them for their abilities and to give visibility to the best grazing management practices.

The BLM designed grazing-related CMA's to fill this dual function. Livestock operators receiving CMA's may adjust the season of use and numbers and kinds of livestock grazed on their allotments. Fees for the grazing use may be paid at the end of, rather than prior to, the grazing fee year to account for fluctuations in use. However, flexibility of grazing use will be within sideboards set by the BLM, as required by the Taylor Grazing Act.

As an additional reward, grazing-related CMA's were designed to provide an operator with some assurance of long-term tenure on the allotment. CMA's with livestock operators will be issued for a 10-year period, with an evaluation at the end of the first 5 years. If the evaluation shows that the operator's grazing management practices are aiding progress toward management objectives for the allotment, the BLM may renew both the CMA and the permit or lease for another 10 years from the time of the evaluation. In other words, every 5 years, an operator who continued to meet the objectives of the CMA would be assured of another 10 years



Colorado ranchers discuss allocation of resource uses and rangeland improvements with BLM representatives.

of grazing use on the allotment. This assurance of tenure should give the operator an advantage in making long-range plans for his or her grazing operation.

Although similar in some respects, a CMA should not be confused with the BLM's allotment management plans (AMP). Like an AMP, a CMA outlines the multiple-use, sustained yield objectives for the allotment that were developed through land-use planning. A CMA, however, is developed only for allotments where these objectives are already being met. It is an agreement by the operator to continue current grazing management practices so that these objectives will continue to be met. The structured flexibility it gives an operator to exercise his demonstrated management abilities helps ensure that this occurs.

An AMP, on the other hand, is a structured plan. It normally sets out detailed management practices—such as a grazing system—and improvement actions that must be followed to achieve the established objectives. An AMP generally involves changes in the grazing operation since it is frequently developed to resolve an existing resource or management problem.

Not all livestock operators will be eligible for a CMA. Operators must first be nominated as outstanding grazing managers and approved by a screening committee before being offered CMA's. They must have operated on their allotments for a sufficient period of time to have clearly demonstrated good management practices.

Soil Conservation Districts, State and Federal wildlife agencies, advisory committees, or other local groups can submit nominations. These nominations will be screened by District advisory committees or a group specifically organized for the purpose. After a CMA has been developed with a selected operator, the District Grazing Advisory Board and the District Multiple-Use Advisory Council must recommend that the BLM enter into the CMA.

The allotment used by the operator also must meet certain conditions. It must be in good condition, with no serious conflicts among uses. Multiple-use and sustained yield objectives for the allotment must be being achieved under current BLM and operator management actions. And normally, the final grazing environmental impact statement for the area must have been completed and the associated land-use plan approved.

The BLM's CMA program is well underway in most States. Over 120 operators have been nominated to date for their outstanding grazing management practices. More nominations are expected as the program becomes better known.

The BLM also has received numerous nominations for other user and interest groups that deserve a greater role in participative management. Proposed CMA's with these groups involve protection of wildlife habitat and archeological resources, dune stabilization, trail maintenance, and monitoring of off-road-vehicle use.

Cooperative management agreements will enable BLM to concentrate appropriated funds on areas where intensive Federal management is most needed. In addition, cooperative management efforts should provide the public with facilities or user opportunities that would not be possible under BLM capabilities alone. The common goal of the BLM and the public is to improve resource conditions for all. Working together toward this goal will make it possible for the BLM to meet the user demands of the future. ●

Revocation of Rangeland Permits: A Case Study

Con P. Lynch

Beginning in 1977, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began to prepare, draft and revise 144 Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The purpose of each statement was to disclose the environmental impacts of grazing upon the public lands and to help the BLM to make decisions to preserve and protect the public lands. In 1981, the BLM District of Lakeview, Ore., completed its EIS. Although there were no complete revocations of rangeland permits, there were partial revocations. This article focuses on the potential effects of a complete permit revocation and how such a decision would affect the Lynch Brothers Ranch which is located in southcentral Oregon.

The Current Lynch Brothers Operation

The Lynch Brothers' Ranch is owned and operated by Phil and Jim Lynch and is located 42 miles northeast of Lakeview. The ranch has been in the Lynch family for over 80 years and utilizes many traditional ranching techniques. Lynch Brothers' public land allotment includes 107,720 acres, which are divided into five pastures. Currently, 91,400 acres are managed under a "rest rotation" system which Lynch Brothers entered into in 1975. Under the rest rotation system, the public lands are divided into three separate pastures and each pasture is used on an alternating basis. The objectives under this system are to establish a higher level of forage vigor, increase litter to establish new seedlings, strive for a higher level of forage diversity, and to meet growth requirements of plants and animals.

Working in a desert country, Lynch Brothers' run a cow-calf operation. Presently the ranch runs 2,490 head of cattle. Traditional operation techniques allow the ranch to be basically self-sufficient and to produce high quality beef. Currently, Lynch Brothers trail their cattle to the public range land in March. Trailing eliminates trucking costs and is faster considering the herd size and road conditions. The cattle are

placed in one of the three pastures in the rest rotation until July. During July, approximately 400 head will be separated and moved to one of the two remaining pastures where they will remain until September. These 400 head are used as a tool to accomplish the BLM's objective under the rest rotation system. After September these cattle return to the ranch headquarters in Plush, Ore., where they will remain until the following March. Meanwhile, the rest of the cattle are trailed some 150 miles (the trip takes 2-3 weeks) to Lynch Brothers summer range, which includes both privately owned land and United States Forest Service permit lands. Those cattle will remain on the Lynch summer range until heavy snow force the return to the ranch headquarters. Usually this occurs sometime in October or November.

Once all of the cattle have returned to the headquarters, and beginning in the late fall, the cattle are fed hay that was produced on the Lynch ranch the previous summer. This hay is supplemented by third-cutting alfalfa hay purchased within the immediate area. The hay is fed directly on the hay-producing pastures. In the spring after the cattle have been moved to the public lands, a homemade drag is used to break up and spread the manure that remains on the fields. This natural fertilization reduces and, in most cases, eliminates the use and need for commercial fertilizers.

The use of traditional ranching techniques means that irrigation is accomplished by flooding of the fields. The Lynch operation is simple, natural, and non-energy intensive. Many of the costs and much of the energy consumption common in modern agricultural techniques and operations are eliminated by the older methods. Granted, the area does not produce its maximum yield, but the above characteristics would be forfeited if Lynch Brothers attempted to maximize their yield. For example, located just a few miles from the Lynch headquarters ranch is an area referred to as the Swamp. This privately owned land is lower in elevation than the largest body of water in the Valley, Hart Lake. The Swamp is operated entirely in its natural state. The grass is strictly