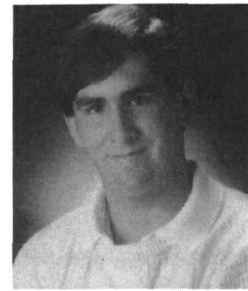


Range Management and the Desert Preservation Legislation

J. Scott Barber



In October, 1989, I had the opportunity to testify against a major preservation bill, HR780 (the House of Representatives version of Senator Alan Cranston's California Desert Protection Act), at Congressional hearings in Barstow. We listened to the pros and cons, and I was impressed by one thought: If this legislation passes, there won't be any range to manage in the California desert.

Because cattlemen are busy, they do not feel they have time to be politicians. However, if they don't get politically active, there will not be any cattle businesses in many areas. What does the public think when the ranchers do not fight for their ideas? The rancher must convince the public that we are good stewards of the land. We must be aware of our public image!

There are over 90 million acres of wilderness in the U.S. While some parks and wilderness areas allow grazing

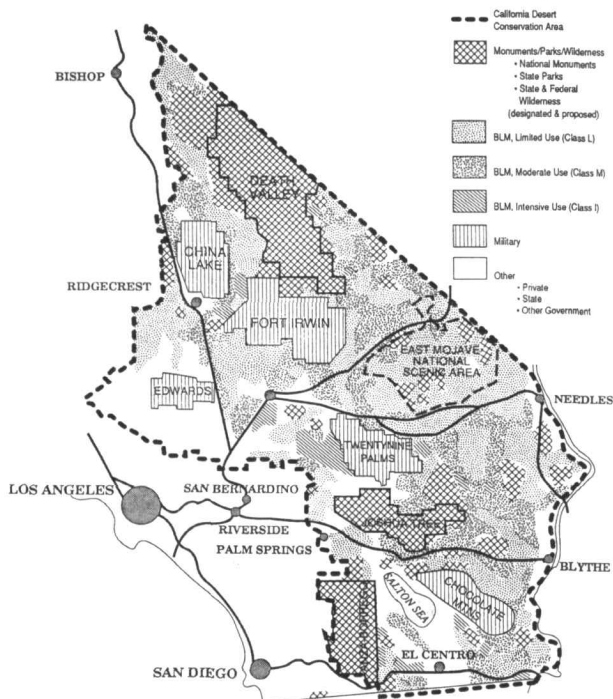
rights, the proposed Mojave National Park in California does not. This is becoming a national trend. More and more public lands are being removed from multiple use by preservation measures. In the Mojave, the military is expanding, even as they are cutting bases out around the rest of the country.

Following is some background on the preservation movement in the Mojave Desert. In the past, the Sierra Club has been very successful in manipulating public sentiment. They only show the grandeur of the desert, not the reality and hard work. The Sierra Club says the desert is being destroyed and the BLM does not do enough. They say the cattle destroy the desert ecology. These are all arguments for Senate Bill 11 (S11). Since 1973, Senator Alan Cranston of California has introduced bills in Congress in response to requests by several groups, led by the Sierra Club, to set aside vast areas of the California desert for preservation. Preservation is very different from conservation. His efforts have resulted in S11 and HR780.

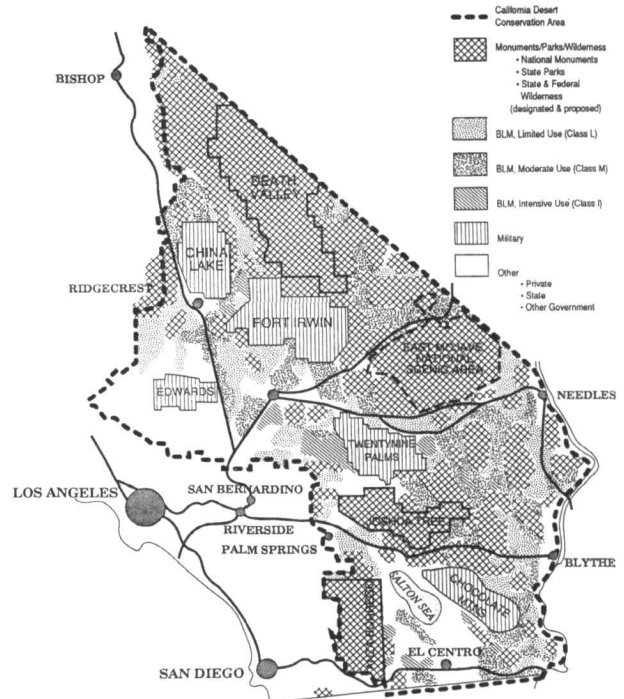
There are many reasons why there should not be a bill

Editor's Note: This is the first place winner of the High School Youth Forum paper presentations at the 1990 SRM Annual Meeting in Reno, Nevada. It is a good message for all of us.

CURRENT CALIFORNIA DESERT PLAN



PROPOSED DESERT LEGISLATION



like S11. The current desert conservation plan is the California Desert Conservation Act, managed by the BLM. The Act established an advisory committee to assist in developing the plan. Preparation of the plan cost 8 million dollars, involved massive research, dozens of public hearings and more than 40,000 public comments. Users on both sides commended the balanced nature of the plan. S11 and HR780 would completely nullify the present plan. It would create millions of acres of new National Parks, with 2.5 million taken from existing National Monuments and 3.2 million from BLM-administered lands. They would alter land use of more than half of the BLM-administered lands in the area and establish the new Mojave National Park and more wilderness. The Wilderness designation means that more areas will be closed to all motorized vehicles. National Park designation means the areas would be managed to preserve their *natural* values. Vehicle access is limited to existing roads.

The bills allow no new mining claims, leases for oil and gas, geothermal or mineral exploration or grazing. They call for the acquisition of private and State lands mostly by exchanges using the *remaining* BLM lands as a trade. The proposed bills will directly affect 14 cattle operations in the Mojave. The cattlemen will be allowed to graze only until their permits expire, with no new permits issued. This only allows them time to sell their stock and get out.

The livestock industry in the 13 western states represents 8.2 million head of cattle and sheep. Twenty percent of the calves going to the feedlot and 50% of the marketable lambs graze on federal lands at least part of the year. In 1987, cash receipts from cattle and sheep in these states totaled \$9.5 billion. Ranching has been a historical use on Federal lands for 125 years. Wildlife also use the developed springs, windmills, water tanks and catch basins for water that were originally installed for cattle use.

Most cattlemen are the true conservationists of the desert, but, they haven't gotten the message out.

There are many ways used to close off public lands. Most of the "roads" (or ways) that the cattlemen use will be closed because they do not meet the BLM requirements of being a road. The Big Horn Sheep Society uses "ways" to haul water to guzzlers during drought times, and haul equipment for maintenance of the guzzlers. The cattlemen use them to check on watering holes and windmills. This is not just a California desert issue. This is a national issue. Only three percent of Yosemite National Park is accessible by motorized vehicles and therefore 97 percent is denied to individuals that cannot walk, hike, or ride horses. Many conservation groups are also opposing the proposed legislation. The Big Horn Sheep Society is against the bills as it will stop them from going into an area and building guzzlers for animal drinking water.

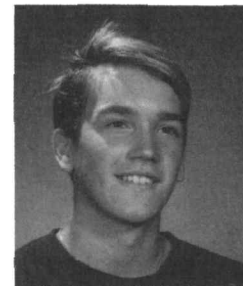
Many developed springs will have to be "put to sleep". A rancher in the desert spends about 75% of his time developing and maintaining water for the cattle, BUT various wildlife like Big Horn Sheep, burros, deer, quail and chuker use them too.

People involved in range management, cattle and other interests in multiple use must learn how to use the media. We can help by becoming involved in issues, attending service organization meetings and presenting the facts. And VOTE! Votes are what influence the politicians. We need to write to our Congressmen and Senators, and express our opinions. We need to work to elect representatives that represent our position. If we are to be properly represented, we **MUST** become better organized.

The main thing I have learned throughout this whole issue is that the Sierra Club is not always right—but they are better organized!

Elk and Cattle: A Conflict in Land Use?

Zeb Hogan



In Arizona, as in many other places, elk and cattle are competitors. This competition causes problems for the managers of the land on which they both live and graze. As a result, much of our rangeland is being overgrazed. In some areas, eighty to ninety percent of the forage of preferred species is being utilized by elk alone. The overgrazing by these animals is causing the slow destruction of the habitat, notably the valuable riparian zones and adjacent uplands.

Editor's Note: This paper was the second place finisher in the High School Youth Forum contest at the 1990 Annual Meeting in Reno, Nevada.

The lack of forage in many areas has forced the elk to eat almost anything—both native and introduced grasses, shrubs, and even small trees. Dwarf trees, caused by the elk nibbling at new growth on young conifers, demonstrate the amazing stress placed upon the plant life. Grasses can be found that are growing horizontally rather than vertically—a sign of heavy grazing pressure on the habitat. Unless something is done soon, the elk will exhaust all of their food sources, which can result in a sharp drop in elk populations.

Elk are found in Central Arizona, essentially in lands dominated by ponderosa pine and mixed conifers. While ponderosa pine upland habitats dominate the landscape,