

Rangeland Tug-of-War

Stan Tixier

What's the best use of Rangeland?
 I asked a lot of folks,
 Or is it just a pile of sand,
 A place for cowboy jokes?
 Its uses add to many,
 So, multiple's the term,
 Perhaps there isn't any
 Best use that's hard and firm.

The rancher says there's no doubt
 That Rangeland's for the cow,
 Why, any child can figure out
 It's not a place to plow,
 But, it's a home for cattle,
 For sheep and horses too,
 So stockmen will do battle
 With those who'd ban the moo.

The sportsman knows it's habitat
 For wildlife, they can tell,
 For deer and elk and more than that,
 It's non-game space as well.
 And where there's lakes or rivers,
 Biologists will wish
 The Rangeland site delivers
 A habitat for fish.

The forester thinks Rangeland's
 As worthless as can be,
 What good's a place where use-plans
 Don't emphasize the tree?
 It may make posts and fuelwood,
 But after that he'll pass,
 Such country doesn't look good,
 There's no board-feet in grass.

Now if you ask the miner,
 he'll tell you it's the place,
 Can there be something finer,
 And use a smaller space,
 Than mineral extraction?
 No other use, I'm told,
 Would yield even a fraction
 Of what they get for gold.

The ones who drill for oil and gas,
 And those that dig for coal,
 Will say that Rangelands, first and last,
 Could have no higher goal,
 Than energy production,
 You get it from the ground,
 There should be no reduction
 Of leases all around.

The campers and the hikers
 Agree that Rangeland's great,
 Also the motor bikers
 Think trails should have no gate,
 'Cause recreation's foremost,
 There must be room to roam,
 It's more than just an outpost,
 A fun-time, outdoor home.

Just ask the preservationist,
 You shouldn't have to guess,
 It's open-space that meets the test,
 It should be Wilderness.
 Outlaw commercial uses
 Of Rangelands, yes we should,
 Abolish Range abuses,
 Let's lock 'em up for good.

There's animals and plants galore
 Whose future's insecure,
 There's birds and fish and many more
 That may not long endure.
 "Endangered Species" mention
 That Rangeland plays a role,
 With management attention,
 Recovery is the goal.

The wild horse lovers reckon
 There's one endangered breed,
 So Rangelands all should beckon
 The noble feral steed.
 Don't chase 'em trap 'em, fell 'em,
 'Cause freedom is their thing,
 Adopt 'em, never sell 'em,
 Despite the cash they'd bring.

Next comes the irrigator,
 And hydro-engineer,
 They'll tell you now and later,
 That Rangeland has no peer,
 As watershed, the cover
 Of vegetation, grass,
 Will out-perform each other
 Identified land-mass.

Now Rangeland isn't all the same,
 It has unique places,
 There's wetter zones that have a name
 That conjures special graces.
 Let's recognize the meadow,
 Conserve it all we can,
 It's valuable we all know,
 It's called Riparian.

Research is vital to the cause,
 Investigations show,
 Despite environmental laws,
 There's lots more we don't know.
 The scientist's solution
 Suggests that time be spent
 Avoiding Range-pollution,
 Apply Range Management.

How can so many users
 Of rangeland have their way?
 Some likely will be losers,
 Some may not even play.
 All uses are important there,
 But how it's used is key,
 So users need to learn to share
 Responsibility.

But when we total up the score,
 And users don't agree
 That Rangeland should be used
 for more
 Than their priority,
 We wonder if they realize,
 Or do they really care?
 We don't have to prioritize,
 It's better if we share.

For Rangeland has resources,
 And capability,
 If users would join forces,
 Perhaps at last they'd see,
 When fussing finally takes its toll,
 Cooperation starts;
 Rangeland's a place wherein the whole
 Is greater than its parts.