

# Ask The Expert

## QUESTION:

What are some of the advantages of being a rangeland manager, and what are some ways for the younger generation to become involved in the proper management of our nation's natural resources?

## RESPONSE:

### *Advantages:*

Being a rangeland manager involves a way of life that is extraordinarily fulfilling for people who love living and working outdoors. A career as a rangeland manager is challenging and rewarding as well. As a rangeland manager you work with real opportunities on the land. When you do your job right, you can see the benefit of the hard work that goes into helping natural resources improve in condition and provide for the needs of our society. Usually the rangeland manager works in cooperation with people of different expertise and as a member of a resource management team. You help integrate knowledge from other disciplines into solutions that resolve complicated natural resources issues. Where we live and work, the rangeland manager is usually trying to find sustainable approaches to provide forage for livestock, habitat for wildlife and fish, management for wildfires, restoration of depleted rangelands, and income for families on the ranches using the range. When all these concerns and other issues are integrated, a sustainable approach to natural resources management is the outcome. Without the knowledge and wisdom of the rangeland manager, problems are often not resolved.

The fringe benefit is that you work in the most beautiful areas of the world. The normal day in the field includes the sights of the stars on a clear night, the evening sunsets, the deer on the horizon, cattle grazing a vibrant meadow, the delicate beauty of a wildflower, the energy of a sprinting antelope, and the peaceful quiet of the wide open spaces. And then, you get paid for it. As a rangeland manager you make a good income that allows you to raise a family and enjoy the life of a professional in our society. In the 1960s President Kennedy told us, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." We can think of no better way to meet this challenge from President Kennedy than the life of a rangeland manager. Done right you will leave the land better than it was when you began your career.

### *Ways to get involved:*

The first step we see is to get an education. To work at the professional level, a BS degree in range science is the minimum. Graduates with a rangeland degree from an SRM-accredited university have the scientific, social, practical, and technical skills to do the work required of successful rangeland managers. Other approaches and degrees can also provide a base but each needs to be carefully examined to be sure the education is adequate for the job you are pursuing. Accreditation by SRM ensures you that the minimum requirements to perform and acquire a rangeland manager job have been met. When you select a university, check out the curriculum, availability of field trips and internships, and hands-on activities that are part of the degree. Most universities have a range club and other ways to socialize with students with a like interest. This can add both fun and diverse knowledge to your education.

Not everyone can move to a college town to study and universities are increasingly offering distance education where courses can be taken and degrees earned while living, and usually working, away from the university town. Students that elect this approach to education should be sure to participate in field trips, internships, and other methods to acquire hands-on experience when they can.

Mentoring from experienced rangeland managers is an important way to develop skills and judgment as a land manager. This usually occurs on the job but often the best mentoring comes from fellow professionals in our professional society, the Society for Range Management. Once you graduate, be sure to stay up to date by participating in the local chapter and section of the SRM. Read the journals, participate in the meetings, and get to know your colleagues. Most of the time, those folks active in SRM know whom to call when they need questions answered. Fortunately, SRM has a wide diversity of specialists and by participating with this diverse group, you get a good continuing education as a fringe benefit.

Rangeland management is an exciting and rewarding career. You can work in the finest areas and with great people. You know you are doing good for the land and the people that live on the land. Most of the time we can't believe we get paid to do what we enjoy the most—being rangeland managers.

---

*William C. Krueger and John C. Buckhouse, Professors, Department of Rangeland Ecology and Management, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331.*