



By Gary Frasier

Frasier's Philosophy

It has been said that the youth of today are the future of tomorrow. This is a true perspective with respect to the future of the Society for Range Management and the range science profession.

Over 50 years ago a group of individuals got together and decided there needed to be a professional society dedicated to the proper management of our natural resources. Many of these individuals were employed by "the government." They knew that it was necessary to document the status of the resources, formulate plans to effectively manage the resources, and to instill a level of credibility with the landowners. The Society of Range Management was born. It became a recognizable entity in the proper management of the natural resources. People were proud to be able to say they were members of SRM.

As with all things, times are changing. Membership in SRM is declining in spite of various efforts to increase numbers. The number of our founding members of the range management profession is declining. Many of our most knowledgeable natural resource managers are retiring. Many range management instructors and professors at our universities and colleges are retiring and not being replaced. Colleges and universities are incorporating or combining "range management curriculum" with other groups. "Range manager" is not a prestigious title for a job. Yet the need for managing our natural resources in a sustainable manner continues. Is the range profession dead? Will the rangelands be allowed to go through a "transition" to a less productive "state"? Who will insure that our natural resources are maintained in a sustainable manner?

I do not believe the future is all that bleak. There is hope coming over the horizon. I see it in our youth. They are the salvation for proper management of the natural resources. I have been privileged in the past 20-plus years to see and participate in the SRM High School Youth Forum program that is held each year at the SRM Annual Meeting. I found this year's presentations at Vancouver to be especially encouraging. Every presentation by these high school students showed a deep concern for the status of our natural resources and a commitment to preserving proper natural resource management. As we have done for several years, we are publishing in this issue the top five winners of the contest in Vancouver. Read the papers. You will understand why I have hope for the future.

Also in this issue is an article that provides information on how each of us might reach more young people by going to high schools in our area and talking to the students about range management. We have an article on how we can use camps to introduce young people to proper range management.

Let us not give up on "range management." Our young students need the basics of plant physiology, hydrology, animal science, soils, and other subjects. But more importantly they need the "range management" courses to learn how to put it all together. With these tools they can carry on the proper management of our natural resources. An aggressive effort by the present range management leaders will provide the opportunity for the youth in our schools to carry on the dreams of the SRM founders. The future will be better. ♦