

# Developing Opportunities for Marketing Rangeland

## Wilson Scaling

In my keynote address, I wore my government hat—my public servant hat. Now, I can put my rancher's hat back on and talk about the profession where I've spent most of my life. . . a life in the private sector.

I want to remind you of the link this session has with the National Range Conference that USDA helped sponsor in Oklahoma City in 1985. That conference was all about "Opportunities for the Future." It's important that we tie this symposium to the '85 conference, because in Oklahoma City we challenged our traditional ways of thinking as ranchers. We looked at ways to diversify our operations. . . and to find new products and new markets. . . and new ways to sustain our range resources.

**Multiple use of rangeland is the wave of the future for ranchers.** At Oklahoma City, we all heard the message that, yes, forage for livestock will continue to be the primary use; but other uses will be economically desirable for the private operator. . . and desirable for the public land manager and the community as well.

There are opportunities out there. . . if we keep an open mind as to what we can produce and how we can market it! I've seen us become more creative in marketing our traditional product—livestock. A real good example is the use of satellite video to exhibit the animals up for bid. . . and arm-chair bidding by telephone. . . with no stress on the animal or the bidder.

**Another real good example is the "natural beef"** kind of operation serving health food stores. One such operation has its own controlled feedlot and packing plant. No implants, antibiotics, growth hormones, or anything unnatural are used.

As to our less traditional products, I never cease to be amazed at the things people will buy. . . especially when they're things I'd normally take for granted, or even consider a nuisance. A lot of folks in this country will pay dearly for chips of mesquite wood, which they toss on their barbecues. Creosotebush has a market, too, at least for camel feed.

Sometimes we're walking over what turns out to be good landscaping stone. In the Wichita Falls area, many homes use live oak and cedar elm and rock for landscaping that came from my family's ranch. I get a percentage for firewood harvested from my ranch. . . and I never have to handle the wood.

Some ranchers find they can turn a profit from raising Christmas trees or exotic animals.

Hunting leases are big money in range country, and have been for 50 years or more. I have a vested interest in this. Not everyone hunts with a gun; photographers and bird watchers

will pay for access to your property also. It's reported that in Texas there are more wildlife photographers now than hunters. . . and that bird watching is the fastest growing form of recreation in the Lone Star State.

There are plenty of other opportunities to turn a profit by providing access to your land; trail rides, dude ranching, camping, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, rock collecting, and historical tours. In all, recreation should be a "boom" industry for ranchers.

**To make the best of tourism,** ranch families may want to get into the "bed and breakfast" business. Western hospitality is legend throughout the world, and there should be little doubt that one of the most valuable things about rangeland is its contribution to a better understanding of western life. Of course, in some areas, there may be obstacles to overcome, mainly liability questions. Certainly, I think, the Society for Range Management has an opportunity to help by working with state and local legislative people on behalf of ranchers, to ensure that liability is reasonable for private enterprise. In some states there may be restrictions on hunting leases; those need attention, too.

The demand for vacation homes "on the range" is another opportunity. . . one that we should approach cautiously if land development is involved. I've heard of one rancher who chose to sell easements, stipulating that his livestock operation not be disturbed. This arrangement worked out well for all concerned. The tenants have access to the entire ranch for outdoor activities. . . and they have been an asset to the rancher by providing volunteer help.

So far, I've talked about marketing plants, animals, scenery, and the flavor of the "Old West." But, people today assign other values to rangelands. People are becoming more aware of the offsite benefits of our range management practices. . . and how soil erosion control and other actions save tax dollars and natural resources.

Again, let's be aware that multiple uses may increase pressure on our rangelands. There may be competition, for example, between livestock and recreation uses.

**No matter what marketing ideas we have,** as range managers we must stay on top of the condition of our rangeland. It's a responsibility not just to ourselves, but to our communities as well.

Stick to the fundamentals of good ranching, no matter what other ideas evolve. If you have a livestock operation, keep it a good, sound one. . . with a good, balanced grazing system. . . and base any additional programs around that.

There are lots of good grazing systems. Choose one carefully and stick with it. Don't jump around, because range recovers slowly. Keep an adequate cover of grass and other forage to hold your soil and to protect water quality. Native grass is the cheapest feed for domestic livestock. You'll max-

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imize your net profit with the right quantity and quality of native forage.

**The off-ranch benefits of a well-managed livestock enterprise** can make you real popular with your agricultural and nonagricultural neighbors. The Rocky Creek Watershed story is a classic example of this. It's a story I don't think can be told too often.

In the early 1960's, landowners of five ranches covering about one-half of the watershed began extensive range improvement. By 1970, springs that had been dormant since the 1930's began to flow on all five ranches. West Rocky Creek now supplies about 7 percent of the water supply of San Angelo, 20 miles away.

How did these ranchers do it? They enhanced grass cover by reseeding the range, controlling brush, and managing grazing more closely. The grasses help to hold both soil and water on the land. That reduces sedimentation of downstream water supplies and allows water to soak into the aquifer. More water. . .and better water. . .that's a real plus.

The public is aware of the environmental consequences of our actions as ranchers. What better proof is there of this than the 1985 Farm Bill? It makes us look at the kind of land, including rangeland, we've been putting into crop production in years past and reconsider the wisdom of our actions.

The Conservation Reserve Program has some attractive incentives for taking highly erodible land out of production and restoring a good cover of grass or trees. Of course, there are pros and cons to it all. . .and uncertainty about the future, 10 to 15 years from now, for the range industry when some of that grassland comes out of the Reserve. But, working together, I think we can help each other make the right decisions.

**If you are participating in the CRP** and plan to leave your land in permanent vegetation, I encourage you to put the best possible cover on the land you've enrolled. Kansas is on the right track with 92 percent of its CRP land in native grass. Strive for the best permanent cover you can. If you can't get the seed you want right away, keep the land in temporary cover. Seed dealers are committing a lot of their resources to providing you the best. I think you'll find that optimum ground cover will pay dividends down the road.

I know what it's like to make conservation and untraditional marketing decisions for a ranch. I've had to make plenty of long-range decisions that affect my own operation and my neighbors'. We keep our country in good condition by using proper stocking rates. We manage for quantity and quality of grass. And we have a brush-control program that we've used since 1936. This program affects the availability of water on and off the land. . .as well as wildlife habitat conditions.

**Earthen tanks we built ensure good grazing distribution** and attract wildlife. Conservation tillage and contour terraces are a must on our cultivated acreage.

It's a profitable operation managed for domestic livestock, and bobwhite quail hunting is a valuable byproduct, thanks to good conservation measures. If I can do it, you can do it!

To gain the most of what your rangeland has to offer, work closely with your friends in the Society, with your local conservation district, with your state and local agencies and universities, and most of all with your neighbors.

Ranchers have a proud tradition of good business sense as well as stewardship. Let's keep sharing ideas that will keep this tradition going.

## A National Outlook on Ranching's Future

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It's a real privilege and honor to have this time on your agenda.

Fred Bryant asked if I'd bring you my perspective on ranching and perhaps a look down the road into the next century.

You should be aware that, basically, my perspective comes from rural Texas, where I've spent my private life. But today I'd like to bring you a national outlook from my public life.

I think all of us who are ranchers have at least the same set of values, if not the same perspectives: And that is, we want to make our own decisions for our own operations, and we want to keep our country in tip-top condition. Our pride and our good business sense wouldn't let us do it any other way. And that's why the ranchers that are here today are members of the Society. . .we share a concern for good range management.

As to the future, I doubt any of us has a crystal ball that's very accurate. But from my perspective, our future in the ranching industry depends on four driving forces:

1. Economics will continue to be a driving force in our decisionmaking. The economic forces are no longer just local or national; they are global. Out of economic necessity, range managers are breaking with some traditions. . .and becoming more resourceful than ever before. We're diversifying our operations, looking to multiple uses, and, most important, sharpening our marketing skills. We must look ahead to new opportunities—new traditions—for profitability and sustainable use of this resource. We're more of a dynamic industry than we ever were.

2. All too often, the public views the Nation's range resources as entirely publicly owned. They are wrong! There is a lack of understanding not only about the extent of private ownership but also about the extent of contributions those owners make to wildlife habitat, riparian areas and resource improvement. The private rangeland owners are integral to this vast resource system. Their contributions are real contributions. I see us working harder than ever before to ensure our private property rights are protected. . .and, at the same