

# The SRM Spring 2007 Membership Survey

Thoughts, values, and expressions of our members

## By SRM Staff

The Society for Range Management (SRM) is composed of “A well-trained and highly motivated group of professional and rangeland users working with productive, sustainable rangelands ecosystems” (SRM Vision). The SRM Mission is “To promote the professional development and continuing education of members and the public and the stewardship of rangeland resources.” To meet this goal the current SRM Strategic Plan calls for the following:

- Providing quality members service
- Promoting professional education and development
- Enhancing external communication
- Supporting rangeland science
- Influencing public policy
- Providing quality administration

At various times over the past few years there have been discussions as to how well SRM is meeting these goals and satisfying the needs of the membership and what might be done to better meet these needs. A short and simple survey was developed to begin the process of determining how SRM membership views the value of the services they receive.

### Survey Approach

The survey, in the form of a questionnaire, was placed inside the front cover of the April 2007 *Rangelands*. Several weeks later, 2 “newsflashes” were sent via e-mail to all SRM members with e-mail addresses on file requesting response to the survey. Eleven questions addressed general issues both within and outside our current Strategic Plan. A final

question requested demographic information for statistical purposes only (see Sidebar). Several of the questions had space for individual written comments.

### Survey Responses

A total of 689 individual responses were received. This represents about 20% of the membership, which is similar to other membership responses, ie, annual voting for the SRM Board of Directors, by-laws changes, etc. In addition, 1,550 written comments were also received through the survey questions. Following is a breakdown of the 689 respondents by core member categories:

Federal/state employees: 300 respondents (44%)

Academia: 106 respondents (15%)

Ranchers: 84 respondents (12%)

Consultants: 91 respondents (13%)

Retired: 107 respondents (16%)

Students: 56 respondents (8%)

Other: 41 respondents (6%)

This distribution is similar to the distribution of the membership database.

### Age of All Respondents

The respondents fell into the following age categories:

22–30: 10%

31–40: 13%

41–55: 36%

56–65: 24%

Over 65: 17%

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents by occupation category. As expected, SRM members who have

## Survey points addressed

**SRM program/services value (rank each of the following 1 to 5; 1 = no value through 5 = high value)**

Annual meeting and Trade Show  
*Rangeland Ecology and Management* journal  
*Rangelands* magazine  
*Rangeland News* monthly newsletter  
Website  
Professional certification programs  
Technical range management publications  
Professional/technical networking  
General range management information

**Basic value of SRM membership (ranked 1 to 5)**

**Additional services SRM could provide (check all that are of interest)**

On-line employment bank  
Subject expert network database  
Job fair at annual meetings  
SRM-sponsored specialty conferences/workshops/training  
Calendar of professional meetings/training on the website

**Method of receiving annual dues notice and *Rangeland News* monthly newsletter (email or postal mail)**

**Preferred length of SRM Annual Meetings (3 days or less, 4–5 days, 5 days or more)**

**Is location of Annual Meeting a factor in attendance? (yes, no)**

**Frequency of SRM website visitation (daily, weekly, monthly, rarely)**

**Items used on website (check all that apply)**

Publication Access (*Rangeland Ecology and Management*, *Rangelands*, *Rangeland News*)  
Annual Meeting information  
Member directory  
Section information  
Committee information

**Does the organization and functionality of SRM website meet your needs? (yes, no)**

**Is SRM certification as a range management professional important to you? (yes, no)**

**Quality of functions and services by SRM (rank each of the following 1 to 5; 1 = no value through 5 = high value)**

Communication from the Board of Directors  
Role/function of the Advisory Council

## Survey points addressed (cont.)

Committee structure and communications  
Policy development and implementation  
Staff resources  
Membership development and outreach  
External partnerships  
Political lobbying  
General rangeland educational efforts  
Relation with sections  
Membership representation on the SRM Board of Directors

### Final demographic information requested

Current occupation or position:

Student (Undergraduate, Graduate)  
Federal or State Agency  
Academia  
Retired  
Rancher or Land Manager  
Consultant

Continuous years of SRM membership (1–4, 5–10, 11–20, Over 20)

Have you ever dropped your membership and rejoined later (yes, no)

Age (under 21, 22–30, 31–40, 42–55, 56–65, over 65)

retired are the most senior group followed by the ranchers (Figs. 1E and 1C).

### SRM Web Site

Survey results showed that the frequency with which the respondents visited the SRM Web site was as follows:

Weekly: 62 respondents (9%)  
Monthly: 317 respondents (46%)  
Rarely: 288 respondents (42%)

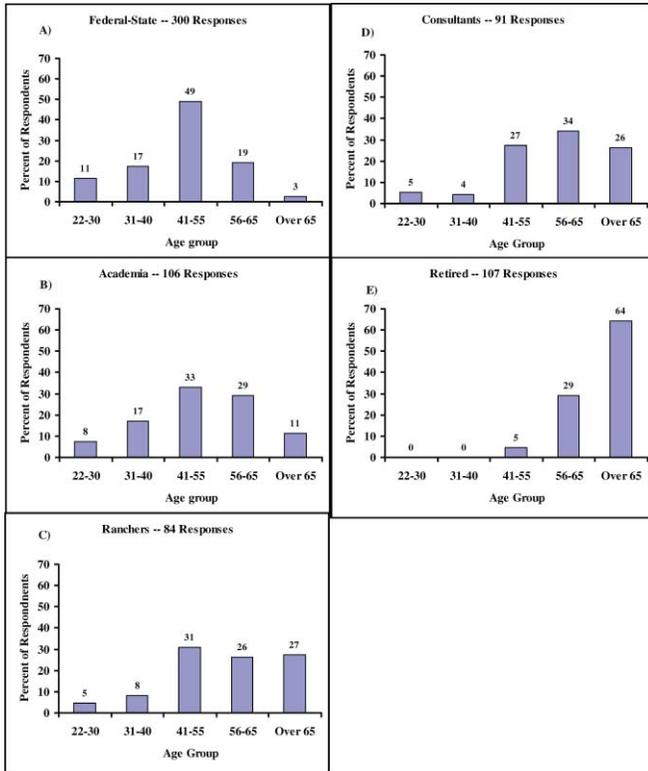
Of the respondents that visited the Web site, publication sites were visited by 350 respondents (51%), annual meeting information by 324 respondents (46%), SRM directory by 133 respondents (19%), section activities by 181 respondents (26%), and committee activities by 61 respondents (9%).

Seventy-five percent of all respondents (520) reported that the organization and functionality of the SRM Web site suited their needs as an SRM member. Eleven percent (72) reported that it did not. There were 245 separate comments on the topic of the Web site suitability to member needs, including the following:

Don't use the Web site: 17% of the comments  
Easy to use and meets needs: 42% of the comments  
Could be better: 14% of the comments  
No internet service: 3% of the comments

### SRM Professional Certification

On the question of certification through SRM, 42% (291 respondents) reported that certification was important and



**Figure 1.** Age grouping of respondents in each occupational classification: **A**, Federal/state employees. **B**, Academia. **C**, Ranchers. **D**, Consultants. **E**, Retired.

50% (344 respondents) did not use or think certification was important.

There were 359 separate comments on the importance of SRM certification to the members:

- Not needed for job/government service: 18% of the comments
- An important factor of job: 36% of the comments
- An unimportant factor for the job: 9% of the comments
- Retired/not interested/rancher: 9% of the comments
- College degree more important: 2% of the comments
- Certified elsewhere: 4% of the comments
- Dropped certification: 1% of the comments

## Mailing

Of the 687 respondents, 42% of the respondents wanted their dues information by e-mail and 52% wanted the information by postal mail. Conversely, 64% wanted the monthly *Rangeland News* by e-mail and 30% by postal mail.

## Meeting Length and Location

Thirty-one percent of the respondents wanted Annual Meetings of 3 days or less whereas 56% listed 4 to 5 days. The meeting location was a factor in attendance in 74% of the responses; 22% said the meeting location was not a factor in their attendance.

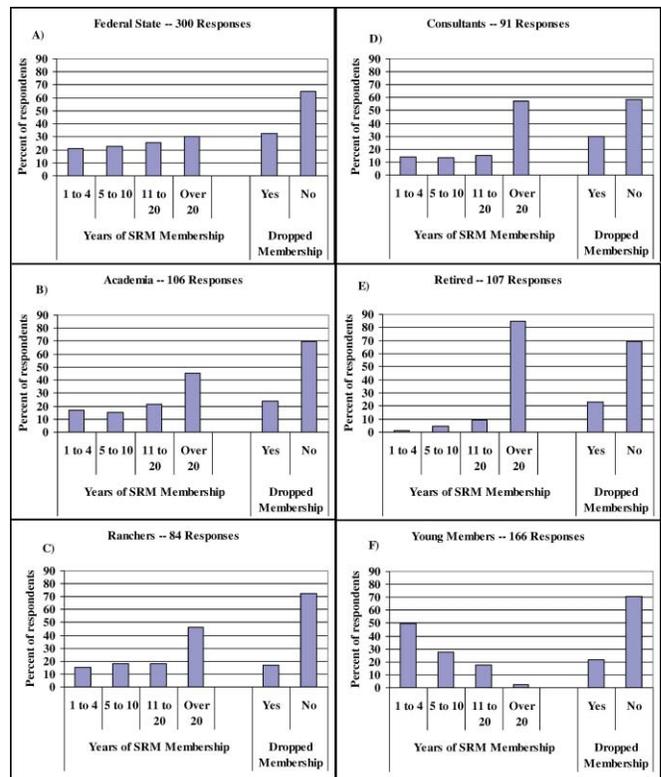
There were 253 separate comments associated with meeting location. Cost and distance was a factor in 36% of the comments. Some respondents commented that they liked varied sites (9%), small venue sites (4%), large cities (yes: 4%, no: 4%), western states (6%), and warm climates (6%). Budget was a factor in 5% of the comments.

## Duration of SRM Membership

Twenty percent of the respondents reported 1–4 years of continuous membership, 17% 5–10 years, 20% 11–20 years, and 42% over 20 years of continuous membership. Sixty-eight percent had never dropped their membership. There were 164 separate comments on reasons for dropping the SRM membership:

- Forgot to pay dues: 21% of the comments
- Changed jobs: 24% of the comments
- Lack of interest: 9% of the comments
- Cost: 17% of the comments
- Student: 10% of the comments
- SRM Board of Directors actions: 9% of the comments

It must be remembered that some of these respondents are members who dropped their membership and then renewed. Figure 2 shows the length of SRM membership by various core professional occupational groupings. Again as expected, the retired SRM members had the highest percentage of over 20 years of continuous membership



**Figure 2.** Years of SRM membership for each classification: **A**, Federal/state employees. **B**, Academia. **C**, Ranchers. **D**, Consultants. **E**, Retired. **F**, Young members.

(Fig. 2E). Approximately 55% of the rancher group had less than 20 years of continuous membership (Fig. 2C).

### SRM Program Values and Quality of Function and Services

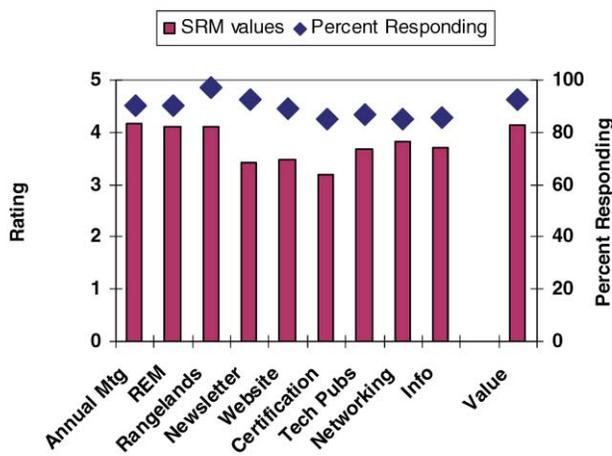
Respondents were asked to rate the value of 10 SRM programs and services and the quality of 11 SRM functions and services on a scale of 1 to 5. A rating of 1 indicated the item had no or poor importance and 5 indicated a high or excellent value. A measure of rating variability was estimated by calculating the standard deviation (SD) of the responses of each group.

#### SRM Programs/Services

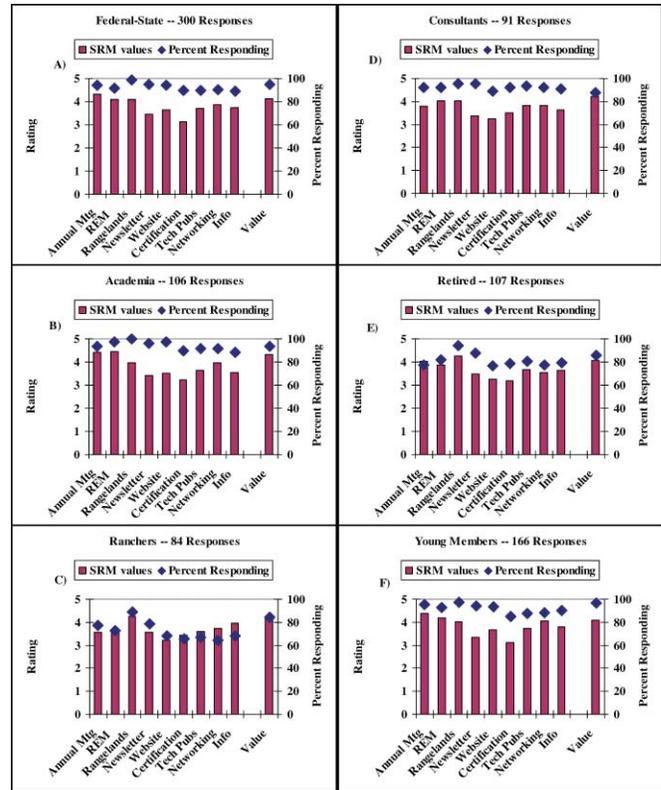
Figure 3 shows the results of these ratings. The diamond (◆) above the bars indicates the percentage of the 689 respondents that addressed this item. The respondents indicated that the Annual Meeting, the journal *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, and *Rangelands* were the most valued program values with ratings of 4+. The *Rangeland Newsletter*, Web site, and professional certification programs were the lowest of the group but still with a rating of 3+. The technical range management publications, professional/technical networking, and general range management information were all intermediate with a 3.5 average. The basic value and benefit of SRM membership was rated at 4.1. The SD of all groups varied from 0.90 to 1.35 rating points.

Figure 4 shows the ratings by core professional occupational groupings. Of note is the lower percentage of responses by the ranchers group. They also tended to rate the values of the separate items lower than did the other

**SRM Program Values-All Respondents**



**Figure 3.** Rating of SRM Program Values by all respondents. The diamond (◆) above the bars indicates the percentage of the 689 respondents that addressed this item.



**Figure 4.** Rating of SRM Program Values by occupational classification: **A**, Federal/state employees. **B**, Academia. **C**, Ranchers. **D**, Consultants. **E**, Retired. **F**, Young members. The diamond (◆) above the bars indicates the percentage of the respondents in that grouping that addressed this item.

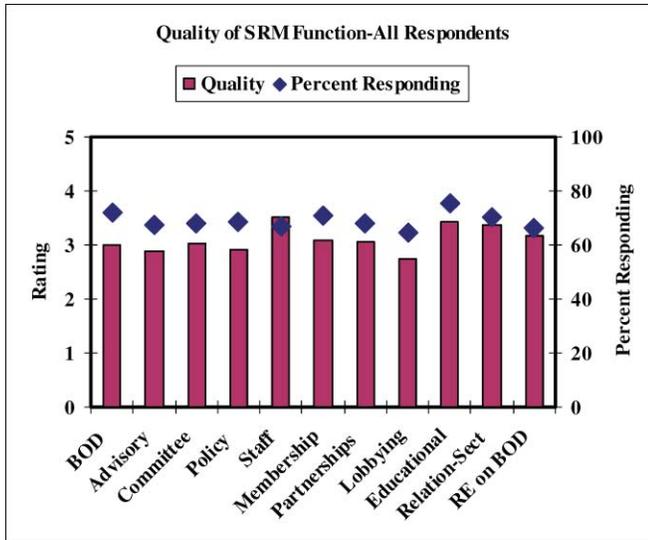
groups (Fig. 4C). The consultant group also rated the groups lower but had a high percentage of respondents.

There were 220 separate comments concerning the basic value and benefit of SRM membership, including the following:

- Provides interaction/networking/idea exchange: 36% of the comments
- Provides professional status: 8% of the comments
- Provides useful publications/technical information: 12% of the comments
- Not much benefit/poor support for producer/poor leadership: 9% of the comments
- Retired: active 6%, inactive 8% of the comments
- SRM is family: 4% of the comments
- New member or unable to quantify: 3% of the comments

#### Quality of Functions and Services of SRM

Only about 70% of the respondents provided information on this question (Fig. 5). Several respondents stated they were not aware of these services and functions or did not have sufficient information to rate the groups. Ratings from



**Figure 5.** Rating of quality of SRM Function and Services by all respondents. The diamond (◆) above the bars indicates the percentage of the 689 respondents that addressed this item.

the ones who did respond averaged 2.5 to 3.5+ across all groupings. The SD was 0.94 to 1.03 rating points.

Figure 6 shows the ratings by core professional occupational grouping. All groups rated the individual values of the separate items in the 2.5 to 3.5 range. The ranchers had the lowest percentage of responses (less than 60%) (Fig. 6C).

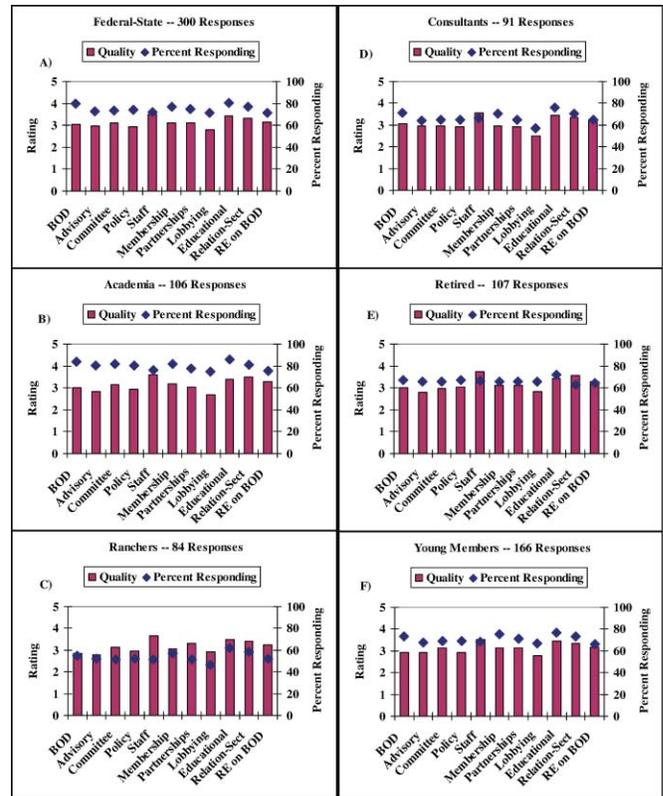
When asked what new services would be desirable, respondents indicated the following:

- On-line employment bank: 4% of the respondents
- Subject-expert network database: 19% of the respondents
- Job fair at annual meetings: 14% of the respondents
- SRM-sponsored specialty conferences/workshops/training: 27% of the respondents
- Calendar of professional meetings/training on the Web site: 24% of the respondents

### Implications of Survey

Respondents rated the SRM programs and services as 3 to 4.5 out of 5. The quality of function and service by SRM was rated 2.5 to 3.5 out of 5. Based on the additional comments from the respondents, many SRM functions, processes, and services are not well understood by the general SRM membership. It would appear that complicated operations and organizational structure of the SRM committees makes it difficult for new members to become actively involved. The survey suggests opportunities for improved communications and coordination at all levels, from leadership, to Board of Directors, to Advisory Council, to committees and staff.

The SRM Annual Meeting and the 2 publications, *Rangeland Ecology and Management* and *Rangelands*, are the



**Figure 6.** Rating of quality of SRM Function and Services by occupational classification; **A**, Federal/state employees. **B**, Academia. **C**, Ranchers. **D**, Consultants. **E**, Retired. **F**, Young members. The diamond (◆) above the bars indicates the percentage of the respondents in that grouping that addressed this item.

most readily identifiable membership benefits. The SRM Web site is used but not as a major source of information. More marketing and promotion of the Web site is needed for the entire service and value of membership.

The SRM Certified Professional in Rangeland Management program must be marketed to improve its recognition within the profession.

Attendance cost and location of the SRM Annual Meeting are keys in continued high attendance.

The responses indicate that the membership in general thinks very highly of the purpose and goals of the SRM, with ratings of 4 to 5. At the same time the respondents indicated that although the quality of service provided by the various SRM groups could be rated satisfactory (a rating of 3) there could be improvement in all phases of activities.

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