



By Gary Frasier

Frasier's Philosophy

As one gets older there is an increasing tendency to reflect back to the “good old days.” I am no different. While I am having trouble accepting the fact that I have gotten older, I do find an increasing tendency to reflect on the past. I try to remember what was important when I first became an SRM member. We talked about desertification, grazing systems, range improvements, and reseeding. There was an increasing awareness that our natural resources meant more to us than solely the production of livestock. Multiple use of the land was important. We were recognizing that some of the older, more entrenched concepts of plant succession needed modification or to be replaced because irreversible changes had occurred to the land in some places. We made steady progress in making the land sustainable.

Where are we today? The basic goals are still the same. We want sustainable, healthy landscapes for future generations. Consumers of the land's products do not necessarily live on the land. They are the recreationists wanting to relax. They are the downstream water users. They are the hikers. They are the hunters and fishermen. And as time passes older ranchers are slowly being replaced by people with few direct ties to the land. Our young professionals in SRM are being required to do more of the land management from the office. They have different tools, i.e., GIS, GPS, etc., but very little time to “kick the dirt.” They are knowledgeable about plants, soils, and wildlife. They are good at preparing reports for administrators to show how the natural resources are responding to the management plans, yet they have very little time to “kick the dirt” with the people living on the land.

I am dismayed by some of our university systems who take the words “Range Management” out of natural resources curricula. We are in desperate need of people who understand how to integrate the many scientific disciplines, soils, plants, and animals that are part of the natural resource landscape. I call this “range management.” To me the first and best range manager is the rancher who daily makes a living from the land. Others are the great people working for the various land management agencies. They all are important to the discipline we call “range management.” Let us give all these people their due respect. They are professionals working in a difficult situation. Each decision has supporters and detractors. Decisions often have beneficiaries and those that are adversely affected. A good decision is a balancing act. In making these decisions these young professionals need all the support they can get. They are always trying to improve. You can see it at SRM meetings; they are trying to improve.

What more can we ask for? My hat is off to all young people in the field of range management. You are the new face of our profession. I would hope that you will look back on this time as the “good old days.” ♦