

Letter to the Editor

By Fred Marshall

Dear Editor:

The first part of *Rangelands* I read is Thad Box's writings on "Listening to the Land;" I find his thoughts not only stimulating but, well, very thoughtful!

In the June issue of *Rangelands* his "thoughts" were, to a large degree, a lament about the loss of Range Management and Forest Management as full "departments" or even "colleges" within various universities; he unequivocally stated that "Closing colleges of agriculture, changing names of majors, and combining land care programs into general natural resource management degrees will not better serve the land."

As part of his answer to the future well-being of the natural resource professions he goes on to issue a challenge for readers of *Rangelands* to fill this publication with "thoughtful rebuttals of what I, and others, write—essays, stories, and exegeses from educated people who love the land."

I herein respond to this challenge, as I believe that unless all major historical and many continuing aspects of the range, forestry, and related professions change, neither the land, the people who own the land, nor the resource professions who attempt to manage it will be well served.

For far too long the resource professions, especially range and forestry, have resisted change and hence caused the rapid demise of both the stature of their professions and their professional training programs.

To be successful, which means that resource professionals are once again well respected as are their training programs, and that they hold professional positions of stature that have meaningful and positive influence and effect on and over all natural resources, the following must occur:

1. The college and university programs must not only change their names but also their focus. The change in names must be to "Natural Resource Management" with curricula to match. The programs will very likely have to be extended to five years to enable them to include the requisite courses to ensure the degrees have meaningful content and stature. (This transition is virtually complete in British Columbia except the 5-year term.)
2. While the various natural resource professional societies, such as Society of American Foresters and SRM, may still exist individually, they and many other resource professions should, at the very least, form a formal Federation of Natural Resource Professions and be more

inclusive in their membership requirements. However, it would likely be more beneficial if a larger Association of Natural Resource Professionals was formed with various disciplines within it being established, accredited, and/or credentialed. SRM has already made positive moves in this regard by developing joint annual meetings with allied groups. In British Columbia, the Central Interior Logging Association changed the venue of their recent annual meeting to include all natural resource industries with great success.

3. Government entities such as the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (the Ministries of Forestry and Environment in British Columbia) need to amalgamate into a single Natural Resource Agency. This would not only reduce bureaucracy and save literally billions of taxpayer dollars, but would, most importantly, result in much better coordinated resource management that could be ecosystem based instead of administratively based—or, rather, administratively restricted!

Forestry is no longer "King of the Woods," and cattle are no longer "King of the Range," and neither will ever be again; ditto the associated professionals and practitioners. The sooner everyone involved with these and other natural resource industries recognizes this and embraces the changes indicated above, the better off and more successful everyone will be, and the better potential everyone will have to do a much improved job of resource management.

PS: Yale University has the longest continuous forestry-related school in the United States; it operates under the moniker of the "Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies" with its main objective being "to inform its students and leaders regarding the environment and the health of biosphere. Its focus is on perfect training and professional education to the new generation regarding the globe. It helps to generate leadership quality by providing a wide range of information relating to the environment." It claims that its programs are a "hub for green education." A far cry from the historical curriculum descriptions of the traditional forestry and range programs!

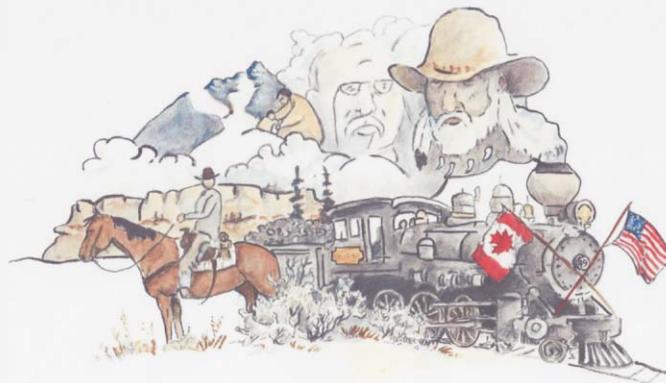
Author (fmarshall@telus.net) is an Independent Resource Consultant with a BS in Forestry from the University of Idaho and a MF from Yale. He and his wife live on and manage a small cattle ranch combined with a Crown Woodlot in Southern

British Columbia, Canada. He worked for both the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service in Idaho and Washington, USA, and for the Forest Industry in British

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TRANSCENDING BORDERS

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