



State of the Society Advancing the Profession

GARY B. DONART

This address was given by Dr. Donart, 1993 President of the Society for Range Management, on February 14, 1994, at the Society's Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Happy Valentine's Day!!

On behalf of the Society I extend sincere appreciation to the Colorado Section, under the leadership of Tom Bartlett and Don Smith, for hosting this Annual Meeting. Every aspect was well planned. I would also like to recognize the past Presidents of the Society for the leadership they have given and the platform from which we are now able to operate. Our Board of Directors for this past year have been excellent to work with. To those of you who served as committee chairpersons, your volunteer efforts did not go unnoticed, as it was through your efforts that the Society programs become implemented. I also appreciate the support of my colleagues and University administration for their assistance and support over the past year.

Two gentlemen to whom I am deeply indebted are Ray Housley, our Washington representative, and Bud Rumburg, our Executive Vice-President. Their untiring effort, constant vigil, and wise counsel are critical to the well being of the Society and were an asset to me in pursuing programs.

I cannot close my Valentine's Day appreciation without thanking my wife, Glenda. Over the last two years she has assisted me in more ways than either of us could ever have imagined. Her support in taking care of personal concerns, much greater than we had ever anticipated, is all that allowed me to pursue the activities of the Society. Her attendance here today is warmly appreciated. I owe her more than can be expressed and I have a lot of catching up to do after this meeting.

I am pleased to state that everything is going well in the Denver office. We have sold the old office building and that has taken a financial burden off the Society and is allowing Bud more time to pursue other activities. The building sale was good. We got a fair price, based on what the market would bear, obtained a good down payment and an excellent interest rate on the balance. Member and section response to our call for purchase of notes on the new building was excellent, and those of us who hesitated lost out on a good deal. We have an excellent staff which has to be the most efficient in the business. Rene Crane, who left us this fall to pursue new interests, will be missed but has been replaced by Ann Harris, who is doing a superb job. Kirsten, Jenny, Patty, and Marlowe round out our personnel, assisted by Pat Smith, who still works part time on society publications. Jerry Schwien also played an important part in our operations until his return to the SCS in October. Their support is greatly appreciated.

We have changed our accounting procedures and hope to have a better understanding of our cash flow, better identify what our costs are per activity, and thus be more efficient, economically. Speaking of economics, the Society is doing well. We are solvent, but not affluent. Earlier in the year we indicated that we were in deficit spending because of the building repairs, etc. With receipt of one outstanding bill, we will end the year on the positive side, but there is no surplus. We still do not have funding to initiate new projects or activities. Each of us should still be creative in thought as to ways of increasing the cash flow of the Society, and the Board

is looking at this as a critical issue identified in our strategic plan. We are upgrading our publications equipment and I am also optimistic that we will be connected to the electronic world via E-mail with internet capabilities before the end of 1994.

Our Strategic Plan was implemented last year in Albuquerque. The Board of Directors spent considerable time in discussion and review of the plan this past summer in Springfield. Our concern was how to most efficiently carry out the intent of the plan and address the critical issues. This past Saturday evening the Board met with the outgoing and incoming chairpersons of the Society in a brainstorming session to see if there were better or different ways to carry out the strategic plan, to see if there is duplicated effort, or to see if we have any missing links in our structure. It was a stimulating session and a lot of good information was presented. The Board will continue to review the output of the session and try to make adjustments by the summer meeting for implementation as soon as possible.

With the significant changes in the federal administration and Congress, we concentrated on a substantial informational process, contacting the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and all congressional delegates involved with agriculture and natural resources, providing them with information on the significance of rangelands, the importance of the natural resource, and encouraging them to recognize this in their environmental agenda, and offered the assistance of the Society. Additional correspondence and personal contact with many of the individuals and programs have been continued through the year. I believe we are perceived as a sound organization with a lot to offer and that our support and contact is appreciated. However, much of the daily issue is political, involving judgements or decisions to which the Society is not in position to offer professional assistance. Our followup contacts with individuals allows us the opportunity to discuss and review many of the decisions as they might impact the resource and/or the opportunities for management.

I am reminded that before there were volcanic eruptions they had to carry the lava down the mountain by hand and scatter it over the sleeping villages. This took a lot of time. It didn't take long for an eruption to occur this year with the development of Rangeland Reform '94. Federal Grazing Policy forums were held in April and May. We had representation at each of the hearings, with several of you involved with presenting testimony through the formal panels or from the public input sessions. I presented the SRM position on grazing management at the forum in Albuquerque, emphasizing multiple use management based on an ecosystem approach which recognized herbivory, both livestock and wildlife, as part of the greater system. Encouragement of the use of Coordinated Resource Management and local level involvement were stressed. I also encouraged recognition and use of the rangeland professionals within the employ of the agencies to enhance public land values.

The Society has followed the developments of the reform pro-

cess and has had members participating at several of the roundtable sessions across the West. We are awaiting the next round of written documents and are prepared to provide constructive comments. We are also prepared to present information, facts, and testimony at any, or all, of the public forums regarding the revisions of Rangeland Reform '94.

Another key activity this past year was the release of the National Academy of Sciences report on Rangeland Health. Bud Rumburg, Ray Housley, Pat Johnson of the Unity Committee, and I were present, along with many members from the National Capital Section, at the press release and followup workshop on the report. Responses to the report have been varied. Some express extreme displeasure, others disappointment, while others are pleased. I believe that much of the concern about the report is focused on the preface of the report or on the news release regarding it. Semantics are undoubtedly a concern for many. The Unity in Concepts and Terminology Task Force has been working with the report since its release. It is important to recognize that both the Unity report and the Academy report have been released as first approximations. A symposium is scheduled at this meeting to discuss the Academy report. One thing has become clear: while we work with a specific piece of land and understand it fairly well, a process of integrating our knowledge of specific land units or allotments into an inventory report on the status of rangeland integrity for interpretation by the lay public and elected officials is less than adequate. Key agencies responsible for rangeland management are involved and actively working to resolve this issue. I am convinced that professional integrity will prevail and that we will develop a concept that is workable and satisfactory.

These two activities, when coupled with others, have certainly given rangelands and rangeland management more visibility and publicity than anything in recent years. Our challenge as a professional society is to think positively, to take advantage of the opportunities, and to provide the facts and professional judgement necessary to guide the process. I believe we have a sound base if we look at our policy and position statements and continue to build from them. I recognize that what we are facing is a little like a bucking bronco that must be tamed and we can't get it slowed down enough to get on. However, every good bronc rider believes that any horse can be tamed and sets out with that objective. The Society must be in the same frame of mind.

While we work with the previous challenges, the Society is aware of the proposals for reorganization and potential downsizing of federal agencies. Again the Society has communicated its concerns and emphasized the importance of rangelands and the rangeland programs relative to natural resource issues. Activity in Congress regarding these issues is going on now. While there will undoubtedly be some change, we are optimistic that rangeland management will still have a solid position, relative to all other activities.

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative for Private Lands is moving forward. The steering committee last met in January. The committee is developing language for the inclusion of the initiative into the 1995 Farm Bill and is developing the support for both the language and the appropriation of funds. Grass-roots support from the membership and the sections is essential to showing the importance of the initiative to the support of natural resources. It is possible that the Grazing Lands Initiative and Conservation Reserve Program activities of the Society can be closely integrated. Speaking of the CRP, a national policy symposium was held just last week. The Society, through its CRP committee, was involved with that activity.

Our efforts with Coordinated Resource Management are being well received. We have held several training sessions this past year, both in the public and private land states. It is very gratifying to see the acceptance of the process in the private land states. The process

is recognized as an excellent way to address water issues and non-point source pollution problems involving numerous agencies and interest groups.

The Society has published the CRM guidelines this year. We have also published the long-awaited *Rangeland Cover Types* and the AIBS symposia on Ecological Implications of Livestock Herbivory in the West. These three publications, along with the NAS report on Rangeland Health, are now available through the Society office. Each of these should be useful to each of us as we look for factual information regarding rangelands and their uses.

Our efforts at partnership and developing affiliations with other organizations is continuing and should assist us in developing numbers and strength to present facts important to rangeland management. Part of this effort is showcased in a poster session to be held tomorrow morning.

There is still much ahead of us. The National Biological Survey, after a rocky beginning, is now established. With it come many unanswered questions. The Society will again be providing constructive comment to the program. The program promises a lot; however, the feasibility may be in question. How this program will impact on the development of sound rangeland data collection is not clear at this time. The inventory of species and the relationship to the Endangered Species Act is not clear. The process of balancing ecosystem management, protection, and economic development is not clear. The dealing with geological time and its relationship to ecosystems is not identified. The ability to work through reasoned facts and emotional opinion is not well specified. The relationship of the survey to private property rights and responsibilities will be questioned. Several sections are already involved with this discussion. Here will be another opportunity and challenge to the Society.

The Endangered Species Act has not yet been debated. The Society has a policy statement and resolution on the topic and is ready to provide information when it is timely to do so. Neotropical birds are the latest to enter the threatened and endangered species debate. A proposal to list the southwestern yellow flycatcher has been presented. The Society has addressed the concerns listed in the Federal Register, such as identifying the presence of opinion, lack of knowledge on the range and extent of the species, and what management is capable of doing for the species. More of this topic should be coming soon.

Gap analysis and the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) are underway as processes of monitoring ecological integrity. These processes are not looking at site specific situations, but are involving landscape or larger interpretation. We must work carefully with these programs to insure that site specific information which is crucial to the management process can be integrated and properly interpreted and not become a source of conflict.

In August, 1992, I attended the Renewable Natural Resources Foundation (RNRF) Congress. The Congress was well structured and had excellent keynote speakers. As I participated in the ecosystem management working groups, I developed a state of confusion, frustration, and concern as I listened to nearly 150 delegates discuss critical issues and concepts regarding renewable natural resources. The most important was the absence of support for the fact that we were dealing with a renewable natural resource. Additional concerns involved the desire to change the status quo but not knowing how to do it, and an urgent need for a stewardship ethic, which could not be defined.

As I went into the year I found these thoughts emerging in many circles. Change is inevitable and this is certainly a bit part of what we deal with in rangeland management today. In today's society it is the baby boomers who are defining the work place. They are a

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generation reared in relative affluence. Their parents were products of the Great Depression. A significant difference exists in the two. This has resulted in a society composed of idealists, realists, and pessimists, folded into activists and passivists, but largely an impatient society. The statement that people all have one thing in common, they are different, is so true. As we have become a more urbanized and technological/service-based society, perhaps the words of Henry Ford are appropriate: "The farther we get away from the land, the greater our insecurity." With the impact of mass media we have developed a public opinion, and public opinion can be described as what folks think folks think.

Last summer I was asked to identify 5–10 important biological issues from the 173 RNRFC Congress recommendations. I started by identifying two terms, *sustainability* and *biodiversity*. SRM has struggled with these terms. We have a position on biodiversity and an excellent synthesis paper on the topic, but still don't have the answer. We have used the concept for years but are just now working with it in today's application. Range science has recognized the concept of sustainability for more than 50 years. It was in our early definitions of range management and was associated with carrying capacity. These two terms are ecological conceptual terms. They are value-laden terms that are recognized and used by the lay public and elected officials, and the scientific community can't answer all of the questions that these people ask or generate.

Ecological principles must govern renewable natural resources. Economic theory must fit ecological concepts. Ecology is not a series of simple linear relationships, and we as ecologists are still learning the significance of some of these relationships. Most of the general public are not as ecologically knowledgeable as they are ecologically aware. I would even hazard to guess that an even greater number don't even care; and if they do, protection is the simple answer. We have often confused past and present uses and their impacts on the resources of today. This is intermingled with the lack of knowledge in ecology, especially by the layman. Churchill said it best when he said, "If we open the quarrel between the

past and the present, we lose the future".

The recommendations I presented to RNRFC, and I leave with you, were to (1) develop consensus building on environmental issues to obtain agreement and avoid conflict; (2) support long-term, interdisciplinary ecological research to address management issues and to establish science-based benchmarks; (3) create, implement, and maintain ongoing standardized terminology and data bases; (4) expand educational systems for the managers, resource users, landowners, public officials, and lay public to appreciate how defined ecosystems work; (5) develop an acceptable stewardship ethic and implement it through educational programs, including K-12; (6) quantify sustainability and biodiversity for the different societal values and determine the ecological integrity for estimating future values of resources; (7) establish effective mechanisms for communicating data bases and management needs to, and between, scientists and managers; (8) focus on pro-active programs to integrate more scientific data and information into the policy process; (9) revise federal cost-benefit guidelines to reflect contemporary resource economics; (10) develop coalitions of professional organizations to address needs as none of us knows as much about something as all of us.

Much of this we are doing today but we must focus and work harder at it. The common thread through the recommendations is communications. This is undoubtedly the biggest challenge we have to good management. I believe we must operate on the premise that nothing is so simple that it can't be misunderstood! We must double our efforts to go forward with facts and reasoned judgements. Opinions should be clearly stated. I am reminded that you don't squat while wearing spurs, so let's get on with the challenge!

This past year has been the greatest honor of my professional career. I thank each of you as individual members for your contributions to the profession. This is what has made the Society strong and effective. Happy Valentine's Day!