



Status and Outlook for Range in the New Politics

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Highlight: *Continued need is predicted for livestock grazing from the nation's forests and ranges. However, more consideration must be given to desires of people for all the goods and services range provides. This is the new politics of range management and development. Program goals must consider enhancing the environment while planning more efficient use of the range for livestock production.*

The theme "Rangeland Resources and Politics" is timely. The role that range can and should play in a changing, environmentally-awakened society needs more discussion. It needs exposure to the forum of the Society for Range Management and beyond its membership—exposure that it can sponsor.

I would like to start by explaining a couple of terms. By the term *new politics* is meant the various new institutional arrangements made in recent years to deal with questions of public policy. There are new laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act. There are new court decisions, particularly relating to standing to sue. There are new government organizations, such as the Regional Commissions. And there are shifts of political emphasis, particularly from the rural areas to the cities.

In the term *rangeland*, I include, as the Society for Range Management does, natural grasslands, savannas, shrublands, most deserts, tundra, alpine communities, coastal marshes, and wet meadows.

The Society for Range Management is concerned about "... understanding range ecosystems, ... whose resources include tangible products and intangible values." Thus, we share a common concern about natural systems and understanding of how systems operate and how their components interrelate. The Society for Range Management recognizes (and I quote from its *Benchmarks: a statement of concepts and positions*), "... that intelligent use of range resources must be based on economic and social decisions compatible with the capabilities of the biological system." With this we certainly agree. It is the interaction of the resource with politics that I want to discuss.

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General Outlook

Increased numbers of people and their activities and consumption are causing increased demands for goods and services. Although population projections recently have been lowered due to sharp declines in fertility and birth expectations, demographers say that zero population growth is still some years away. By 1980 our population may rise to between 222 and 231 million, about 8 to 13% over 1970. Higher levels of spendable income contribute to the increasing demand for goods and services.

Consumption of industrial wood in the United States (i.e., all products except fuelwood), increased 70% to a level of 13 billion cubic feet between 1940 and 1971, and our studies indicate further increases—to nearly 23 billion cubic feet by the year 2000, assuming 1970 price levels. We also expect higher demands for wildland recreation. Recent estimates indicate that between 30 and 40 million people now camp, compared to about 11 million in 1960. Camping, however, may be approaching a temporary saturation. Increased hunting, off-road recreation vehicle use, skiing—all important outdoor recreational activities—are projected. Water flow requirement from the nation's wildlands also is projected to increase significantly in the years ahead. Needs for energy are increasing, particularly for production of electricity and for gas and other fossil fuels.

I offer these observations because I believe we can intelligently consider range only in the context of society's needs and desires. We must be prepared to consider the need for trade-offs among the many resources of the nation's forest and range ecosystems, as society's needs and opportunities to meet those needs change.

For example, fossil fuels provide much of our energy for heating, as well as for production of electrical energy. Environmental problems arise in the process of mining of coal and its conversion to fuel and to electricity. Some argue in favor of dampening the demand for energy as a means of dealing with these environmental problems by raising prices. Others favor more use of nuclear energy sources. The issue is well illustrated by the prospective development of the low-sulfur coal deposits of the Northern Plains areas and the probable development of oil-shale lands which appear to be in the offing. The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture,

the Environmental Protection Agency, and the states belonging to the old West Regional Commission are now taking a look at this situation.

Possible trade-offs between range grazing and alternative sources of energy for livestock production also need to be understood. In many places, range is the most efficient source of livestock forage. Cropland may often compete economically, but always with a greater expenditure of energy. As fuels become scarce and their total environmental costs are assessed, range may be called on to produce far more forage than now.

Allocating Range Use

These and similar national issues are of concern to all of us who must evaluate prospective levels of land and resource use in relation to public need. For example:

National Forest grazing has been in strong demand for the 68 years there has been a Forest Service. Ranchers and farmers have grazed their livestock either seasonally or year-long upon grazing allotments under paid term permit. We considered the need of the grazer for the grass and environment of the range. He contributes substantively to meat production, and from his operation derives income which helps turn the economic wheels of his local or regional area. A principal factor limiting the number of permitted livestock has been the grazing capacity, even though research has yielded many ways favoring increased livestock use.

Stocking of National Forest ranges was too heavy in the early years, especially during World War I when increased grazing was allowed to help meet national needs for meat and fiber. Since then, adjustments have been made to bring the grazing load back into line with the capability of the land for sustained production. We were not always as successful as we wanted to be in balancing livestock use with resource capability. There was competition for range in some areas, but essentially it was competition between two groups of herbivores—livestock and big game.

As population increased over the years and public needs and customs changed, new pressures began to affect the range. Increasingly the public has made use of the range. No longer is the problem simply one of allocating grazing among the ranchers and farmers who want to graze livestock. The problem now is to allocate range among a host of uses, including off-road vehicle travel and wild horse grazing.

Not only are there new demands for the resource, but there are also stiffer requirements for its management.

Public land administrators in the past were ruled by an ethic of conservation—a land ethic—that called for protecting the soil while the resource was being used for the public good. But today they must also manage for environmental quality, and this includes more values—esthetics, scenery, solitude, to name but a few. This intensified public interest has resulted in such new legislation as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

This new political climate affects not only livestock grazing on the National Forests but also the management of timber, wildlife, recreation, watersheds, wilderness, minerals, and the rest. It requires the development and evaluation of a broad range of land use alternatives and program mixes. It requires public involvement in planning and decisionmaking. Citizen expressions of environmental, social, and economic concern today influence more than ever the development and administration of public policies. The citizen, the legislator, the court, the public land manager are involved together as never before.

The Political Process and Range

The federal budgetary process is a good example of this process. In the Forest Service we maintain long-range plans for production of specific resource outputs. Each year the Forest Service requests the manpower and funds to attain the specified goals.

The Federal Budget, submitted annually to the Congress, presents a proposed level of federal spending that the President believes would best meet national goals of all kinds. The proposed budget for the fiscal year 1974 to begin July 1, 1973, was presented to the Congress on January 29, 1973.

In preparing this budget, each program of each agency was evaluated in relation to the contributions it could make toward achievement of national goals. Dollars were apportioned among the various programs in accordance with national priorities and within the total budget ceiling. Trade-offs were considered at each level of the budget review to cut and fit dollar levels to the size of the total outlay.

In the formation of the budget, Welfare competes with Foreign Assistance; Defense with Transportation; Agriculture with Housing; and so on.

Guiding construction of the President's budget are policy and other direction spelled out in the law. The Congress acts upon each element of the President's budget and also cuts and fits it according to its judgment. Interest groups normally voice their needs through the Congress.

Once the Congress is satisfied with the budget, it authorizes expenditure of agreed-upon monies and appropriates these funds through the legislative process. Thus, budgetmaking is essentially a political process. Throughout the process the citizen can and does make his opinions and needs known to both the legislative and executive branches.

Some Forest Service Concerns

In developing the annual budget, we must answer several key questions. How much of the Forest Service dollar should be used for range grazing purposes in the National Forest System? How much, if any, in support of non-federal forest-range grazing via our State and Private Forestry effort? And, how much for research on pressing problems.

Once the goals and funding decisions are made for range programs, we must search out the more productive National

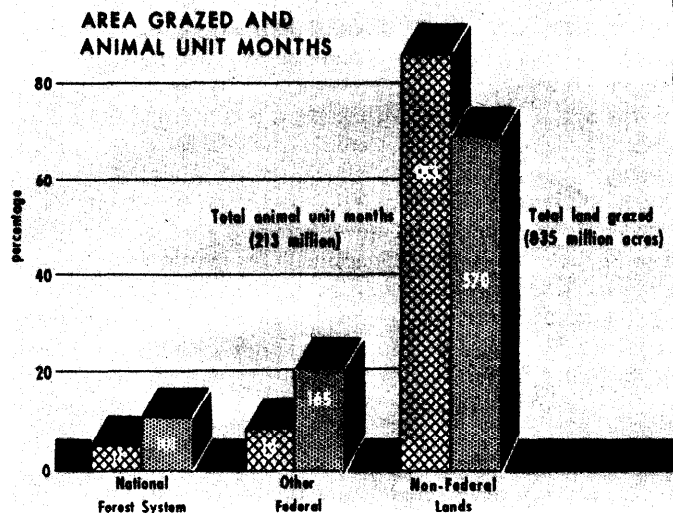


Fig. 1. Livestock grazing and AUM production on US forests and ranges in 1970 (48 states).

Forest System range areas where costs of maintenance and development are reasonable. At the same time, we must give specific attention to range areas with special social and environmental problems. Our objective is to use the public funds among all areas in such a way that the range programs will contribute more efficiently toward the nation's overall goals.

National Range

We predict a continued high demand over the next 10 to 20 years for forest-range grazing. Our projections suggest an increase of 20% between 1970 and 1980 and 50% between 1970 and the year 2000.

There are 1.2 billion acres of forest and rangeland in the 48 conterminous states. Of this area, 835 million acres at present are being grazed by livestock during part or all of each year (Fig. 1). Some 265 million acres of this is in public ownership, principally under jurisdiction of the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

The 835 million acres of forest and range being grazed are producing 213 million animal unit months (AUMs) of grazing annually. This is the equivalent of supplying the year-long forage requirements for about 17 million cows. The public lands comprise 32% of the area grazed and provide 14% of the animal unit months of grazing.

In the face of changing technology of beef production and apparent untapped productivity of pasture forage and other feed production sources, it might appear that forest-range may not be "needed" for livestock production. No doubt it is possible that other feeds and feed sources have the potential to provide the feed now supplied by grazing the forest-range. However, we believe that forest-range lands can compete as they do now in providing the additional feeder cattle needed in the next 10 to 20 years if range costs do not increase relative to costs of other feed sources. Forest-range also can continue to support domestic production of lambs and wool.

There are other indicators that suggest continued high demand over the next 10 to 20 years for use of the nation's forest and range lands for livestock grazing. Historically, cattle and sheep have been the principal marketable outputs of forest-range lands. The most consistent feature of the historic role of the forest-range has been its use as a low-cost feed source. Furthermore, many rural economies are substantially dependent on production of livestock from forest and range. Increasing the production of range livestock may help strengthen these local or regional economies.

We estimate that the range resource of the United States has a reasonable potential to produce 566 million animal unit months annually or the equivalent of providing the yearlong forage requirements of 47 million cows. Coincidentally, this is one projection of the size of the total beef cow herd in 1980. However, our demand projections indicate that it is not likely that all of this capacity could be developed or used. Range grazing would not be a competitive source of energy for livestock production above about 320 million AUM's. Other forage and feed sources would meet those higher needs. Furthermore, achieving the higher capacity level of 566 million AUM's would involve some significant tradeoffs.

Although about one-fourth of the total range, public and private, is estimated to be in poor condition, significant progress has been made in correcting the errors of past overgrazing. In addition, significant improvement of environmental quality together with wood growth can come from



Fig. 2. *Grazing, wood growth, and quality forest and range environment can go hand-in-hand.*

better management of forested areas for livestock, using existing technology. We have estimated that about 72 million acres of eastern forests are being improperly grazed at an estimated cost of more than 800 million cubic feet of wood growth annually. Associated environmental values also are being degraded by this grazing use. Disturbingly, this kind of use continues when we have the technology and experience to maintain grazing without these losses (Fig. 2).

Some of the most significant range management work, in my opinion, is that of the grassroots organizations comprised of local landowners. Working with their local county and state governments and through cooperative efforts of their colleges and universities, they are establishing needed range improvements and implementing intensive range management.

The rancher, the economist, and the ecologist are rolling up their sleeves and demonstrating in their rural community that here is where the science and art of range management gets down to business. Some tremendous gains already have been made. The momentum for quality management at the grassroots, where it should be, is in many cases setting the pace for public agency range development programs.

This response may be the greatest testimony that people who make their living from the land are also deeply concerned and capable of maintaining its quality.

Conclusion

The need will continue for livestock grazing on the nation's forest and range lands and range grazing can be carried out while at the same time achieving improvements in environmental quality. That grazing can remain a legitimate and important use of public lands.

The new politics does not change this situation. What it does change is the way in which plans and decisions are made. No longer can we assume that we are dealing with an uninformed public. No longer can we rest our case solely on professional judgment or technical facts. Many other people have a strong interest in everything we do in range and the strength to challenge everything with which they disagree. Our job is to learn to understand the new politics and to work with it. There is no other way.

