

Rangelands—Challenge to the Nation¹

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Highlight

Rangeland is nominated as the least understood natural resource. Underlined is the importance of human effort in the various work fields and the rights of individuals and publics. Conclusion is a five point summary of challenges ahead for rangeland management.

One of the purposes of a university is to stimulate and to assist in the development of society's intellectual resources and natural resources . . . to serve in a sense as a guardian, a developer, and an exploiter of these resources. And first and foremost, it is the task of a university to teach and to train. The subject of rangelands represents an excellent meeting ground for discussion of all of these interests.

All universities, and especially Land-Grant institutions, as they have developed their instructional, research, and extension service programs, have been acutely aware of the increasingly important part all of our natural resources are playing in our modern life. They are equally aware, particularly in the West, of their special responsibilities toward conservation and management and regulation of our natural resources and of the difficulties of making the public aware of these complex relationships.

The natural resources of our nation that need greater understanding and attention include water, soil, wildlife, petroleum, minerals, and forests. But for

one of the *least understood* natural resources of all, I nominate the vast rangelands of the West.

The rangeland and livestock industry of the West has been a challenge that has traditionally captured the imagination of the American people. There has always been a degree of romanticism in the West. It would appear, however, that that era is about over. Rangeland users, the livestock industry, and the people of the West, are now confronted with a need for greater development and full production to fulfill the rapidly expanding food requirements of this nation and of the world.

We are seeing new frontiers developing in America nearly every day. There are numerous evidences of these new frontiers . . . in space, in engineering, in medicine, in various fields of science and communications. Improved utilization and better development and management of our rangelands is another great and vital frontier.

But the traditional cowboy, who for so many generations has been a colorful symbol of western rangelands, is likely to have a secondary role in this new, vast drama that is unfolding as one of the major challenges of the rangeland industry for the next 20 years. The cowboy could very well be replaced by a team operation . . . by the scientist, the economist, the manager, and all the range users working together to improve efficiency and greater production demanded by an expanding population. There is no reason to believe this team operation will be any less dramatic, and certainly no less productive, than the leading men in the cowboy era.

Leaders in the fields of range and related resource management recognize the lack of adequate understanding of their operations and their problems by the public. The rapport between

professional range managers and range users, in many cases, has admittedly left much to be desired.

We can make a good case for improvement of this mutual understanding between management and users, or others involved, by full utilization of a movement that has been proven successful for more than a century of trial and test. This refers to the Land-Grant College system which had its beginnings with the Morrill Act signed by President Lincoln in 1862. This system of resident instruction, research, and service is available to improve and generate better understanding among all elements in range management at local and statewide levels.

Research, a key to better understanding and continued development of material resources, may be conducted along local, state, or even regional levels. Many range types and land use patterns exist independently of state lines. They can be and are being worked on from a regional basis. But regional problems in general are usually of such a nature that solutions may need local interpretation.

This is where colleges and universities definitely come into view. It seems almost unbelievable how often these institutions of higher learning are overlooked in research, service, education, and information they can and will offer to natural resource leaders at all levels.

As indicated previously, the rangelands of today have made many specific contributions in wealth, recreation, and happiness to this nation. But what of tomorrow . . . the next 20 years?

Sizeable segments of land may be utilized for more concentrated agricultural purposes if new and additional sources of water are developed. Population shifts and increases may change land uses in certain areas. Tech-

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nical, scientific, and social developments even in the next two decades may revolutionize and alter our way of life—just as they have in the past two decades.

The most impressive feature of range management considered by this conference probably revolves around the idea of how rangelands can be made the most productive and the most useful; how they can be utilized to the very maximum for recreation and wildlife and in providing tangible substance to the American worldwide campaign against hunger.

A few of the challenges ahead, in summary, can be identified as follows:

1. To place rangelands in their proper perspective in relation to other resources so they can make a maximum contribution to all segments of humanity.
2. To develop adequate and appropriate laws at all levels of government, and administer rangelands to keep them a producing part of the national economy.
3. To recognize ourselves, and

to be certain the general public realizes, the importance of the range livestock industry to the economy of the West and to the diet of the American people.

4. To see the relationships between public and private land. To use these private lands efficiently and effectively in complementary conjunction with the vast holdings of public lands.
5. To understand fully the range resource: to know its productivity, past, present, and future; to plan soundly for various uses of the rangelands; for forage, water, mineral, and wildlife production, recreation, and to utilize research, education, and communication to the maximum.

Above, sketched with broad strokes, is a description of some of our principal problems in rangeland utilization, plus allusions to some of the great lacks of public understanding of rangelands, even as the people from urban areas very commonly lack an understanding of agriculture in general. These two

broad areas of concern form the genesis of a challenge—the challenge of the future for America and for that matter for the world, to create and develop much more understanding.

Such understandings involve more than a sympathetic attitude, important as that may be. This needed understanding has much to do with a recognition of the important interdependence of human effort in the various work fields and the rights of individuals and the rights of publics. There is also the added need for an understanding of education, for continuous research and public service, and the need for resources for their support. In high priority is the need for even more dedicated men and women to be enlisted in work of inspired teaching and research. By whatever route we examine the challenges of the future—be they the problems of rangelands or any other concern—as a nation and as a world our success will depend upon unselfish, courageous, determined, and most of all upon enlightened efforts.