

## Livestock Grazing Under Multiple-Use Policy<sup>1</sup>

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### Highlight

**Good range management is the price ranchers must pay for a place on the public lands. Stockmen must have a positive plan of action to improve the range and develop leadership in land management.**

My livestock operation is entirely dependent on the use of public lands. The cattle operation I have today is based upon lands homesteaded by my parents in 1879 and has been used continuously since that time as a home base for livestock that graze approximately nine months each year on public range managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service. In addition I have some public lands leased from the Utah State Land Board.

The last few years this operation has been on a non-profit basis but I hope this condition will soon change. However, with this base property and the use of public range lands, my father and mother reared a large family, from which has sprung nearly 400 descendants. I mention this to indicate how important this ranching business is in the growth of a community, a state, and a nation.

In order to appreciate the viewpoint of the livestock operator, we must remember the history of grazing. Prior to 1905 all of the forests were grazed without restriction, until 1934 all other public lands owned by the Federal Government were grazed without any control or regulation, and during this time the West was built, largely by the basic agricultural pursuits of

raising cattle and sheep on public lands without charge.

Government regulation moved in on public range—generally speaking, the livestock operator has accepted these changes. The Taylor Grazing Act was sponsored, promoted, and passed through the efforts of the livestock men.

On June 12, 1960, The Congress passed the Forest Service Multiple Use Act. The Congress stated, "It is the policy of the Congress that the national forests are established and shall be administered for: 1) outdoor recreation, 2) range, 3) timber, 4) watershed, 5) wildlife and fish purposes." Here the traditional land policy was changed.

The livestock operator has lived with the multiple-use program throughout the years, so that grazing has been compatible with other uses for many years, and at this time must continue to be.

Most livestock operators feel Forest Service and BLM grazing permits are actually rights; however, the law does not yet say so, but they have all the earmarks of an established right. The mining law provides that the first locator obtains the right. The water law is based on the principle that he who first puts the water to beneficial use has the right to it. The homestead law provided that the right to the land went to the one who first filed upon it.

In many instances, special acts have been passed which provide that if a permit is taken away from a permittee, he will be paid the fair market value of the permit. This has always been done when a permit has been taken for military purposes.

Many prominent students of the range situation recommend that a law be passed making a Forest and BLM permit a right to guarantee tenure. If it were regarded as a right, it would eliminate much trouble. Then if a permit was to be taken away

from a permittee for the benefit of the people, the permittee would be paid for it. Certainly if a large grazing area is retired from grazing for recreational purposes, to be used by the public, then why shouldn't the public pay the permittee? It is my opinion that this matter is a practical one and will, in the not too distant future, be settled by a grazing permit being recognized as a right. It appears we are merely fighting the problem to say it isn't. We all know permits are frequently bought and sold for substantial consideration.

The people who argue against this, generally speaking, are government range managers who say these lands belong to all the people. This does not appear to me to be a logical analogy. Certainly the White House, by the same theory, belongs to all the people, but that doesn't mean all the people have the right to move in with the President.

Livestock operators must move forward with changing times and conditions. We do not feel that the establishment of the multiple-use policy changes the situation much. There has never been any conflict between the livestock operator and the lumbermen, who harvest the timber. I do not know of any case where the permittee has objected to the construction of dams and reservoirs for irrigation and power purposes. As far as wildlife is concerned, I feel confident in saying that the livestock operator has always cooperated with wildlife interests. For years, our own outfit has, in cooperation with the Fish and Game Commission, distributed salt for wildlife. There are times some hunters are inconsiderate of other users of the public lands, and particularly livestock. However, a closer look at the situation shows me that only a very small percentage of the hunters and other outdoor lovers disturb the livestock. Generally I have found hunters to be real gentlemen, if a gentleman is one who is considerate of the rights of others.

Outdoor recreation has become very prominent in the last few years and, undoubtedly, will demand more

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of the public lands in the future than it has in the past. However, many camp areas have been established in the heart of the grazing country, but where fenced properly, seem to interfere very little with the grazing of surrounding areas. Livestock grazing has been, and will be, compatible with wildlife grazing, hunting and fishing.

I feel confident the livestock operator can live with the multiple-use Act, which states, "The management of all the various renewable surface resources of the national forests will be so managed that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions and that some land will be used for less than all of the resources."

The viewpoint of the present livestock operators is that the smart thing to do is to develop and improve our forage production. We believe that a livestock operator is shortsighted and foolish if he overgrazes his private range or the public lands he is permitted to use.

I know many operators who have increased their net income by reducing the number of livestock grazed upon given areas. Today, the smart livestock operator is the one who makes proper utilization of his range but does not overgraze it. He knows that in overgrazing or by improper forage utilization, he is the loser.

Ranchers need to modernize their use of public lands or face further restriction. Public range administrators can be and have been of real aid by cooperating and encouraging stockmen to improve ranges and adjust to changing times.

We are informed the objective of

range managers is to maintain or improve production of forage on land used to support domestic livestock and big game animals. Yet records show that too often, as management intensity on public lands has increased, total animal production has steadily decreased because of reduction in time or numbers.

Naturally, those who are concerned with maintaining a healthy livestock industry in the West view this trend with alarm.

Ranchers tend to defend their right to continue to graze public land on the basis of national meat needs, priority of use, moral principle, and the personal hardship which would result from reduction or elimination. Although each of these has a degree of validity, a stronger argument is that grazing belongs as a part of the multiple use of land and that it can be included without detriment to other legitimate uses. Early in the history of the West, land was abundant, sparsely occupied and used freely. The range livestock business was founded upon such conditions.

There is a great and understandable desire to own land; people are increasingly more aware of the value of public land and of their rights to use these lands.

Changing federal land policy is a product of public demand—not a cause. Most administrators, and especially those born and trained in the West, make an honest effort to keep Federal lands available for livestock grazing, despite the forces of millions of people demanding other land uses.

There is no need for alarming talk that changing federal land policy will wipe out the livestock business. True, a change is inevitable, but this need not mean elimination of the industry. But modernization is necessary. What happens in the future is largely up to the rancher.

The rancher cannot stand by and hope someone will protect his interest in the land. He must immediately and aggressively solve these problems. Livestockmen who approach the range manager in a spirit of understanding and a willingness to cooperate in putting together a workable multiple-use program on the land are the far-sighted ones. This requires that the stockmen have a positive plan of action to improve the range. Stockmen must develop leadership in land management. There is no reason to wait for others to develop the plans. Good range management is the price ranchers must pay for a place on the public lands.

I believe ranchers may now look forward to increasing, rather than decreasing, their grazing permits. This can be done on a large majority of our public ranges if stockmen and administrators really want it done. In 60 years of management on America's public ranges, we have not begun to exhaust the possibilities of increasing forage production. We have talked for years about getting this job done. It is time for action. Both stockmen and federal administrators have been slow in putting to use known information about improving ranges.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the fact that the livestock operator who is permitted to operate his livestock on public lands can and must adjust his program to conform to the multiple-use policy. And that by proper planning and cooperation with the range managers, the future may well bring a more stabilized and profitable livestock industry.

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