

Must History Repeat?

Historical analogies, though they are seldom precise tools, are often suggestive. The more recent history of the management of publicly-owned wildlands for recreational use presents a number of evident parallels with the earlier history of the management of such lands for grazing. Are these parallels simply examples of a human tendency to make the same mistake repeatedly? Or do they reflect a sufficiently fundamental identity between problems of recreation and grazing management so that the longer experience with grazing can actually help us to anticipate (and avoid) emerging problems with recreation? It seems to us that many management problems which perplex both recreation and grazing policy on public lands in the West have common origins in underlying public attitudes, traditions, and institutional arrangements. To the extent that this is true, detailed development of the recreation-grazing analogy might enable us to anticipate some future recreation problems before they emerge in critical form.

In Table 1, we have attempted to list in rough sequence a number of broad stages and time periods in the evolution of man's basic relationship to emerging grazing and recreational resources. We do not suggest that these stages constitute a comprehensive description. However, they seem to us to

characterize clearly recognizable periods in the development of grazing and recreational use of western public lands in the United States with particular reference to National Forests and the Public Domain. Obviously, these suggested time periods should be considered as indicators of some central tendency. Overlaps, differing rates in the development of particular agencies, and other factors preclude doing more than identifying central tendencies.

For most of the 19th Century the western Public Domain was generally regarded as a commons, freely open to those who wished to use it, despite theoretical legal prohibition of such unrestricted use. So far as use of grazing resources was concerned, the shift to a different concept began with the Forest Reserve Organic Act of 1897 and regulations promulgated under it which initially excluded and subsequently regulated use of the forage resource on National Forests. Legalistically, the power to regulate recreational use was implied at the same time, but in practice such regulation appears not to have been significant until after World War I.

Imposition of user fees and limitations of use to levels consistent with estimates of grazing capacity characterized management of the grazing resource after 1905. But rather generally until after World War II (and to some extent even today), grazing fees were repeatedly set at levels below the full

market value of the resource. Estimates of range carrying capacity were frequently excessive, so that overstocking and resource depletion resulted.

In the management of the recreation resource on National Forests, the period of free use and extensive management persisted long after it had been terminated for grazing. User fees emerged in 1964 and effective limitation of recreation use is still not a general resource management practice despite continuing clear evidence of overuse of many recreation sites and resulting deterioration of recreation resource quality.

One outcome of the policy of setting user fees at levels below full value which is apparent in both grazing and recreation resources is the tendency of the market to capitalize the free benefits into the value of dependent private property. Market values of dependent ranches, of privately-owned summer homes, and of recreation support facilities near public lands have all reflected this tendency.

A second parallel with the same origins is hardening political opposition to any correction of the fee structure. After 1910 numerous battles were fought over grazing fees between administrative agencies and western livestock interests. Opposition to early attempts to establish recreation user fees was stiff enough to delay their adoption for many years and to insure that such fees would be restricted to a token level, despite legal assurance that fee proceeds would all be used to enhance recreation resource values.

The range wars of the 19th Century between grazing interests that were in technical and economic conflict with each other were a well-known result of the early view of the grazing resource as a public commons. Although the models of combat are more restrained, equally bitter internecine strife among different sorts of recreation users with technically conflicting interests have recently become commonplace. Witness such conflicts as those over the Mineral King development, the Kern Plateau, and the North Cascades; and those between the advocates of jeeping, snowmobiling, power boating, and water skiing versus their respective detractors.

At the level of technical management, a fourth parallel seems to us instructive. Early destruction of range land can be largely attributed to grazing in excess of safe stocking rates. Although public agencies made serious

Table 1. Some stages in the evolution of range and recreation resources on the Western Public Lands.

Characteristics of the Stage of Resource Development	Timing of the Stage	
	Grazing Use	Recreation Use
1. Virtually unrestricted use of the resource	1850-1897	1850-1915
2. Initial period of use regulation—extensive management	1897-1934	1915-1955
3. User fees initiated—below full cost	1905	1964
4. Efforts to limit use to carrying capacity; frequently unsuccessful with accompanying declines in resource quality; overstocking	1910-present	1950-present
5. Capitalization of public resource values into dependent private property	1915-present	1950-present
6. Internecine conflict between resource users (cattlemen vs. sheepmen; motorized vs. non-motorized recreationists)	1870-1934	1930-present
7. Dominant political pressure by resource users to limit user fees and use-restrictions	1910-present	1950-present
8. Substantial public programs of intensive resource management including capital investments	1934-present	1955-present

attempts to bring stocking rates and forage productive capacities into balance, these efforts were all too frequently thwarted. Such failures reflected a combination of political opposition to stocking reduction, inadequate funds for investment in resource improvement, and technically incorrect assessment of carrying capacity itself. The process of resource depletion due to recreation use in excess of carrying capacity now proceeds apace before our eyes. The same trilogy of causes is also evident, this time with perhaps even more emphasis on the technical inadequacies of our methods of assessing recreation carrying capacity.

Experience with heavy use of the range resource has demonstrated clearly the fundamental necessity of livestock management. In the face of overstocking, new water developments or other range improvements became in practice the sites of additional resource depletion. A piecemeal approach to range use proved utterly inadequate and had to give way to management programs based on a view of the entire range-livestock system. Only where such an integrated approach to management of the resource has been adopted, has it been possible to sustain resource quality in the face of relatively intensive livestock use.

Planning for management of the

recreation resource has, perhaps, shown some evidence of moving out of the piecemeal stage toward an integrated approach. But at present there appears to have been little success in achieving the degree of control over users which the livestock parallel suggests is an imperative.

The practices which will be needed in order to manage successfully the people on the land are those which range managers have been employing with increasing success over recent decades. They include control of numbers or intensity of use, distribution, season, and frequency of use, and such vegetational control measures as seeding, fertilization, noxious plant control, and soil conservation structures. Thus, the range manager has much to offer in solving many aspects of recreational problems.

Other sorts of specialists must also contribute to such solutions. The forester's concepts of timber site quality, timber stand classification, regulation of the cut, and some basic mensurational and silvicultural concepts, to name only a few, seem to us to offer highly promising approaches to recreation management problems. The landscape architect, the civil engineer, and the regional planner will undoubtedly have equally important contributions. If the differing backgrounds and approaches of this array of

somewhat specialized resource management professions can be brought to bear collectively on recreation use problems, it appears to us that the result would contribute greatly, not only to better management of recreation resources, but, more fundamentally, to the development of a more comprehensive concept of what a natural resource is and how it can best be managed. Such a comprehensive concept would be relevant and valuable to each of the contributing professions. It might even emerge as an operationally definable tool that would help remove "multiple use" from its present somewhat mystical constraints.

The parallels between grazing and recreation problems identified in Table 1 suggest that the evolution of the concept of the recreation resource is going through the same stages as were experienced in the evolution of the grazing resource, with a lag of three or four decades. If we could learn to take advantage of such relevant past experience, we should be able to avoid some mistakes now being made and increase the effectiveness of our total resource management effort. Interprofessional modes of approach to recreation problems seem therefore to offer us a golden opportunity.—*Harold F. Heady and Henry J. Vaux*, School of Forestry and Conservation, University of California, Berkeley.