

# RANGE MANAGEMENT

---

---

## Range Management—An Obituary?<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM F. SCHROEDER<sup>2</sup>

Attorney, Vale, Oregon

### Highlight

**A commentary upon the multiple-use principle.**

These last few days have been interesting ones in observing the exchanges between those of the federalist persuasion, the commercial persuasion, and those in between, who I like to think of as being of the political persuasion. At various times in the past, I have had the pleasure of addressing each of these persuasions on the subject of the public lands, but never before today have I addressed all of them at the same time. From past reactions, I believe I can fairly predict that never before today have

I given all of these persuasions the opportunity of disagreeing with me at the same time. If in the mutual disagreement all of you find another common ground among you, this is only a bonus, not the purpose of my remarks.

Because I am the concluding speaker of this fine convention, I am apprehensive about it, as was the fabled Irishman who was about to die. The priest bent over him to give him the last rites of the church and said, "Repeat after me, 'I renounce the devil and all his evil deeds'". But there was no response from Mike, and the priest repeated, more loudly: "Repeat after me, 'I renounce the devil and all his evil deeds'". Still there was no response from Mike and, after the third try, the priest shook Mike and he opened his eyes. "Didn't you hear me, Mike?" asked the priest. "Yes, I did", replied Mike, "but you told me I was going to die, and this seems to me to be a heck of a time to antagonize anybody."

This dialogue between all of you professionals in your respective persuasions is a happy event because too often you meet one another on an isolated issue of practical consequence, and meet head-on in a context where the predilections of each of you have no opportunity for expression or understanding, with the inevitable result that moral chasms are created. Some become good guys

and others become bad guys.

Almost thirty years ago, Henry Wallace's elaborate Senate Document 199, "The Western Range", urged the development of the western rangelands not only for the production of livestock, but for watershed protection, timber production, for wildlife, and for recreation. There were slight excursions, but it is significant that the principle justification urged for each was the creation of new wealth. In other words, that the rangelands should be restored because in doing so, wealth would be created by development of grass, water, timber, wildlife and recreation. The Western Range contended that good watersheds serve the agricultural, industrial and municipal dependence upon water and deter or prevent costly floods; that wildlife had a then economic value of more than ninety million dollars annually, which could be increased; and that recreation "draws large sums of money that otherwise would not be received"; and so on.

Some of these objectives did not, of course, involve the creation of wealth in its pure economic sense. Recreation, for instance, does not make new wealth, but the fact that it might redistribute wealth to portions of our geography that did not formerly have it, undoubtedly seemed to have a sufficient identity with this economic concept to be justified by it.

The creation of new wealth was in the conventional wisdom a non-debatable objective. If an activity did so, it was good, val-

<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the 18th Annual Meeting, American Society of Range Management, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 12, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to general law practice, Mr. Schroeder is active in litigation affecting public lands and has become a widely known and quoted commentator upon public land problems. His published papers include: "Cobwebs on the Public Lands", *Western Livestock Journal*, 1960; "The Price of Manifest Destiny", *Nevada-California Sections, ASRM*; and "The Common Ground", *Western Livestock Journal*, 1965. Mr. Schroeder received his AB Degree in 1946 from the University of Chicago, LLB from Valparaiso University in 1949, and is admitted to practice in Illinois and Oregon, before the federal court, and most federal agencies.

uable, and desirable; if it did not do so, it was not worth considering. Therefore, it was not surprising that those who endorsed the idea that western rangelands should be restored, did what they could to justify restoration by the use of this conventional wisdom.

More than twenty years ago, when the classic treatise on range management expressed it, this multiple use principle had also become non-debatable. The choice of uses to be brought within the aura of this principle, or to continue within it, was also made with the use of the economic criterion. Whether any use should be embraced as one of the multiple uses was a question answered as much in economic terms as in the terms of whether the attributes of the range lent itself to the proposed use.

I remember so well an old grazier telling me of a meeting of cattlemen, sheepmen, and miners in the earliest days of the administration of the Taylor Act. Each contingent was doing its very best to secure the most favorable result for itself, and, before very long, the meeting was at a purple pitch. It almost broke up when a little lady, who up to that time had been silent, rose to inquire why those uses should be considered at all when they all would have the effect of destroying the wild flowers which she and her friends liked so much to see on the range in the spring.

It is well known that over the years there has been a tremendous competition between these uses. The competition was not and is not for the land itself. It is one of the facts of life that I deplore, and I believe the livestock industry will one day deplore with me, that it has rejected the promise of the Taylor Act for the eventual disposition of the public lands. The competition among the multiple uses has

not been for the land—they do not want it. The competition has been for emphasis, for status, for tenure, for preferred treatment, and for prior access to the public purse.

Over the years, we have heard a theorist or two attempting to placate this competition with the argument that all of these uses are mutually compatible, that there need be no competition between them, that a total development upon the western rangelands can totally satisfy each of them. It is, of course, true that the same regime of diagnosis and treatment, the same dollar, can simultaneously improve the uses of a few of them. But the real problem lay in its answer; because it would take a *total* development of a range to develop each of the uses to the maximum of their potential, tremendous amounts of public money would be required. The fact that this has not been politically possible of accomplishment within the history of the United States, neutralizes the theorist and encourages this competition to continue.

Please do not remind me of the pilot Vale Project as a single, shining example to the contrary, since just last week its third fiscal appropriation was cut by more than fifty percent.

The uses which already had the dignity of acceptance as part of the multiple-use principle found almost their only common ground in vigorously resisting any different use which was aspiring for recognition. The subdivider, for instance, has been and is strenuously resisted by almost all of the accepted uses and the resistance to him and other proposed uses such as the wild flower lover has been based almost entirely upon the relative economic unimportance of the invader at best, and the downright theft motive of the invader at worst.

Since restoration of the west-

ern rangelands has been continually urged on the strength of the conventional wisdom that wealth will be thereby created, it is natural that the competition among the uses was and still is waged with this same weapon. The livestock industry, for example, urges a superior economic status in pointing to the contribution to the gross national product which its production makes, in showing the economic dependency of the west upon it, in pointing to its capital investment, the taxes upon it which substantially support the local and state governments. All of you are familiar with these and other similar arguments used by each of the other competitors. These are the arguments within the conventional wisdom and they are used for every purpose.

By name, you are a society of range management and the classic definition of range management has almost always been the science and art of planning and directing range use so as to obtain the *maximum* livestock production consistent with conservation of the range resources. The first stated objective of this society is to advance the science and art of *grazing* land management. Explicit in both your name and your objective is this economic fetish of wealth production.

Moreover, I presume that you are still dedicated to the philosophy of Stoddart and Smith that "disuse is waste," that "the aim of the range guardian is *maximum* use, so long as that use is compatible with protection from permanent injury," and that "the goal of the range manager is not conservation alone, but *maximum sustained* production of forage, the backbone of the livestock industry." If you are, then your philosophy espouses this conventional wisdom.

What I have tried to say, is that those who were and are interested in the rehabilitation of

the western rangelands have generally tried to justify on the ground that rehabilitation was economically desirable in that it would be creative or productive of new wealth. The controversies respecting the uses of these ranges have generally been waged along these same lines.

One of the lesser unfortunate consequences of the use of this weapon is that when relative economic benefit was tested in this controversy, the image of total economic benefit suffered. When I argue that my horse is more valuable than yours, I am not only valuing my horse, but I am necessarily minimizing the value of yours, thus reducing the total value of both of them.

Of overriding consequence, however, is this. If the rehabilitation of the western rangelands is our goal, this conventional wisdom which we have unsuccessfully used to inspire it, will write our obituary.

The creation or production of new wealth is now almost totally irrelevant. The conventional wisdom has died in the existence of the affluent society. In general, the declining marginal urgency of goods has become the economic key note of our time. In particular, the affluent society has little need of the maximums to which all of you dedicate yourselves and indeed, it is becoming more and more embarrassed by them.

The problem of agricultural surplus has been tiring the American imagination for a long time and it has been taxing the American pocketbook as well. The surplus problem is so well known and so expensive that it has acquired a sickly pallor in the eyes of most Americans. Except for the most perspicacious among our citizens, this pallor has created a veil against discussion which is, in most cases, impossible to pierce by any rationalization such as, for example, that only portions of

American agriculture are in surplus. Whether it is true or false, the livestock industry is tied to the image of agricultural surplus and complaint about current prices which create sub-marginal operations, makes more secure the knot.

As long as there is two-dollar beefsteak in the counter of every metropolitan super-market, there will be less, rather than more interest in the problem of agriculture in general and that of the livestock industry in particular. I do not wish to pursue the question today as to whether this is right or wrong; I ask only that you accept today that this image is a fact.

Almost all of the other multiple uses of the public lands suffer from much the same image; if there is not a surplus, at least there is enough. Even in wholly responsible quarters there is found the recurrent theme that if there is enough, no public moneys should be spent in permitting more. Especially Reclamation Projects have become a focal point in this attack.

The relative unimportance of the creation or production of wealth has been heralded by President Johnson in his statement of the Great Society. In announcing this objective at Brown University last year, he said, "For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization." In an Interior publication of last year, this is found: "With economists confidently predicting a Gross National Product of at least one trillion 73 billion dollars by 1980, it is fair again to ask—what will such af-

fluence mean if, in the process of achieving this goal, we destroy most of the values that make for human well being? . . . Something of this solid, elemental march of seas and seasons and stars communicates itself to the harried, hurried human being when he is able to find the time and the opportunity for outdoor leisure experiences. If these opportunities are to be a part of tomorrow's America, we must act to save them today."

Am I suggesting that the recreationist has finally succeeded in the competition for the public lands? Indeed not! I am suggesting that there is a clear and present danger that he and all of the other multiple users of the public lands may lose in their objective of range rehabilitation, because of the overpowering importance of a larger and more comprehensive need.

The race for inner space is not a race for public lands, it is not even just a race for private lands (although this is also involved). It is this, according to that comprehensive Interior publication: "The front line of conservation today extends from minerals to mallards, from salmon to soils, from wilderness to water, from lignite to lizards. An urgent need exists today for a study of the 'ecology of man,' to determine the ideal relationship between human population and the land. We are heading for a standing room only environment. The amount of open space available per person is decreasing at a faster rate than the population increases. Eventually, people will be piled on top of each other. They will have no alternative. The conservation concept is ultimately something of the mind—a search for balance and order, a quest for new values, a striving for a land conscience that has meaning for the future." This is what the President on February 8, 1965, called creative conservation.

In this order of things, where do you think the rehabilitation of the western rangelands will occur? Do you think your conventional wisdom will touch the affluent society for the moneys to accomplish it? How successfully will your conventional wisdom approach the affluent society which has been called to the expensive creation of a total environment, and which is more than ready to heed that call?<sup>3</sup>

I say it cannot, if it ever could. The concept of economic use has been and is implicit in the multiple-use principle; for this reason, the clarion call of multiple use will not inspire range rehabilitation. The multiple-use principle has been and will continue to be only productive of

controversy between the uses themselves and between the accepted uses and others. If political appropriations upon which range rehabilitation depends are obtainable at all, they will be obtained only if those controversies are permitted to die and instead a new clarion is heard in the land which can appeal to our elected representatives east of the Hundredth Meridian and their constituents. We can no longer justify the rehabilitation of the western rangelands with the conventional wisdom. We can no longer waste our talents in odious comparisons between the economic contributions of each of the multiple users of the public lands. Because of this heritage of economic competition, I wish to suggest that the multiple use principle in its present frame of reference is obsolete and that only by discarding it will range rehabilitation have meaning in our time.

If the ranges are to be restored, we must with a *single* voice, justify this as part of the land conscience that has meaning for the future. We must, in short, accord to it a total human value which it has.

To all of you who are professionals in the field of public lands, let me say that the way of accomplishing this is within your better understanding and implementation. If you do not, or will not understand it and move vigorously with it, I am confident that this will be your obituary.

For simple souls like me, I am content to suggest one of the Wordsworth sonnets which begins:

The land we from our father  
had in *trust*

And to our children *will* transmit, or die:

This is our maxim, this our piety.

<sup>3</sup> Since this was written, "The Foul-ing of the American Environment" was published in *Saturday Review*, May 22, 1965, to which the attention of the reader is called.