

Integration in the Use of Public and Private Range in Pacific Northwest Ranching

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This subject seems to be simplicity in the greatest degree, but when one begins to analyze all the aspects, many problems appear. The first problem arises from the word "Northwest." I have taken the Northwest to be roughly that area covered by the Northwest Section of this Society—Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. This vast territory presents numerous problems, all vital to range management.

Let us consider climate. On the Pacific coast slopes we have an area with extremely heavy precipitation. Southwest Oregon is a semi-desert region. Other districts vary between these two extremes in precipitation. There are regions with little or no frost while others have temperatures of 50 to 60 degrees below zero. We have rangelands with nearly 200 frost-free days and others that get frosted every month of the summer.

Then, too, we have great variations in topography from the sea level delta lands to the high ranges with elevations of 10,000 feet. Between these extremes we have level plains and mountainous terrain.

Such variations in climate and topography together with soil

differences require Northwest ranchers to deal with extremely different types of vegetation in their livestock operations. These types vary from open grasslands along the low elevations, deep canyons, such as the Snake River, which are best used for winter range to open grasslands above timberline which can be used only in summer. Extensive open pine grasslands and natural forests, vast acreages of which have been burned over and are now a tangle of lodgepole or fir reproduction, provide late spring summer and fall grazing.

Consequently, diversified ranch operations will often work best for the Northwest rancher. As a result some ranch operations are a cow-calf production while others merchandize 2 or 3-year-old steers off grass.

These great variations in climate, topography and range type constitute some of the natural obstacles to year-long livestock operations in the Northwest. Also to be considered are some man-made problems which make the picture more complex. The number of public land administration agencies with which Northwest ranchers must cooperate is an example. Fortunately for ranchers in

British Columbia this problem is minimized in that the Forest Service controls most public lands. However, our rancher neighbors to the south normally deal with a number of agencies for grazing privileges on lands under their administration. They may deal with the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State Land Department, and even counties for grazing lands. Each of these has its own land management regulations and objectives with which the rancher must comply and which greatly influence the complexity of his ranching operations. These regulations and objectives, so I've been told, are not always co-ordinated for efficient use of natural and human resources and have sometimes created hindrances to a sound range utilization program. However, when these groups elect to work together they have adequate personnel and finances to create an integrated program far superior to anything that could occur on an individual basis.

An example of how these groups can work together for the mutual benefit of all, and particularly the land user, was brought to my attention by a recent article in the Western Livestock Journal, December 1959 issue, outlining the work done by the Beaver Soil Conservation District in Utah. The agencies cooperating in this vast program were the Soil Conser-

vation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Utah Extension Service, Utah Fish and Game Commission and the North Divide Cattlemen's Association. They united to create a program covering optimum use of all land resources in the district. Their plan for range improvement and integration of all forces and resources has been the key to their success.

Ranchers in the Pacific Northwest have their year-long operations further confounded by the problems of multiple use—forestry, game, grazing, recreation and watersheds—on their private lands as well as on the public lands that they use. These multiple-use problems are primarily the problems of agency and group coordination and cooperation because the life-blood of multiple use rests with the public lands. Close cooperation by all concerned is essential for sound multiple use management and any attempts on the part of one group to over-balance or over-control any phase of multiple resource use can create serious situations detrimental to proper range use.

In view of all these broad factors; climate, topography, type of vegetation, ranching operation and different agencies involved, any adequate land use formula must be considered on a rather limited, local basis. In the Northwest, like other areas having range grazing practices such as salting, herding and water development are of prime importance. Fencing too, is important in most cases. Such speed-up practices as reseeding and brush control are highly important but have a more limited application. Because of the complexity of the range lands and natural factors normally associated with Northwest ranches, a thorough study of the range should be made and used as a guide to the overall mode of application of these practices for most effective results.

For Northwest ranges, climate and elevation normally dictate the plan of rotational grazing. The livestock are wintered on meadow or irrigated land on the valley floors where winter feed is produced during the summers. Maximum production from these bottomlands, which are usually privately owned, can be of the greatest importance. An extra two weeks to a month of winter feed enables a rancher to delay his turn-out date and thus conserve vital spring grass.

Adjacent to the hay land on the bottoms we often have open or semi-open bunchgrass pastures which constitute spring and fall grazing. Due to the characteristics of these areas, namely good drainage and quick growth in the spring, they are our critical ranges. Here the greatest damage to forage plants and soils has occurred. Overgrazing and equally damaging wrong season grazing have left many of our best range sites with weeds in place of the finest grasses in the world. Many of these areas will never return to their original climax vegetation but resting or limited use and reseeding can make producing land out of waste. This is a situation where research, extension and administration with a closely integrated program can help rebuild our heritage of grass out of the devastation of the past.

Summer grazing in the Northwest commonly is on timbered or alpine sites. This type of range varies tremendously from pine grasslands in good to poor condition to forests or burned over land with lodgepole thickets having some grazing value. These ranges primarily are public lands. Here, problems of multiple use management are most pronounced and coordination and cooperation between groups interested in grazing, logging, forestry, watersheds, hunting, fishing and other types of recreation are most urgent.

It is not uncommon when we commence to put sound multiple use management into practice to find our hands tied by some fixed statute or regulation which was enacted with the best of intent but is not flexible enough to allow optimum resource management. For example, we have found dates for turn-out or removal of stock set by regulation regardless of condition of the soil and grass, or weather. The dates cannot be changed even though both the rancher and local administrator know that they should be. Grazing seasons and stocking rates should be flexible and realistic in respect to the effect upon both private and public lands. Such range practices as reseeding, salting, herding, fencing and clearing trails or building access roads require close coordination and cooperation between private and public interests. Much progress is being made toward rectifying problems such as these that face ranchers in the Northwest.

Forestry and logging create additional problems involving the close cooperation of those interests with the livestock ranchers. Only through close understanding of all problems can logging operations, wherever feasible, be planned to minimize disturbance to the grazing resource. Roads can give access to both timber and grazing. Reseeding of logged areas can create a valuable temporary forage supply and can hold and rebuild the soil for future timber crops. We can grow and harvest both trees and grass from the same site in much of our Northwest area.

As with forestry, those persons interested primarily in hunting and fishing can gain much by working with ranchers using public lands. In British Columbia we have eliminated many problems because the organized sportsmen, the game branch and the ranchers are cooperating to the advantage of everyone con-

cerned. Fish and game groups have asked for and been granted hunting and fishing seasons designed to aid grazing interests. In return, large acreages of private holdings have been opened up to hunters. This is one example of many where groups with diverse interests have joined forces for the common good. However, there is a tremendous field for improvement in this portion of our general multiple-use management program in the Northwest.

As a rancher, I should like to touch on a few factors I consider to be detrimental to a sound multiple-use program. We in the Northwest are going through an era of real estate speculation that is setting up our ranches as trading units rather than as long-time operations. Many ranches presently are overstocked to enhance their sale value and the result is serious

range damage, not only during the pre-sale period but also during the time it takes the new owner to become acquainted with the true situation. This situation also encourages continued change in ownership.

Along with this unstable and continued change in land ownership, we have an ever-changing personnel in our land administration and extension agencies. This tends to be wasteful because our technical forces spend much of their time becoming familiar with the range and ranching problems. In spite of the widespread experience gained by moving technical people around from area to area which is valuable in promotions to higher positions, the practice has detracted from progress toward sound land use management in many locations.

I feel that in some cases Northwest ranchers are still faced with

insufficient permanency of tenure of grazing areas. Short-term grazing privileges tend to discourage long-term range improvement plans and action.

These are among some of the problems still facing livestock ranchers in our Northwest area. Any integrated land use project in the Northwest must be planned on a local basis. Utilization of both public and private lands must be considered together to obtain optimum harvest without damage to either. We must coordinate all our forces—research, extension, administration, and private interests—for effective results. There should be greater permanency of grazing tenure and in the placement of local personnel. The key to a successful multiple-use program that integrates public and private lands lies in coordination and cooperation. This is our challenge.