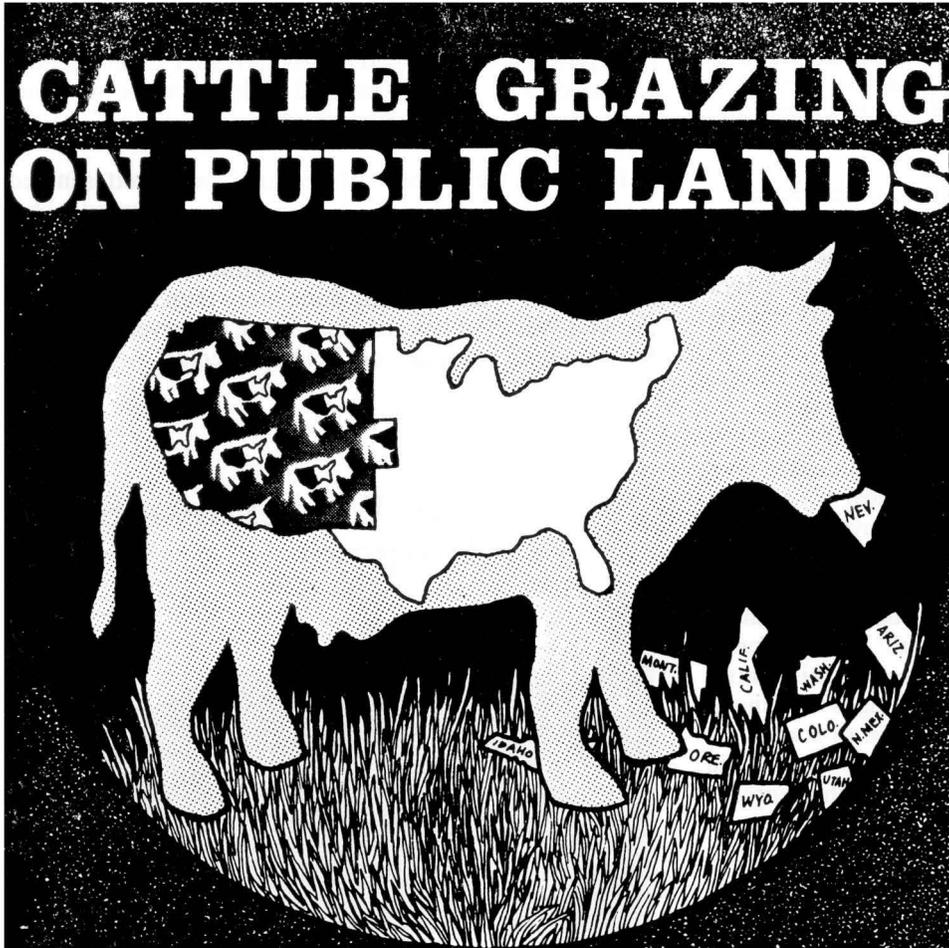


Chapter XI

JUSTIFICATIONS/MYTHS



(Nola Burger)

Today, 100 years after the cattle and sheep drives and range wars that figured so prominently in the settling of the West, livestock grazing continues as a valid, authorized use on public range. Livestock grazing produces food and fiber, along with many other environmental, economic, and social benefits.

--Livestock Grazing Successes on Public Range (USDA 1989)

We have provided the most abundant, economical, and safest food supply in the world, while practicing conservation methods that ensured that the environment is protected.

--National Cattle Growers Association news release, spring 1990

The secret to lying is to always tell big lies, never small ones.

--Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister

In ranching's early years, brute force ruled the range. Stockmen took what they had the power to take and felt little need to justify their actions or presence on public land. In the early 1900s, as more people came West and population grew, public land increasingly was used for purposes other than ranching. Accordingly, ranchmen were increasingly hard-pressed to excuse their dominance and destructive practices.

At first it was mostly a matter of defending "their" land from competitors. Ranchers simply claimed to have the "right" to control public land because they were there first (conveniently overlooking the Native American people and wildlife they helped eliminate). Over time, as multiple use gained acceptance, this claim became less tenable. So, through the years stockmen necessarily have developed increasingly complex and diverse stratagems for justifying a business that is inherently unjustifiable.

Much of this rationale has been passed down through the years in the same way as

Western legends and tall tales. Ranching custom and the unwritten, self-perpetuating code of cowboy comradere compel stockmen to promote these fictions. As with the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus, by mutual agreement what is known to be untrue is treated as reality. Ranchers largely can't be blamed for promoting these fables; they were raised on them and see them as not only part of their ranching legacy but as a necessary protection against what they perceive as an increasingly hostile society.

Other justifications have been deliberately fabricated in recent years as part of the industry's modern promotion strategy. Some are specifically designed to appeal to popular virtues such as patriotism, teamwork, thriftiness, and fair play. Others are scare tactics. Many of these arguments can be very convincing to the uninformed. Each has at least a grain of truth, as does any fabrication. Ranching advocates offer them brazenly, hoping that impressiveness of presentation will obscure content, thinking that our

society's ignorance, indifference, and cowboy religion will protect their myths. The ranching establishment has learned the fine art of public relations.

Over the years most of these justifications have become highly standardized. They fall into a score of basic approaches.

● *What problem?*

I've worked 6 years as a Forest Service botanist, mostly on the Inyo [California] NF, and am livid at what I've seen, experienced, and confronted in habitat devastation, rancher rhetoric & clout, and FS apathy toward the mere acknowledgment of even a problem existing.

--Jim Andre, Bayside, California, personal correspondence

Believing denial the best defense, many in the ranching establishment simply refuse to acknowledge that there is or ever was a problem. They feign surprise at the very suggestion:

What!? -- peaceful, grazing cows and sheep harm the land? Ridiculous! Some armchair environmentalist must have thought that one up. You don't believe that crap do you?

Thus, if you do you are led to feel like a gullible, desk-bound fool. This works on many people who know little about ranching or who strongly embrace cowboy mythology.

The agencies, as public affairs agents, commonly disregard or trivialize ranching impacts. As a small but common example, this morning I read a publication entitled "Proposed Coconino National Forest Plan." In it the Forest Service describes the 12 "issues of concern" for this central Arizona National Forest. Curiously, ranching is not among them. There is only an incidental reference to some livestock-caused damage to riparian areas *in the past*. Though undeniably ranching stands with logging as this Forest's most harmful influence, apparently the public should not even consider it a problem, much less a major issue. Ranching advocates insist that there is no positive *proof* that ranching harms the land. To them, of course, no evidence constitutes proof.

● *Well, ranching's not so bad compared to*

When denial didn't work, ranchers blamed the problems on wild horses, weather, hunters, off-road vehicles, vandals, or -- most recently -- elk.

--Rose Strickland "Taking the Bull by the Horns" (Strickland 1990)

***The flyer portrays a rugged Western landscape in silhouette. To the right, outlined in white, a city sprawls across the flatlands. A road extends from the city to the left, toward what remains of the wild. On the far left, up on a bluff, a lone, mounted cowboy surveys the encroaching distant city. A river, etched in orange lines, symbolically separates the cowboy from modern society.

The flyer was distributed by the Tucson Public Library to advertise audio tapes labeled "The Wilderness Still

Lingers." The message is clear: Cowboys are an integral part of the wilderness, valiantly-but-futilely trying to protect their home and the West from the relentless onslaught of modern civilization -- a sadly unalterable destiny. The scene evokes melancholy, and sympathy for wilderness and cowboy.

But there is more. Barely visible in the river gorge, a bridge crosses the river. Will the cowboy cross that bridge into the modern age? Hell no! This is a one-way bridge, representing civilization's inevitable advancement against defenseless cowboy/wilderness. Further, parts of the cowboy and horse are outlined in pink; no other part of the flyer is that color except the text used to describe the wilderness audio cassettes. In other words, the cowboy is our link to the wilderness.

Ironically, the writers featured on these cassettes include strong supporters of ranching reform, even Edward Abbey, a leading critic of public lands ranching. Also ironic is that this irrevocable symbol of the wilderness -- the cowboy/rancher -- has not only done more than anyone to ruin the wild West, but has also done more to prevent remaining Western natural areas from being protected.

Tucson Public Library's Writers of the Purple Sage project and the Arizona Humanities Council proudly present:

The Wilderness Still Lingers

The Southwestern Landscape in Literature

These 30-minute audio programs can be checked out at any Tucson Public Library Branch. Or check your KUAT Radio Program Guide for upcoming broadcast times.

Program 1
PASSAGES TO POWER

The mighty Colorado River has inspired a flood of words from Southwesterners, including the Hopi, John Wesley Powell and Edward Abbey. Hear how they describe the Colorado before and after its taming by the Glen Canyon Dam.

Program 2
LAND OF MANY USES

Southwesterners have seen the wilderness as a sacred ground... proving ground... playground... and battleground. But can all visions of "The Land of Many Uses" co-exist? Charles Bowden, Ann Zwinger, and other writers give their views.

***The video portrays an elderly Navajo woman on horseback driving sheep across a vast, barren Navajo landscape. In the distance, like an immense, evil citadel, stands the coal-fired Four Corners Power Plant, one of the largest and dirtiest electric-generating facilities in the US.

The message is clear. Here is a traditional way of life being symbolically, if not physically, assaulted by the juggernaut of industrial civilization. Furthermore, science and technology, impersonal and uncaring, can be extremely destructive, whereas the rustic family activity -- livestock grazing -- is relatively harmless. The two are ironically side by side.

It is ironic -- because the woman's sheep, along with other livestock on the reservation, have done more damage to Navajoland than all the reservation's power plants and coal strip mines combined. It is also ironic because now that Navajo land is severely degraded by overgrazing it isn't much use for anything but continued overgrazing.

***The front page photo of the conservation journal *High Country News* is half-filled by "Brutus," a 26-story-high strip-mining shovel turned tourist attraction near West Mineral, Kansas. Like a small toy in comparison, a black angus cow runs before the gigantic iron monster.

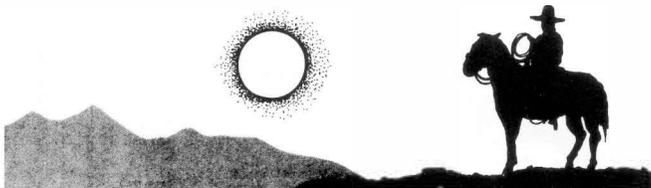
Symbolism run amok! Here is a poor, defenseless cow, and by inference its poor, defenseless rancher owner, and by inference the poor, defenseless ranching subculture, under attack from the ruthless, unstoppable modern monster of exploitation.

Ironically again, stockmen and their cows have done more to ruin the West than a thousand of these gigantic strip-mining machines. But to write this is blasphemy!!! Regardless of reality, our American Cowboy remains the personification of the Western landscape.

The point is, images similar to those above, though delusions, pervade our society. Grazing livestock, folksy cowboys, rustic windmills, etc. often are (even by environmentalists) contrasted against contemporary culture to represent benign simplicity, naturalness, innocence, contentment, truth, pride, and other virtues. Because of its outward predominance in Western history, ranching recalls the past -- bygone times, the good ol' days, when things were as things should be. Ironically once again, we have seen that ranching is not the antithesis but the vanguard and compatriot of the exploitive, growth-oriented modern worldview.

Usually the first thing a country does in the course of economic development is introduce a lot of livestock. Our data are showing that this is not a very smart move.

--Cornell University nutritional biochemist T.C. Campbell



Backpackers leave body wastes and campfire ashes in the wilderness areas; ecologists pollute the biosphere and other areas they study; bird watchers disturb the habitat of the birds they watch; campers leave residues and trample vegetation, so do hunters and anglers; herds and flocks of livestock trample and defecate on grass and water just as they did in Biblical times. So, too, do all wild herbivores, and even fish must defecate.

--T.C. Byerly, Staff Consultant, Winrock International (suppliers of range "improvement" equipment) (USDA, USDI, CEQ 1979)

Some say the best defense is a good offense. As Western ranching has come under increasing resistance in recent years, ranching proponents have begun a concerted effort to promote the idea that ranching isn't really a problem when compared to other uses. Using diversionary tactics to deflect opposition, many have taken to condemning the "real destroyers of public lands" -- strip-miners, irresponsible hunters, off-road vehicle users, backpackers, vandals,

and those fiendish litterbugs. (Curiously, stockmen almost universally support logging, which is the second most overall destructive use of Western public lands. Less trees mean more grass.)

By focusing attention on other public lands abusers, ranchmen take the heat off themselves. By displaying opposition to other destructive uses, they portray themselves as environmentally concerned, thus suggesting that they certainly would not harm the land.

New Mexico public lands rancher Sid Goodloe declares in *Harper's Magazine*, "let's talk about the real problem on our public lands -- the damage being done to them by off-road vehicles." South Dakota rancher Linda Haselstrom sums up her argument in a letter to *High Country News*: "If we ban cattle grazing, let's be consistent and ban all use of public lands that will damage the land or wildlife . . . [and] ban skiers from mountains where any living wild animal has been observed." Maybe we should also ban public lands birders, those unchaste ruffians who gleefully trample delicate purple asters and terrorize great blue herons.

This all-or-nothing, black-or-white approach is used often by stockmen and their apologists. It is an old debating trick -- using shades of grey to justify or trivialize extremes. No distinction is made in *degree* of abuse, which would allow us to *prioritize* mitigation of the abuses. The point consistently side-stepped is that public lands ranching is the most destructive, least justifiable of all public lands uses.

It's a felony to deface a Forest Service sign, but perfectly OK for cows to destroy an entire watershed!

--Denzel and Nancy Ferguson (ONDA 1990)

Personal experience has led me to write that cattle alone have done thousands of times more to degrade our natural surroundings than all the tourists, fishermen, picnickers, hikers, backpackers, birders, and naturalists combined. Philip Fradkin claims in "The Eating of the West" that "The impact of countless hooves and mouths over the years has done more to alter the type of vegetation and landforms of the West than all of the water projects, strip mines, power plants, freeways, and subdivision developments combined." On the other hand, Colorado public lands rancher Art Johnson claims in a letter to *High Country News* that "When you look at the massive and permanent damage done by mining, oil development, major road building, deforestation, hydro projects, ski resorts, etc., the damage done by present grazing practices on public lands is minor." While most people naturally tend to think that the truth must lie somewhere between these extremes, careful consideration of the obscure nature of ranching and its overall impact leads me to believe that Philip Fradkin and I are *understating* the case.

Ranching promoters maintain that we must treat all uses equally. If we ban ranching, then let's ban 'em all, including hunting and skiing, hiking and birding. They know, of course, that few of these other uses ever will be banned.

There is another important ulterior motive behind this twisted logic -- *eliminating competition*. As discussed previously, ranching negatively affects many other uses of public land. Inversely, these other uses sometimes conflict with ranching.

For example, many stockmen dislike ORV enthusiasts because they kill grass, scare cattle, leave gates open, and vandalize range developments. Ranchers may sound like the environmentalists they claim to be when ranting and raving against the evils of ORV use, but their primary motive is eliminating competition.

They ignore the fact that the removal of the vegetation cover by livestock and the extensive network of Western ranching access roads is a major cause of the ORV problem, and that most ranchers are themselves off-road vehicle users. With massive pickup trucks, 3- and 4-wheelers, and dirt bikes, stockmen patrol allotments in all kinds of weather, on road and off, causing far more damage than other ORV users in most of the West. Thus, any argument against ORV use is an argument against ranching.

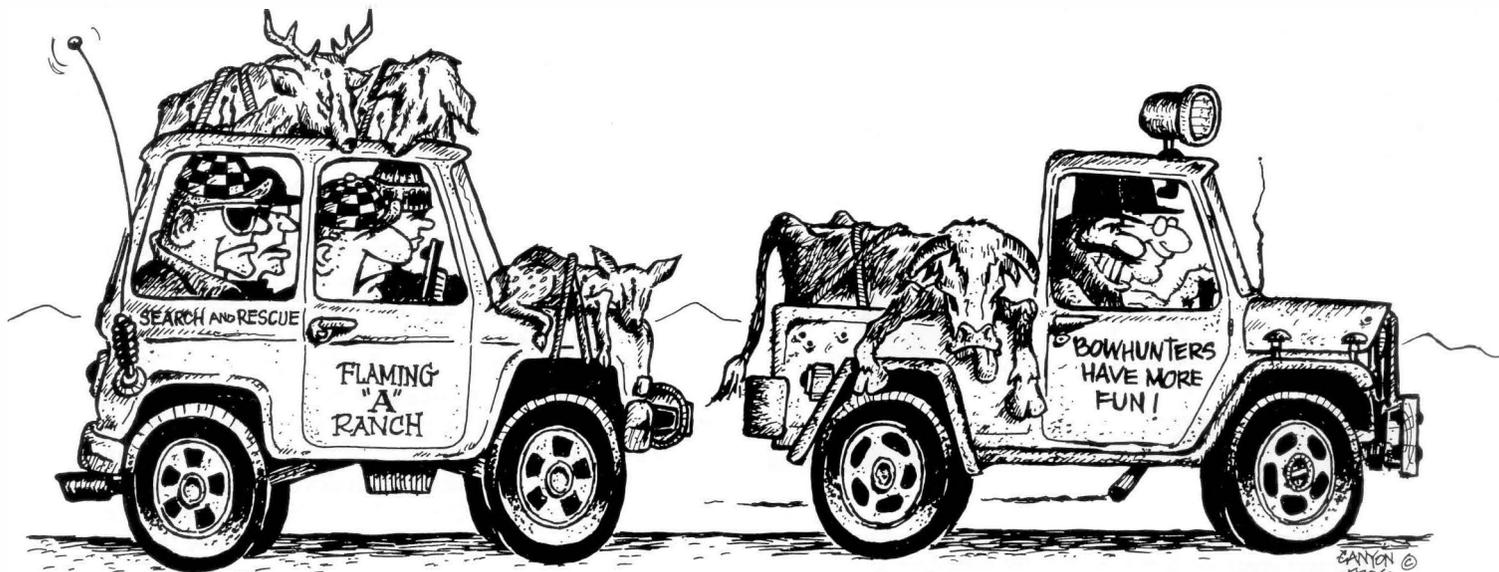
Ranchers sometimes discourage mining on public land because it reduces grazing and scares cattle. However, where mining development results in improved access, an influx of money to the local economy, or other perceived ranching benefits, they tolerate or encourage it. (As mentioned, by law stockmen are more than compensated financially for reduced grazing and other inconveniences caused by mining operations on allotments.)

bad, are likely to oppose ranching -- and most ranchers simply don't like "those hippie types." So they denounce hikers and backpackers as "the true despoilers of the West," "outsiders" who trample the land, pollute the water, litter, leave gates open, and scare cows. They "use the resources and don't even pay a fee to do so!"

Sure, there are rainforest destruction, wholesale slaughter of dolphins by the tuna industry, wanton harvesting of animals for their pelts by the fur industry, toxic and hazardous waste and a whole panoply of other crimes that we have committed against the planet. But recognition of these facts does not excuse the rape of the West that has been perpetrated by ranchers and their cattle.

--David A. Huett, in a letter to the *Tucson Weekly* (9-26-90)

These days, public display of environmental concern is a necessary part of any commercial land-use strategy. Stockmen, set in their ways and used to getting what they want, were slow to learn this. Mostly since the "ecology movement" of the 1970s they have come to realize that feigning environmental concern, as distasteful as it might be, helps garner support and minimize competition.



(Roger Candee)

Stockmen have mixed feelings about hunters. On one hand, they encourage and support hunting to eliminate their animal enemies. On the other, stockmen push for stronger controls over hunters because hunters sometimes scare livestock, cut locks and fences, leave gates open, and shoot holes in water tanks. Some hunters, discouraged by the lack of game on Western ranges, have taken to hunting cattle. But most ranchers themselves are "hunters," or at least have no qualms about knocking off predators, competitors, pests, and no-goods.

Stockmen especially disdain hikers and backpackers, accusing them of numerous sins. Their hostile feelings seem based mainly on socio-political factors. People who appreciate rather than exploit public land make ranchers look

All this is not to say that some ranchers are not truly concerned. As with any group, some are working to reverse environmental degradation, both on and off their allotments. Unfortunately, because any kind of ranching is inherently detrimental, even these ranchers continue to damage the range with both livestock and development. Their hard work and good intentions create an unfortunate situation where the support they garner perpetuates the innately harmful, wasteful welfare ranching they practice.



● **Ranching may once have been destructive, but not now that it's scientific.**

The record is clear. The ranges are improving and most of the rangelands are best used for grazing . . . there's no reason to argue for not grazing.

--Thadis Box, Utah State University range professional

Our grandfathers and great grandfathers overgrazed, but that's all over now.

--An Arizona public lands rancher, in a local newspaper

Assistant Secretary of the Interior David O'Neal told members of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association to fight critics by producing "data proving our rangelands are getting better."

--*The Animals' Agenda* (March 1991)

Nearly every ranching publication contains some reference to the "uncontrolled" livestock devastation of long ago. Each then openly or by inference goes on to claim that range conditions are much better now than in those wild, unrestricted days.

This often is the second line of defense when initial attempts to make ranching seem harmless fails. It goes something like this: "Uncontrolled" grazing ravaged the range a century ago. Since range condition was terrible then, it must be better now. Since it is better now, range conditions are improving. Since range conditions are improving and we have ever-expanding science and technology for "controlled" grazing, range condition will continue to improve indefinitely, eventually even surpassing aboriginal condition.

This is faulty logic, but the basic assumptions behind it may be even more faulty. Past grazing was "uncontrolled" insofar as it was not administered by the government and livestock were mostly unfenced. However, then as now the mass of domestic animals were the major factor behind the devastation, not the lack of administration and fences. Indeed, in some ways the large, nomadic herds on the open range then caused less environmental damage per head than livestock do now. The claim that "controlled" grazing is necessarily more benign is as much a myth as the promise that control of the atom would bring us "a world of peace"

and "life of effortless plenty."

Are range conditions really better now? Things may *seem* better than a hundred years ago when much of the West was stripped as bare as a billiard table (though much is still that bare). However, as mentioned, even government studies show that roughly 50% of Western range productivity has been lost to cumulate livestock impact. In a report to the President's Council on Environmental Quality, Frederic H. Wagner and 2 other range experts "concluded that 3/4 of the western ranges were producing at less than half their potential at the time [1968]" (Wagner 1978). A 1984 Senate report estimated that 76% of BLM range was in either fair or poor condition, unable to produce more than half its estimated aboriginal potential (Williams 1990). A 1980 SCS estimate was that more than half of Western rangeland was producing at less than 40% potential and that more than 85% was producing at less than 60% potential (Chaney 1990). Several other reports indicating little or no change have already been mentioned. In other words, the land is actually producing much less forage now, though individual forage plants in grazed areas may on the average be larger than, say, in the 1880s or 1930s because they are not always cropped to the ground.

If we define range condition as the overall, long-term health and integrity of the rangeland environment, today's conditions probably are significantly worse than a century ago. A century ago, livestock were simply turned out and allowed to reproduce in greater and greater numbers until the land could no longer support them. Although this caused many kinds of immediate environmental harm, other kinds of damage and more serious long-term damage would not become apparent for decades.

In the late 1800s livestock stripped the herbaceous cover, then starved if they were not removed from the range. Even so, *the distribution, composition, and density of native vegetation all were still basically intact*. Native species covered most of their aboriginal range; vegetation was composed mostly of natives; and individual plants were relatively closely spaced, though eaten to nubs. Over subsequent decades native species have declined drastically as increasers, invaders, and bare dirt spread relentlessly. Distribution, composition, and density have progressively declined as long-term impacts compounded.

CONDITION OF BLM-MANAGED PUBLIC RANGLAND

Source	Condition class (percent)				
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown
NRDC/NWF @ (1985)	1.9	27.1	42	29	0
BLM range managers (GAO 1988)	6	23	31	12	28
Official BLM report (1987)	3	30	39	19	9

@Natural Resources Defense Council and National Wildlife Federation. Based on an analysis of the grazing environmental impact statements done by BLM between May 1978 and June 1985, covering about 118 million of the 165 million acres of public ranchland administered by BLM.

Range Conditions, Then and Now



The BLM range now, according to the BLM. (BLM)

Dropped out range conservationists have told me that they have seen drastic reductions in forage in the last 10 years, and expect the trend to continue.

--Anonymous New Mexico State Land Department official

Each passing year more soil erodes from the Western range. There is less soil now than ever before because excessive soil erosion continues while the creation of new soil cannot nearly keep pace. The greatly reduced topsoil supply and the loss of tens of thousands of acres of bottomland have caused a chain reaction of destructive environmental changes, including substantial loss in biological health and productivity.

Likewise, continual overgrazing has contributed to a progressive diminishment in streamflows and water tables, and thus in dependent wildlife. Evidence indicates that overall water pollution due to livestock also has grown steadily worse.

Ranching continues to harm wildlife. Granted, there have been reintroductions and increases of some species' populations in recent decades. However, much of this recovery has required massive human intervention, and little of it can be credited to ranching. Each year we expend more resources to maintain or increase numbers of some "game" animals, often to counterbalance ranching's malevolent influences. This creates the *illusion* of recovery. Meanwhile, ranching causes many of the less popular native species to continue their inexorable declines, some toward extirpation or extinction. The overall wildlife picture is not better than in the past.

Additionally, a century ago, though much of the West was ravaged by livestock, large areas remained ungrazed because they were inaccessible or too far from water. For example, until the early 1900s many of the natural forest meadows had never been grazed by livestock because they were too remote or were surrounded by impenetrable brush or trees. Aboriginal, densely vegetated forests had not yet been thinned by timbering. Large portions of arid to semi-arid range were too far from water for livestock to utilize.

In recent decades, more ranching access roads, modernized livestock and supply transport (including helicopters), livestock access developments, and artificial water sources

have allowed livestock to spread to almost every nook and cranny of our public range. This important factor is underappreciated by most range analysts. Though some public land has been built on or otherwise withdrawn from livestock use (only 4% in the US since 1958 [Joyce 1989]), rangeland overall is being more thoroughly grazed, and previously ungrazed land has been turned into grazing land.

Range developments a century ago were simple and rare. Today, science and technology have provided the means to mitigate some of the more serious range management detriments (though always at the expense of other

natural components and other ecosystems). This has enabled the ranching establishment to damage the land more thoroughly in more ways than early ranchers would have imagined possible. Each year there are more and more fences, roads, stock watering devices, salt blocks, seedings, and other destructive range developments.

Federal records show livestock range herbage consumption on public lands down somewhat from earlier times, *but roughly stable since the 1950s*. Even accounting for today's larger cattle, agency exaggeration, and other factors, there probably has been an overall, small reduction in livestock biomass since historic peak periods. We are told that this represents a "sincere attempt to control overgrazing." More correctly it means *the long-term productivity of the Western range continues to decline – even with the aid of billions of dollars in range "improvements."* Thus, some experts believe relative livestock *pressure* on the Western range is now at an all-time high. (In the West as a whole, the cattle population is at an all-time high.)

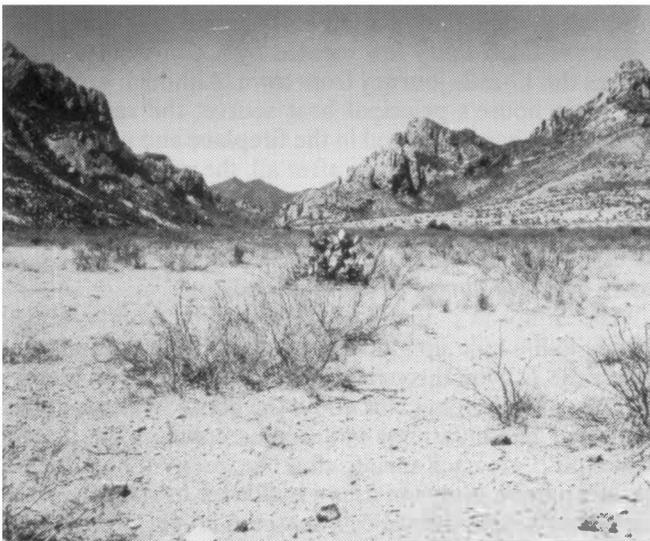
The highest historic peaks in livestock numbers give us the false impression that lower levels represent responsible use. Yet, even disregarding these highest peaks, livestock pressure on public land has consistently remained extremely high from the 1870s until present; **even the lowest points represent a severely harmful influence.**

BLM's own 1984 report -- which has been criticized as slanted to portray BLM range improvement -- stated that, while 5% of BLM range was rated excellent, 31% good, 42% in fair, and 18% in poor or very poor condition, 18% was improving, 68% was stable, and 14% was declining (USDI, BLM 1984). It is safe to assume that if BLM says nearly as much of its land is deteriorating as improving, probably more is deteriorating than improving. After the General Accounting Office conducted 11 studies of BLM in 3 years, it reported to Congress in 1989:

We found that almost 60% of the grazing allotments for which BLM range managers had current status information were in less than satisfactory condition. Further, only about one-fourth of the allotments whose status was known were improving while the remainder were either stable or declining. Despite this generally unsatisfactory condition, range managers told us that a significant portion of grazing allotments continued to be overstocked. Moreover, on 75% of the allotments threatened

with overgrazing, BLM had not scheduled any action to reduce authorized grazing levels. [emphasis added]

(Mentioned earlier was a 1987 SCS report estimating as much US private range deteriorating as improving.)



The mouth of Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahua Mountains, southeast Arizona. A 1908 photo (top) shows a range well covered with native grasses eaten close to the ground by cattle, widely scattered with shrubs. The same scene in 1956 (below) is dominated by bare, rocky ground and thorny brush. (*Unknown*)



A freeway right-of-way west of Laramie, Wyoming. The resident photographer adds, "This is common all over Wyoming and getting worse." (*Harvey Duncan*)

Range condition as defined by the ranching establishment is an arbitrary, biased, misleading term, based mainly on perceived present potential of the land to produce herbage for livestock, rather than on environmental health and integrity. Furthermore, how much environmental good is allegedly "productive" range in allegedly "good" condition when herbage is cropped to stubble for most or all of the year?

In sum, today's public range is in a **dynamic state of degradation**. Most evidence indicates that the greatest rate of overt rangeland damage probably occurred during the initial livestock invasion of the late 1800s and during a few peak use periods in the first half of this century. But these high rates of degradation in large part simply reflect that the most susceptible environmental components succumbed first. Compared to these peaks, the overall *rate* of environmental damage has in some ways declined. However, in some ways it has not. *Progressive* deterioration continues and *cumulative* degeneration intensifies. Thus, overall ranching *pressure* is probably near an all-time high. Ranching is as bad as it used to be, if not worse.

- ***Ranchers aren't responsible for harming public land because it is the government's responsibility to protect this land.***

Last night, I once again heard a public lands rancher stand up in front of a crowd and make this claim. It deserves no response.

- ***Ranchers lead simple, earthy lives, so they have developed a special closeness to and respect for Nature.***



The Fantasy.

Ranchers are rugged outdoorsmen, right? They make a living out there on the range, close to the land. From working on the land for so long they have developed a thorough knowledge of, and strong feeling for, the environment. They are poor, hard-working people who lead simple, natural lives. So the story goes.

Back in the real world, we find that most ranchers are not rugged, adventurous outdoorsmen, but are instead rather ordinary businessmen. Generally they attend to their livestock and ranching chores in fancy pickup trucks (sometimes ultra-lights, airplanes, or helicopters), do their work with the most modern equipment available, and rarely spend a night outdoors. They see the environment more as obstacle than companion. Through the years I have been shocked to discover just how little most stockmen understand or appreciate the land they ranch.

The common perception that ranchers lead a simple existence, a natural life close to the Earth, is but for few exceptions not true. In the first place, most Western stockmen are well-situated and accustomed to a comfortable lifestyle. Moreover, the very nature of public lands livestock grazing necessitates large, complex, and expensive ranching operations. And because Western land, public land especially, is so poor for raising livestock, profit-to-expense ratio is usually very low. A livestock operation netting \$100,000 per year may spend several times that amount for not only ranching labor, supplies, repairs, utilities, transport, etc., but to maintain the accustomed lifestyle in a remote location. If public and private subsidies are factored, the "business" becomes so unprofitable as to be laughable. A visit to a public lands ranch is a lesson on waste:

Simpson and "his wife" own an 80-acre base property. Around the headquarters compound rests an assortment of heavy equipment -- tractor, bulldozer, backhoe. Pieces of machinery lie in various states of repair and disrepair. Against a shed wall stand drums of kerosene, creosote, asphalt emulsion, diesel fuel, gasoline, motor oil, and hydraulic fluid. Behind the shed, we find a grease pit and a small trench for used oil.

The large barn is stocked with straw, hay, salt blocks, and bags of cattle, horse, dog, and chicken feed, cement, and fertilizer. A few seldom-ridden horses stand in their stalls; a horse corral is adjacent. The horses are handy for certain chores (and for fun and visitors), but the vast bulk of ranch work utilizes motorized vehicles -- including the pickups, stock truck, jeep, and ATV parked over with the family car, horse trailer, heavy equipment trailer, utility trailer, live-in trailer (for extended stays on the range), and several junk vehicles near the ranch house. Simpson's single-prop Cherokee awaits him at the end of a nearby quarter-mile-long dirt runway.

The compound also contains cattle corrals, holding pens, chutes, ramps, a stock tank and scale. Sheds and outbuildings bulge with tools and supplies, most seldom but eventually used. Here we find auto and truck parts, vehicle repair tools, windmill components, water pumps, chainsaws, generators, equestrian gear, branding implements, sheet metal, sheet and rolled plastic, tarps, torches, sprayers, mowers, power post hole diggers, chains and ropes, come-alongs, hydraulic jacks, drills and presses, wire stretchers, welding equipment, carpentry tools, table saws, an air compressor, electrical equipment, veterinary supplies, firearm supplies, varmint and insect poisons, weed killers, *ad infinitum*. Under the overhangs of some of the buildings are a cement mixer, wheelbarrows, piles of fence posts and stays, old gates, rolls of mesh and barbed wire, pipe (CPVC, ABS, and galvanized iron), lumber, roofing materials, concrete blocks, ladders, propane tanks, stove pipes, screens, rebar,

angle iron, hoses, haying machinery, farm implements, old tires, animal traps, and so on. Tacked and nailed on the wall of one old shed are deer heads, rattlesnake skins, and coyote carcasses. The hound pens and chicken coops occupy most of the shady space under a lone ponderosa pine.

Six miles of dirt road snake from ranch headquarters down the valley to the well-maintained gravel road leading to town. The dirt road is usually impassable several days a year, but the county does a good job of keeping it open. Along the dirt road, mail is delivered daily to 3 widely spaced mailboxes, all owned by public lands ranchers who own the best bottomland along the valley and control permits for ranching on surrounding public land. The other 2 ranchers have children, who are picked up and dropped off by school buses each weekday.

Back at Simpson Ranch, electrical wires from the main house and various buildings meet at a central utility pole; from there a line of power poles marches to the horizon. Telephone wires, installed 15 years ago through a special discount to ranchers, also run along these poles. The large propane storage tank that serves the main ranch and guest houses is filled every few months by a delivery truck that makes the 17-mile journey from town. Although propane is the main house's principal heat source, the ranch family burns a few cords of wood in the fireplace and wood heater each winter to save money; after all, the wood is free from public land. The ranch house isn't exactly "Little House on the Prairie"; it is large, comfortable, and equipped with the latest conveniences. A satellite dish picks up TV waves. An extra bedroom serves as the ranch office.

The Simpson's domestic water comes from a fenced spring half a mile up a nearby canyon, capped off and run down the canyon through a 2" galvanized iron pipe into a 10,000-gallon holding tank above the house. Water for cattle (when at headquarters) and horses comes from a small reservoir. Late each spring, after the threat of flooding has mostly passed, Simpson uses a bulldozer to scrape a diversion dam across the valley's seasonal creek, diverting the flow through a ditch into the reservoir. The reservoir also helps irrigate a 12-acre pasture, which occupies the most fertile bottomland along the creek below the house. During periods when the reservoir is full, Simpson allows it to overflow and run back down into its natural course (or what passes for "natural" after being channelized and ripped). Though the creek no longer flows for extended periods, when it does, water is diverted directly to pasture and stock via irrigation ditches.

For years Simpson has dumped garbage, brush, trash, scrap material, and assorted junk into an arroyo a couple hundred yards behind the house. Like many ranchers, he feels a curious security in this time-honored accumulation.

Due to intensive activity by vehicles, machinery, horses, cattle, and people, the compound area for a radius of hundreds of feet is stark, bare earth. Most days this is a source of dust, but it becomes a cursed muddy quagmire after a rain. Nevertheless, the ranch family is glad for the barren zone around their living area as it helps keep the bugs and varmints at bay.

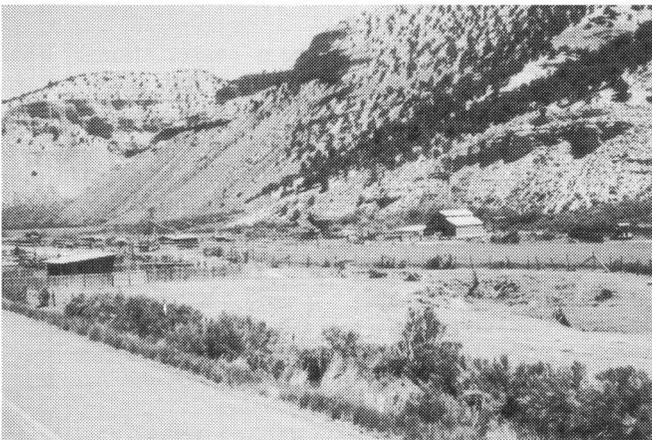
Simpson has tried to raise a few fruit trees near the house, fencing them from the horses and loose cattle with 5 tight strands of barbed wire on close-set posts. The attempt has been moderately successful, with most of the stunted trees'

upper branches still intact. A lawn and ornamental bushes survive within a chain link fence adjoining the house.

From the compound, dirt roads radiate in every direction, following the creek up and downstream, accessing every part of the valley bottomland, cutting up steep hillsides, winding along ridgetops and canyon bottoms. The stockman can drive from the ranch house almost anywhere. On his ATV, he can zip down to the diversion dam to check the water flow, or down the valley to irrigate the pasture. In his jeep, he can 4-wheel it up to the springhead to check the water intake or drive the 7 rugged miles along ridgetops to check cattle on the high mesa on the far side of the 12,300-acre allotment. In one of his heavy-duty pickups, it takes only an hour to reach a fence post cutting area 35 miles away, or half an hour to go to town to pick up supplies.

During the 18 years Simpson has "owned" the allotment, the Forest Service and other agencies have provided the following: 7 dirt and 3 metal stock tanks; a concrete dam; a pipeline; 2 windmills; 3 brush and 5 pinyon/juniper removals totaling 1450 acres; 2 noxious weed control projects for 470 acres; 3 seedings and reseedings for 870 acres; poison spray twice for grasshoppers on 900 acres; poison grain for gophers and ground squirrels; coyote and mountain lion eradication; disease inoculation for hundreds of cattle; 16 miles of new fence and 8 1/2 miles of replacement fence; 4 cattle guards; 3 gates; 8 miles of dirt roads; and 6 "Watch for Livestock" and "Cattle Guard" signs. Nobody keeps track, but the cost of all these "improvements" totals about \$200,000. Simpson has contributed some of his own range developments, generally the cheaper ones.

Other assistance comes in various forms from the feds, the state, the county, range pros, the ag department at the university. Most he is glad to receive, though sometimes he feels that others are trying to run his ranch and his life.



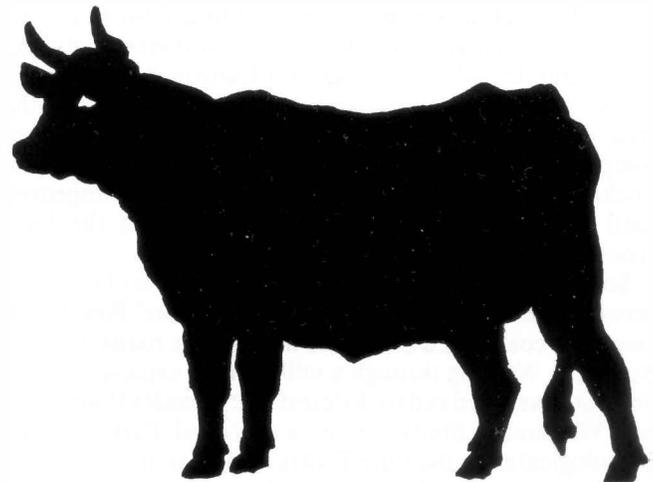
Part of a public lands ranching headquarters -- houses, barns, sheds, trucks, heavy equipment, etc. Note that the riparian bottom has been virtually destroyed. Central Utah.

Except perhaps for the airplane, Simpson's hypothetical ranching operation is typical of public lands ranches. Ranchers may live far from town, but this in no way means they live simply, much less naturally. While most of us will continue to envy the popularized down-home Western lifestyle, we should realize that this dream has little to do with the reality of public lands ranching. A small percentage of

stockmen, especially in the wilder areas of the West, may live this way, but the celebrated Western lifestyle generally is better exemplified by small-time miners and homesteading hippies than by ranchers. Regardless, we should not condone a group's harmful activities because we envy or sympathize with their lifestyle.

As a whole the stock ranching business in its goals and management is much like other businesses. The rancher wants the greatest net financial return with the least expense and effort. He figures herbage amounts, livestock weights, and ranching expenses on his pocket calculator. He records receipts and expenditures and market trends on computer spreadsheets.

The stockman is not out there to commune with Nature, but to make money and maintain the status quo. If through the years he happens to gain an appreciation for the natural world he and his livestock denigrate, it is incidental to his primary purposes. As a society, one of our biggest misconceptions is that knowledge of or physical proximity to Nature necessarily begets respect for Nature. Ignoring obvious signs to the contrary, we are further willing to believe that an appreciation for Nature necessarily overrides the desire for profits and power enough to beget benign use.



"Our goal is to produce the greatest weight gain in our cattle with the least financial expense possible."

--4-"H" youth

- ***Ranchers are the true conservationists. Their livelihood depends on a healthy range, so they wouldn't damage the environment.***

We are the original ecologists. We're the ones who originally came West, took it on ourselves to produce something from nothing. We are dependent on the ecology.

--Jim Connelley, president, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, 1-2-90 Tucson Citizen

Such arguments often are impressive, especially to city dwellers. The first half of this book reveals that they have no basis in reality.

Some public lands ranchers have joined conservation organizations in recent years, often taking positions of power to which they are accustomed -- a main reason most large conservation organizations refuse to challenge the ranching establishment. While some seem truly concerned for environmental welfare, most seem more concerned with other things. That is, they have come to understand that co-opting the very groups that might otherwise oppose their exploitation of public land is good public relations and good politics. For example, a contribution from the X-9 Ranch will reasonably assure that the local Sierra Club will not interfere with the X-9's public ranching operation, especially when the X-9 owner is a Sierra Club board member. A few hundred dollars and a membership fee is a small price for a wealthy stockman to pay to protect an operation worth a million. Additionally, the environmental image he gains from his association with the Sierra Club minimizes opposition from other conservation groups, politicians, and the public.

Beyond images, public lands ranchers generally oppose activities that would threaten their income levels and social/political standing and support those that would strengthen them; environmental impact is incidental. In the 2-million-acre "Arizona Strip" north of the Grand Canyon, where devastating overgrazing has continued for a century, ranchers are encouraging new uranium mines, including one within 15 miles of the Grand Canyon itself. Though ranching is the only land use to speak of over most of the area, and since (aside from the uranium miners) stockmen comprise by far the strongest political force in the area, stockmen welcome uranium mining there for the improved road network it provides and as "a boost to the local economy."

Southern Utah's Burr Trail, a 66-mile stretch of dirt road between the small town of Boulder and "Lake" Powell, has long been considered one of the most scenic roads in North America. Winding through a million-acre expanse of relatively undeveloped red rock desert that includes Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, a National Park, and archaeological sites, the Burr Trail is a popular mountain bike trail. Yet, some area businesspeople are pushing to have it developed to boost tourism and fatten their wallets. With \$2 million in Utah taxes, they plan to have Burr Trail widened, re-routed, and paved, infringing on wildlife and wilderness, increasing vehicular traffic by an estimated 2000%, and degrading the road's scenic qualities. Local public lands ranchers support the plan because it would improve their access, and, again, "boost the local economy."

In contrast, public lands ranchers are now in league with thousands of people in protest of a proposal by the US Air Force to withdraw 1.5 million mostly BLM acres in southwest Idaho for a bombing range. If implemented, the proposal might reduce grazing for some of the area's 60 or so permittees, though they would be financially compensated. Two hundred people testified at a recent hearing on the proposal; several were ranchers, who received most of the media attention simply because they are ranchers.

Similarly, ranchers in southwest Montana's Big Hole Valley presently are joined with conservationists in calling for Wilderness designation for much of the National Forest surrounding the 100-mile-long valley. The Forest Service plans to allow clearcutting on large areas of the thick forest

on the steep hillsides north and west of the valley. All 17 Big Hole Valley ranchers oppose the proposed logging and have reluctantly accepted Wilderness designation as the only feasible way to stop it, even though past and present ranching keeps most of the valley bare of trees and is the valley's greatest environmental detriment. While their alleged "collective regard for the land" has impressed some conservationists, the ranchers' primary concern is that clearcutting will increase watershed runoff and hurt their ranching operations (if logged, the steep slopes would provide a minimal amount of pasture anyway).

As in most river valleys in the rural West, the Big Hole ranchers own most of the private land and dominate the valley, especially in the lower elevations. Any intrusion into their area is a potential threat to their ranching operations and to their local power structure.

The Big Hole issue demonstrates the enormous power of the ranching establishment. A coalition of conservation organizations with thousands of members could battle against the proposed clearcutting with only a low probability of success. But throw in 17 local ranchers and suddenly you have "one of the most influential conservation groups in southwestern Montana," as reported in the conservation newsletter *LightHawk*. A handful of local stockmen equals an army of ordinary Jane and John Does.

Thus, public lands ranchers sometimes support environmental protection -- usually ostentatiously -- by proclaiming their positions to the press, as if their involvement suddenly gives the issue real significance. How many times have you heard these exact words?: "As a _____ (fill in state) public lands rancher with a deep, abiding respect for the land, _____ (fill in complaint or demand)." Their modernized public relations strategy has given public lands ranchers a more palatable conservation image, but they will never be and *cannot* be true conservationists, much less environmentalists, for public lands ranching by its very nature is environmentally unsound.

In other words, it is easy to be a "conservationist" when proposing to conserve something besides the land you ranch. You can call yourself an ecologist because you have learned ecology in your attempt to manipulate ecosystems for ranching. And anyone can send in \$35 for a Sierra Club membership and claim to be an environmentalist.

Stockmen's destructive legacy speaks for itself. They stand without equal as enemies of conservation.

They came into the West, they killed off the native wildlife, they've stripped the West of vegetation and continue to declare war on the few remaining predators. And now they have the nerve to call themselves environmentalists.

--Jim Fish, Public Lands Action Network, 4-28-90. *Albuquerque Tribune*

All of the ranchers' arguments are specious. They claim to love the land. Well, I have known people who beat their spouses black and blue all the while claiming they love them dearly.

--David A. Huet, letter to the editor, *Tucson Weekly* (9-26-90)

Sure, some (not most) ranchers and cowboys spend much time on land and some have learned a lot about the land. Some even have a personal relationship with the land. But even for

most of these people the relationship seems to be more like that of a rapist who appreciates the firmness and smell and taste and beauty of his victim's body.

--Anonymous

The rancher (with a few honorable exceptions) is a man who strings barbed wire all over the range; drills wells and bulldozes stock ponds; drives off elk and antelope and bighorn sheep; poisons coyotes and prairie dogs; shoots eagles, bears, and cougars on sight; supplants the native grasses with tumbleweed, snakeweed, povertyweed, cowshit, anthills, mud, dust, and flies. And then leans back and grins at the TV cameras and talks about how much he loves the American West.

--Edward Abbey "Even the Bad Guys Wear White Hats" (Abbey 1986)

● **Grazing is a useful tool for managing public lands.**

. . . livestock grazing is accepted as a legal, legitimate, and desired tool for improvement or maintenance of public rangelands.

--David Jolly, Chief, SW Region, USFS

The fact is, many public agencies and other cow apologists resort to absurd fantasy attempting to justify the nonsensical tradition of grazing public lands. The current strategy is to contend that cows are good for everything -- water, fish, wildlife, vegetation, soils, etc. It seems only a matter of time before we hear that a cow in your back seat will result in better gas mileage!

--Denzel and Nancy Ferguson (ONDA 1990)

The theory that livestock can be a "useful tool" for managing public lands was concocted in the 1960s and 1970s in response to mounting environmental concern and subsequent pressure for ranching reform. Industry "scientists" and "range experts" were marched in with bogus studies to publicize the idea that livestock can be used for environmental *manipulation*. Reality was turned on its head, and suddenly livestock became a potential benefit rather than actual detriment. The campaign has been moderately successful in dissipating anti-ranching energy, and in many cases is even being used to justify intensified ranching.

Today, though the useful tool argument is increasingly used, the ranching establishment has yet to demonstrate real success in using livestock to improve environmental quality. Indeed, results have been erratic, accomplished only with the aid of expensive range developments, and beneficial to only a few ecosystem components -- at the expense of many more ecosystem components. Ranching in any form has shown an almost unequivocally overall negative impact on Western rangeland.

Most studies were superficial and ignored the complex inter-relationships between large herbivores and other plant and animal life. Other studies were plain silly. Out of this phony research the argument emerged that cattle were a wildlife management "tool" that could benefit many wildlife species. Before long, both stock raisers and academicians portrayed the cow as the finest friend of the western rangelands. Such a

conclusion was ridiculous, but the ranchers had "scientific" evidence to rationalize their livestock grazing.

--Bernard Shanks, *This Land Is Your Land* (Shanks 1984)

● **Ranchers provide range developments and stewardship essential to a healthy environment.**

Throughout the first half of this book we have seen that the opposite is true.

● **Ranchers provide a necessary public service on public lands.**

According to George Bell, who runs a large public lands ranching operation in southern Arizona:

If there were no [public lands] ranchers, all this [public] land would have to be taken care of by the Forest Service and BLM. We help people who get lost on the land; we deal with fires; all kinds of things.

This represents another justification that looks good only on the surface. First of all, Nature does not need to be "taken care of." Rather, it mostly needs to be left alone. Such administration, when required, is the legal responsibility of the agencies, not stockmen. And sure, ranchers may occasionally give directions to lost motorists or report wildfires. But their detriments far outweigh such insignificant contributions. As detailed, they also intimidate public lands visitors, start fires, necessitate the opening and closing of gates, cause livestock to wander onto roadways, detract from recreational use, and so on.

● **Without the use of public lands as calving grounds, the Western livestock industry would collapse.**

The falseness of this claim is explained in Chapter II.

● **Without livestock grazing the public forage resource would be wasted.**

At the onset of this line of reasoning we usually are presented the shopworn argument, "Grass that isn't eaten by livestock is wasted." Consider the words of Ronald A. Michieli, Executive Director of the Public Lands Council:

These animals [public lands livestock] are solar factories. They take a renewable resource which would otherwise be wasted and turn it into edible food and other products which man desires and needs.

This may have gone undisputed 50 or 100 years ago, but many people have come to appreciate that something isn't wasted or worthless if it isn't turned into greenbacks or hamburger.

Colorado public lands rancher's wife Marj Perry asserts, "It [public ranching] is an ideal way of converting grass to protein." So, what is ideal about spending \$2 billion in tax and private monies annually to have our public land

degraded by a politically and socially dominant minority to produce 3% of our livestock -- especially when the average American already consumes twice the amount of protein recommended by nutritionists?



FORAGE WOULD HAVE LITTLE VALUE SAVE FOR LIVESTOCK.

A photo from an SCS ranching publication. Note the caption. (SCS)

● ***If you don't graze the land, how else are you going to use it?***

Why do we think that all usable land must somehow be used by humans? Why would we consider this a mandate to put livestock on the land? Yet, this is the automatic response from many Americans to the idea of removing livestock from public lands. More than anything, cultural conditioning creates this reality.

The ranching establishment gives more professional, yet no more substantial, explanations. For example, Steve Williams, Range Manager for the Arizona State Land Department, writes, "The rural areas vary in nature and character, but really aren't suited for anything but grazing." He should tell that to a fisher, camper, or nature photographer. He should tell that to a desert tortoise, bobcat, frog, butterfly, bunchgrass plant, hillside, or stream.

● ***"Grazing is a traditional, legitimate use of public lands."***

--Robert M. Williamson, Director of Range Management, BLM

Public lands graziers claim they have the "right" to ranch our public lands, saying "We've been running cattle here since before you were born, son!" or "My great, great grandfather homesteaded this place in 1879." By this line of reasoning, we might say that pirates have the right to plunder ships at sea because they have been doing so for centuries, or that a king has the right to the throne because his ancestors conquered the kingdom a hundred years ago. As ecologist George Wuerthner notes:

The only defense for the continuation of public lands grazing is that it is a traditional use of public lands. . . . Dumping raw sewage into our rivers was traditional also. (Wuerthner 1989)

Similarly, we are told that ranching should continue wherever stockmen have "established grazing rights." This almost sounds reasonable -- until you stop to consider that ranching has traditionally occurred almost every place that it now occurs, which is to say almost everywhere there is enough vegetation to keep a cow or sheep alive, which is to say 73% of Western public land, which is to say 41% of the West.

And what of the 40,000-year-old tradition of the Native Americans that ranchers killed or displaced, or the ancient traditions of the Western ecosystems they devastated?

--*We all must make a living.*

--*We all use natural resources.*

--*We all impact the environment, or have someone else do it for us.*

The ranching establishment often uses these calculated truisms as arguments to rationalize public lands ranching -- the well-worn tactic of justifying black or white by expounding upon shades of grey. It shifts the blame and belittles the destruction.

Yes (though there are obviously far too many people on the planet), everyone should have an equal opportunity to have a place to live and earn a living. However, when just one person or family monopolizes and degrades thousands, or even tens or hundreds of thousands, of publicly owned acres, under heavy subsidization, to provide their income and produce a relatively tiny amount of food for society, it is time to draw the line.

I don't think it's a fair statement to make that public grazing is a major destructor of land. Use of that kind is historic. . . . A lot of the permittees have been out there a long time -- three or four generations in some cases.

--Joe ["Bogus Logic"] Zilincar, public relations spokesman for BLM's national office

● ***Public lands grazing must be saved to preserve our ranching legacy.***

In one place, the city council set aside an ecological reserve -- with cattle! Their reasoning was that the cattle are part of San Diego's history, so they stay.

--Dave Sage, Solano Beach, California, personal correspondence

Sympathizers to the ranchers claim that a "valuable cultural resource" would be lost if the ranchers and their livestock were removed [from Mt. Diablo State Park, California]. Even if the ranchers are defeated, a "demonstration ranch" with about 200 head of cattle would remain, "to reflect this county's history. . . ."

--Sharon Seidenstein, Berkeley, California, personal correspondence

The sight of cattle or sheep and cowboys or sheepherders on a well-managed range is an attractive part of western lore for our mainly urban population.

--from *Progressive Agriculture* by the College of Agriculture, University of Arizona (College of Agriculture 1981)

Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb once said that "Westerners have developed a talent for taking something small and blowing it up to giant size." The ranching establishment often claims that ranching must be preserved because it is vital to our Western legacy. Further twisting reality, it alleges that, as one rancher put it, "many people view pastures as natural scenery."

What is really being said here? Are cows and fences part of Nature? Why must public lands ranching's 18% contribution to Western livestock production be preserved to save our Western legacy? As well say we had to save the Rambler to save the American automobile industry. Moreover, why hasn't the government preserved (that is heavily subsidized) the thousands of Western shoemakers or weavers or glassblowers or Native Americans or grizzly bears or riparian areas to save our Western legacy?

What is really being assumed is that ranchers and ranching are somehow more important than anybody or anything else. In real terms, stockmen simply maintain a more powerful public image and carry more clout.



For decades, the ranching establishment has been imprinting in the American psyche the message that the ranchman is "the keeper of the Western flame," that "the living legend of the cowboy" (public lands rancher) must be preserved or the last vestige of the Old West will die. They warn us that if the public lands rancher "fades into history" (gets booted off public land), the Great Western Epic will end and our cherished Western Romance will be lost forever.

Yet, most ranching in the West is on private land and will continue with or without public lands ranching. Moreover, little of the romantic Old West we hold most dear is based on actual livestock ranching; by far most would survive even if *all* ranching was ended. Further, rather than a bunch of rustic, sweat-stained cowpokes, *most* public lands ranchers are well-situated and influential. They comprise a powerful, highly organized, heavily financed, hard-nosed business -- not a romantic legacy.

By and large stockmen's involvement in our Western legacy has been bloodstained, destructive, and wasteful. Why we should preserve such a legacy, except perhaps in books and movies, is a question we should ask.

Don't get me wrong; I love the legends of the Old West. . . . But the days of longhorns, trail drives, rustlers and gun-fighters are long gone. What little remains of the West's wilderness -- as opposed to the Wild West -- needs to be conserved.

It's become too precious to sacrifice to a sappy nostalgia for the frontier, to a business that cannot survive except for massive government subsidies.

Besides, cattle ranching has done irreparable damage to the West. . . .

The hard truth is that we don't need the West's cattle ranches anymore. They're as much a historical oddity as the steam locomotive and whalebone corset.

--Richard Lessner, "Dancing With Wolves: Ranchers Should Lose This War" (Lessner 1991)

● ***No serious, knowledgeable person would propose ending public land ranching.***

Interestingly, this claim is made more often by conservationists than by stockmen. A person who opposes ranching is a person whose social acceptance and self-image are on the chopping block. A person who embraces America's cowboy imperative and promotes only modest reforms designed to perpetuate ranching need not fear ostracization and gnawing inner guilt. Thus most conservationists distance themselves from "the radical fringe" and breathe easy.

Most ranchers know better. They of all people understand why the concerned, well-informed person is the *most* likely to call for an end to public lands ranching.

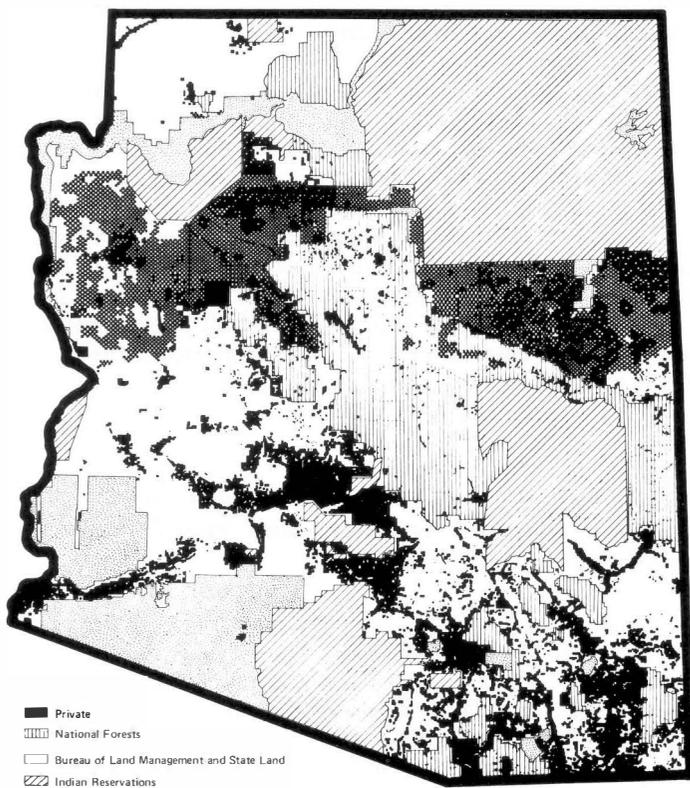
● ***If livestock are banned from public lands, the Western livestock industry and rural Western economies will collapse.***

It's time to set the record straight. Livestock grazing on public (and private) lands helped settle the west and build our nation, and today continues to play a major role in many local economies. Agriculture is the nation's largest industry, and the cattle industry is the largest segment of American agriculture.

--Patty McDonald, Executive Director, Public Lands Council

One of welfare graziers' favorite tricks is lumping public lands ranching together with the entire livestock industry, and agriculture in general, to increase its apparent importance. Another example of this is a statement by Pamela Neal, Executive Vice President of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association, in an *Arizona Daily Star* article on public lands ranching: "Cattle is the largest commodity in the state's agricultural group." Nowhere in the lengthy article does she acknowledge just *how much* public lands ranching contributes to the state's agricultural industry. The obviously sympathetic author of the article further states, "Hinging on the outcome of this battle [over increasing grazing fees to fair market value] could be the death of the state's \$1 billion cattle industry and a *piece of Arizona tradition* [italics added]." These kinds of claims are as common as they are misleading. (*Seven Popular MYTHS About Livestock Grazing on Public Lands* takes this to the extreme; see Mosly 1990.) As Bernard DeVoto writes in *The Easy Chair*, "they are telling the truth, but not enough of it." Unfortunately, many uninformed Americans are eager to believe whatever a cowboy tells them.

Back in the real world, we find that Arizona's *gross* total income from cattle is less than half this \$1 billion figure and that beef cattle represent only about 1/3 of the state's overall agricultural production. Only 32% of Arizona's livestock are produced by federal land -- more than any state but Nevada at 38%, which is 70% BLM and 10% FS land, almost entirely grazed. Further, though about 45% of non-Indian reservation Arizona is grazed federal land, altogether there are only about 1000 federal lands ranchers in the state -- 0.025% of the population, or 1 out of 4000 residents.



Source: Arizona Office of Economic Planning and Development, *Public Land Ownership in Arizona, 1971*.

LAND OWNERSHIP IN ARIZONA

(Dark gray areas represent private checkerboarded with public.)

All publicly owned lands in the 11 Western states combined produce only 18% of the West's livestock -- hardly essential to the survival of the Western livestock industry. Only 17% of Western stock producers use public land at all (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986), and most of these ranchers don't depend on public ranching to stay in business.

They [wildlife groups] have had their goddamn boot heel in our [stockmen's] neck now for the last 10 years and they do not let up, and I don't think you'll have an economic base in Wyoming that can support the schools or cities or hospitals. But I don't think they give a shit.

--Lee Coffman, President, Wyoming Wool Growers Association, *High Country News* (11-23-87)

If the livestock producer were to be forced off the public range, it would be impossible to maintain a viable livestock industry.

--Hubbard S. Russel, Jr., Chairman, Private Lands and Water Usage Committee, National Cattlemen's Association

Many small cities and towns in the West would be destroyed economically if all grazing were taken off the public land.

--[illegible signature], Deputy Director, Acting, BLM, "stock" response, 1988

To take cattle off public lands, as some preservationists suggest, would cripple the state's [New Mexico's] economy as well as the economy of the entire West.

--Public lands rancher James M. Jackson, *Natural Resources Journal* (Summer 1989)

These statements represent an even more preposterous fairy tale -- that if livestock are banned from public land the economies of the rural West will be ruined and the people living there will become destitute. One Colorado welfare rancher even suggested that it would be "a form of genocide." Here in Arizona -- one of many so-called "cattle states" -- a recent study claims that if public lands ranching were ended the state economy would lose most of \$302 million contributed by Arizona ranchers (1-25-89 *Arizona Republic*). The study was commissioned and funded by the Arizona Cattle Growers Association (ACGA), headed by an agribusiness professional at an agricultural college, and presented to the public by a public relations firm hired by ACGA. It was conducted using results of surveys mailed out to 601 selected ranchers, with only 180 ranchers responding. Each dollar spent was counted "three times to indicate the way income is spent locally." Results were based on extremely inflated dollar figures, and dollars spent included everything from ranchers spending money at movie theaters to BLM range managers buying food and gas while making trips to grazing allotments. *Economic minuses due to ranching were not reflected*, nor were the results of a recent Arizona State University College of Business study showing that all agriculture, including ranching, feedlots, and crop production, accounts for just 7% of the gross economic product in Arizona's 13 rural counties. Nor was any indication given that ranchers would still spend a comparable amount of money locally whether they ran livestock on public land or not. Such bogus studies are common, and typify ranching industry misinformation (indeed, the Forest Service and BLM are currently using the above and other slanted studies to promote ranching).

The fact is, even though *most* of the area of *most* Western counties is ranched, very few counties earn more than 5% of their gross income from ranching, *even including private lands ranching*. In studies of 20 local Western ranching areas, Steve Johnson, Southwest Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, found not one having more than 3% of its economy based on ranching. Indeed, if other factors are considered, livestock grazing actually *detracts* from many, if not most, local economies -- even the well-known "cattle countries" and "cow counties."

Mojave County in northwest Arizona, for example, encompasses some 13,000 square miles, and more than 80%

of it is grazed by cattle. Yet this overwhelmingly rural county derives only 0.8% of its total income from ranching and all other agriculture. Ranching is the county's greatest environmental detriment, and an overall economic detriment.

Grant County in southwest New Mexico derives less than 5% of its gross income from livestock grazing, even though 90% of its 3000 square miles is grazed. Ranching there has caused drastic reductions in game and fish, the elimination of many natural water sources, erosion of topsoil and loss of hundreds of acres of valuable bottomland, extensive public and private property damage, decreased recreational income, extensive flood damage to small communities and the county seat, and more. Despite bold proclamations by Grant County stockmen and their agency collaborators, ranching certainly causes a net loss to that county's economy.

Northeast Nevada's 8500-square-mile White Pine County is likewise typical. It boasts being one of Nevada's "Cow Counties" and is in fact composed of 76.6% BLM land, nearly all of which is grazed. The stockmen who rule over most of White Pine County assert that the county's economy would collapse without ranching. Yet White Pine County derives only 4% of its gross income from all ranching, public and private. Again, ranching's detrimental influences may actually cause a net loss of income to the county.

Eastern Montana is the region of the West perhaps most dependent on livestock grazing. But even here most counties derive only small income percentages from ranching -- tiny percentages from public lands ranching (90% of Montana livestock are on private land). In Wyoming, the alleged "Cowboy State," where only about 2000 public lands permittees graze about half of the land, less than 5% of the state's income is derived from public lands ranching. (Various government sources)

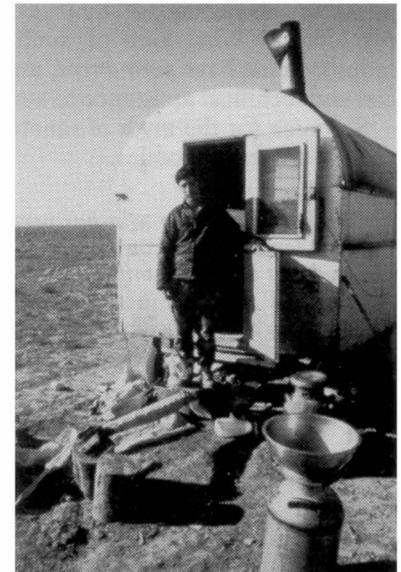


Without public lands ranching, net incomes would probably *increase* for most rural economies. For example, in Idaho hunters and fishers pay 15 times more for hunting and fishing licenses than all ranchers on BLM and FS rangeland in the state (1/4 of the state) pay in federal grazing fees. Without degradation of game animal habitat and attrition from ranchers, game animal populations in Idaho would soar.

Because public lands ranches cover an average of more than 12,000 acres each, local rural economies are usually affected by only several to a score or so public lands ranch-

ing operations. Therefore, even if their contributions outweighed their detriments, the benefits could hardly be significant.

As for employment, few industries come close to ranching in the paucity of jobs created compared to taxes and resources consumed. Alan Durning notes in *State of the World: 1990* that "ranching is the least labor-intensive agricultural activity in the country." A review by the Congressional Research Service shows that only 3.6% of the commercial employment based on the 7 National Forests in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is attributable to livestock



A Peruvian sheep herder on Idaho BLM land. (George Wuerthner)

operations (Wuerthner 1991). In other words, public lands ranchers hire few employees. Many of their hired hands are transients or illegal aliens, are part-time and/or temporary and poorly paid. More and higher paying jobs could be created by ending public lands ranching.



(Greg Pentkowski)

The agencies allege that public lands ranching is "important locally." Likewise, one could say, so is poodle grooming "important locally." The agencies say they need to prop up publiclandsranchingto "stabilize the localeconomies of the rural West." What kind of double talk is this when the industry must have *permanent*, massive government financial and technical assistance to survive?

So much for the myth of ranching as the "backbone" of rural Western economies.

One BLM employee who has been studying the impact of public lands ranching on the West said she was able to find no significant economic impact. "And there was no real social impact. I decided there was only a mythical impact. Everybody's in love with the myth of the American cowboy."

--Jon R. Luoma, "Discouraging Words" (Luoma 1986)

● ***Together, we can work to create a better future for rangeland management . . .***

Changing public values and demands bring complexity and focus attention on the need for cooperation among all users of rangelands. Successful partnerships between permittees, State, and Federal managers form a strong base on which to build a positive future for the public range.

--Livestock Grazing Successes on Public Range, "Produced in partnership by: The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Public Lands Council" (USDA 1989)

This one is designed to appeal to our faith in science and technology, if not our optimism, patriotism, and teamwork. By planning for a co-operative future, the ranching establishment lays the foundation for future public lands ranching. In recent years, this has become a public relations approach.

Ranching, we are told, is a "developing science," and it is merely a matter of time before scientific breakthroughs allow us to solve its problems. Livestock grazing will become an exciting new tool of progressive rangeland management! With American spirit and ingenuity, we will not only halt environmental deterioration, but eventually double -- hell, triple -- livestock production!!!



This contrived optimism is no substitute for reality. We have yet to see much improvement in the overall condition of the public range, even with billions of tax and private dollars poured into management, developments, and restoration. Enthusiasm, glittering promises, and intensified rangeland manipulation are not substitutes.

Though many people already propose ending public lands ranching -- and many more would if made aware of the situation -- our government refuses to even acknowledge the possibility. Not one BLM resource area, Forest Service ranger district, or state land department division has made a *significant* permanent overall reduction in ranching, much less ordered a complete cessation.

Yet countering this interest [in environmental responsibility] has been the widespread growth of a feeling that science and technology will resolve any real emergency and bring us to a condition of effortless plenty.

--Paul B. Sears in *Deserts on the March* (Sears 1967)

● ***We're all in this together, good neighbor, good buddy. (A.k.a., honey is sweeter than cow shit.)***

This one's similar to the above, with an added emotional twist. When ranchers turn on the folksy charm, who can resist? No one can garner sympathy like a dusty ol' cowpoke. When, hat in hand, a Western-garbed permittee in his slow drawl says he knows "there's room for improvement" but how hard he's "been a'tryin' to do a better job" than his overgrazin' grandpappy did, could you cancel the poor, sincere fellow's permit and turn him out onto the cold streets? When he asks you if you'll join with him and work to improve the range, are you going to tell him no? Hell no! You would seem a heartless scoundrel -- as he well knows! I have seen even confirmed stop-public-lands-ranching advocates melt under the influence. You cannot resist. At this point all you can do is meekly suggest modest reforms, or more likely point your finger at the government and demand more range "improvements."

What a song and dance! In truth, the vast majority of these po', hardworkin' ranch folk are not really poor at all, and do not work any harder than the rest of us.

They do not relent, however: We must work together, they plead. It's not us and them; no. Join us, they say -- *join us!*

What does this *really* mean? Mostly it means do not resist your ranching neighbors. Help them preserve the status quo. With your time, energy, and tax dollars, help them mitigate their destructive ranching impacts and restore your overgrazed ranges -- *so they may raise more cattle and sheep!*

● ***If you don't keep us in business, we'll be forced to sell out to the developers.***

If we are forced from the public lands, we have two alternatives. First, we can manage our lands for domestic livestock only [no change], or, secondly, we can sell to the "developers." None of us want this, so please don't force us into it.

--J.W. Swan, First Vice-President, Idaho Cattlemen's Association (USDA, USDI, CEQ 1979)

Rather than a grain, this argument contains a small pebble of truth. The thinly veiled threat -- *blackmail* -- has for years been used effectively to quell opposition.

Many stockmen imply that if they were to cease ranching, public lands would be opened up to developers. Although they know full well that public land is rarely bought, sold, or commercially built upon, they fool some uninformed people.

Perhaps most public lands ranchers are not so bold as to imply this outlandish threat, but many do maintain that if they are "driven out of business" (is receiving welfare a

"business"?) by enforced restrictions, higher expenses, decreased subsidies, and/or reduced grazing, they will then sell their private lands, including base properties, to developers who will turn the rural West into a squalor of condominiums and subdivisions. This ominous warning is false in several ways.

First, (as detailed above and below) the argument applies mainly to private, not public, lands ranching (though with alternatives available it need not apply to private ranching either). And by supporting public lands ranching we put more pressure on private ranchers to sell out because we give their more heavily subsidized competitors an even more unfair advantage.

Next, few public lands ranchers would be inclined to sell their base properties and get out of welfare ranching even if not making a profit on the public lands ranching portions of their operations. As mentioned, government reports reveal that public land provides an average of only about 1/3 of permittees' total livestock needs (and, yes, calves can be born and raised just as well, or better, on private land). As we also have seen, many permittees are not serious stock raisers but ranch instead for extra income, tax write-offs, "front" business, family tradition, status, hobby, etc.

Next, if they did sell out, why would public lands ranchers -- people who claim "a deep, abiding respect" for their land -- sell it to developers rather than to more responsible owners? As highly desirable as most ranch properties are, there would be no lack of environmentally concerned buyers, many who would pay a good price and take better care of the land than ranchers have.

Next, many public lands ranchers already have sold off their "excess" land (privately owned land in excess of minimum base properties required for public lands grazing permits) -- and not because they were "driven out of business." Consider how many Western ranching operations are named "_____ Land and Cattle Company." Most public lands ranchers either do not need all their private land to maintain ranching operations, do not need public lands grazing to maintain operations, use public lands ranching as a tax write-off or source of extra income, or are more or less independently wealthy. So, for most public lands ranchers, excess land is not necessary anyway. Cutting off their subsidies and artificial props would not induce them to sell off their excess land, much less their base properties.

Because ranching properties are among the most well-watered, fertile, and strategically located lands in the West, generally they command high prices. The private lands associated with public lands ranching are especially coveted since they are bordered or surrounded by public land and protected from nearby development, and often are located in spectacular natural settings. Many public lands ranchers realized their land's substantial financial potential long ago and sold off all land not essential to their ranching operations. Others have sold off bits and pieces over the years for various reasons. Sale of excess property is one of the main reasons that such a high percentage of public lands ranchers are so rich and powerful; many have become millionaires. Far from being the end result of hard times for public lands ranchers, sale of excess land has given them even greater economic, social, and political clout.

Unfortunately, much of this excess land *has* been sold to developers for housing developments, vacation cabins,

resorts, campgrounds, hunting camps, and so on (ironically, often resulting in conflicts over the grazing practices of the rancher who sold the land in the first place). However, a similar amount of excess land would have been sold regardless of the public lands ranching situation.

On the other hand, much of this land has ended up with better caretakers, environmentally speaking, than stockmen. Through purchase, trade, or special arrangement, cities, counties, states, and the federal government acquire it to protect watersheds, to halt flooding and soil erosion, for recreational purposes, and so on. Other land is protected as publicly owned nature preserves, reserves, refuges, parks, etc. Still other is acquired by private conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Wilderness Society, or by hunting and fishing groups, or by conservation-minded individuals. For various objectives, ranching usually has been curtailed or eliminated on these lands, with dramatic success in most cases.

Next, even if every public lands rancher in the West was suddenly "driven out of business" and forced to sell his permit, nearly all base properties eventually would be sold to other ranchers because base properties are necessary for public lands ranching operations, no matter who picks up the permit. Government agencies essentially mandate continued grazing on nearly every allotment; if one person doesn't graze it, another will. With endless subsidization, technical and working assistance, essentially permanent grazing tenure, prestige, and power all institutionalized as part of the grazing permit, there is no lack of ranchers wanting permits, even if a former permittee was not making it and decided to sell. Base properties and permits nearly always are sold together. Each new permittee needs a base property, which nearly always will turn out to be the existing base property. Ranchers want to headquarter their operations on suitable base properties, close to their grazing allotments. And because taxes on large properties for non-graziers are astronomical, few besides ranchers can afford or are inclined to buy them. Base properties remain nearly invariable in number and location. With our government bending over backward to keep stockmen in business, it would take a major shift in public lands policy to change this situation.

Lastly, even if public ranching were banned, undoubtedly most former permittees would retain base properties as the private ranches, vacation get-aways, and rural residences they are, while some would turn them into dude ranches, hunting camps, wilderness guide bases, and other business ventures. Why would they sell out these established, comfortable country estates simply because their livestock no longer obtained some portion of their diet from public land? As above, few permittees would have to or be inclined to. Of those comparatively few base properties that were sold, a similar percentage would end up under the protection of the conservation-minded entities mentioned above.

To protect base properties once public ranching was ended, there are many reasonable and feasible possibilities. These include special programs to assist former permittees with management, stringent zoning ordinances, redirection of welfare ranching subsidies, and restrictions on who former permittees could sell to. Probably the best solution is for the government to buy out all base properties and

return them to public ownership. This approach has proven successful with many National Parks and other public reserves.

But, ranching advocates warn, what about the fate of public lands themselves once livestock are removed? Wouldn't such removal create a "void" that could be filled only by some other kind of exploitation? Won't the government want to put the land to use? Won't the big strip mining companies, clearcut loggers, road builders, ORVers, and other environmental rapists come marching in?

The answer is a resounding "NO!" *These exploiters are already doing this* almost every place they can, and with the government's blessing. In fact, it is largely the huge network of ranching roads that allowed the exploiters access to nearly every nook and cranny of the West in the first place. The ranching industry conquered most of the Wild West and has been instrumental in its overdevelopment. Removing livestock from public land would simply mean no livestock or new range developments on the public's land -- less, not more, exploitation.

Ranchers decree that we must choose one or the other -- ranching or another form of exploitation. This is analogous to being given the option between having your mother raped or beaten up. But now we actually have both.

Aside from all of this, most development is due to overpopulation and rampant consumerism, rather than to the availability of land for building. Millions of acres of rural Western ranchland are available for sale and development right now, but only a small percentage of this land is actually being developed (other than for ranching). By far most rural Western real estate bought and sold is bought and sold among ranchers, who continue to own outright roughly 25% of the West. Availability of even more ranchland for sale will not cause substantially more development.

Unhappily, development of the rural West is a reality and probably will continue, with or without livestock. The choice is not between development and ranching, but between development *with* ranching and development *without* ranching. We only compound the destruction by supporting public lands ranching.

***RANCHING DOES NOT
PROTECT THE WEST.
RANCHING EXPLOITS
AND PROMOTES EXPLOITATION
OF THE WEST.***

- ***Without public lands ranching people would go hungry and the price of a hamburger would skyrocket.***

If you succeed [end public lands ranching], I hope you get the joy of paying \$15 a pound for a tough bull, like they do in China, which, by the way is where I wish people like you were.

--Bonnie Udall, Arizona public lands rancher's widow, personal correspondence

Suggesting that we start growing all beef on private lands, the average public [sic] would probably be paying \$25.00 for a hamburger.

--"A cattleman," Palm Springs, California, personal correspondence

I think people should realize that when they recommend a reduction [in livestock numbers on public lands], they are not reducing domestic livestock grazing, but they are reducing food supply for the world.

--J.W. Swan, First Vice-President, Idaho Cattlemen's Association (USDA, USDI, CEQ 1979)

They [cowmen] realize that cattle on public lands contribute nearly 50 percent of the beef cattle in the U.S. food chain.

--Mary Monzingo, ZR Hereford Ranch, Benson, Arizona, letter to editor, 3-10-88 *Arizona Daily Star*

Federally owned rangelands provide about 10% of the feed requirements of livestock in the United States.

--from **Range Management: Principles and Practices**, a textbook on contemporary range management (Holechek 1989)

... 18% of the [sic] U.S. beef is raised on public lands.

--Society for Range Management

Therefore, the grass forage of public grasslands needs to be continued [sic] for ruminant (primarily cattle and sheep) production to prevent worldwide famine.

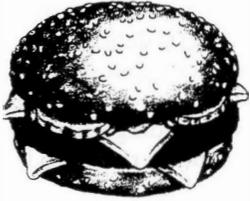
--Robert E. Miller, D.V.M., Johnstown, Colorado, in a letter to *Colorado Outdoors*

Most of the people who make these (dare I say *ridiculous*?) claims know that only 3% of this country's beef comes from all public lands. But they also realize that we are a gullible, cowboy-crazed society.

In truth, the amount of food produced by public lands ranching is insignificant to US food supply. More plant food could probably have been grown on private Western bottomland washed away by ranching-caused flooding than is now produced by public lands ranching. Far more cattle are raised on the 2 million private pasture acres in Vermont than on the 55 million public acres in Nevada (USDA 1987).

As for "feeding a hungry world" (where some 20 million people die of malnutrition each year), the minuscule amount of public lands-grazed meat exported to other nations does *nothing* to feed the hungry. Little if any of it winds up in the hands of those suffering from hunger or malnutrition. Poor people cannot afford expensive luxury items like imported beef. Most of it ends up in well-stocked refrigerators in wealthier nations such as Canada, Great Britain, and Japan. Moreover, the US accounts for only 2% of world beef exports, while importing almost 9 times this much. (The US produces only 9% of world beef, and far less than 1% of world sheep.) (Espenshade 1988)

Terminating public lands ranching would likewise have little effect on the price or availability of meat in the American supermarket. According to Brigham Young



University economist Ardon Pope, Mormon bishop and son of a ranching family, we could kick every cow off public land and at most the cost of beef might temporarily rise 2%. The nation's beef supply would be diminished almost imperceptibly. Rest assured -- McDonald's would not have to change its price list, and hamburgers would keep rolling off the grills by the billions.

Agriculture Department figures show that Americans now consume an average of about 100 pounds of beef per year (and 1.6 pounds of lamb and mutton) (USDA 1987). Just how much are we willing to pay for the 3 pounds of this provided by public lands ranching? Wild game animals and game birds already provide a larger amount, while non-commercial fishing provides even more. If livestock were removed, public land would provide much more wild fare. We could all just as well eat plant food instead of cow meat in a few meals each year.

Clearly, if one believes the claim of Nevada cattlemen that they are feeding the country and the world, then one would also believe that the President of the Nevada Cattlemen's Association can urinate in San Francisco Bay and raise the water level in Hong King Harbor.

--Don Molde, "The Western Livestock Industry -- Last Bastion of Free Enterprise or Heavily Subsidized Environmental Disaster?" (Molde 1984)



(Ginny Rosenberg)

● ***If we don't maintain public lands ranching, more tropical rainforest will be cut down to make up for the lost beef.***

Some well-meaning individuals -- often impelled by ranching industry misinformation -- boldly make this warning, thinking they are doing the world a favor. Invariably they fail to understand the destructiveness of public lands ranching, how little of this country's beef comes from public land, or the dynamics of beef imports and exports. Public lands ranchers have been using these misinformed people to promote their destructive business. Statistics belie their claim.

In historic times more than half of the world's tropical rainforest has been cleared, and roughly half of this area currently is used to graze livestock. Probably less than 10% of the world's total rainforest-area beef is exported and less than 5% of the world's exported beef comes from rainforest areas (Espenshade 1988). The US accounts for about 20% of the world's beef imports (Espenshade 1988); about 5% of the US beef supply is imported (US Dept. of Com. 1986); and roughly 10% of US beef imports are from rainforest areas (USDA 1987). Finally, again, only 3% of US beef comes from public land.

Since official statistics are lacking, from all this I have roughly estimated that about 0.5%, or 1/200, of all US beef is rainforest beef, and that the US uses about 2% of the world's tropical rainforest beef. Thus, indirectly the US uses roughly 1%, or 1/100, of the world's tropical rainforest area to produce beef. (Of course US beef import impact is greater on some rainforest areas than on others.)

Now, theoretically, if public lands ranching was banned the US could make up for this lost beef by importing 6 times as much rainforest beef -- in which case the US would use about 1/17 of the world's rainforest area to produce beef. In this scenario, we could "save" 1/17 of the world's tropical rainforests by saving public lands ranching.

In reality, this is a nearly impossible, worst-case scenario, and is based on faulty logic. If public lands beef was "lost" -- if there was a demand for that missing 3% -- why would we suddenly "make it up" with only rainforest beef? If increased beef imports were somehow necessary, why wouldn't 90% of it be imported from *non-rainforest* sources, as it currently is? Under this scenario, we could save 1/170 of the world's rainforests by saving public lands ranching.

But why couldn't we slightly increase grain belt, pasture, and/or feedlot beef production? Why couldn't the 3% loss be absorbed by the continuing reduction in US beef consumption? Why couldn't people eat a tiny bit more grain? Moreover, those cattlemen clearing the rainforest for ranching unfortunately have no lack of customers for their product and will continue to clear rainforest regardless of a 3% fluctuation in US demand for beef.

More importantly, the argument for supporting public lands ranching over rainforest ranching for environmental reasons is self-contradictory. Because it takes many times more land area per cow, Western public lands ranching is, *beef pound for beef pound*, easily as environmentally destructive as tropical rainforest-area ranching.

Livestock production is a primary cause of world tropical rainforest destruction, but the continuation or elimination

of US public lands ranching is such an infinitesimally small factor in that destruction that it is hardly worth the paper to write about it. The American ranching establishment's incessant campaign to get people to eat more beef probably has resulted in the destruction of more rainforest than has been "spared" through public lands ranching's beef "contribution."

If we can't meet the demand for beef within the United States, will the third world countries such as Brazil, be encouraged to speed up the deforestation of their rain forests to increase livestock production? The consequences of taking cows off public lands may be of greater detrimental significance to the environment of the nation and the planet then [sic] it appears.
--Public lands rancher James M. Jackson, *Natural Resources Journal* (Summer 1989)

In the United States, challenges to publicly subsidized grazing have not yet brought changes in policy, even though environmental damage rivals that of the Amazon rain forest.
--Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, "Grazing Our Way to Disaster" (Bloyd-Peshkin 1991)

● ***Meat is a natural food and essential to human health, so livestock grazing is essential.***

If we kick ranchers off the public lands, what are people going to eat? People need meat.
--Colorado public lands rancher

The presumption that heavy meat eating is natural and necessary to humans is one of the greatest fallacies of modern times, one the ranching establishment is only too happy to take advantage of. Now, hold on! Before you throw this book down in disgust, read this section through:

What we eat is a very personal matter. People are easily offended when you question what they put into their bodies. Personally, I find it offensive to be told that eating large amounts of beef is natural and healthy, that I should be doing it or supporting it. However, though I have been almost wholly plant-eating for more than 20 years, animal-eating does not bother me. I see nothing wrong with a hawk catching a rabbit and crushing its skull, then ripping its guts out and eating them. I watch with fascination. I've no problem with hungry people eating animals (hopefully not Endangered species); I occasionally do so myself. This is simply part of the wonderful instinct to survive. It is only natural to eat what is available when the body needs sustenance.

Nevertheless, both scientific study and common-sense observation reveal *Homo sapiens* as a slightly omnivorous plant-eater, not an omnivore. Our teeth, jaws, tongue, saliva, salivary glands, stomach, digestive juices, intestines, liver, urine, skin pores, and more are all those of a plant-eating animal. According to Harvey Diamond in *Fit for Life*, "There is not one anatomical faculty the human being has that would indicate that it is equipped for tearing, ripping, and rending flesh for consumption (Diamond 1985)." Look at your hands. They are perfectly evolved for picking fruits, berries, nuts, vegetables, and the like, not for ripping through tough hide into flesh, as are omnivores' claws. We

scarcely have what are inaccurately termed "canine" teeth, which all large truly omnivorous mammals have -- and even vegan (one who eats plant foods almost exclusively) gorillas have, for defense. With our extreme slowness, delicate skin, fragile bodies, and complete lack of natural weapons, we are not equipped to pursue, battle, and kill most wild animals for food (without the aid of technology, including primitive weapons -- a relatively recent development, as reflected by our very minimal subsequent physiological evolution toward omnivorism).

Well then, how about our psyche, our instinct? Don't we naturally crave meat? Naturally, no; socially and culturally, yes. How many of us, when hungry, upon seeing a rabbit have the overwhelming urge to jump on it and sink our teeth into its neck, bite into its underside and eat the heart, liver, other guts, and, lastly, the meat, then lap up the spilled blood, as would a truly omnivorous large mammal? Maybe if we were starving; otherwise we wouldn't eat it unless it was properly "prepared." We always cook our meat, usually smother it with sauces and spices, and commonly disguise it within other foods. (Some practices of some native peoples are a partial exception, but these were also relatively recent developments, anthropologically speaking.) In contrast, nearly all plant foods may be eaten natural and unadulterated. How many of us would pluck a ripe, juicy pear from a tree and eagerly sink our teeth into it?

The meat, dairy and egg industries tell us: Animal products constitute 2 of the "Basic 4" food groups. The meat, dairy and egg industries don't tell us: There were originally 12 official basic food groups, before these industries applied enormous political pressure on behalf of their products.

--John Robbins, *Diet for a New America* (Robbins 1987)

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, modern society clings blindly to its mandated assumption that we are omnivores. To preserve the myth, the livestock industry, US government, and food service industry spend *hundreds of millions* of dollars annually on advertising. (In comparison, the combined annual budget of the 7 major environmental organizations in the US is only \$125 million.) Consequently, today we believe eating excessive amounts of cow meat is not only natural and healthy, but even patriotic and exciting.

The National Livestock and Meat Board makes it a point to "reach the children of the land at an early age," and "prepare them for a lifetime of meat-eating."

--John Robbins, *Diet for a New America* (Robbins 1987)

Mary Ryan of the California Beef Council, outlined the work of the council promoting beef with advertising campaigns on television and magazines through the coming months. She said the council is now targeting unique areas including Hispanics, Asians, health care experts and fitness enthusiasts, food editors and the youth market.

--3-30-89 Santa Maria [CA] *Times*

The Beef Industry Council has the rights to the popular Gary Larson's cow cartoons from "The Far Side" collections. These cartoons are featured in special ads aimed to reach foodservice operators.

--Beef magazine, January 1987



Though US beef consumption fell from a high point of 127 pounds per capita in 1976 to 108 pounds per capita in 1986 (USDA 1987) (or from 81 pounds in 1974 to 64 pounds in 1989, when different criteria for what constitutes "beef consumption" are used), the livestock industry is mounting a multi-million dollar advertising campaign to convince people to eat more of it: "Beef -- Real Food for Real People." The campaign, launched by the Cattlemen's Board and Beef Industry Council in January 1987, spent \$29 million in the first 28 weeks alone for TV spots, print ads, and radio commercials. In 1991 the campaign continues in full swing.

On TV the ultra-masculine and brutally sincere James Garner advises us to eat more beef -- *real* food -- if we want to be real people and says you can't really trust those who don't. Sexy Cybill Shepard glamorizes the meat -- "People have a primal, instinctive craving for ham-burgers -- something hot and juicy," and recalls the Madison Avenue adage that you "sell the sizzle, not the steak." Shepard likewise states that she doesn't trust anyone who doesn't eat beef. She was later quoted as saying she hardly ever ate the

stuff herself, while Garner checked into a hospital for quintuple coronary artery bypass surgery. Then came model Kim Alexis -- who later admitted that she rarely ate beef. And then Jeff Juliano, the man who played the part of the original Ronald McDonald, was revealed to be vegetarian.

The cow meat pushers were further embarrassed when it was discovered that the handsome, blond cowboy holding an American flag pictured on their promotion posters in supermarkets across America was taken directly from a Hitler Youth poster from World War II Germany. The Nazi youth was given a hat and chaps, his shirt color changed, the swastika on his tie transformed into a longhorn, and his swastika flag substituted with the stars and stripes.

In recent years America's long-time "King of Meats" has been taking a beating. For reasons not understood by cattlemen, beef suddenly has become the whipping boy for food faddists, diet book authors -- and even some scientists and nutritionists.
--from a promotional pamphlet by the National Cattlemen's Association

While vested interests proclaim cow meat to be "nutrition you can sink your teeth into," scientific studies consistently show that it causes untold death and suffering. Documented by Pulitzer Prize nominee John Robbins in *Diet for a New America*, daily consumption of animal products (mainly beef in the US):

- increases the risk of heart disease -- the most common cause of death in the US -- by more than 300%
- causes high rates of colon cancer -- the most common life-threatening cancer in the US
- increases the risk of breast cancer by nearly 400%
- increases the rate of fatal prostate cancer 3.6 times
- roughly doubles the risk of osteoporosis (weak bones and teeth; 20 million Americans have this disease)



A New Mexico public lands ranch. As always, note the fenceline contrast.



- significantly contributes to the incidence of strokes; pancreatic, stomach, endometrial, cervical, ovarian, and even lung cancer; sterility; multiple sclerosis; salmonellosis (a bacterial disease, with over 4 million known cases a year in the US); trichinosis (worms, mostly from pork); kidney stones; kidney disease; peptic ulcers; hiatal hernias; gallstones; diverticulosis; irritable colon syndrome; hypoglycemia and diabetes; hypertension; asthma; arthritis; hemorrhoids; constipation; and obesity
- increases the amount of pesticides in mothers' milk 35 times
- is the source of 55% of pesticide residues in the US diet (DDT, malathion, parathion, aldrin, kepone, dieldrin, chlordane, heptachlor, endrin, mirex, PCBs, PBBs, toxaphene, lindane, etc.). (USDA tests less than 1 of 250,000 slaughtered animals for toxics, and for only 10% of chemicals known to be present in the US meat supply.)

Robbins writes, "Thousands of impeccably conducted modern research studies now reveal traditional assumptions regarding our need for meats, dairy products and eggs have been in error (Robbins 1987)."

Each year 1.5 million Americans are crippled or killed prematurely by heart failure, stroke, cancer, and other "killer" diseases that have been linked conclusively with the consumption of animal products . . . Yet, the USDA actually encourages the consumption of animal products by promoting the "four basic food groups," which suggests that one-half of our dietary calories should come from meat and dairy products.

--Alex Hershaft, president, Farm Animal Reform Movement

Cow meat averages 25%-36% fat (much of it saturated fat) compared to 3%-4% for wild animals; 70%-80% of saturated fat eaten by Americans comes from animal products. Beef's cholesterol content is very high; virtually all of the cholesterol eaten by Americans comes from animal products. Beef



(Roger Candee)

has virtually no fiber. It is difficult for humans to digest properly, which hampers extraction of its nutrients. It putrefies in our intestines -- which are long and designed for plant eating -- producing various toxins not produced by decaying plant matter, taking an average of 4 days to make the digestive journey rather than a day and a half as for plant foods. Cow meat is devoid of carbohydrates, the most readily usable source of energy, contains very little calcium, and has only fair vitamin content. It contains harmful added nitrates and hormones. (Partly because of this, thousands of young American boys and girls, some of them barely out of diapers, have grown large breasts, sprouted pubic hair, etc.) The residues from pesticides, hormones, growth stimulants, insecticides, tranquilizers, radioactive isotopes, herbicides, antibiotics, appetite stimulants, and larvicides found in beef batter our immune systems, damage our gene pool, and cause birth defects, sterility, and neurological disorders. Beef usually is processed, adulterated in various ways, and, by the time it reaches the supermarket shelf, partially decomposed. (Generally animal matter decomposes into harmful substances much more quickly than does plant material.)

Does this sound like a natural food for humans? If we were omnivores would a diet containing even 25% meat create these health problems? Are our bodies trying to tell us something?

Despite mass production and endless subsidization, cow also even costs more than most foods of comparable nutritional value -- and far more than the retail price indicates if public and private subsidization are included.

At your next cookout amaze your hosts and throw that T-bone to the dog. Better yet, eat the dog.

--Ecologist B. Don Schwarzenegger

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But how can the human body get enough protein without animal foods?! Ghastly images of protein-starved, Third World stick figures haunt our memories. It has been said, only partly in jest, that only our fear of death itself rivals our fear of protein deficiency.

Well, how does the vegan gorilla get protein? How did we vegan hominids get it for 12 million years? The amount of calories as protein in human milk is 5%; nutritionists consider this is the optimum amount of calories as protein for humans. Many plant foods compare with (and some exceed) meat in protein content, and most contain sufficient protein. Rice has 5%, wheat 15%, and broccoli 45%. Even carrots have 10% of calories as protein. With a plant food diet, even containing no animal products, it is virtually impossible *not* to get enough protein in one's diet!

Also according to nutritionists, the average American's 106-gram daily protein intake is already almost twice the US government's average recommended daily allowance (RDA) of 54 grams. RDAs have a built-in safety margin of almost twice the actual need, which means the average American gets *between 3 and 4 times* more protein than the body wants. (Diamond 1985) According to a USDA survey, even the average American vegetarian consumes 150% as much protein as the RDA, or *between 2 and 3 times* more than the optimum amount for good health.

According to *The Times Atlas of the World*, people in the US and Canada eat *more* animal protein and *less* plant protein than any other region on Earth. These 2 countries derive well over 2/3 of their protein from animal foods, while the rest of the world derives well over 2/3 of its protein from plant foods. In other words, rather than being the basis of good health, America's extremely high-meat, high-protein diet is a major reason it has the world's highest rates of heart disease, digestive tract problems, and various cancers. No, the world's starving masses are not dying simply from protein deficiency, but from deficiencies in calories and carbohydrates and minerals and vitamins and fiber and every other nutritional component.

This isn't to say that people in the world's poorer regions wouldn't eat more meat if they could. Like the "great" wealthy cultures they strive to emulate, Third World cultures have come to measure "progress" by the amount of meat they can afford. Meat is a status symbol, to both the individual and the society. We believe the more meat in the pot, the better off we are.

But don't we need "complete" protein to build strong, healthy bodies? Yes. Haven't we been taught for decades that "complete" protein can be obtained only from animal products? Yes, but merely thinking something for a long time doesn't make it true.

Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. Our bodies manufacture perhaps 16 of the 25 (so far known to science) amino acids needed to make protein. But nine of them, called essential amino acids, must come directly from food. The human body digests food protein, splits it into its component amino acids, and from these constructs the protein it needs. We easily obtain the 9 amino acids needed to manufacture complete protein from a plant food diet, as we have for millions of years. The current assumption that humans require "complete" protein available only from the bodies of animals is based mostly on research on lab rats in the 1940s. (Akers 1983)

To be turned into usable protein in our bodies, these 9 amino acids need not be ingested in the so-called "proper combination," a "complete protein" combination found only as animal protein or a complicated combination of plant foods, as popularized in Frances Moore Lappe's vegetarian best-seller, *Diet for a Small Planet*. Both meat and some plant foods contain all 9 amino acids. Moreover, the human body *stores* amino acids in the blood -- in an "amino acid pool" -- and doles them out in the proper amounts when needed. As long as all 9 are replenished regularly, from whatever sources, they will be readily available for the manufacture of protein. Any natural, varied plant food diet easily provides all 9. And in an emergency the body can extract amino acids from cells and redistribute them where needed. Lappe now maintains that she was mistaken: protein combining is unnecessary, a notion with which a growing number of experts agree. Further, many amino acids in meat are destroyed when meat is cooked, as it nearly always is by humans (and for good reason should be).

In *A Vegetarian Sourcebook*, Keith Akers writes: "It is almost impossible to avoid getting enough protein on almost any calorically adequate diet" (Akers 1983). Nathan Pritikin, considered by many the foremost expert on nutrition in recent years, similarly observed:

Vegetarians always ask about getting enough protein. But I don't know any nutrition expert that can plan a diet of natural foods resulting in a protein deficiency, so long as you're not deficient in calories. You need only six percent of total calories in protein . . . and it's practically impossible to get below nine percent in ordinary diets.

Then what about the mysterious, magic vitamin B12? Won't we perish without it? Isn't it found naturally only in animal foods, and isn't this proof positive that we humans are naturally omnivorous?

Even most vegans believe this one. (Then again, for more than a century much of the world considered chocolate a potent aphrodisiac.) Vegan gorillas need B12 too. Where do they get theirs? And cows? In the healthy individual, the stomach secretes a substance called "intrinsic factor," which makes available to the body the B12 created by the bacterial flora in the large intestine (similar to the way our bodies manufacture vitamins B1 and B6). For many years it was blindly presumed that the human body did not independently produce B12 in this manner or, that if it did, this B12 could not be utilized (inexplicably, making humans the only vegan animal on Earth that produced B12 but could not utilize body-produced B12). Recent studies by Dr. Keiichi Morishita and others indicate that the human body does indeed manufacture B12, and that it is absorbed and utilized. This body-produced B12 is the same as that produced in the bodies of other vegan animals, and, as it has been for millions of years, is wholly adequate for our needs. Vitamin B12 is also found in many plant foods, though in minute amounts.

An extremely rare disease called pernicious anemia results from B12 deficiency. According to John Robbins, however:

. . . the only instances of pernicious anemia known in the medical literature have resulted from an extremely rare metabolic dysfunction which causes an inability to metabolize the vitamin. There are no cases on record of pernicious anemia resulting from a pure vegetarian diet. (Robbins 1987)

The *Times Atlas of the World* shows that although the US and Canada rank third highest out of 8 world regions in the number of calories consumed by humans daily, these 2 heavy meat eating countries expend many times more energy in the form of non-renewable resources to produce a meat food calorie (even a range-grazed meat food calorie) than the rest of the world does to produce a plant food calorie. In fact, a detailed 1978 study by the US Departments of Interior and Commerce ("Raw Materials in the United States Economy, 1900- 1977, Technical Paper 47") revealed that the production of meat, dairy products, and eggs accounts for about 1/3 of all raw materials used for any purpose in the United States! If we ate plant foods instead, only about 1/50 of our raw materials consumed would be for food production. (Robbins 1990)

Similarly, economists Robin Hur and David Fields estimate that if the US switched from a meat- to plant-centered diet, "A typical household of three could expect to save \$4,000 a year in the short run. . . . Savings on health care alone could be expected to reach \$100 billion within five years." (Robbins 1990)

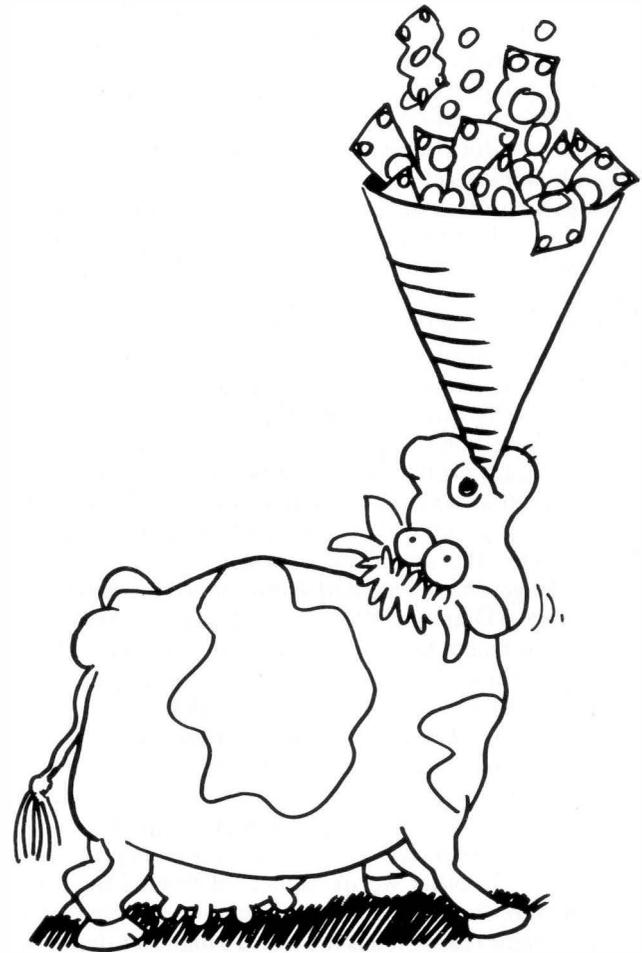
America's extremely high meat intake *does* reflect our great wealth. But rather than contributing to our being "well-fed," it detracts greatly from our overall food potential, as well as wasting money and resources and causing tremendous environmental harm.

Food calories produced per calorie of fossil fuel energy input

Corn (Mexico)	83.33
Sorghum (The Sudan)	38.46
Rice (The Philippines)	9.50
Wheat (India)	9.06
Oats (US)	2.47
Potatoes (US)	2.18
Corn (US)	1.80
Wheat (US)	1.71
Soybeans (US)	1.45
Rice (US)	1.25
<i>Beef (rangeland, US)</i>	.28
Eggs (US)	.25
<i>Lamb (rangeland, US)</i>	.16
Milk (US)	.14
Broilers (US)	.07
Catfish (US)	.04
<i>Beef (feedlot*, US)</i>	.03

* Remember, nearly all public lands cattle eventually go to feedlots.

(Source: Akers 1983)



(Greg Pentkowski)

Likewise, Keith Akers reports that studies show no correlation between vegan diet and B12 deficiency, or any other serious health problem (Akers 1983).

From within or without, the healthy human body requires only about 0.1 microgram (*one ten millionth of a gram*) of B12 daily. Most commercial vitamin B12 supplements supply 10,000 times or more this amount per dose. The body conserves B12 and can store enough of it to last 5 years or longer. In other words, theoretically, if a strict vegan consumed 1 vitamin B12 tablet, B12 from that tablet could be stored and used by the body for *years*. Additionally, when B12 passes from the body in bile salts, it can be reabsorbed through the intestinal wall (and perhaps elsewhere) and recycled, so that very little of it actually leaves the body. Animal foods do contain vastly greater amounts of vitamin B12 than do plant foods, but this is of no importance since our bodies independently manufacture and store what we need.

In fact, meat consumption *hampers* the body's production of intrinsic factor and thus the absorption of B12. So, heavy meat eaters, especially those who drink alcohol to excess (and, for biochemical/physiological and even psychological reasons, the two often occur together), are actually more likely to develop the dreaded B12 shortage than vegans. Not that some vegans don't develop vitamin B12 deficiency, and many other nutritional problems. Just

that, like so many in our modern society, their deficiencies are not caused by a vegan diet, but by an overall *lousy* diet.

But isn't animal flesh the iron-rich food; don't we need it to get enough of this essential mineral? Then why is iron-deficiency anemia the most common nutrient deficiency in the US -- a nation of meat gluttons? Other factors are involved, but once again, a meat-centered diet may block the body's absorption and use of iron.

Thiamin, niacin, B6, vitamin C, phosphorus, fiber, calcium, fat, calories? Whatever nutritional component in question will be supplied more properly by a vegan than meat-centered diet.

Well then, isn't it true that, unlike wimpy plant foods, meat gives one strength and endurance? To build a hard, meaty body, doesn't it make sense to eat a lot of meat? (Many advertisers even subtly imply that it will make a man's penis grow larger and firmer -- and stay hard longer during sex.) Doesn't the fuel from plant food just "burn off" quickly, whereas that from meat is (as advertised) potent, long-lasting energy? *Isn't meat a power food?*

How many millions of misguided, macho muscle men, believing these myths, make meat their main course at every meal? Because beefy, brawny types are the most likely to believe it in the first place, the myth may seem to be true. But don't they wonder how the buffalo can produce a half-ton of hard muscle from blades of grass? Or how the grass-eating horse can run for hours at high speed? Or how the gorilla, perhaps the strongest large animal for its size on Earth, can build its amazing physique from leaves, stalks, fruit, and other plant foods almost exclusively? Or how many of the world's top athletes can be vegetarian?

Sure, you can become big and bulky with a fatty, hormone-infested, meat-centered diet, especially if you pump iron 3 times a week. And as a placebo meat can do amazing things. But it is no more of a power- and body-building source than plant foods containing equivalent nutrients. (Indeed, much evidence suggests the opposite.) Nutrients, from whatever source, are nutrients. Health, strength, and endurance (and sexual proficiency) come not from gobbling down meat, but from natural eating and natural living.

All this leads into one of the most sensitive subjects -- the psychology of traditional, heavy meat eating. It would take more pages to begin to explore this issue than we can afford here, but because it is so important to understanding why we support the ranching industry, I will consider it briefly.

First and foremost, *culture more than anything dictates individual reality*. When a certain behavior has for centuries been an integrated component of the cultural whole, it is extremely difficult for the individual to realize the extent to which that culture has evolved to reinforce belief in that custom in each individual psyche. Cultural beliefs tend to be self-perpetuating entities over which the human participants have little objective control.

For example, up until early this century American women were supposed to wear dresses, never pants. Of course, there was no significant physical reason why women could not have worn pants (or that men could not have worn dresses, for that matter), but the prevailing reality was "Women wear dresses." To men and women alike, it was almost beyond belief that women would want to wear pants. A woman who did was likely to be scorned as homosexual or crazy. Conversely, because of this mandated reality via

social pressure, few other than homosexual and crazy women could conceive of wearing or would want to wear pants, *thereby reinforcing the common cultural reality*.

Today, we think ourselves an advanced, enlightened culture. Yet to be considered more attractive our women remove their natural body hair and cover their faces with colored substances; to gain acceptance our men tie slender pieces of cloth around their necks; our doctors slap newborns and put them in plastic boxes (then cut the foreskin off the males' penises!); our priests drop magic water on babies' heads to ward off the Devil; and most of our people think that our political unit, the USA, is inherently -- and even spiritually -- superior to all others on Earth. Most of our people consider these behaviors and beliefs not cultural manifestations but "reality" itself. The point is, we were born into this predetermined "reality" with little ability or desire to objectively comprehend it, much less formulate an alternative and live it out within the context of the prevailing culture.

So it is with omnivorism. Our cultural reality dictates that "Humans are omnivores." This preordained reality never was based on facts, but on its own continuance over the centuries. We were raised to accept, not to question, those beliefs.

Each member of society tends to embrace his or her traditional, assigned role in the cultural whole. Therefore, the popular vegetarian stereotype -- pale and skinny, impotent, timid, a little queer, a "bleeding heart" who is "afraid to kill an animal" -- often is quite accurate. These individuals in turn reaffirm society's prevailing conviction that vegetarianism does indeed diminish health and that it is practiced by "inferior" persons.

Hence, the beef industry's new slogan: "*Real* food for *real* people." It wasn't designed to *convince* people that beef is more real than plant foods or that beef-eaters are more real than plant-eaters, but to *preserve* our culture's long-standing myth. Though only 3% of US citizens thus far have adopted a plant food diet, this vegetarian trend already represents the loss of billions of dollars to the livestock industry. The slogan is a clever, though desperate, attempt to stave off growing awareness that meat actually is *not* a very real food for humans after all.

Despite centuries of ignorance, mythology, and prejudice, despite unceasing commercial persuasion, and despite the stigma of the stereotypical wimpy vegetarian, the movement toward a more natural plant-centered diet continues to grow. Realizing that their culture lost touch with what is natural long ago, more people are trying to reestablish it in their own lives. They try to minimize society's many pressures to feel inferior or somehow less real for not eating large amounts of meat, and they find they don't need meat at all to be healthy, strong, and real.

The world's longest-lived peoples are the Vilcabambas of Ecuador's Andes, the Abkhasians near the USSR's Black Sea, and the Hunzas of Northern Pakistan's Himalayas. Researchers report that all 3 are totally vegetarian or close to it. "But what about the Eskimos?" every good skeptic must ask. They seem(ed) to thrive on nothing but fish, seal, walrus, and whale (though not beef). By necessity, the indigenous peoples of extremely cold climates are the most meat-oriented on Earth, though they do eat some plant foods. Extreme cold does seem to make the human body

much more amenable to a fatty, meat-centered diet. After thousands of years, these peoples have even begun to show physiological changes toward carnivorism. Still, even they remain overwhelmingly vegan in body. It is speculated that being the world's greatest consumers of animal flesh is a major reason the Eskimos, Laplanders, Greenlanders, and Russian Kurgi have the world's lowest average life expectancies, often only about 30 years (Robbins 1987).

[Note: Much of the following discussion on early human diet (and of the rise of pastoralism in the following section) may also be speculative -- though no more so than prevailing theories. Substantial and mounting evidence suggests that it is correct. For many reasons, traditional scientific study has provided us a very misleading picture of certain aspects of early humans.]

The Eskimos are the extreme. Relatively few ancestral human groups (or even existing primitive tribes) derived more than a minor portion of their food from animal sources. Contrary to our popular image, the great majority were not hunters or hunter-gatherers but *gatherers or gatherer-hunters*, subsisting primarily on fruits, berries, leafy greens, vegetables, herbs, nuts, tubers, grains, seeds, honey, and such. As related by Riane Eisler in her important work, *The Chalice and the Blade*, scientific evidence suggests that, "meat eating formed only a minuscule part of the diet of ancestral primates, hominids, and early humans." Dr. Oliver Alabaster, director of the Institute for Disease Prevention at George Washington University, concurs:

Fruits, nuts, cereal, and vegetation were the basis of the human diet over the millennia. Our modern diet is really an anathema to our whole historical evolution.

During earlier hominid history, we were even less likely to eat animals, as reported by the eminent anthropologist Dr. Alan Walker in his studies of fossilized teeth:

No exceptions have been found. Every tooth examined from the hominids of the 12 million-year period leading up to Homo erectus appeared to be that of a fruit eater.

When relatively recently hominids overpopulated their natural habitat in the well-vegetated tropics* and many were forced out into colder and dryer regions where hominid plant foods were less abundant, they were forced to kill animals for food, clothing, and shelter. During subsequent ice ages, they came to rely even more heavily upon animals for survival. When local game animals were depleted, they invaded new lands or began domesticating and raising livestock. Thus did those who would shape recent human history become habituated to heavy meat eating.

* Those hominids remaining in the tropics eventually also depleted their habitat and for other reasons came to rely more heavily on animal foods, but this is another story. Native Americans, also habituated to excessive meat consumption, are descended from heavy meat eating peoples who had lived in the cold regions of Asia for millennia and gradually worked their way across the Bearing Strait perhaps 40,000 years ago.

Leaving its natural habitat in the tropics was perhaps the most hazardous step ever taken by the human-like animal. To survive, *Homo erectus* has from that point on been forced to adopt unnatural and harmful ways of living, and to greatly alter its surroundings to provide for its needs as an inherently tropical, plant-eating animal.

Our popular vision of our "lowly" human ancestors -- cowering in caves; cold, hungry, filthy, and disease-ridden; clothed with ill-fitting animal skins; venturing out into the cruel world only to hunt game or club each other over the head; surviving on greasy mastodon parts -- is probably the antithesis of most early humans.

All this has broad implications as to the alleged "naturalness" of many traits we traditionally have been conditioned to believe inherent-

ly human, including omnivorism, hunting . . . clothing, housing . . . warfare, science, technology, and the whole shebang. But this is another book . . .

In recent millennia, as these powerful, war-like pastoral tribes and the dominating cultures and colonial empires from which they grew spread their influence around the globe, meat eating became symbolic of status, wealth, and power. Lack of meat came to be seen as a sign of poverty, weakness, and general inferiority.

We are primates, and primates are all vegetarians with only rare meat consumption by certain species. All the protein, minerals, and vitamins the human body needs are easily obtained from plant sources. The taste for meats and other fatty foods is like a substance abuse to which we are addicted early in life.

--Dr. Neal Barnard, President, 30,000-member Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

With this history, heavy meat eating in contemporary times has become a psychological need for most of the Earth's people. *As we have drawn further away from the natural world, what we eat has become increasingly arbitrary -- based on social and cultural considerations, not instinct and bodily function.* William J. Mayo, founder of the Mayo Clinic, in an address to the American College of Surgeons states, "Meat-eating has increased 400% in the last 100 years." (America's beef consumption has likewise grown along with its cowboy obsession, and now, according to the editors of Consumer Reports, "The United States, with less than one-twentieth of the planet's people, consumes one-fourth of the planet's beef.") In our modern, competitive world, meat eating has become so strongly associated with accepted values that it is a rare individual who dares step outside cultural norms and even suggest that we are not omnivores.

Still, more and more people continue to shed their culturally installed preconceptions in favor of common sense, as scientific evidence that humans are naturally vegan continues to accumulate. As mentioned, literally thousands of studies already suggest as much, but now findings from the most comprehensive study of the issue yet conducted strongly reinforce the concept. In 1983 Cornell University researchers, aided by Chinese scientists, began a continuing study of the dietary habits of thousands of Chinese and comparing them to those of Americans. Among their recently released findings:

- Chinese get more than enough protein; Chinese consume 1/3 less protein than Americans, but only 7% of their protein comes from animal sources compared to 70% for Americans.
- Consumption of animal protein itself significantly raises the incidence of heart disease and cancer.
- Fat intake should account for 10%-15% of caloric intake, rather than the 30% or more commonly ingested by meat-centered Americans (interestingly, the average American's body is 15%-30% fat, compared to the optimum 10%-15%).
- Chinese consume 20% more calories than Americans, but Americans are 25% fatter (no, the Chinese are not starving, as for 50 years we have been indoctrinated to believe).

- Cholesterol counts for Chinese ranged from 88 to 165 milligrams per 100 milliliters of blood, compared to 155 to 274 milligrams for Americans.
- The average Chinese adult with her/his heavily vegetarian diet consumes twice as much iron as does the average American.
- Chinese get plenty of calcium and have lower rates of osteoporosis than American animal product eaters.
- Chinese ingest 3 times more dietary fiber than Americans, nearly twice as many vegetables, 4 times as much grain, 1/11 as much sugar, 1/5 as much fats and oils, 1/4 as much meat, and 1/88 as much cow milk product.

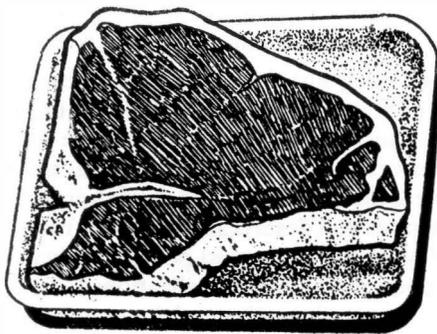
The director of the study, Cornell University nutritional biochemist T. Colin Campbell, maintains that only in the last few thousand years have meat and animal products become prevalent in the human diet: "That's not nearly enough time to evolve new mechanisms to give us protection from those kinds of foods. . . . Animal foods, in general, are not really helpful and we need to get away from eating them." Campbell is writing a book on the reasons why recent humans have begun eating so much meat, and the preliminary findings of the study were recently published as a 900-page monograph. (*Arizona Daily Star* 1990) After studying the diets and health histories of 88,751 female nurses, Dr. Walter Willet of the Brigham and Woman's Hospital in Boston concluded, "The optimum amount of red meat you eat should be zero."

Baboons, raccoons, opossums, chickens, and peccaries are omnivorous. Orang-utans, chimpanzees, gibbons, gorillas, (our 4 closest relatives) and humans are all vegan or nearly so.

We humans are "omnivorous" in that we can extract some nutrients from most things organic, be they oranges, animal parts, or grass clippings. Similarly, wolves are "omnivorous" in that they can extract nutrients from oranges, animal parts, or grass clippings. Nevertheless, neither humans nor wolves are true omnivores. Throughout prehistory, we have eaten animals in time of need and lightly supplemented our normal diet with animals, especially those easily caught such as insects, shellfish, and certain reptiles and amphibians. Eating meat occasionally is natural to humans, but eating large amounts routinely is not. To me, what is natural is what is best (though often this "rule" must be compromised in an increasingly unnatural world).

Unfortunately, people generally perceive and do what their culture dictates, despite any evidence to the contrary. Our modern circumstance decrees that we are omnivores,

and our thoughts and actions are compelled by this imperial edict. We become frightened and reactionary when our very reality develops cracks. So now, throw this book down in disgust if you must.



To conclude, it is untrue that eating animal flesh is essential to human health. For example, my 2 sons, 13 and 15, have eaten meat only several times in their lives and are in excellent health. Likewise, it is untrue that a diet containing more than a small percentage of meat is natural to the human animal. Livestock grazing is thus not justified on the basis of nutritional need.

Tell me, do you ever wonder where that wonderful prime rib and succulent T-bone steak came from? . . . As you sit at your tidy table some evening in the future and feast on a paaty of vegetable protein and sea weed, you can contemplate on whatever happened to that good old beef steak! Long live the rancher and his cows!

--Nancy E. Brown, letter to the editor, 1-30-90 *Red Rock News*, Sedona, Arizona



(SCS, USDA)

● *God put the land here for ranching.*

Regardless of one's convictions as to how we all got here, the fact remains that man and cattle are a part of the scheme of things, just as are other mammals, reptiles, birds, and all the rest.

--Public lands rancher's widow Peggy Monzingo, in a letter to a local newspaper

Mary Vass, another long-time public lands rancher (or, "rancher's wife," as she prefers) in Wyoming, once told me:

I believe grass was put here by the Good Lord for us to raise livestock. If you don't graze this public lands grass, what are you going to do with it?

When I answered, "Not much; I'd leave it mostly for wild animals and the rest of Nature," she responded, "Now, what are you going to *do* with all those wild animals?"

Mrs. Vass's words represent much more than she might imagine. Her conviction is shared by today's public lands ranchers in particular and the Western ranching community in general. It is echoed by the men who "conquered" the West and continue to exploit it for short-term personal gain, men who consider the land little more than a collection of resources put here by "God" for competitive human use (which even if true would still not justify such short-sighted exploitation). It is seen in Western Manifest Destiny -- the subjugation of Native Americans; the bloody range wars;

social, economic, and political ascendancy; and the relentless war against "the wilderness." And it is reflected by our modern culture more than we might imagine or care to acknowledge.

Mrs. Vass, in her seemingly unassuming way, reflects a belief system, an ideology that sees humanity above and apart from Nature and evolution as a divinely preordained, linear progression toward ever-increasing human dominance. The roots of her words go far into prehistory. Indeed, the taproot from which Mrs. Vass's worldview grew likely had its seed in the rise of aggressive, warlike pastoral tribes in the "Old World" thousands of years ago.

From their beginnings perhaps 12 million years ago, most hominids lived in unitary coexistence with Nature. As *Homo sapiens* evolved, its unique intelligence made it a very successful species, and it thus eventually overpopulated its natural habitat in the tropics ("overpopulated" meaning exceeding natural limits). Other species would have been confined by various environmental factors, but humans pushed into less favorable habitats and survived by using fire, making clothing, and building increasingly more efficient shelters -- by (temporarily) outwitting Nature. Most settled into the more benign, productive portions of their new world, where eventually they developed civilizations based on farming -- a human invention that began roughly 10,000 years ago to produce food in overpopulated habitat and areas where humans were not native.

But continuing overpopulation there and in the tropics caused other peoples to be cast into the less productive hinterlands, where even greater changes in their cultures took place. There, struggling merely to survive, they gradually came to view Nature as an enemy -- to be thwarted or conquered -- rather than as the benevolent companion it generally had always been. Because plant foods were much less abundant, these peoples necessarily changed from a plant- to animal-centered diet and developed weapons and skills needed to hunt large prey. Because hunting gained immense importance and men -- generally faster and stronger than women and not encumbered by bearing and nursing infants -- became the hunters, the cooperative social systems these peoples had in the tropics gradually evolved into authoritarian patriarchies. The most aggressive and successful males became dominant chieftains. Women were cast into a subordinate role, along with children, animals, and Nature in general (see Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*).

To stay with the roaming and migratory animals they came to depend on, these peoples necessarily developed highly nomadic lifestyles. As they became more efficient hunters, they often depleted local food animals and had to move into new areas to find enough to eat. When these new territories were already occupied by other hunting bands, conflict erupted. The bands with the best hunting weapons and skills usually won.

With this new, aggressive competition developing, communication broke down, leading hunting groups to increasingly distrust one another. Accordingly, trade also broke down, leading them to rely increasingly on pillage rather than exchange to replenish their diminishing resources. As time went on, these bands learned that in order to survive they needed to improve their fighting skills as much or more than their hunting skills. They modified their hunting

weapons for use against humans. Gradually, they evolved from nomadic hunting bands into savage, pirate-like warrior-tribes.

Some eventually perceived greater efficiency and dependability in domesticating and grazing wild sheep, goats, and cattle, and became nomadic and semi-nomadic herders. This rise of animal husbandry gave them a feeling of control over their environment, further alienating them from Nature and worsening their aggressive tendencies. The larger, more dependable food supplies provided by pastoralism gave them an even greater ability to wage war against their neighbors. The ability to derive sustenance from wild game or livestock anywhere the animals could forage or browse provided them mobility and prolonged access to nearly any area they desired. Subsequent domestication of the horse gave them even greater mobility and power to overcome their enemies.

When they overgrazed their land, the warlike pastoralists drove their livestock into neighboring territories and battled for dominance. They killed their competitors, took "their" women into slavery, looted and destroyed property, and added the stock to their herds. Appropriating the losers' resources, the victors increased their power exponentially. Meanwhile, hunting declined almost completely before the onslaught and overgrazing of the powerful pastoralists. Now a man was judged by the number of livestock he possessed, as he still is today in many parts of the world, including the American West. Indeed, archaeologist Marija Gimbutas' description of one of these pastoral warrior-cultures bears striking resemblance to the male-dominated ranching subculture of today's rural West:

The Kurgan system was composed of patrilineal, socially stratified, herding units which lived in small villages or seasonal settlements while grazing their animals over vast areas.

Gimbutas relates that the Kurgan "exalted virile, heroic warrior gods" [macho, gun-toting cowboy heros] and "glorified the lethal power of the sharp blade" [6-shooter]. This phallic symbolism and the power structures it enforces have been passed down through subsequent dominator societies and live on today in rural Western America.

Meanwhile, as these pastoral warrior-tribes expanded their domains they began to encroach upon the settled, generally more peaceful agrarian civilizations. In *The Chalice and the Blade*, Riane Eisler describes this early threat:

At first it was like the proverbial biblical cloud "no bigger than a man's hand" -- the activities of seemingly insignificant nomadic bands roaming the less desirable fringe areas of our globe seeking grass for their herds. Over the millennia they were apparently out there in the harsh, unwanted, colder, sparser territories on the edges of the earth . . . (Eisler 1987)

However, as their growing lust for power led to ever-greater conquests, their influence on these agrarian cultures became profound. The most ruthless and violent were the most efficient conquerors, amassing great wealth and power. Among these were the well-known "barbaric hordes" that swept out of the steppes and deserts and across Eurasia beginning around 7000 years ago. The most powerful began directly attacking the bountiful agrarian civilizations. Eisler describes "increasingly massive incursions of the extremely mobile, warlike, hierarchic, and male-dominated pastoralist

peoples" (Eisler 1987). W.C. Lowdermilk, in *Conquest of the Land though 7,000 Years*, repeatedly describes the conflict between pastoral peoples and agrarian peoples:

Invasions of nomads out of the grasslands and desert From time to time they have swept down into the plain to bring devastation and destruction upon the farming and city peoples of the plains. Such was the beginning of the Cain and Abel struggle between the shepherd and the farmer. (Lowdermilk 1975)

To make a long story short, eventually even the most peaceable of the agrarian cultures were either conquered or forced to adopt war-oriented postures to defend themselves. (See, for example, Andrew Schmookler's *Parable of the Tribes*.) The influence of aggressive pastoral hordes thus wholly redirected prevailing human culture. A new system, based on the power to dominate rather than cooperate, emerged and was spread through Europe, most of Asia, eventually North America and all other areas colonized by Europeans and Euro-Americans. (The Roman Empire, for example, was largely an outgrowth of this new system, and a main reason Rome invaded northern Europe was because it had seriously depleted the Mediterranean region with overgrazing livestock and deforestation for livestock.) The new dominant paradigm placed one religion over all others, man over woman, the powerful over the weak, the upper class over the lower classes, people over animals, and humanity over Nature. This worldview has been passed down through many empires, kingdoms, and nation-states, and is still with us. In modern America, it is perhaps best represented by the religious intolerance, machismo, environmental plunder, entrenched social and economic hierarchies, and domineering political power of the Western ranching establishment. Only in recent decades have we begun to question this predominant worldview.

[A footnote: Humans' new-found ability to use animals for food allowed them access to virtually every portion of the planet's land (and even water) surface. This allowed *Homo sapiens* to occupy -- and denigrate -- non-human habitat throughout most of the world -- habitat not suited to and easily damaged by the exotic, overwhelming human species.]

Thus was our "fall from grace" precipitated not by Eve or serpents or evil demons but by warlike pastoralists who had earlier been the first humans cast out of their comfortable natural habitat into a seemingly cruel and alien world. So we see that herdsmen and their animals, through necessity borne of circumstances, became the first great despoilers of the "Garden of Eden" -- the bountiful natural world that had existed basically unspoiled since its beginnings billions of years ago. And thus did powerful stockmen introduce to the world the first great social/cultural system based on human domination rather than cooperation between humans and the planet -- a system that influences our reality to this day. Thus, public lands ranching is not, of course, divinely preordained, but determined by relatively recent world cultural evolution.

[Note: All this is not to suggest that pastoralists are "the root of all evil." They were, through a chain of circumstances beyond their control, cast into the role of leading humanity away from itself and into this different reality.]

. . . the existing image of the lone cowboy hero in popular culture runs counter to the deep sociality that has always been intrinsic to human nature. The myth fosters privatism and deludes us into the "wishdream" of being totally independent

one day like the cowboy hero.

--Douglas C. Bowman, *Beyond the Modern Mind*

The word *Devil* came into the Jewish religion from the time when the Hebrews were captives of Babylon, and thence into Christianity. According to Zoroaster, devas or devils "are the originators of all that is bad . . . and are constantly thinking of causing the destruction of the fields and trees." This connotation has its origin in the fact that their former fellow tribesmen, the Indians, were running their cattle, sheep and goats over their fields, destroying them. . . .

Zoroaster's followers fenced their fields off from this destruction which created further fighting with the "deva worshippers." The Persian word *pairi-daeza*, meaning a "beautiful garden fenced in," was taken over in the Old Testament as the word *paradise*, and thence spread over the whole civilized world.

--Doloras LaChapelle, *Earth Wisdom*

SYMBOLISM

*Ritual
Ceremony
Custom
Culture*

*All begin as natural expressions
All, even the most primitive
Quickly become traps
Inferior substitutes for Nature*

*Humanized symbolism replaces
Naturalism*

*Never restoring, never attaining parity with
What it supplanted, what it buried*

*Wedging us ever further from ourselves
From the Earth*

--LJ, somewhere between Nature and Culture

- *Give us po', hard-workin' folks a break, won't ya; don't destroy our cherished way of life.*

"You can't avoid one conclusion," says a BLM staffer. "The permittees are one of the most pampered groups in the country. We protect their life-style and insure that they get to graze their animals at minimum cost. We assure that they have no competition. We look the other way when they trespass or sublease for profit. We give them low-interest loans and a disproportionate voice in the management of the resource they profit from. What other business gets pampered that way? And they're really just businessmen -- businessmen with special clothes and a special hat and a special twang in their voices, and we listen to them and just give them whatever they want." --from "Discouraging Words" by Jon R. Luoma (Luoma 1986)



(Greg Pentkowski)

If all the rationalization and hard-sell doesn't work, as a last resort the plead-for-sympathy approach usually does. It comes in many different forms, all designed to evoke our pity for the poor ol' dusty cowpoke. Thus, for example, when a few years ago the New Mexico State Land Department had the audacity to attempt to raise the state land grazing fee closer to fair market value, the NM Cattle Growers and NM Farm and Livestock Bureau labeled it a "shameful attack on a financially-strapped minority. . . . Because of the ranchers' economic conditions, we just can't stand it. . . . We have an environment very conducive to disaster" (McClellan 1985). Well hand me the goddamned Kleenex!

The American public has long had immense sympathy for anyone in the ranching business. That most public lands ranchers are materially secure and socially and politically powerful is unknown to most Americans, but seems to have little bearing on our feelings anyway. And, in these days of striving to save the family farm, it is especially easy to commiserate with public lands stockmen who claim to be in that poverty-stricken boat. In reality, the public lands rancher bears little resemblance to the traditional, small-time farmer.

"This thing [soil erosion] has been going on for centuries; it was going on before there was a cow in Wyoming. . . . Why blame it on the poor shepherd and little old cowboy that's trying to make a living here on these hills?"

--Wyoming Senator Frank Barrett in 1946, from *The Easy Chair* by Bernard DeVoto (DeVoto adds: "There are places in Wyoming where the poor shepherd and little old cowboy have accelerated erosion several hundred thousand percent.") (DeVoto 1955)

Undoubtedly some public lands ranchers *are* struggling financially, even with plentiful government and private assistance. (As detailed, roughly 2 billion tax and private dollars annually are lost to public lands ranching -- an

average of \$66,666 for each public lands permittee; compare this with the average amount a family of four receives on welfare each year -- \$6,492.) A few permittees are selling out of the ranching business altogether. But this simply means that their ranching operations have not been providing enough profit to make staying in the ranching business worth the effort. This is to be expected occasionally for, as we have seen, public land is a lousy place to raise cattle. As Tom Bonar, an Arizona permittee using 200,000 public acres, complains, "How's a guy supposed to make a living?"

Well, most of us are struggling to make it. But does the locksmith expect the government to supply work materials and guarantee permanent employment? Does the construction worker insist that the government grant special utility rates and waive taxes on home and property? Does the grocer demand that the government sell her/him agricultural products at 1/5 fair market value? Of the many commercial groups in this country, public lands ranchers expect more and a greater variety of assistance than perhaps any other.

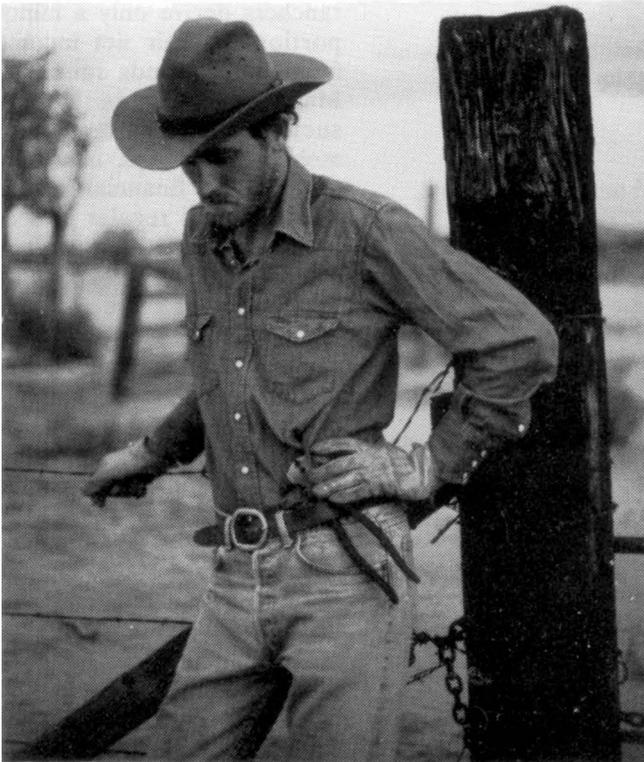
Why is it a tragedy when a ranch fails, but no big deal when my shoe store goes under?

--Small businessman at a 1985 Wyoming Republican Party issues conference

Jim Chilton, another Arizona public lands grazer, grumbles, "I'm a native Arizonan, and I've worked hard all my life. When someone calls me a welfare recipient, I just boil." On an emotional level, this may seem admirable. But think about it; does hard work alone mean someone is not on welfare, or that the work being done is worthwhile?

When a business is heavily subsidized, it is a form of welfare, whether the recipient works hard or not. Furthermore, work is not a virtue when the results are destructive. "Work" is simply directed effort. It may be beneficial, harmless, or destructive. Many ranchers are hard working; many are not, as is the case with most professions. Supporting welfare ranching because some stockmen work hard makes no sense, nor is it fair to the other workers of this country. Indeed, one of ranching's greatest appeals is that (though it does take much money) it requires as much or little effort as the stock raiser wants to spend; "just throw some cows out there and you're in business," as they say. (Personal observation suggests that very many public lands ranchers spend as much time in coffee shops as on the range.)





The author demonstrates that you cannot believe everything as presented. (Lynne Bohi)

Although they love to dress up like Gabby Hayes, ranchers are businessmen, and like all businessmen they want to minimize overhead and maximize profits.

--Richard Lessner, "Dances With Wolves: Ranchers Should Lose This War" (Lessner 1991)

Despite reality, the ranching establishment keeps arousing our sympathies and romanticism: "We're just plain common-folk, tryin' hard against all odds to make an honest living," they declare. Not only that, they are (take your pick): "providing red meat for a growing America (or world)"; "working people"; "the forgotten folks at the bottom of the economic pyramid"; "the salt of the earth"; "promoting the pioneer spirit"; "preserving our Western legacy"; "preserving our Western legacy"; and so on. With such syrupy schmaltz, who could refuse these poor downtrodden their dirt-cheap grazing fees, subsidized range developments, and profuse special treatment? Few commercial enterprises stoop to such heights of calculated self-pity and pretentious false modesty in an attempt to maintain government and public support. And they'll lay it on

thicker and heavier as needed, even going so far as to question the patriotism and morality of those who would deny them.

The ranchers making these claims are usually the same ones who can afford to take jets or drive their fancy, \$15,000 pickups from across the West to attend a 3-day stockmen's convention for \$60 a night at some posh hotel -- so they can stand up and make their pitiful claims! Sometimes, however, a stockmen's association will fly in a truly destitute, dusty public lands cowpoke to tell his tear-jerking tail of woe and misery for the media or Congress. What a show!!

Various interests want all livestock removed; other interests want the resources developed to permit livestock to safely use the resources. Whether the public lands are to continue to provide opportunity for those seeking to make a living or to provide enjoyment for those who have already secured their means of livelihood is an often raised question. [Drive a semi between these lines!] (USDA, USDI, CEQ 1979)

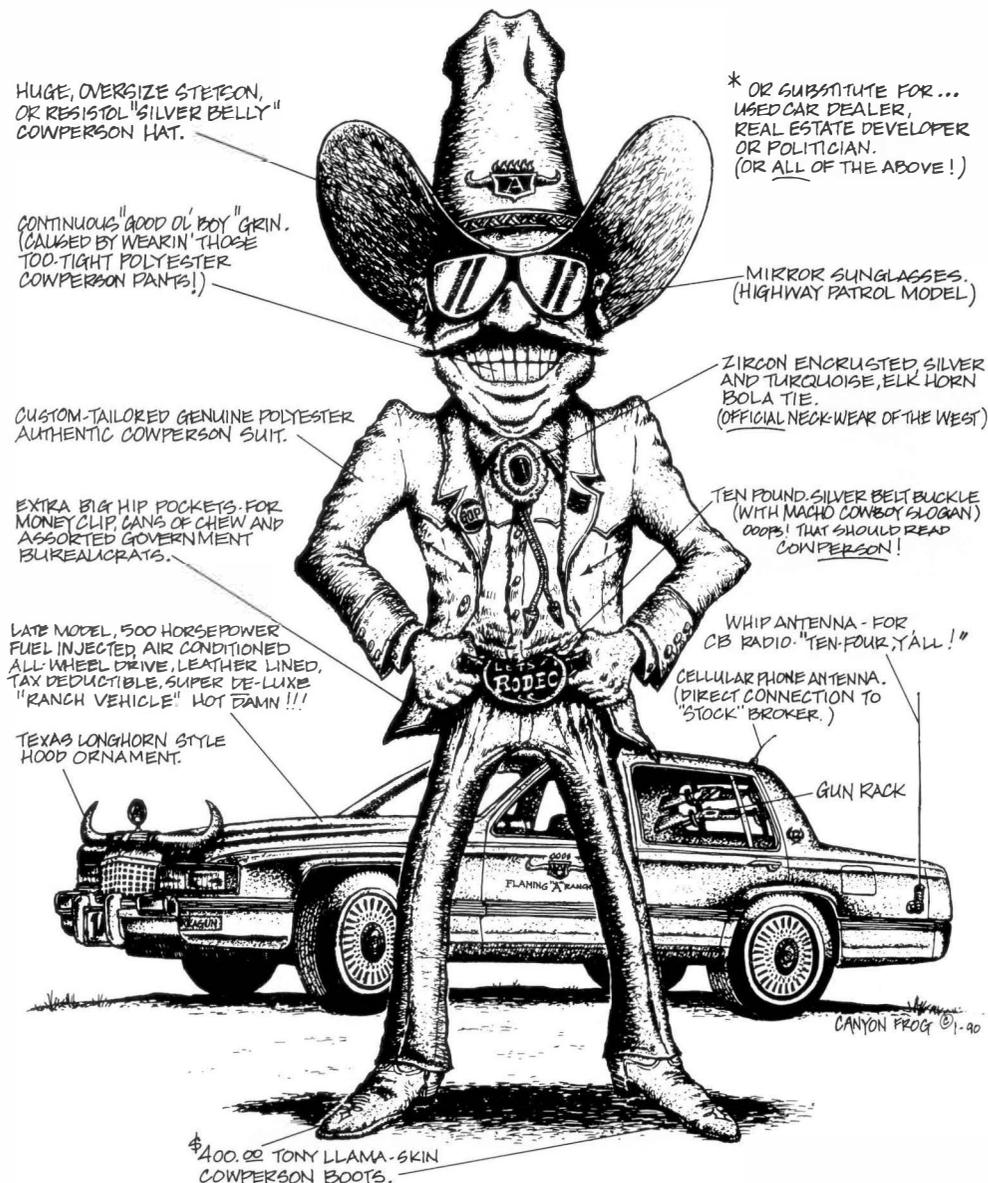
--Idaho Governor and public lands rancher John V. Evans, 1979

The underappreciated but irrefutable fact is that most of the 30,000 or so Western public lands ranchers (1.9% of US ranchers) live quite comfortably. About 20% are described by the US government as "large" operators -- those permitted to lease more than 5000 AUMs (the equivalent of roughly 400 cattle). By far most of these ranchers would be considered wealthy by the average American. GAO identifies 11% of all BLM permittees as corporations, while an additional 8% are described as "partnerships" and another 5% as "other" than individuals (USGAO 1986). Forest Service and other government agency figures are similar. Most of these entities hold substantial wealth, and in recent years this group includes a growing number of powerful Japanese investors. Idaho, 70% publicly owned, has a higher percentage of millionaires than any other state, largely because wealthy ranchers so thoroughly dominate its public and private lands (Ferguson 1983).



This not-unusual public lands ranching headquarters in central California includes structural developments worth more than \$1 million.

THE COMPLEET CONTEMPORARY CATTLEPERSON *



(Roger Candee)

Of the remaining (roughly 2/3) described as "medium" to "small" individual operators, many are land speculators, politicians, wealthy businessmen, doctors, lawyers, actors, country and western singers . . . even rock stars! For most of these people, ranching is not a profession, but a tax write-off, source of extra income, weekend hobby, vacation getaway, or a way to impress people (we're spending the weekend . . . *at our ranch*). Romance, recreation, and achievement of desired social status or political power are the primary motives for many operators. Still other public ranching operations are pursued simply to maintain family tradition.

This leaves probably less than 50% "medium" to "small" ranchers. A large percentage of even these stockmen are financially endowed. As mentioned, most public lands

ranchers derive only a minor portion of their net income from public lands ranching. Many own other businesses, such as retail stores, automobile dealerships, insurance outlets, and financial institutions, or hold regular jobs or political offices in town, and cowboy only on weekends. A great many of these ranchers have become independently wealthy through inheritance and/or by selling off their "excess" private land.

Of the remaining 20%-30% (?) -- the medium to small-time "working ranchers" -- the majority are well-off, to say the least. These stockmen maintain essentially permanent ranching tenure (and subsidies) on public land and usually own or hold substantial equity in their homes and improvements, base properties, livestock, vehicles, machinery, and other tangible and intangible assets. In many cases wives work as waitresses, retail clerks, beauticians, etc. and bring home other income.

Of the remaining less than 10% (?) (perhaps less than 3000) who are not well-situated, few are truly poor. Regardless, with many practical alternatives available (see next chapter), even the poorest have no good excuse to keep their livestock on the public's land.

Everyone wants the family farm to survive, and nostalgia looms especially large in the West, where cowboys have always held the greatest fascination

for Americans. Working a spread that runs from here to the horizon comports with the classic American image of freedom and rugged individualism.

--Dyan Zaslowsky, "A Public Beef" (Zaslowsky 1989)

If we calculate the average public grazer's income based solely on public lands ranching (as most permittees purposefully do), we get a distorted picture. If 22,000 federal lands ranchers are divided into the \$390 million in annual livestock value derived from grazing BLM and FS land, we find that each permittee sells his public lands livestock for only \$17,727 annually. Even disregarding ranching expenses (which could easily dwarf this figure), this amount hardly exceeds the poverty level for most families. Perhaps they really are as poor as they claim?

No. Their livestock graze public land an average of only about 4 months each year. For the remaining 8 months, their animals subsist on private land. A year is 3 times longer than 4 months, and $3 \times \$17,727 = \$53,181$ per year. Additionally, some of most BLM and FS permittees' livestock spend *no* time on BLM or FS land or on other publicly owned land, so we may safely surmise that the average federal permittee grosses far more than \$53,181 annually from livestock sales. Moreover, as mentioned, most public lands ranchers have a second or even third or fourth source of income. These include other jobs, political office or influence, direct and indirect ranching subsidies, "special arrangements" with government agencies, hunting and access fees, interest, dividends, royalties, commissions, rentals, and sale of public resources. Some ranchers, for example, have amassed considerable wealth from fees paid by energy companies to drill for oil and gas on the ranchers' land. Many have become independently wealthy through inheritance and/or sale of "excess" real estate. Thus, claims by most permittees of poverty based on low income from public lands grazing are grossly deceptive.

This isn't a matter of survival, or generally even of lifestyle, but of profit and power. On the whole, public lands ranchers have a much higher net income and far greater total assets than the average American; a remarkably large percentage are millionaires. They hold immense influence and prestige. What reason is there for pity? The American public has been taken for a century-long ride by these sympathy miners.

The rancher's self-image as the last hard-working, most independent member of American society grew with the popular western movies. Western stockraisers, as Bernard DeVoto explained, believed in their own mythology. No finer welfare system was ever developed. It combined aristocratic arrogance toward a public agency with high social status and financial rewards.

--Bernard Shanks, *This Land Is Your Land* (Shanks 1984)

These welfare ranchers are experts at telling tales of woe. . . . Everyone is crying about the poor rancher that will lose his job. Has any welfare rancher ever stepped forward to help you keep your job? . . . No one worried about the poor crutch-makers who lost their jobs when Jonas Salk invented the polio vaccine, and no one is going to miss the welfare rancher.

--Stuart Croghan, LaGrande, Oregon

And so we find that the ranching establishment's justifications for ranching have little basis in reality. The next chapter will explore the most commonly proposed alternatives to traditional public lands ranching, concluding with a description of one of the most workable and responsible long-term solutions.

