

Chapter XII

ALTERNATIVES

Notwithstanding the semi-facetious BENEFITS OF PUBLIC LANDS RANCHING, some readers may still think this book dwells on the negative and offers no solutions. I would counter that it dwells on public lands ranching -- an overwhelming negative -- the elimination of which is the solution. Allowing the subsequent environmental, economic, social, and political improvement is one of the most *positive* things we could do for the West.

And yet, while many people recognize that ranching is a negative influence overall, few in our cowboy-oriented society realize the extent of its influence and fewer still can conceptualize banning it from public land. Instead, they offer alternatives.

Reform

If you talk about making people quit ranching, you put up an instant red flag. They'll throw your head up against the wall up here in eastern Montana. If, on the other hand, you say we want to help you ranch in a different way, to manage the land better and make a profit without government subsidies, then maybe they'll listen.

--Charles Jonkel, Institute of the Rockies

But total eviction of the cattle and sheep would not be much of a victory. The real victory will be reform of public land ranching so it becomes an asset to the West rather than its present liability.

--Ed Marston, publisher, *High Country News* (3-12-90)

Reform is fine -- except when that to be reformed is inherently impractical. Given enough hidden subsidization, special assistance, and publicized misinformation, banana plantations in Minnesota could be made to seem feasible.

Public lands ranching has been undergoing reformation since the early 1900s; little has changed, though. This book has mentioned dozens of legislative acts and amendments, policy directives, and judicial rulings designed to reform ranching. They have had varying effects on the agencies, yet all of them combined have not much changed public lands ranching. For example, though NRDC's 1973 lawsuit forced BLM to go through the motions of preparing EISs for 212 grazing areas on 150 million acres, the EISs have, according to NRDC, resulted in little discernible benefit to the land.

Still, even most conservationists remain deluded that the solution is to study ecology and reform ranching accordingly. Does understanding Minnesotan ecology and how bananas grow make growing bananas in Minnesota practical? Wouldn't a more reasonable approach be to decide not *how* but *if* public land should be used for ranching?



Carrizo Plain is a 50-mile-long valley nestled between coastal mountain ranges in south-central California. A visitor in 1886 described it: "In the spring, native bunch grasses, reaching as tall as the side of a horse, grew thick on the undulating land, turning to naturally cured hay in the summer. Wild horses, elk, deer, and antelope were abundant on the plain." A subsequent century of ranching has left it remarkably barren and devoid of wildlife. In 1988 The Nature Conservancy, in cooperation with BLM and the California Department of Fish & Game, purchased 8 contiguous ranches on the plain -- 85,000 acres altogether -- that eventually will be sold to the agencies as the core of a 180,000-acre reserve. To help restore several Endangered species, the Conservancy has implemented "a much stricter grazing management regime." However, though limited progress has been made, in a late 1990 visit to the "reserve" I saw overwhelming overgrazing and precious little recovery (even taking into account the current drought). An interview with cowboy-like managers of the "reserve" indicated that ranching will continue. It seems certain that (without intensive, expensive range restoration) significant recovery will not occur until ranching is terminated.



receive fair market value for its herbage, the fee would have to be raised 10-fold, to about \$20/AUM. Moreover, the federal grazing fee is simply the price the government charges for grazing livestock (like a feed store selling hay); it does not compensate the roughly \$1 billion a year in additional tax subsidies. To cover this cost, with half of fees going to the Range "Betterment" Fund, permittees would have to pay approximately \$80/AUM, or more than 40 times the current rate. To recompense the additional non-tax-related values already outlined, they might have to pay \$200/AUM or more. Fat chance, especially when permittees already complain about \$1.81/AUM!

If the federal government was somehow forced to reform ranching administration to fully protect the environment and public interest, what would happen? It would quintuple the grazing fee; terminate the Range "Betterment" Fund; eliminate subsidies; close ranching roads and dismantle fences; end predator and pest programs; ban livestock from all environmentally sensitive areas; drastically cut remaining livestock numbers; strictly enforce all grazing regulations; disallow monopolization; eliminate "advisory" boards, unfair laws, and special political consideration . . . in other words, it would essentially shut down the vast bulk of public lands ranching. What little remained wouldn't begin to justify the infrastructure needed to keep it going! Ranching reform is a contradiction in terms -- a pipe dream.

After all these years of effort, we still face the same set of problems: seriously abused public lands with devastated streamside areas, ravaged fisheries and wildlife habitat, chronic soil erosion, weed invasions, sick watersheds, and degraded trails and campsites. . . . My husband says range reform is like cold fusion.

--Rose Strickland, Sierra Club Grazing Subcommittee Chair (Strickland 1990)

Raised Grazing Fees

Perhaps the most commonly suggested alternative is raising grazing fees to make them comparable to the cost of leasing private ranching. Through this simple act the public would finally receive a fair price for the herbage it collectively owns. Or would it?

As mentioned, about 1/2 of federal grazing fee receipts are returned to the Range "Betterment" Fund for ranching development. Thus, for the American public to actually

Many environmentalists believe higher fees would reduce grazing pressure because generally public lands ranchers stock heavily to take advantage of cheap herbage. The herbage-to-animal profit ratio makes this practical, even if the high level of grazing lowers average animal weight or if some animals starve. Higher grazing fees supposedly would remove this motivation. However, a good look at leased private ranchland suggests that this is largely wishful thinking.

According to Johanna Wald, public lands attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, "By being set so low, the fees are denying the agencies the ability to do their job better, if not right" (Zaslowsky 1989). While undoubtedly this idea has merit, the fact remains that the grazing fee system is set up to promote ranching more than stewardship; the more money it returns through fees, the more ranching justifies and expands itself. The system was designed to be self-perpetuating.

Some people presume (or hope, in many cases) that higher fees would be the straw that broke the camel's back -- that public lands ranching would then collapse like a house of cards. However, many borderline ranchers might overstock allotments or increase trespass to recoup this extra expense, perhaps out of spite, to judge from the warnings of some. Higher fees would eliminate some inefficient, uneconomic, submarginal, and speculative operators (some of the most irresponsible), but other ranchers are always waiting to procure those leases. Moreover, since fees are only a small portion of operating costs, even a large increase would be unlikely to shut down an operation not already on the brink. Most operators, especially large ones, could easily pay market value. Higher fees probably would tend to force smaller operators out of business, allowing larger ones to buy them out and expand. (It seems likely, however, that raising the grazing fee to fair market value would result in less than 5000 of the West's 30,000 or so public lands ranchers selling their grazing permits -- and very few of these would be impelled by actual poverty.)

Supporters of the traditional micro-fees have terrified the hamburger-addicted public by claiming that beef prices would skyrocket if ranchers were forced pay what herbage is worth. For example, Arizona Congressional Representative Jim Kolbe (from an influential public lands ranching family) responded to Oklahoma Representative Mike Synar's 1988 bill to raise the federal grazing fee by saying, "I doubt opponents would be willing to pay three to four times the price of beef at their local supermarkets." Kolbe . . . well . . . misrepresents the truth.

Suppose federal permittees were forced to pay fair market value of roughly \$10/AUM, and suppose they compensated by raising the selling price of their cattle 5-fold, and suppose feedlots and meat companies bought their animals at this ridiculous price and incorporated this beef into the national supply. Since all federal land beef is only 2% of the national supply, if the rest was priced at \$1 per pound and public land beef was \$5 per pound, the overall increase in beef prices would be to \$1.08 per pound, not the \$3-\$4 claimed by Kolbe.

According to long-time range reform advocate Randy Morris and others higher grazing fees would mean more money available for not only ranching administration but ranching development -- that is, for expanded environmental degradation. They would probably further entrench the ranching establishment and give stockmen even more social/political clout. Additionally, by paying more for fees (and higher taxes as well), the industry would convey an improved image (which in a sense would be deserved). However, this better image could lend validity to an inherently impractical land use, giving the public the misimpression that everything's fine now.

Raising grazing fees *may* be an improvement. But it is no solution.

Several reformers have suggested basing grazing fees on permittees' environmental impact. A rancher who badly overgrazed an allotment would pay a very high fee; one who did minimal damage would pay a minimal fee. This may sound good in theory. However, if it worked in practice the rancher causing minimal damage and paying a minimal fee would graze a minimal number of livestock. In other words, most public lands ranching would be terminated anyway. More likely, as they currently do, the agencies would simply misinterpret range conditions to cater to stockmen, and widespread overgrazing and trespass would continue. Covert subsidization, political abuse, and all the rest would remain largely unchanged. This too is no solution.

Competitive or Open Bid Leases

When someone wants to cut timber on your [public] forests he has to enter a sealed bid against all others who want to bid and can make the required guarantees. Not the cowboy and the shepherd, types who are always bellyaching about bureaucratic tyranny.

--Bernard DeVoto, *The Easy Chair* (DeVoto 1955)

Another alternative is leasing ranching by competitive bid, as on some Department of Defense, Indian reservation, state, and other public and private land. Timber; oil, gas, and minerals; and other public resources are leased by competitive bid, so why not livestock herbage?

Under this scenario, public land would be offered for ranching lease to the highest *qualified* bidder (preferably with a reasonable floor fee, perhaps to cover administrative costs). Lease rates would then approximate those on private land -- fair market value. Leases could be issued for a period of 5 or 10 years. Because ranchers would no longer have lifetime guarantees of ranching privileges, they would be less likely to treat public land as their own, the government would procure more administrative power, and other users would gain proportionately more influence. Thus, selling the idea to stockmen would require a miracle.

Wyoming Game & Fish takes competitive bids for its land and receives \$5-\$8/AUM. California sells ranching permits for some of its land to the highest bidders. Oklahoma put grazing leases up for bid and quadrupled grazing income. The Army's Boardman Bombing Range in northeast Oregon averages \$7-\$8 on its competitive bids.

In competitive bidding areas, grazing fees average much higher than for land with set fees. However, they still average only about 1/2 to 2/3 of fair market value. If competitive bidding were used for all BLM, FS, state, and other public land now on set fees, fees on those lands would probably average even lower due to relative political influence and somewhat higher ranching expenses.

While competitive bidding probably would be an improvement over set fees, the new system would have many of the same drawbacks as the old, as well as some others. For example, it assumes an open marketplace -- nearly the antithesis of the ranching situation in most of the rural West. As now happens with most competitive bid ranchland, entrenched ranchers would acquire most of the leases. And the necessarily wide geographic distribution of Western ranches makes it difficult for distant ranchers to bid high. This, plus "special arrangements," tradition, and social and political influence, favor the status quo. The competitive bid system could thus encourage grazing monopolies as large, established operators collaborated, combined, and expanded exponentially, as was the case in ranching's early days.

As for improving range conditions, competitive bidding would fail unless a significant portion of the increased revenue went toward administrative changes, monitoring and enforcement. Though competitive fee-leased land generally is in better condition than fixed-fee land, the difference is due almost entirely to tighter regulations, lower permitted stocking rates, and stricter enforcement by agencies quite differently oriented than BLM, FS, and most state land departments. Finally, as usual, even if competitive bids reached fair market value, they would not begin to end subsidization, political abuse, and all the rest.

The proud, independent rancher as the paragon of the free enterprise system? Forget it, he's a welfare bum. I heard one good ol' boy state at a grazing fee hearing last year, "Open bidding would destroy the very concept of free enterprise."

--Dave Foreman, "My Heros Have Always Been Cowboys" (Foreman 1986)

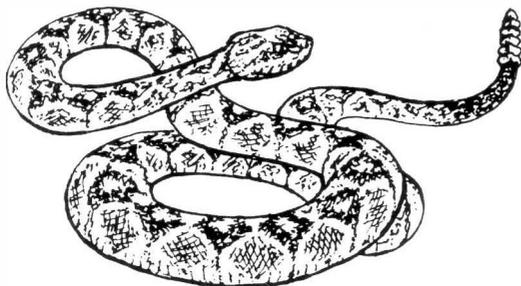
While competitive bidding between stock raisers would seem appropriate to this country's capitalist system, *open* bidding would seem even more so, especially under the multiple-use concept. Conservation, hunting, fishing, outfitting, hiking, backpacking, and other interests would then have the opportunity to use public land now degraded by ranching for other purposes. If they would pay as much as ranchers for the use (or non-use) of this land, cause less environmental damage and taxpayer waste, and provide services for a greater number and wider range of people, then why shouldn't our government administer such a system? Why shouldn't our government favor a true *multiple use, free enterprise* system?

Perhaps an open bid system would be preferable to fixed fees or closed bid between stockmen, but it too has serious drawbacks. Because much Western range is of little economic interest to other users, and because most graziers could pay much higher fees, ranching-as-usual probably would continue on most Western public land. Range condition on these allotments would not improve much, if at all. Also, those stockmen who won the bidding might feel an even greater possessiveness over public land and expect greater control over it, further entrenching dominant-use ranching.

Those groups and individuals with the most money and profit potential -- ranchers in most of the West -- probably would monopolize most of the land. Abuse might increase and multiple use suffer. Perhaps more than traditionally, the less affluent, less powerful, and less exploitative public interests would be stuck at the bottom of the totem pole. Further, those who leased public land purely to protect and restore the environment would be caught in a ransom-type situation. In essence, they would be paying the government large sums of money to do what it should have done all along -- protect the land. Also, improved allotment conditions would force higher competing bids from stockmen when leases came up for bid. Thus, conservationists would be punished for their good stewardship. Conversely, the more a rancher degraded an allotment, the lower subsequent competing bids from other users would tend to be.

There is another, more practical, consideration with an open bid system: what would become of those millions of range developments? Would the government allow fences to be torn down, roads closed, and stock tanks to wash away on non-grazed allotments when future ranching is always a possibility? How could environmental restoration proceed with them? But why waste millions of dollars to maintain them if no longer needed?

While open bidding seems the best of the alternatives mentioned so far, even it is a poor solution.



Game Ranching

Wildlife worth preserving should be wild.

--Raymond F. Dasmann, *Environmental Conservation*
(Dasmann 1972)

The concept of game ranching is appealing to many -- it seems a perfect compromise between conservationist and rancher. In this alternative, we simply replace domestic ungulates with wild ones. The rancher continues ranching, and -- presto! -- the range is restored.

Game ranching on large private ranches has recently gained popularity because continued range deterioration, competition from intensive livestock production, reduced beef and mutton consumption, and growing public opposition to environmental degradation make livestock ranching decreasingly attractive. Rather than sell out, a small percentage of private ranchers are turning to game ranching. They manage private land for selected wildlife, receive permission from state game & fish departments to set extended hunting seasons and bag limits, and charge hunting fees, sometimes producing several times as much income as they did from livestock.

However, public lands ranchers generally do not advocate game ranching because (1) wildlife on public land (ostensibly) is public property and (2) most base/private properties are not large enough to support significant game populations. So, though game ranching on public land -- even if it required *more* subsidization -- generally is preferable to livestock ranching, its widespread use would require a major and unlikely shift in land use policy.

In many parts of the West, a cow has a lot less economic value than an elk.

--Bruce Babbitt while Arizona Governor, whose family runs one of the largest public land ranching operations in the state

Game ranching has one overriding purpose -- to make money -- and 2 basic orientations -- hunting and meat production. Thus far, nearly all Western game ranches are geared more toward hunting. For example, Wyoming Republican legislator Jim Hageman charges \$100 per person to hunt deer on his eastern Wyoming ranch. Brad Eade of the Laguna Ranch near Coalinga, California, says, "We've cut down on cattle by 50% and increased our hunting tremendously." His ranch's hunting program now earns twice as much as his cattle did. Utah's largest game ranch is the Deseret Ranch 110 miles northeast of Salt Lake City. The mountainous 200,000 acres were used primarily for livestock until 1977, when a trophy game emphasis was adopted. Now, the state of Utah allocates a certain number of hunting licenses to the ranch each year, and customers pay from \$100 for a non-guided deer hunt to \$2000 for a catered 2-week elk hunt. Wildlife business at the ranch employs 3 persons full-time and earns about \$250,000 annually.

In recent years, scores of ranchers, particularly in California, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah, have reduced livestock to increase commercial "game" on portions of their

private rangeland. However, they still represent only a tiny fraction of Western ranchers, and, moreover, little public land has experienced similar changes in management.

Exotic game ranching also is increasingly popular on private land, especially in Texas, where some 200 ranches use exotic species as a major source of income or to augment livestock operations. Many hunters gladly pay a high price to bag a gazelle or gemsbok.

However, buffalo, deer, elk, moose, pronghorn, and bighorn are eminently better suited to Western game ranching than are exotics or livestock. Compared to livestock, they require less water, fencing, herding and handling, treatment for parasites and disease, predator protection, and other management and range development. Wild meat, hides, and body parts generally are more valuable than those of livestock. Natives also cause relatively less environmental damage. Elk, for example, eat only 1/3 to 1/2 as much as cattle, produce about 40% more (and much leaner) meat per unit of herbage eaten, command twice the price, and do much less land damage per pound produced. Exotics compete with natives and spread disease and parasites. On some public lands, Big Bend National Park and Gunnison National Monument for example, feral exotics wander in from nearby game ranches and upset natural processes.

From the data gathered so far, it appears that, near Nairobi, the annual yield of lean meat from game ranches could be at least twice the poundage per acre as is taken from the best cattle ranch in the area.

--Paul Ehrlich, *The Machinery of Nature* (Ehrlich 1986)

Game ranching for meat production generally requires more financial investment and intensive management than for hunting. Even so, studies by wildlife biologists indicate that more meat could be produced on a sustained yield basis on Western public land through increased wildlife production (with livestock removed) than is currently produced with livestock.

Paul Ehrlich reports in *The Machinery of Nature* that since 1978 on their 20,000-acre ranch near Nairobi, Kenya, David and Carol Hopcraft have been raising mostly game animals, along with some cattle. Studies there have shown that in the past few years range condition has been improving even though animal biomass has increased some 35%. Harvesting antelopes and other wild animals is more efficient and humane than it is with cattle; cullers simply drive out on the range and shoot as many animals as needed. (Ehrlich 1986)

In the Western US, buffalo ranching is increasing, with the shaggy beasts at least partially replacing cattle on dozens of ranches. Being smarter, larger, stronger, faster, and more agile than cattle, buffalo can better survive harsh winters and protect themselves from predators. They have a more efficient digestive system and can graze "lower quality"

vegetation. During grazing, they disperse more and are less selective than cattle. On the other hand, they hate and often walk right through fences, are hard to handle, and present a whole new set of instincts and behaviors for ranchers to deal with.

Due to clever advertising and health concerns, Americans are acquiring a taste for buffalo meat ("buf?") -- higher in protein, lower in cholesterol, and, many say, more flavorful than beef. Buf is commanding high prices. Still, in the US only 10,000 buffalo are slaughtered and processed annually, compared to 60,000 beef cattle *daily*.

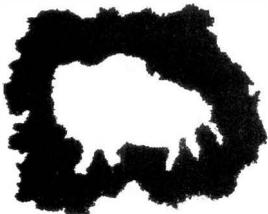
Ranchers have additional financial incentives for raising buffalo. Where livestock ranches double as dude ranches, resorts, hunting camps, and such, buffalo can be a novel tourist attraction. Some raise buffalo as big game animals, charging hundreds of dollars for the opportunity to ride out and shoot one. Often, the body is then sold or kept by the rancher, who may thus double his profit on the animal. Salable buffalo by-products are of superior quality and value to those of cattle, and include heads, skulls, tails, robes, leather goods, and jewelry made from bones and horns.

Pound for pound, ranch buffalo are less environmentally destructive than livestock. Nevertheless, buffalo *ranching* invariably is more destructive than is no ranching at all. Overgrazing and ranching overdevelopment was evident on most of the buffalo ranches I have visited, whereas range condition appeared good to excellent at Custer State Park (South Dakota), and Wind Cave, Badlands, and Yellowstone National Parks, where buffalo are semi-wild. And even buffalo ranching entails branding, roundups, fencing, road building, construction of water developments, predator slaughter, brush removal, and other management and development.

Research continues on buffalo genetics, crossbreeding, and inbreeding, as range professionals try to engineer the perfect "cattelo" and "beefalo." As buffalo popularity grows, ranching management intensifies and buffalo are raised more and more like cows, with increasingly similar results. Like cattle and sheep, ranch buffalo are slowly being turned into passive domestic creatures of the ranching establishment.

Is public land game ranching a workable alternative? Controversy already flares over game ranching on private land, with many people contending that no one should own free-roaming wildlife, especially animals that spend much of their time on public land. If ranchers removed livestock from public land and allowed wildlife to recover -- wildlife that would have been there naturally if not for ranching -- would it give them the right to profit from these animals? Should the public be charged by ranchers to hunt on its own land? Shouldn't wildlife on public land be public property, or no one's "property"?

If public land game ranching is to benefit the public and its land, it will have to be less like ranching and more like non-intensive wildlife management. In 1986 Bob Scott, a native of the "cowboy town" of Hamilton, Montana, unveiled his proposal for a large-scale "game range" in east-central Montana. Scott envisions transforming 15,000 square miles (about 10% of the state) of fenced, overgrazed livestock country into a huge game range/Nature reserve called "the Big Open." Domestic fences would be removed, native game animals restocked, and the whole area allowed to restore itself to something more like the bountiful country Lewis and Clark reported in 1805 as teeming with wildlife. Presently, 363,000 sheep and cattle graze the "seriously degraded" area. Forty percent is public land.



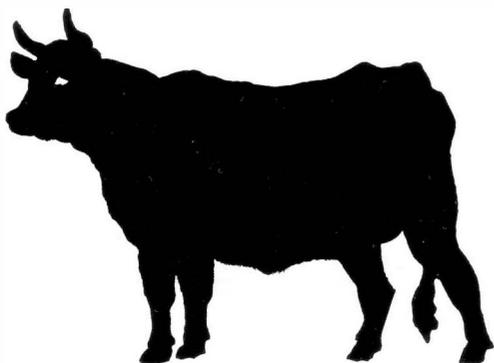
Scott estimates that the Big Open would support 75,000 buffalo, 150,000 deer, 40,000 elk, 40,000 pronghorn, and 15,000 bighorn sheep, as well as much higher numbers of many other animals, and would be of greatly improved environmental quality. Perhaps \$39 million annually would be generated from hunting fees alone, and household income for the area's 3000 residents would rise from (the reported) \$15,000 to \$28,000 a year. Writes Scott in personal correspondence, "We are telling them that converting to wildlife is a **higher economic return**, and we have the facts and market studies to prove it." Even the Soil Conservation Service seems to agree, as a recent report indicated that it would be cheaper to buy out all the ranchers and wheat farmers in eastern Montana than to continue government subsidies. The Big Open is one of the most workable large-scale game range proposals to date.

Yet, thus far it has gained little acceptance from the local populace. Though Scott tours the region giving talks and slide shows, trying to drum up support, few take him seriously. To the "good ol' boys" who dominate the region, the idea of someone telling them what to do hasn't set too well. Also, they are afraid to risk their traditional, subsidized way of life, and they worry about droughts, predators, and disease problems from wild animals. Some think the Big Open might be a plot by the government to take away their land. Scott has been scoffed, laughed, and yelled at. In one town, locals broke the windows out of his friend's car, thinking it was his. (Cahill 1987)

As usual, stockmen reign supreme. Their pressure, Scott says, keeps silent those who might otherwise support the idea. The loudest opponents prevail at public forums. Agencies won't study the idea without ranchers' approval.

On the Great Plains stretching from Texas to Montana, Frank and Deborah Popper have identified 139,000 square miles as being too unproductive to provide viable subsistence for local ranchers and farmers. They suggest that through a consortium of private and government owners this land be remanaged as the world's largest game preserve -- the Buffalo Commons. The cost? "Billions," according to Frank Popper, "but less than the current subsidy programs." Like Bob Scott, the Poppers have been denounced and threatened; they were furnished bodyguards for a public address in Nebraska. (Sidey 1990)

Thus, despite the eminent workability of the Big Open, Buffalo Commons, and proposals like it (see Popper 1988, for examples), the dreams will almost certainly be crushed under cowboy boot heels.



Savory's Salvation

Man's a clever little animal.

--Allan Savory

In recent decades, resistance to public lands ranching has grown steadily (though it is still not strong). The "ecology movement" of the 1960s and 1970s inspired open opposition to the industry's more flagrant abuses. There were calls for increasingly radical reform, with a growing minority demanding cessation of public lands ranching altogether.

The Imperial Graziers, fearing widespread rebellion and already experiencing decreasing profits, were mightily worried. They tried denial, rationalization, justification. They warned of economic disaster and the demise of The Hamburger. They forebode the end of Western Saga. They pled for sympathy. They pulled and pulled at their political strings. Some even threatened injury or death to anyone challenging the Royal Western Crown.

All this helped, but not enough. Even many of the Royal Ranchers' loyal government servants were clamoring for fewer Sacred Cows. Throughout the Grazing Kingdom, the graziers' 100 year reign seemed imperiled. Impending doom . . . desperation . . . and then . . . from far, far away, a Wise Man suddenly appeared.

The Wise Man gathered the despairing stockmen about Him, saying, "I am The Savoryor. Follow Me. Through Me ye shall find everlasting profit and power." The assembled were understandably skeptical, but worried nonetheless. "Fear not!" continued He, "Nay, the evil is not too many Sacred Cows, but too few. Verily, the West must have more livestock or fall to ruin!"

The congregation could scarce believe its ears.

But The Savoryor did not falter. "I am the Son of the God of Science. Gather together your scattered flocks into vast, moving herds; therein lies salvation."

Thereupon The Savoryor's words become Gospel and His followers devout. The Good Word spread far and wide across the Grazing Kingdom, and many hopeless graziers became Savorites.



Grazing Guru Allan Savory. (Steve Johnson)

Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.
--from The Wizard of Oz

Allan Savory was born in 1935 in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where his father was a big-time dam builder. With a background in sugar farming, biology, the military, and politics, Allan went into cattle/game ranching on his own land in 1964, and later bought an additional cattle ranch in southern Rhodesia. Published studies by Professor J.P.H. Acocks convinced Savory that short-duration grazing was a superior ranching approach and, with a partner, he established a counseling service to promote the idea. Subsequent failure of his cattle ranch, ostensibly from prolonged drought, and persecution resulting from his struggle to wrest power from Rhodesian leader Ian Smith induced Savory to come to the US in 1978, according to his present wife, "with little more than the clothes he was wearing and a few personal mementos" (and ownership of 7000 acres of his cattle/game ranch).

Savory knew that Western ranchers were seeking a panacea, so he set up another range consultant business, in Albuquerque, New Mexico and, for more than \$100 per hour, taught ranchers how to use the short-duration grazing system he learned and redefined in Africa. In those early years, he popularized his teachings as "The Savory Grazing Method" or "SGM." Since a public land ranch's value and a stockman's borrowing power and clout are largely based on the number of animals grazed, Savory's claims such as "you can double the conventional or SCS [Soil Conservation Service] stocking rate" guaranteed him no lack of clients.

However, though SGM spread quickly through the ranching community, Savory soon realized that to gain the support necessary to implement his ideas on public land, he would also have to appeal to (as listed in one of his brochures) "environmentalists, university professors, private consultants, economists, government extension officers, bankers, businessmen, Native Americans, wildlifers, and foresters." So, he expanded SGM in scope and gave it the all-encompassing label "Holistic Resource Management," or "HRM."

In the 1980s, Savory skillfully and heavily marketed HRM as a progressive, scientific land management approach, to be used by nearly anyone to achieve nearly any land management objective -- even, somehow, mutually exclusive goals

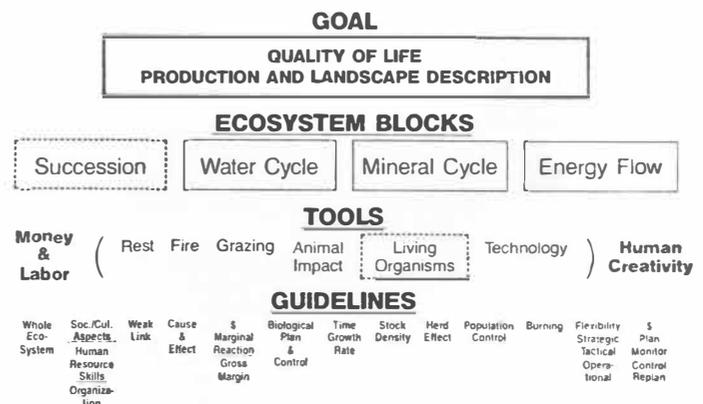
simultaneously. He established an HRM Center in Albuquerque, where he taught HRM for \$1000-\$2000 per 1- or 2-week course. Center memberships went for \$35/year and lifetime charter memberships for \$10,000 (charter members receive a plaque). With the IRS in pursuit, Savory applied for and received non-profit status for his Center. With his growing gaggle of dedicated followers, Savory installed HRM branches around the West and flew about in his private plane conducting high-priced seminars and workshops at strategic locations. (Most were held at posh hotels and resorts, the "poor little ol' public lands ranchers" arriving via their late-model, heavy-duty pickups or private aircraft.) Savory's curious "holistic" approach to ranching garnered much publicity, including TV spots and articles in numerous publications. He started a quarterly newsletter entitled *The Savory Letter*, advertised widely, and distributed massive amounts of slick promotional literature.

What exactly is HRM? Savory calls it "a method of managing resources, involving planning and monitoring and replanning until desired goals are achieved." More fully, HRM is Allan Savory's malleable, theoretical concept of land management designed to lure and seduce every special interest group. With it, ecological interrelationships are carefully analyzed and manipulated; the results are then monitored and the management practices refined until the desired effect is achieved (or until the test fails).

If you think this sounds like a lot of mumbo-jumbo, you are right. Holistic Resource Management is a nebulous term and purposefully so; a malleable non-entity cannot be refuted and remains the property of its creator. What HRM really amounts to is studying ecosystems to more effectively and profitably manipulate them -- with Allan Savory as paid interpreter and advisor.

Of course there is nothing new in this "holistic, ecologic, scientific" approach. "Progressive scientists" (as Savory calls himself) have for decades been compounding their ecological knowledge to more effectively manipulate the environment. Many brilliant scientists are doing this now for big land-raaping corporations and the military. Nearly every "scientific discovery" claimed by Savory has been known elsewhere for years. The approach is not new; the only things new are Savory's ecological interpretations and derivative plans to promote ranching.

HOLISTIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MODEL

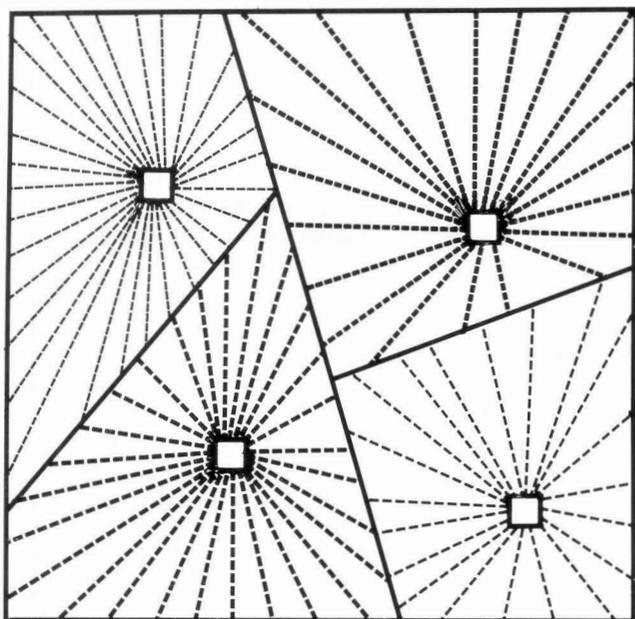


Range rest and reducing stocking numbers are the worst possible forms of range management.

--Allan Savory

As an aid to interpretation and manipulation of the environment, Savory created the "HRM Model." While the model may seem based on ecological principles, in practice (as with all aspects of HRM) it is used chiefly to promote Savory's ideas. The model lists 6 "tools" for resource management: (1) rest; (2) fire; (3) grazing; (4) animal impact; (5) living organisms; and (6) technology. I personally heard Savory say he advised the use of *fire* only once in his career (on a Navajo range when large numbers of cattle couldn't be brought in quickly enough). He repeatedly stresses that *rest* (non-grazing) is in the long run more destructive than is any level of overgrazing; that livestock are nearly always a more efficient management tool than other *living organisms* (e.g., wildlife); and that in by far most cases *technology* is a less useful tool than livestock. In fact, despite his claim that "the idea that I want to put cattle on the land is ridiculous, even childish," Savory's almost invariable solution to any land management problem (and, more accurately, the *goal* itself in the vast majority of cases) has been *grazing* and *animal impact*, i.e., *high-intensity, short-duration livestock* (almost always cattle) *grazing*, along with associated technological developments, mostly more fences, roads, salting, and water developments.

Savory's goal, dogma, and ultimate reality is **INTENSIVE SHORT-DURATION LIVESTOCK GRAZING**. It is HRM's basis, its overwhelming distinguishing feature, and essentially what keeps Savory in business. Nearly all HRM components -- that is, all of Savory's teachings and theories -- are in some way designed to advance intensive short-duration livestock grazing, and thus HRM -- creating a self-perpetuating entity.



The future for public lands?

HRM students are taught how to implement intensive short-duration grazing on the land. (This includes public land managers; taxpayers have shelled out several hundred thousand dollars to teach them HRM.) Intensive SDG typically involves a wagon-wheel arrangement of fences, with water and livestock handling facilities at the center of the grazing area, or "cell," as Savory calls it. He recommends at least 12 and as many as 40 pastures, or "paddocks," per cell. Each paddock receives a week or less of extremely intensive livestock use, followed by a long period of non-use, and each paddock is grazed several times per growing season. (Compare this with native herds, which rarely grazed an area thoroughly more than once a year, usually once in several or more years.)

Coming under increasing fire for his plan to divide the West into literally millions of tiny, wedge-shaped fenced pastures, Savory recently began *espousing* (more than actually teaching) intensive herding as a way to *minimize* fencing. A huge number of tightly packed animals is herded slowly across an allotment until all areas are grazed; then the process is repeated, and so on.

Both methods allegedly "simulate" native ungulate herds, distributing grazing impacts more evenly over allotments, forcing animals to eat less palatable plants, trampling seeds and dead vegetation into the soil and creating seedbeds, allowing more sunlight for new growth, reducing soil compaction and erosion, increasing water percolation, benefiting wildlife, doubling livestock production, and perhaps even curing warts. All this sounds great in theory, but let's examine these claims.

Intensive livestock management, due to its very nature, cannot come close to simulating the behavior of wild animals. Native herds moved freely and randomly, not within political boundaries restricted by fences or where people drove or allowed them. They were composed of animals of varying ages which over years, generations, and millennia formed an array of social orders and interactions. Contrarily, most livestock are removed from the range before 2 years of age; composition and arrangement by sex, leadership ability, and other characteristics are corrupted; and human management impairs social interaction. Less-fit members of wild herds were culled occasionally by predators that kept herds cohesive and healthy, whereas a large percentage of the *most* fit livestock are removed annually by cowboys. Moreover, huge herds of ungulates were not native to most of the West, and domestic livestock cannot fill the ecological niche of vanished wildlife.

Savory counters that it will never be possible to bring wildlife back to anywhere near original range and numbers, so the most effective and available tool for managing the West is cattle. This pessimistic and self-serving attitude neglects that cattle ranching is the main reason wildlife cannot recover.

Savory may be right in claiming that HRM distributes grazing impacts more evenly over allotments. In fact, this probably is the main reason many ranchers experience a moderate increase in livestock production with HRM. According to Holechek *et al.* in *Range Management*:

Much of the increase in stocking rate claimed possible under short-duration grazing results from better livestock distribution (Dahl 1986). Confining a large number of animals to a small area for a short period improves uniformity of use and

forces the use of areas and plants not used previously.
(Holechek 1987)

Consequently, HRM may spread grazing *damage* more evenly over allotments and negatively affect a greater number and variety of wildlife.

While claims of doubling stocking rates with HRM are greatly exaggerated, many ranchers report moderate increases. Aside from more uniform grazing, much of this is probably due to the initial release of forage nutrients caused by intensive trampling; there are indications, however, of long-term decline. Some increase may be due to more efficient management, while much is due to more intensive management, including higher expenditures for planning, monitoring, fencing, herding, etc. Many claims of HRM increases are made during especially productive forage years (often when HRM publicity photos are taken). Others are made by imaginative ranchers deluding themselves that their last hope (HRM) is working or that their capital investment on HRM hasn't been wasted. Then, too, failed HRM operations are unlikely to be publicized, except when failures may be overtly blamed on non-adherence to HRM tenets.

One of Savory's key theories is that herds of large ungulates are the critical factor in maintaining Western range ecosystems. He explains that most of the West is prone to prolonged periods of adverse conditions for plant growth. These "brittle" (generally arid to semi-arid) environments



Termites remove and help decompose dead plant material. Semi-arid range.

lack the moisture necessary to decay and recycle dead plant (mostly grass) material, so livestock (preferably cattle, as sheep are not large enough) must physically knock it down and trample it into the soil.

Savory's theory is unsound in several ways. First, plants native to "brittle" environments are eminently adapted to them, so to them conditions are not "adverse." Second, it is untrue that dead plant material in these areas cannot decompose; it sometimes does so biologically near ground level during wet weather, causing standing material to eventually fall over. Depending on circumstances, dead plant material may also decompose chemically. Wind, rain, hail, and animals break it apart and knock it over. Nest-building and burrowing creatures work it into the soil. Termites, ants, and other microfauna decompose it. Many plant parts naturally detach from parent plants and fall to the ground. And, over much of the West, snowpack helps incorporate standing organic matter into the soil. Third, after its onset, heavy grazing of any kind leaves little organic matter to trample into the soil.



An ungrazed grass plant in southern Idaho. Last year's growth was matted down by snow, creating a mulch that protects and enriches the soil, preserves soil moisture, and so forth. HRM students are taught that old growth is "decadent" and that standing dead organic matter cannot be properly recycled without the help of livestock. (George Wuertner)

Finally, like tree snags in forests, standing dead range plant material is itself an important, natural environmental component. Regardless, Savory claims like most ranchers that old-growth range plants are "useless" and "decadent." According to Savory, because dead material in "brittle" environments cannot decompose, it must be "tramped down" by livestock or it will grow so high and thick that it blocks sunlight from growth points and eventually kills itself. What is left is a perpetually sterile landscape filled mostly with tall, thick, sunlight-impenetrable dead grass.

Really? Even in the driest, coldest desert (where Savory says it takes longest for dead plant material to decay) can you imagine such a scene? In all my travels, I have never seen it. Some of that thick blanket of organic matter must eventually burn, decompose, or be knocked down naturally, allowing some new growth to occur (and with such abundance of organic material near ground level any cleared area would be highly favorable to new growth). Moreover,

these "brittle" environments are exactly where plant growth is scarcest and sunlight most plentiful, leaving another of Savory's theories working against itself. It is hardly conceivable that any sun-drenched, "brittle" environment could support enough vegetation to crowd itself out and die out completely. The limiting factor in these areas is *water*, not sunlight.

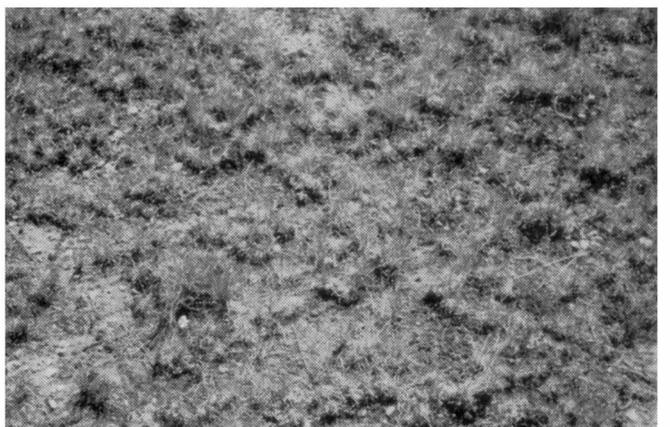
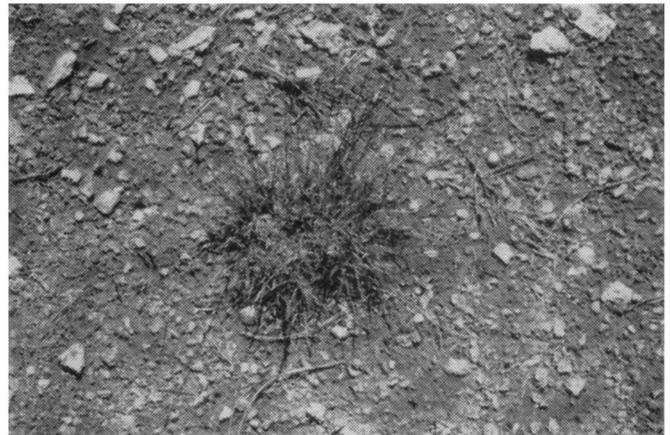
Savory declares that HRM-style grazing improves water infiltration, decreases runoff, and reduces sediment load. Ample research shows that, generally, the exact opposite is true in the West (see Holechek 1989 for many examples). Short-duration grazing's intense hoof pressure compacts the under soil, thereby reducing water infiltration and increasing both runoff and sediment load. The soil's exposed, churned-up top layer can be devastated if a heavy rain or high wind follows soon thereafter. While grazing areas receive relatively long "rests" between HRM use, the time periods are not nearly long enough to allow full recovery. Evidence also indicates that HRM-style grazing generally is no less destructive to riparian areas and waterways than conventional grazing systems (see, for example, Marlow 1989).

Water is usually less available to wildlife under Savory's system than under conventional grazing systems because HRM water sources and developments generally are located at the center of grazing "cells," where livestock and human activity, environmental detriments, and fencing are most concentrated. Further, Savory claims that "all organisms are adapted to man" and that in the future it will be necessary to "semi-domesticate" wildlife to fit into HRM management schemes. He says that large wild animals will "follow closely behind as the [livestock] herd moves along" -- enjoying the many benefits of a freshly ravaged landscape, one must conclude.



Allan Savory's recipe for environmental salvation.

The 4 photos at right demonstrate the general growth pattern of many Western grass species. As an individual grass plant (top) spreads outward, the center portion dies (2nd from top). As the ring continues to expand, it fragments and creates new plants (3rd from top). These new plants spread and fragment and so forth in a dynamic natural balance that maintains a healthy grass cover (bottom).



HRM recruits also learn that:

- Seeds of native grasses are permanently in the soil, and one should never worry that any level of overgrazing will eliminate them.
- "It is the spacing and number of plants that matter, not their size and health."
- Native Western grasses (including bunchgrasses) are adapted to being cropped and trampled repeatedly each year.
- Cryptogams are a prime indicator of a deteriorating environment. (To underscore his postulation, commonly Savory scuffs apart the cryptogamic layer while walking on rangeland.)
- Soil capping is always bad.
- It is always beneficial to disturb the soil in some way -- any way -- especially with herds of livestock.
- Overgrazing is caused by animals grazing an area too long, and has nothing to do with their numbers. [For example, a herd of 100,000 cattle will not overgraze if left on a paddock for only 30 seconds.]
- The worst overgrazing is better than no grazing.

These claims, and similar others too numerous to list here, are refuted elsewhere.

Over the last 4 years, I have conducted my dissertation research on yuccalyucca moth mutualism on the 228,000-acre Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge near Socorro, NM [see photo at top right]. The land has not been grazed for about 15 years and is beginning its recovery to grassland status. I have spent the last few months recording (to the best of my ability) the beauty of that land on slide film. Indeed, I am overwhelmed by it.

--Ollar Fuller, PhD in Biology, founder of Albuquerque Greens, personal correspondence



Ungrazed Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico -- a "deteriorating" range, according to Allan Savory.

To prove HRM grazing superior to non-grazing, Savory commonly cites from his special list of "deteriorating" non-grazed lands. (Curiously, these lands are always deteriorating, never deteriorated; Savory recently conceded that full "degradation could take between 4000 and 5000 years.") These include Chaco Canyon National Monument (his favorite) and Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (see quote and photo above) in New Mexico, the "pathetic" Natural Bridges National Monument and Canyonlands National Park in Utah, Petrified Forest National Park in northeast Arizona, and the Audubon Research Ranch in southern Arizona. These areas and other non-grazed lands throughout the West, Savory insists, are "overrested" from livestock grazing. To reverse deterioration and "get a handle on" management of these lands, HRM-style ranching is the best approach.

I have visited most of the places on Savory's special list and, rather than deterioration, I have seen remarkable recovery and relatively abundant wildlife. Most of the managers of these places seem to agree. For example, pertaining to the Audubon Research Ranch, where 20 livestock-free years has increased the proportion of groundcover from 20% to 80% and increased wildlife tremendously, Director Dr. Mark Stromberg says he believes Savory does not understand that heavy exploitation is not necessarily a part of all environments (Johnson 1987). Canyonlands National Park staff cite evidence of impressive recovery since the Park was formed -- and cattle were banned -- in the 1960s.



HRMers worst nightmare -- the dreaded dead center.



Grassland and wildlife waterhole in "overrested" Petrified Forest National Park, northeast Arizona.

Rest [from livestock] is not doing nothing. It is doing something.

--HRM advocate public lands rancher Wilbur Wood (Accordingly, humans must have been "doing something" for 5 billion years before they even existed.)

Savory likewise often cites a list of "success" ranches that demonstrate HRM's superiority to conventional ranching; it includes the Spurlock, Flying "M", and Date Creek in Arizona, the Davenport in New Mexico, and the Milton in central Montana. He infrequently identifies failures, except to say that they have not worked because managers are not adhering to his advice closely enough. Nonetheless, HRM failures, like the Dodson Allotment in Arizona's Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, are common. In August, 1986, Supervisor Nick McDonough examined the allotment and found that there "was not enough grass left to carry the cows through the winter, or any reserve left for wildlife or plant vigor. . . . If our HRM operation doesn't do better, we won't start another."

As another example, I recently received a call from Oracle, a small community north of Tucson. The excited caller said that Savory-style heavy concentrations of cattle on an adjacent Forest Service allotment "are overflowing onto people's private property," damaging a riparian area, and polluting a water source used by a camp and local residents. Area landowners are banding together to force the Forest Service to take action.

Savory concurrently points at the worst conventional overgrazing to make HRM look better by comparison. This may impress the conservation community, but he often thereby contradicts himself, for conventional and HRM grazing share most of the same detriments. Indeed, numerous scientific studies indicate that generally HRM works best in moist climates, while in dry regions (most of the West) it may on the average be even more destructive than conventional grazing (Holechek 1987).

HRM-style ranching has been established longest in Savory's native Zimbabwe. In 1982 the World Bank/International Finance Corporation examined 7 ranches there where it had been practiced for periods ranging from 7 to 14 years. The Corporation found, "virtually no different effects attributable to grazing systems," and stated that most

of the small changes that did occur were due to "short-term changes in rainfall pattern." (Johnson 1987)

In a recent Rangelands article -- "Southern Africa's Experience with Intensive Short Duration Grazing" -- Certified Range Consultant Jon Skovlin states:

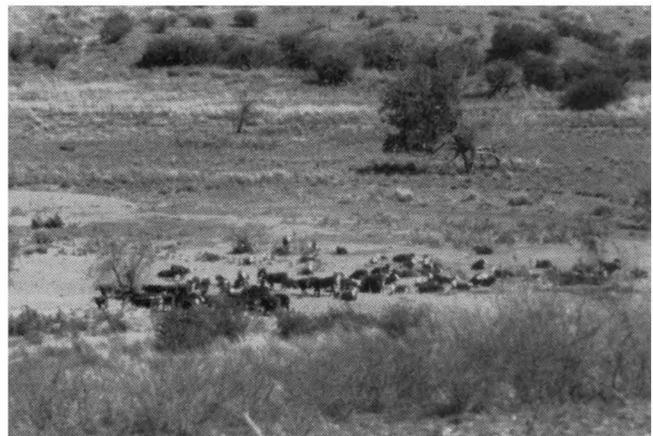
Having returned from 3 years of consulting in sub-Saharan Africa, I am amazed by the interest in and wide acceptance of intensive short duration grazing as popularized by Mr. C.A.R. Savory and his Holistic Resource Management (HRM).

Skovlin cites numerous studies refuting claims for HRM-style grazing, and provides this summary:

Claims for range improvement in southern Africa through Intensive Short Duration Grazing at double conventional stocking rates are not founded in fact. To the contrary, evidence in literature from Zimbabwe and elsewhere indicates it is impossible to have both heavy stocking and improvement in range conditions. . . . In Southern Africa, where SGM had its beginnings, many ranchers are disillusioned and most rangeland specialists contend there are too many shortcomings to recommend it as prescribed. (Skovlin 1987)

To date I have not seen one ranch where HRM is supposed to be practiced, in what would be considered a "brittle environment," the type of environment where his [Savory's] controversial grazing methods are supposed to be most effective, where I was convinced HRM had done the job it is supposed to do.

--Steve Gallizioli, former Arizona Game & Fish wildlife biologist, now a leading HRM advocate, personal correspondence



"Savory"-style herd grazing. (Paul Hirt)

. . . The excess of dead cover smothered the dominant grass itself, resulting in replacement by weeds Where hooved animals grazed, however, they removed excess leafage, and by trampling broke loose dead stalks preparing the way for new growth of grass . . . trampling promoted the natural reseeding process.

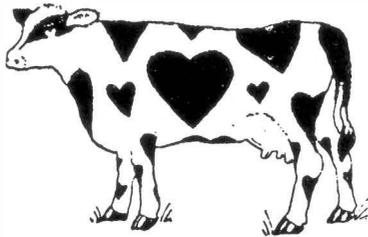
This quote comes not from Savory's HRM text, but from an agriculturally-oriented book entitled *The Grasslands of North America* by James C. Malin, written in 1947. Malin was describing the findings of Russian scientist A.N. Formosov in a 1928 report on the Russian steppe.

A heavy concentration of animals is placed on a given area for a few weeks, after which all the stock are moved on to another area and are finally returned to the first field when the growth is sufficient to withstand another period of grazing.

This one comes from *Beef Cattle Science*, a textbook first published in 1951. It states that this grazing system is best suited to humid regions.

Intensive, short-duration, pasture rotation grazing has been around for centuries. "Savory's" system was used by English stockmen 300 years ago, and his HRM model is based largely on a French dairy system used a century ago. Likewise, intensive herding has been practiced by many cultures around the world for millennia. These peoples travel all year with their herds, seeking whatever forage and browse still survives. Chapter VI examined the devastating results of such pastoralism. The herding Savory advocates also was common in the Western US in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Thousands of shepherds drove massive herds of sheep and cattle, keeping them constantly on the move; in many areas we see their scars still.

For a century, a small minority of range professionals in Eurasia, Africa, New Zealand, and North America have been advocating high-intensity, short-duration livestock grazing. Savory simply modified the approach and popularized it in the West.



There is no such thing as natural. . . . Everything that exists is natural.

--Allan Savory, 1986

Philosophically, HRM also leaves much to ponder. Allan Savory is foremost among the new school of land managers who share the perspective that we must meddle more with Nature to create a "productive" world. He frequently contends that humans have so altered the environment that it can no longer independently function properly. Therefore, he explains, we must intercede and increasingly intensively "manage ecosystems" or they will "deteriorate." Furthermore, in most cases "grazing" and "animal impact" from livestock are the preferred ecosystem management tools. Apache-Sitgreaves NF Supervisor Nick McDonough (who helped initiate HRM on the Apache-Sitgreaves) echoes Savory's theory of progressive human intervention in saying "We believe man is capable of managing forests better than nature can manage forests."

In Savory's world, there is "no such thing as a climate community." There are only "stages of succession," and "through skillful redirection of natural forces" (recall that he says there is "no such thing as natural") we should manipulate the environment (usually with cattle) to produce the "highest stage of succession" possible. This may sound half-way credible if you don't stop to consider that "skillfully redirected" "natural forces" are no longer natural. Under this reality rangelands, as well as deserts, brushlands, dense forests, swamps, and other "unproductive" areas, are redesigned to conform to human goals.

In other words, God is given human form. Sorry Earth; after 5 billion years of natural evolution we humans will take the helm from here (see Walter T. Anderson's *To Govern Evolution*).

HRM promotes the dangerous philosophy that humans are capable of, and should be, managing a planet. It does not recognize the integrity of the natural environment, its right to free existence, or humans' place in it. Instead, it places control of the natural world in the hands of HRM land managers who perceive the Earth as nothing more than a complexity of interrelationships which, if understood well enough, may be manipulated for human purposes. According to Savory, "There are only relationships, and it is only through the study and manipulation of these relationships that we can understand and manage our complex ecosystems."

This strikes me as not only pretentious and anthropocentric, but unrealistic and even immoral (if there is such a thing). HRM, as taught, asserts that *Homo sapiens* should assume the role of benevolent dictator over the Earth's environment, apparently with Allah Savory as chief luminary. Who among us has the knowledge to understand Nature's infinite interrelationships, or the wisdom to direct them? Who will hold the power to decide what form our surroundings will take? Power corrupts. Who controls the rural West now? And, the potential for unforeseen environmental harm grows roughly in proportion to our ability to manipulate the environment.

We, as human participants, have been an integral but small part of this planet's biosystem for perhaps a million years. We have fought to overcome Nature for only tens of thousands, and have overpowered it with brute force for only 200 or so. But we have never assumed the role of *ultimate controller*. HRM can only be seen as another step toward an Orwellian-type world where every action and function, human and non-human, is under the surveillance and unyielding control of whoever is in power.

Like the chickadee and the chipmunk, it [the Gila Monster] has its place in its own environment, and attempts to remove it from the face of the earth place man in the uncomfortable position of deciding which animals besides himself are desirable inhabitants of the globe.

--Peter Matthiessen, *Wildlife in America* (Matthiessen 1959)

Self-serving philosophy and promises of higher stocking rates and environmental salvation do not fully explain Savory's appeal. It lies more in the realm of psychology. Intentionally or not, Savory uses many effective indoctrination techniques to attract, convert, and endear people to his HRM religion.

First, like a candyman with a rainbow of flavors, he offers something to everyone, overlooking no one who might further his cause. Ranchers (at least 90% of his paying students) are promised profits and public favor, agency staff a way to justify bureaucracy and please permittees, conservationists an improved environment, hunters and fishers more wildlife, cities more water, the public expanded multiple use, and so on. Savory ballyhoos HRM as the means to any end -- snake oil supreme. Key, influential non-ranchers, including some agency range staff, SCS and state officials,

university range professionals, politicians, and (especially) prominent anti-ranching advocates, are offered free attendance at HRM training sessions.

After getting their attention, Savory gains their trust. He portrays his cause as noble, selfless, and wholly scientific, asking those who *really care* to join him. In their first HRM class, ranchers are assuaged of possible guilt for overgrazing, range abuse, and ranch failure. Savory explains that they are blameless victims of a hopelessly antiquated ranching establishment. Fortunately, however, there is one bright ray of hope -- HRM.

Next, Savory *shocks* his students, shatters and rearranges their reality. He aggressively denounces the conventional livestock industry (his competition) for its many failures and refutes many beliefs held by ranchers and conservationists alike. Fertile seeds of doubt are sown.

Conventional reality is then systematically replaced with HRM reality. With decisive self-assurance, Savory unleashes a barrage of ideas, facts and figures, theories, revelations, visions. The students' heads reel as their former beliefs are dismantled, and as they try to assimilate all this new and unexpected input. They generally are very impressed, even dazzled, by Savory's apparent knowledge and wisdom. Many begin to see him as a scientific genius, and HRM as a breakthrough in enlightened, progressive thinking.

All along, Savory demands total, undivided attention to his every word. (At an HRM workshop, I was harshly reprimanded for taking notes while he spoke.) Ideas expressed that threaten HRM reality (there are few) are promptly dismantled and dispatched. Or, they may be absorbed as part of HRM if they don't threaten its overall infrastructure. Advance in detail is permitted; fundamental novelty is barred. Thus, HRM is a repository for co-opted data, reinforcing and building upon itself.

At the same time, Savory welcomes opposition. Indeed, he *thrives* on it, especially from traditional ranchers and anti-ranching advocates in the media. He well understands a main principal of martial arts -- use your adversary's energy to your benefit. Thus, arguments made against HRM focus more attention on it; energy used against it brings more energy to it. With his consummate power of reason, Savory turns each counterpoint against its perpetrator and negates even the most well-grounded argument. In each, he finds some fragment, magnifies it, and uses the comparison to justify his position. In the end, because HRM is a malleable, nebulous concept, it cannot be refuted -- it instead absorbs that which confronts it.

Those who still do not accept Savory's interpretation of reality -- no matter how well-informed -- are told they are simply ill-informed. They are pressured to believe that they will surely come to embrace HRM (see the light) when they learn more about it. Thus, so as not to seem ignorant or unenlightened (especially in front of their peers), they are drawn into the HRM mindset.

Indeed, peer pressure is used to keep devotees headed down the straight and narrow. Those not yet fully submitting to HRM are treated like junior partners. Those who begin to doubt are shown the error of their ways. Devotees are privy to various "HRM secrets." They come to feel like part of a select group involved in a vital cause. Self-identity and acceptance by the cult become dependent on one's level of

commitment to HRM. Phony prophets and gurus often use the same approach.

Savory commonly uses black-and-white reasoning to support his claims; his followers, because they so badly need to believe, fill in the appropriate shades of gray. For example, students are sometimes taken on field trips to ranches where they are instructed to compare grazed, ungrazed, and HRM-grazed plots. Many cannot help but choose the lushly vegetated ungrazed plots as being in better condition. When this happens, Savory may take a couple of thoughtful puffs from his scholarly tobacco pipe. He might walk over to the ungrazed plot, yank out a handful of dead blades from old-growth grass and declare it "decadent." At this point, the errant student will realign his chain of thought to conform to Savory's world, despite the overwhelming evidence at his feet.

Those who continue to doubt HRM are castigated as stubborn or ignorant. In his newsletter, Savory has described HRM critics as "closed-minded," "cynics who fiddle while Rome burns," "standing in the way of science," and so forth. Involvement with non-believers continues only so long as they are seen as possible converts or as furthering his cause in some way. For example, in 1986 Savory invited me (a known stop-public-lands-ranching advocate) to attend a 2-day HRM seminar and a 5-day workshop free as his guest. During the workshop, Allan treated me like a visiting dignitary, even offering to let me stay for 2 weeks with him in his comfortable Albuquerque home while attending classes at the HRM Center (\$2000 + value). Due to limited time and interest, I declined his offer, but we continued corresponding via letters. The romance didn't last long, however; as soon as he realized I was not to be counted among his flock, he ended communication. The last letter I received was from Jody Butterfield-Savory, his wife and editor of *The Savory Letter*, indicating Allan no longer wanted to "waste time" responding to my letters: "Please consider these matters closed. We expect no reply."

The Society for Range Management is the most prestigious range organization in the US. Its monthly publication, *Journal of Range Management*, is an endless series of scientific studies exploring range manipulation, with an overwhelming emphasis on livestock production. Savory understood that converting the Society to HRM would be one of the keys to his success, and for years he made that attempt. But the Society for Range Management was not to be regenerated, and it continued on its errant path, unenlightened by Savory's shining star. As Savory saw it, the Society was a staid, reactionary organization, incapable of perceiving HRM as a superior approach to range management. In 1986 Savory canceled his Society membership "because of the repeated attacks made on me personally and on behalf of the society."

Indeed, due mostly to his questionable scientific interpretations, Savory has garnered only moderate support and much opposition from the range science community. Word has it that the nation's largest stock growers organization, the National Cattlemen's Association, recently has also indicated a basic rejection of Savory's HRM.

Allan Savory, the man, is also greatly appealing. His rustic garb, utter self-assurance, and erect, almost militaristic bearing make him an arresting figure. With a complex and creative mind, Savory is knowledgeable (within his realm),

interesting, and witty. His meticulous speech features a charming British colonial accent. He is even handsome, and quite popular with the cowgirls.

All this combines for charisma. Like most gurus, Savory is tremendously persuasive without seeming to try to be, and like most gurus he is most attractive to the naive, uninformed, and desperate. Most people cannot help but like him and, despite evidence to the contrary, find themselves *wanting* to believe him.

The real -- and tragic -- truth is that the resources of our lands have been, are being, and will continue to be abused by livestock grazing until the search for panaceas -- like the one Allan Savory espouses -- is abandoned, and meaningful changes in existing management are made.

--Johanna Wald, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council

Savory claims that halting desertification is his main goal. Even assuming that this is so, good intent and impressive presentation are not enough. After 2 decades in Africa and a decade in the West, HRM has done little to halt desertification. To the contrary, it may be spreading it by distributing livestock and associated developments more widely over the range, and by prolonging ranching in areas where it otherwise might have been reduced or terminated.

Savory claims scientific objectivity, but maintains a nearly fanatic, single-minded devotion to cattle. He insists "there is no such thing as natural," then strives to "simulate natural processes." He professes trying to "skillfully redirect" Nature, then tries to *control* it. His declaration that humans (with him as overseer) know best how to manage Nature seems almost Napoleonic.

Holistic Resource Management is Holeistic Resource Management; it appears whole, but, like a colander, close inspection shows it to be full of holes. The truly *holistic* approach is to re-establish as many missing ecosystem components as possible, allow ecosystems to function as naturally as possible, then -- with minimum impact and in a sustainable fashion -- *cull* needed resources. Few would deny that in this overpopulated, overexploited world we are sometimes forced to compensate with some degree of protective and extractive management. However, rather than ever-increasingly "managing resources," we should try to reduce human population, minimize interference with natural processes, and move toward living more naturally.

Depending on how it is used, and on many other human and environmental variables, HRM-style ranching may in some cases be preferable to conventional ranching. However, it is in no way superior to non-ranching, except in terms of livestock production.

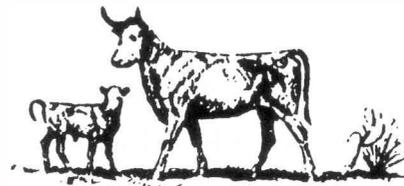
Why would we want to give the public rangelands over to the public?

--Public lands rancher Kirk Hanna, Colorado HRM member

Land management should not be a contest, wherein the person or group accumulating the most political power and/or ecological data gets to manipulate ecosystems. Allan Savory is a range consultant, and more than 90% of his customers are ranchers wanting ranching profits and influence. While the growing movement to end public lands ranching, if successful, would guarantee tremendous environmental improvement, Savory is co-opting this movement to promote his HRM.

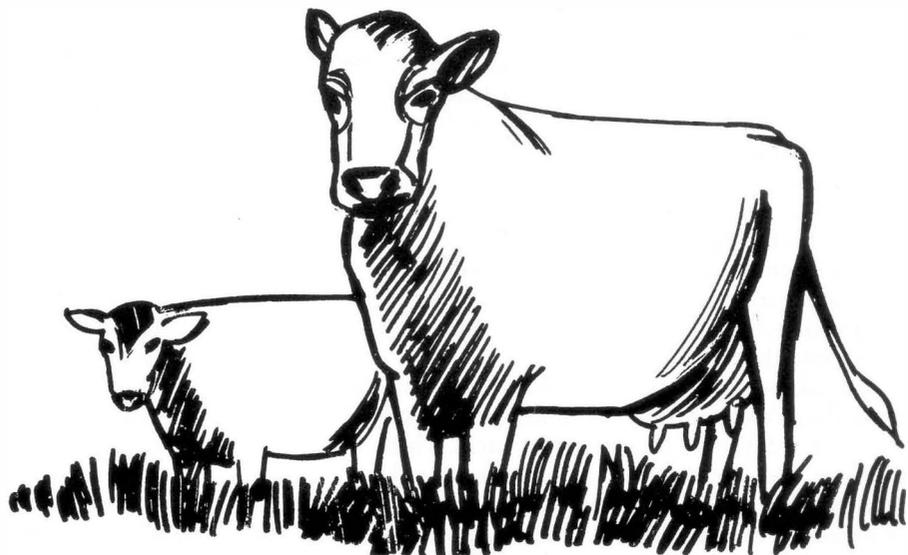
Your kindly editor recalls reading a "balanced" environmental article in which a cattle rancher "philosophically" decided that the grizzly bear was "obsolete as a life form" and had "had its day" and would probably have to be eliminated even in Yellowstone. It apparently did not occur to the journalist (and certainly not to cattlemen) that perhaps the cattlemen's operation was "obsolete as an economic lifestyle" and had "had its day" as a viable business.

--P.J. Ryan, Editor of *Thunderbear*



Logo used by the Arizona branch of Holistic Resource Management.

The Stockmen's Solution



Holistic Resource Management notwithstanding, ranchers have other plans for our public land. In 1983 the Public Lands Council, the powerful association of public lands graziers mentioned earlier, listed its set of alternatives in *The Western Livestock Industry and the Public Lands*. The following quotes from that publication are generally representative of the public ranching establishment:

- . . . *public lands must be managed on the local level by persons very close to the land.* [They want self-regulation on public land.]
- . . . *we believe, first, that private ownership and operation of the nation's land resources are in the national interest* [They want all BLM and Forest Service land and "national grasslands **erving no real purpose**" (emphasis added) transferred to local and state levels, eventually to be sold "at reasonable low cost," or transferred "free" to ranchers.]
- *There are many sound and logical reasons why the continued and even expanded use of federal range by domestic livestock are in the national interest.* [They want currently ungrazed National Parks and Monuments, Wildlife Refuges, Recreation Areas, Wildernesses, and more opened up to ranching.]
- . . . *new law is needed that will provide the producers with long-term, assured, preferential tenure* [They want more or less permanent grazing permits.]
- *In the event the permittee is deprived of further use of an improvement by the act of the government . . . the appraised value . . . should be due and payable to him.* [If the government should deny a permittee use of a range development he helped finance -- no matter how little he contributed -- the government must pay the permittee full cash value for that development.]
- . . . *we believe that the production of adequate food and fiber and the maintenance of the economic stability of the dependent local communities is of even greater importance* [than other public land uses]. [They want ranching given highest priority under the "multiple-use" concept.]
- *We therefore recommend . . . new grazing fee structure and formula* [based on a government and industry collaborated grazing fee study]. [They want a new grazing fee formula that results in an *even lower* grazing fee.]
- *The generally adverse actions of the field personnel are resulting in more appeals* [lengthy complaint.] [They want agency range personnel divested of regulatory powers.]
- *Accordingly, we recommend that title to all waters arising on or flowing over federal lands, be transferred to the states* [They want possession of all waters on or flowing across federal land -- most Western water -- transferred to the states so they may obtain exclusive rights to it.]

They don't want much, do they? They resemble terribly spoiled, bad-tempered (century-old) children, having always gotten their way, yet relentlessly demanding more and more.

In January 1989, the industry gathered for a special conference to consider how to combat growing opposition to public lands ranching. A subsequent report appeared in the Wildlife Management Institute's *Outdoor News Bulletin* (2-10-89):

Apparently over-indulging in loco weed, some attendees at the National Conference on Federal Lands held in Las Vegas, Nevada last month drafted federal legislation that would turn public lands over to livestock graziers Among the authors are the Public Lands Council and the Woolgrowers.

Among other things, the draft would designate "grazing areas" on 307 million acres of Bureau of Land Management and national forest land. Those areas would be dedicated to the "commodity benefit of the American people," specifically the grazing of domestic livestock. It would recognize a "possessory interest" of grazing permittees in public lands. It would designate "grazing enterprise zones" and would transfer those lands to the permittee free, where it is determined that more than 50% of the "split estate values" (i.e., water rights, stock tanks, cattle guards, fences, etc.) are in private ownership. It would prohibit the federal government from acquiring western water rights from the states, and would prohibit Uncle Sam from cancelling grazing permits. It would declare livestock grazing the "dominant use" among all uses of federal rangeland. It would allow graziers to prohibit wilderness designations, wildlife habitat improvements and about anything else they so choose. And it would repeal all other statutes that conflict with it.

A Committee for Idaho's High Desert official titled the proposal "Sagebrush Rebellion III -- The Permittees Have a Wet Dream." Apparently the bill is serious, however, for the 5-23-89 *Los Angeles Times* reports that ranchers "have been looking around Washington for a member of Congress to sponsor the particularly aggressive piece of legislation." According to the *Times*, the proposed bill, called the National Rangeland Grazing System Act of 1989, would also

make it a felony punishable by 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for BLM workers to "present the private grazing permittee in a false light as a poor or incompetent grazer" by falsifying range conditions. (Stein 1989)

More recently, something called the American Freedom Coalition has been formed to help push the bill through.

Even more recently, Wyoming Representative Hansen has introduced a similar bill -- H.R. 473 -- to the 102nd Congress. This one would amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 so that "Whoever intentionally obstructs the operation of, or harasses any activity permitted under, a grazing permit or lease issued under this Act shall be imprisoned for not more than 5 years, fined in accordance with Title 18, United States Code, or both." This punishment might apply to a Forest Service ranger trying to reduce a stocking level, a hiker interfering with a coyote trap, or a camper throwing rocks at invading cattle.

The stockmen's solution, then, is a bad joke.

The general public has been misinformed that public land is strictly owned by the federal government, and that public land and wildlife should go together. . . we [permittees] have public lands that have an easement on them that comes before the general public and the right to run wildlife on them.

--Catron County Cattle Growers Association, in recent letter to the New Mexico State Game Commission

Cattlemen do not own the public range now; it belongs to you and me But they always acted as if they owned the public range and act so now; they convinced themselves that it belonged to them and they now believe it does; and they are trying to take title to it.

--Bernard De Voto (DeVoto 1955)



If something cannot be manufactured or built or grown without causing irreparable ecological damage, can't we strive to create something to take its place, or simply decide to do without it?

--Brian Tokar, *The Green Alternative*



Thorough examination of the alternatives makes clear that the best long-term solution is the simplest -- **end public lands ranching**. Anything less would be environmentally, economically, socially, and politically irresponsible.

Some environmentalists maintain that ending public lands ranching would punish the concerned permittee along with the reckless. However, while good intentions are nice, even the most conscientious permittee causes significant environmental damage, absorbs public subsidies, etc. Again, *any* kind of ranching is significantly more harmful overall than non-ranching.

The end of public lands ranching could be accomplished in many different ways, none as difficult as might be imagined. We could, as early stockmen did to gain control of the West, drive competitors off at gunpoint, kill the resisters, take their possessions, and burn their houses. That's how The Duke woulda done it!

... It is my decision to implement ALT A. This alternative will:

1. Cancel the existing Term Grazing Permit and close the allotment to grazing...

--"Decision of Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact: Crown King Allotment [Prescott National Forest, Arizona] Management Plan," John W. Holt, District Ranger, Bradshaw Ranger District [Note: The permittee has appealed the decision.]

We could tell ranchers to get their livestock off our land (as has been done on a handful of Western allotments). Stockmen could then continue raising their livestock on private land, or get into another business. A public lands grazing permit should have no inherent value, so no reimbursement would be necessary. This plan is good, but has 2 drawbacks -- (1) due to America's love affair with the cowboy, few people would support it, and (2) ranchers would retain ownership of environmentally critical base properties.

**ENOUGH
IS
ENOUGH!**



The Last Roundup

... the only way to attract the public's attention to the grazing abuses taking place now is to propose eliminating all livestock from our public ranges.

--90-year-old Earl Sandvig, raised on Montana ranch, former cowboy, Forest Service range specialist for 30 years, long-time "responsible management" advocate

Perhaps a more acceptable approach is simply to calculate each permittee's annual AUM value and pay him or his widow that amount (adjusted for inflation) each year for the rest of his life to *not* ranch public land. If the annual rate was based on the grazing fee averaged over the past 10 years (\$1.45/AUM), this would cost the federal government about \$26 million annually -- a small fraction of what it now spends on the industry.

Or, we could figure the capital value of each permittee's AUMs and buy them outright. When ranchers sell federal grazing permits with land to each other, they commonly get from \$25-\$50/AUM. Even if we accept \$50 as the average AUM value, we could buy all 18 million BLM and FS AUMs for about \$900 million -- roughly the amount of taxes spent on public lands ranching in only 1 year. This plan is appealing because it would conclude the whole affair quickly.

Or, we could figure each welfare rancher's annual income from public ranching averaged over, say, a 10-year period and give him or his widow a yearly check for that amount for life (adjusted for inflation). This might amount to about \$500 million annually -- approximately the net value of public lands livestock. This plan is even more unfair to the taxpayer, though still far preferable to the present situation.

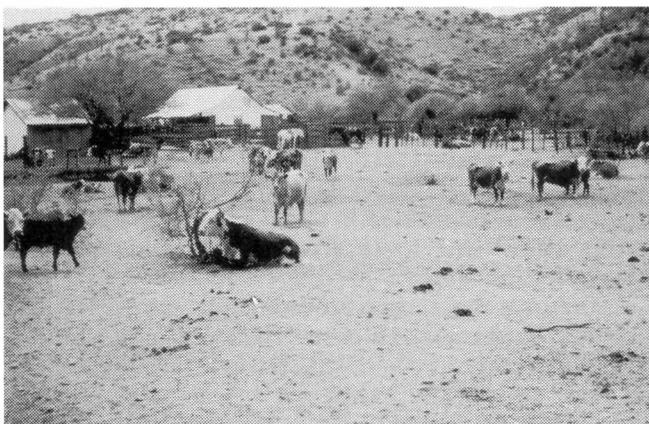
Or, as one anonymous BLM staffer put it:

This nation went into a whole-herd dairy buy-out program to reduce the subsidies being paid to the dairy industry because of abuses and poor policy. Why couldn't we do the same thing to curb abuses of our public lands?

We could simply purchase their livestock and retire their permits and leases.

An economist could figure out the relative advantages and disadvantages of these various methods. We could even let welfare ranchers pick their own kind of subsidy; whatever they chose would be infinitely better than continuing welfare ranching.

These last 4 alternatives are all simple and eminently workable. They do, however, share one significant drawback -- they leave base properties in control of stockmen. Because most owners would continue ranching even without public lands allotments, base properties would continue to be heavily abused. There is also danger of some ranchers ("the original conservationists") selling to developers *out of spite*, as some have blatantly threatened to do if public lands ranching is terminated.



All 30,000 or so public lands ranch headquarters are the foci of huge sacrifice areas.

Aside from ecological considerations, continued ranching of base properties is a monopolization of potential farmland -- level, fertile, well-watered bottomlands, usually located in good growing climates. Rather than barren pastures producing further unneeded livestock, they could instead grow vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains for local communities -- and reduce transportation and storage costs, lower food prices, and provide fresher, more healthful produce. Though generally they would have to work harder, many ex-public lands ranchers could turn to farming, and probably make more money directly from their operations. To this end the government could offer financial incentives by redirecting funds formerly expended on public lands ranching.

Former ranchers could also turn their former base properties into dude ranches, bed-and-breakfast operations, hunting and fishing camps, or centers for environmental study, Nature appreciation, horseback riding, historical tours, and pack and float trips. Ex-ranchers could rent out cabins or provide meals and services to public land travelers. All these enterprises would be enhanced by improved environmental quality. Already they provide a major source of income for many ranchers.

Governments could minimize development and other abuse of former base properties by strictly enforcing environmental laws, as well as zoning, building, and health regulations. And, as explained earlier, many former base properties would probably be purchased by more environmentally conscious owners.

Again, however, it would be much better for the 22,000 (or 30,000, including all public lands) Western base properties (and other environmentally critical private ranchlands) to be returned to public ownership. Remember, too, that many, if not most, base properties originally were transferred to private ownership through various degrees of fraud. Leaving them in private hands is inviting continued environmental disaster.

Several methods of public acquisition could be employed. Perhaps the simplest but least effective would be a program of voluntary sale. An ex-public lands rancher wishing to sell a former base property would be encouraged to sell to the government, which would then place it with the most appropriate land managing agency. Incentives could include offers of more than fair market value, waivers of related taxes and fees, and lucrative trades for environmentally less important government holdings.

Or, an ex-rancher wishing to sell could be required to sell to the government. In the meantime, periodic payments could be made to compensate him for stipulations permitting no sale, development, or abuse of the land. A modified version of this scenario would allow an ex-ranchman to retain ownership until death, at which time ownership would revert to the government and money reflecting the value of the land would be disbursed to the deceased's heirs.

However, the best solution *** **THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE** *** is simply to buy out all ranches, range developments, and AUMs, lock, "stock," and barrel, and be done with it!

Make no mistake; in the short run this would be expensive. At \$500,000 apiece (probably close to average value), the 22,000 Western BLM and Forest Service base properties would cost about \$11 billion. If the roughly \$1 billion in

federal, state, and county taxes currently spent each year on public lands ranching was carefully redirected to purchase former base properties, this amount could be raised in 11 years. Or it might be borrowed against this annual revenue. Many additional funding possibilities exist. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, set up in 1965 with revenue from offshore oil drilling, provides up to \$900 million annually for federal land acquisitions. According to the House Water and Power Resources Subcommittee staff, between \$260 million and \$376 million in taxes is spent annually to supply federally subsidized water for irrigation of surplus crops (a large percentage of which are for livestock). As mentioned, ranchers receive millions annually in subsidies for irrigation for livestock purposes. These wasted subsidies, and many others, could instead fund land purchases. The US plans to spend \$303 billion (directly) on "defense" in 1990, but only \$14 billion to protect the environment -- a ratio of 22 to 1. If Congress would forego a few unneeded Stealth bombers or nuclear missiles, or reduce Star Wars, the full \$11 billion could be redirected easily. Redirection of federal Department of Defense cutbacks could easily provide this amount. Private funding also could be raised, with tax write-offs as added incentives. Conservation, animal rights, recreational, hunting and fishing, scientific, educational, and other groups and individuals could raise millions of dollars. The point is, the money can be raised if there is the demand. Even if a special tax had to be levied to raise the \$11 billion, it would cost only \$44 per US citizen -- a small price to pay for perhaps the greatest environmental restoration program in world history.

If full funding was not immediately forthcoming, a program of systematic acquisition could be implemented. The most environmentally important properties would be priority acquisitions, while environmental safeguards were applied to the remainder.

As for the ex-public lands rancher, he (though loath to admit it) has over the years become financially and psychologically dependent on government aid, like many other welfare recipients. Some of the poorer welfare ranchers are "trapped" in their "profession," just as some other welfare recipients come to depend permanently on government assistance as their means of survival.

A phase-out could be implemented gradually so as not to cause undue hardship and allow ex-welfare ranchers time to readjust to the free enterprise system. Livestock reductions could be made in stages over 5 or 10 years, with compensatory payments made at each stage, perhaps also providing time to raise funds for purchasing base properties.

Using the annual \$50 million or so (beyond grazing fee receipts) previously expended as BLM and FS range funding, former welfare ranchers might be temporarily employed to help rehabilitate the public land they damaged; who would (should) know better the problems they caused? This positive work would provide them excellent karmic therapy. They could help round up feral cattle; reintroduce extirpated species; dismantle and recycle fences, corrals, stock tanks and other range detriments; close and revegetate ranching roads; restore riparian and sacrifice areas; manually remove exotics; and so on. Ranch structures could be disassembled and recycled, or turned into visitor and management centers. As restoration proceeded,

former welfare ranchers could gradually be placed in other professions, some created by improved local environmental and economic conditions.

Other federal, state, county, and city welfare ranchers likewise could be placed in this rehabilitation program, as could many private lands (semi-welfare) ranchers. More than half of the West would then be freed from ranching. The tiny drop in the US beef supply could be compensated in perhaps 5 to 10 years by the continued reduction in beef consumption; or additional cattle be raised in the East, where pastures are 20 to 30 times more livestock-productive than Western rangeland.

Further, even if all 30,000 ex-public lands ranchers had to find new occupations (in reality, only a small percentage would) or go on "welfare" (direct government financial aid), their number would be insignificant on the national scale. For example, during the past 20 years more than 300,000 US railroad workers had to find different jobs (US Dept. of Com. 1987), and their financial plight was far more serious than that of generally well-endowed public lands graziers. Did we shed buckets of tears for the ex-railroad workers? Did we keep them in the railroad business at any cost? And what about the many parts of the country currently experiencing a labor shortage?

All I want to do is get their cows off our property. Let those cowboys and ranchers find some harder way to make a living like the rest of us have to do. There's no good reason why we should subsidize them forever. They've had a free ride. It's time for them to support themselves.

--Edward Abbey (Abbey 1986)

One of the main obstacles to wise management and protection of Western public land is the confusing land ownership pattern. Western history's great variety of government land disposal programs and agency acquisitions has produced a complicated array of land owners and administrators. Moreover, it has created a complex intermixture of land uses that often conflict with one another. Much of the West exhibits such a hopeless hodge-podge of owners, administrators, and uses that effective management and environmental protection are essentially impossible.

The National Park Service and US Fish & Wildlife Service have minimized this problem by acquiring large, solid blocks of land, as has the US military by default (though, still, few if any of these areas are large enough to preserve whole ecosystems intact, and most if not all are abused). Much Forest Service land likewise is relatively cohesive, though large sections in some areas are checkerboarded, and almost all National Forests are plagued with small inholdings -- mostly ranches in the best riparian areas or scattered patented mining claims. Most BLM, state, and county land is intermixed in a checkerboarded or chaotic jumble of properties with a diversity of government administrators and private owners.

Therefore, the various governments should strive to eliminate haphazard and checkerboarded ownership patterns. To repeat, first and foremost the public should eliminate ranching on its land and buy all base properties, most of which are inholdings or adjacent to public land. This is a crucial step toward wise and effective public land administration and toward protecting whole ecosystems

intact. Furthermore, the public should buy other inholdings and adjacent private land and trade fragmented public land for adjoining private land to block up and consolidate public land.

Perhaps more importantly, the BLM, Forest Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, and several other federal land management agencies could be eliminated and replaced with an entirely new, simpler, and more effective land managing entity. This would eliminate much confusion, red tape, duplication of effort, agency squabbling, and bureaucratic imperialism. This new entity could be called the **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LAND (DPL)**. States, counties, cities, and private entities could also place land into DPL administration, and foreign nations would be encouraged to create similar programs. To prevent the centralization and abuse of power, local governments could maintain general administrative control, with basic environmental protection laws applying and mandated integrated public participation.

The DPL concept is based on minimum land management and maximum protection of environmental quality, with encouragement of responsible human use. Indeed, this land would be open to all -- never for a fee -- as the most **PUBLIC** of all land.

Therefore, only non-commercial, low-impact uses would be permitted. Ranching, logging, commercial woodcutting, mining, buildings, roads, dams, utilities, and all other commercial uses and significant new developments would be banned. So would off-road vehicular travel and other medium- to high-impact activities, including those whose *cumulative* impact was significant. Hunting, fishing, plant food and material gathering, woodcutting, rockhounding, and other non-commercial consumptive uses would be responsibly regulated where necessary, and a fee equal to the market value of the resource taken charged. Campgrounds and recreational areas would be simple, with a minimum of development. Sensitive areas would be off-limits until recovery. Natural fire would be reintroduced and other natural processes would be allowed to proceed unimpeded. After prolonged, devastating abuse, public land finally would be allowed to begin natural restoration.

Artificial restoration of damaged public land would also be a major initial function of the Department of Public Land. In the early years, most of the roughly 50,000 former agency personnel could use their acquired skills to remove feral cattle, dismantle fences and other range "improvements," disassemble and recycle structural developments, close and revegetate roads, restore mined and logged-over areas, remove exotic plants and animals, reintroduce natives, and so on. Others would monitor the results. Gradually, as the most urgent tasks were completed and ecosystems began to heal, perhaps 30,000 of the 50,000-member staff would be transferred to other jobs in the public and private sector (some of which would be created by improved environmental quality), leaving a semi-permanent staff of only about 20,000. (Statistics derived from US government publications.)

Because DPL would make so much of our current federal land management bureaucracy and subsidization obsolete, and because the recovering land would be more productive for other uses, the federal, state, and local taxpayers ultimately would save billions of dollars (not to mention

roughly equivalent private savings). Though the agencies that would become DPL now spend over \$4 billion annually, they take in only about \$3 billion from commercial users each year, causing a \$1 billion annual deficit to the US Treasury (derived from US government statistics). The consolidated, simplified DPL would spend only about \$1 billion annually, meaning the federal government would break even immediately. However, non-commercial, consumptive use revenue would increase along with environmental health and reduced competition, and, with other revenue generated from a recovering environment (money not spent by government on flood control, water acquisition, etc.), could be funnelled to DPL, making it revenue-producing.

With the billions of federal dollars saved through the years, the public could purchase and protect additional land under DPL. The system could eventually encompass half or more of the area of the US, including large portions of the East. Commercial exploitation would then be restricted almost exclusively to private land. Since only 3% of this country's livestock and (according to various sources) only 13%-20% of its wood products (72% of US forest is private) come from public land, this production lost would be minor, as would the compensatory additional strain on private land (all environmental laws should likewise apply to private land). As a large percentage of energy and minerals is derived from public lands, reduced production of energy and mineral "resources" would present a greater challenge, but could be compensated through conservation, increased recycling, increased efficiency, and reduced human population. (In fact, DPL could have a beneficial "reverse effect" on our political/economic system, slowing population growth.)

The Department of Public Land idea is based on a faith that Nature manages itself best -- *as it has for 5 billion years* -- but with a belief that Nature and humans are inseparable. DPL's ultimate function would be to ensure that public land remained natural, with natural human use.

This system of environmental protection (or something like it) could help carry the world through these times of anthropogenic crisis. It could provide a setting for humans and Nature to *coexist*, where we could rediscover our connection to the natural world and where Nature could proceed unhampered, neither off limits to the public nor vulnerable to destructive exploitation. It could help prepare the way for a future human existence based on oneness -- not conflict -- with the Earth. In short, the idea could evolve into a return to a healthy, natural world.

Cattle growers feel bashed these days, but the truth is that we have indulged them beyond belief. In what other business could a few people hold much of the continent hostage to a destructive industry with a trivial output? If any other tenants did to our property what cattle growers have done, they'd be booted out in a flash.

All the same, our nostalgia for the Old West makes us long for a happy medium. Isn't there a way to permit grazing at some non-destructive level?

A century of grim experience argues that there isn't. The only sound approach to grazing would be a rest and rotation system that would allow such low numbers of cattle that it would be hard to tell it from an outright ban.

. . . Arguing about how many cattle should be allowed on our public lands is like arguing about how many termites we

should permit in our houses. Ranchers should be given enough time to conquer their addiction to using our public lands. After that, the cattle should go.

--Donald M. Peters, Phoenix, Arizona, Guest Column, 5-30-90 *The Arizona Republic* (Peters 1990)

Livestock grazing abuse has and is scarring most of the public lands in the west that I have seen . . . Livestock grazing should be eliminated from all public lands in the United States.

--Edwin G. Dimick, 28 year veteran of FS, SCS, and BLM, **Livestock Pillage of Our Western Public Lands** (Dimick 1990)

