DEALING WITH MEDIA

Lorraine B. Kingdon[1]

Why deal with media? Quite simply, because people pay attention to newspapers, magazines, radio and television — and because agriculture is in the news. According to a recent study, 84 percent of Americans watch TV every day; 75 percent take at least 45 minutes every day to read a newspaper; 75 percent listen to the radio (but most of them aren't paying full attention); 94 percent read at least one magazine every month; and 50 percent read a book a month. People say they're extremely interested in stories about the environment, and as ranchers, you're often part of the environmental news coverage (Yarbrough, 1991).

Take a good look at today's news. Almost every day the press, television and radio report on the many kinds of trouble faced by individuals, small businesses, farmers — and unfortunately much too often, ranchers. You've seen them.

- Grazing fees are too low, an unfair subsidy to ranchers who, the article says, shouldn't be on our public land anyway.
- Cows are degrading our desert lands, tearing them down beyond repair.
- Ranchers want to shoot elk because they're eating forage that belongs to the cattle.
- Ranchers are shooting, poisoning, destroying our wildlife heritage, and their cows are endangering tortoises.

Sometimes the words are inflammatory; sometimes the stories are more or less accurate; sometimes just the quotes are misleading. What's going on? Unfortunately, it's all too easy to automatically blame the reporters, the editors, the TV anchors. If blame is to be allotted, some of it belongs to you, as well as the media. To get your side of the story told, you need to be able to deal knowledgeably with media.

You need to know the rules when you play with the pros. Understanding how reporters operate — and why — can help ensure that both sides of an issue are presented accurately and fairly. Taking the time to understand how reporters work pays off.

You also may need to change your attitudes about reporters. Colleen Patrick put it this way in her book, ***Mind Over Media***:

> "It is always surprising for me to discover how intimidated people often are of the media. Seeing it as devil or angel, most non-media people tend to attribute a monstrous amount of power to the industry and the people who work in it. More often than not, this much adulation is undeserved.
>
> Occasionally, the full impact of the communications industry devastates or inspires to a magnificent degree, but generally you (yes, you!) can also find a way to influence the coverage about which you are concerned. It means getting your message through to the right people and presenting it in a manner to which they will be receptive.
>
> Remember, in the world of media you are dealing with human beings who work with a communications product—a communication product which deals with stories about people or that affect people in one way or another. You have as much a right to approach them as anyone else."
>
> (Patrick, 1987)

Most reporters are generalists, trained to be journalists, not ranchers. They know how to write news so it can be understood. In small papers, reporters may cover the general call-in news, schools, the local business community and even the city hall and police. On larger papers, reporters may rotate from one type of news to another. And, they're always on a deadline that allows little time for serious consideration of subtleties or details. Unfortunately, most reporters rarely are given the luxury of true investigative reporting, spending months learning about one topic in great depth.

The journalistic theory of "balanced reporting" causes more misunderstanding than practically any other practice. In the media, "balance" means that all sides of a controversy are given a chance to state their position. As a rancher, you and an environmental activist may fight it out in the same article, and the readers are supposed to make up their own minds.

Problems enter when one side states a position more clearly than the other. Or, one side may make arguments not backed by facts. Reporters are supposed to be totally objective, but they're human and bias can enter.

Environment-related stories sell here in the Southwest because we have what is recognized as a sensitive, delicate desert. Also, Tucson and Phoenix are largely populated by recent urban immigrants from vastly different climates in the Midwest and East. These migrants are unfamiliar with the West's wide open spaces and often have preconceived negative ideas about ranching. Reporters are often urbanites, too.

Your first step should be approaching reporters with the right attitude. If you start out by assuming the reporter and the editor and everyone else associated with media are biased, deliberately misinterpreting the facts—that they are liars and scoundrels—don't be surprised if you continue getting a negative press. You're entitled to your feelings about the news coverage ranchers have received, but you harm your credibility if you lose your temper. **No matter what the provocation, keep your cool.**

No matter whether you approach the media or they come to you, you need to know what "news" means. And there are definitions — hundreds of them. Basically, "news" equals information that people **want** to find out about or **need** to find out about. A more cynical definition says that "news" is whatever an editor decides to print or put on radio or TV that day. If you believe you have a story that should be told, ask yourself:

- Is it local?
- Is it unusual? Unique?
- How timely — if the story isn't told this week, is it gone?
- How are people touched, involved, entertained?
- Which people? How many? Where are they?
- Does it solve a problem — or cause one?
- Why do people need to know? (That's the most basic question of all, and the one most often forgotten.)

All right, you have a story idea that will benefit ranchers; now what do you do with it? Abandon the idea that you must write a news release; that job is for the pros who work in the media. Let's assume you want publicity for an event —your local cattle growers organization is holding a meeting to talk about mountain lion predation that has suddenly increased dramatically. First question: Is the public invited? If not, don't bother calling the media because

they only give publicity to events their readers can attend. Second question: Are the media invited?

Is the meeting going to present worthwhile information? Nothing will hurt your credibility more with your audience and the media than a highly publicized event that just doesn't amount to much.

Plan ahead to publicize your meeting. If you want to use magazines, get the information to them at least three months in advance. Simply write a letter or call the editor; be sure to provide the famous "**5 W's and the H**:" **Who, What, When, Where, Why** and **How**. Whatever you do, **DON'T** call or write anyone until you have all your facts, figures and ideas well thought out.

You'll need the same information for daily and weekly newspapers, but don't send it to them until two weeks in advance. Direct your letters to the proper editor, by name not merely by title. If you don't know who that is, call the paper and find out.

If you want to involve television in meeting coverage, use a slightly different approach to the assignment editor. The TV news very rarely will give advance notice of an event unless it has widespread importance. They may send a reporter and a camera to be at the meeting if:

- your topic is controversial (The suggested meeting fits that criterion.); or
- your speakers are well-known; or
- your topic is greatly important to the area; and
- you have something visual going on (so-called "talking heads" are usually considered boring).

Persistence is another key to coverage. Keep trying to interest the media in your story. After you've sent the letter with your news tip, call the editor. Be business-like but friendly. And remember deadlines. Deadlines are part of the everyday world reporters face, and the deadlines are always tight. Only the outbreak of a worldwide catastrophe "stops the presses," despite what you may have seen in the movies. TV Evening News goes on exactly on schedule, not a moment later.

In general, the following deadlines are appropriate (but always check with your media ahead of time, and never, ever call within an hour of the deadline):

- weekly newspapers often go to press on Wednesday, with deadlines for copy on the previous day;
- copy deadlines for morning daily papers are usually about midnight for the last edition;
- for afternoon daily papers, the deadlines range from 8 a.m. to noon, depending on the number of editions printed;
- television can go live, using their remote facilities. Otherwise, for a 5 p.m. newscast, reporters want to be back at the studio to edit their video by 2 p.m. The deadline for the late evening newscast is usually 7 p.m.
- If the radio station has regular newscasts, call the station just about any time; ask when the news director has time to talk.

News releases and newscasts are not the only way to get your story told. For example, if the newspaper has an editorial policy favorable to ranching, perhaps you can persuade the editorial board to express an opinion. This is a long shot except in smaller papers. If you're a good writer, try getting a column on the op-ed page; this is, logically enough, the page opposite the editorial page.

The "Letters to the Editor" section is one of the most heavily read parts of every paper, so it's a good place to reply to news articles or editorials. Use such letters to correct mistakes rather than trying for a retraction; more people will read your letter. Here are some guidelines:

- Limit your letter to one specific subject.
- Use a news "hook." Continue the debate on an issue currently in front of the public.
- Write in a calm, logical manner. Don't rant or rave. Use unbiased expert sources and quote relevant statistics.
- Be careful about using humor or sarcasm. People either will not take you seriously or they will misinterpret. In either case, your point will be lost.
- Write to your local paper or specialized publications as well as the metropolitan papers. But don't write identical letters or ones that look like form letters.
- If you write about the same subject too frequently, you run the risk of diluting your credibility. Ask a friend to write.
- Always sign your letters. Include your name, title, address and daytime phone number so the paper can contact you to verify that you actually sent the letter. At that point, you can ask that your name be withheld.

Radio and television have alternatives to the news, also. They both have talk shows, and talk shows need guests. Think it through before you decide on this type of publicity. You'll be on the air much longer than you are during a 90-second news spot. How do you look on-camera? How do you sound on the mike? Listen to the show. How good is the interviewer? How sympathetic to the guests? Even more important, does the show reach the people you want to convince?

Up to this point, I've assumed **YOU** want to talk to the media. It's just as likely that the **MEDIA** will want to talk to you. Suddenly, you're the pursued, not the pursuer. And, you're in a new ball game.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA — PRINT

If reporters call on the telephone, first get their names and where they work; then find out what information they're interested in. At that point, decide whether you're willing to cooperate. Is this an issue you know enough about? Is this a reputable newspaper? There's a big difference between the Arizona Daily Star and the National Inquirer.

Encourage a face-to-face interview. You'll communicate more clearly because you'll be able to detect when the reporter doesn't understand, and you can clear up confusion immediately. However, sometimes deadlines don't allow a meeting in person.

When you're talking on the phone, identify yourself clearly. Spell your name and have the reporter spell it back. If the reporter has only one or two questions — and you know the answers — give the information promptly. If you need to look something up, say so. If you're not the authority they ought to be talking to, say so and suggest another name. Ranching is a complex business that varies from one part of Arizona to another. If it's necessary to call back later, tell the reporter when you can have the information; ask if that will be convenient, and always follow through. If you have a FAX available, ask about sending information this way.

Never forget, an interview with a reporter is not a conversation, no matter how friendly. It's a highly structured situation, and your role is to communicate as much information as possible about a particular topic, probably as quickly as possible.

Reporters are always on tight deadline. Don't let this fact keep you from controlling the interview. Rarely will the information be valuable only today. Let the reporters know that you understand deadlines and respect them. But also let them know that you will not be pressured to rush into an answer until you get your facts straight. Many issues are complex, and there may be times when a written, not a verbal, answer is more appropriate. Don't try to explain a highly complicated issue over the phone to a reporter who doesn't know much about ranching. You're inviting a story with errors and misquotes.

"No comment" is a reply that will invariably get you into trouble. It will only make reporters suspicious and lead to innuendos or negative references in the story. People who read the articles will have their doubts about you, also. If reporters ask you for information you can't give out — or don't want to — say so and say why.

Sometimes reporters will ask you to comment on a controversial issue, promising that your name won't be used without your permission. "Off the record" is fine if you're a national politician; if you're not, stay away from it. Newspaper editors occasionally insist on using names — no matter what promises the reporter has given during an interview. Comment on controversy if you want, but only if you're willing to see your name in print. Also, anything you say at a public meeting is fair game for reporters. "Off the record" is legally impossible to uphold; don't even try.

When you give a personal opinion on any subject, identify it as such. Make sure the reporter understands that you are speaking for yourself, not other ranchers or your professional organizations.

Answer questions seriously. Watch your sense of humor. Being flippant or funny may appear cold and cynical in print. Being friendly and casual are fine but quite different from making inappropriate jokes.

Don't talk jargon. Reporters are trained journalists and usually know very little about ranching. An "AUM" is incomprehensible. They can't write responsibly and accurately unless they understand exactly what you mean. Good reporters will dig until they're satisfied they know what you're talking about, but don't assume all reporters have the time, the expertise, or the willingness to interpret you. So, start out with uncomplicated language and try to explain what you mean in more than one way. Phrase your answers with a Phoenix reader in mind — someone who probably came from "back East" and couldn't tell a cow from a goat at six feet on a clear day.

If you know the subject ahead of the interview, think through your answers. Have in mind one or two key points that you want the reporter to mention in the finished story. Put them as clearly and as succinctly as you can. Get your points in early, even if you have to redirect the questions.

Think of stories that illustrate your point; use colorful language, but not profanity. Reporters will use a colorful, pithy quote word for word — accurately. This is usually (unless your quote is too colorful) preferable to a paraphrased quote that may or may not be accurately used.

Be positive, not defensive, even though the reporter may phrase the question in a negative way. For example, if the reporter asks, "Why

should you be subsidized with cheap grazing fees?" Resist answering, "Grazing fees aren't subsidies!" Instead, talk about the environmentally favorable things you routinely do on public lands.

Don't let reporters put words in your mouth. If you don't like the way a question is worded, either deny it or give a positive response. Don't simply repeat the question while you think of an answer. In other words, don't say, "Some people think grazing fees are a subsidy, but . . ." Tomorrow's story could read, "Rancher admits grazing fees are a subsidy." Don't be misdirected by the reporter's questions. Questions don't get printed; your answers do. Watch out for "So in other words..." Reporters are trying to interpret what you said and get points down clearly. Be certain their rephrasing is accurate.

Control the interview. Constantly remind yourself that you must remain in control. Don't wait for reporters to ask the right question; do it for them. Smile; look at them directly, and say, pleasantly, "That's an interesting question, but it's more important to consider. . ." Take an active role; don't hesitate to offer pertinent information — a different angle — a piece of human interest. You're the expert, but make sure the information you offer backs up the major points you've decided to discuss. On the other hand, don't let reporters side-track you or lead the interview in directions you don't want to go.

Spell all names and double-check on figures. If possible support your interview with written material, if you have time to locate it before the reporters come. If you have a FAX machine, offer to send corroborating material to the reporter's office, before their deadline.

Sometimes the question is obviously biased — or contains what you know to be untrue. The reporter may be playing a game, hoping to get you annoyed, hoping to get an off-guard comment. Or, the reporter may simply be misinformed. Correct the misinformation, but don't repeat it in your answer, particularly on a radio or TV talk show.

> **"The reason:** *The more people hear the lie, the more they believe it. If the question includes the lie and you reiterate it before giving the accurate information, the lie has been heard twice, the truth only once. One response could be, "That's not true," then give the correct information.***"** (Patrick, 1987)

What about "dumb" questions? If reporters had time to do some background research into ranching, they wouldn't embarrass you — and themselves — by asking totally irrelevant, inane questions. It's not a good idea, obviously, to belittle the reporters. They control what appears in the newspaper, after all. Just smile politely to acknowledge the question, and then say what you want to say; your answer need not directly relate to the question.

I can't repeat it too often: know what you want to say and how you can best get your point of view across. You may have days or hours to plan your side of the interview, or you may have to make those decisions in minutes. Very often, you can't afford to extrapolate, to ad lib. To be blunt about it, when you've said what you want to say — shut up.

A friendly, listening attitude is still one of the best tools a reporter can cultivate. Good interviewers ask questions that demand more than a "yes" or a "no"; they ask for the "why" and "how." They invite you to continue explaining. They listen deeply. They try by their questions and even their body language to inspire you to answer clearly and fully. That's all well and good, but don't be "listened" into saying anything you don't want included in the story.

If you've been misquoted in the past —

and you're worrying about it happening again — tell the reporter. Ask for cooperation; reporters want to be accurate. Volunteer to clarify any information, on the phone if necessary. ***Don't*** ask to see the reporter's story before publication. You can't — you won't — and it's journalistically naive to even ask the question. Also, ***don't*** expect to see the magazine before it goes to print.

If you have complaints about the printed article, go to the reporter first. Talk to the editor, who supervises reporters, only if you can't get satisfaction from the reporter. A retraction may not be in order, but letting reporters and editors know about outright errors is important. If you don't, the error may be repeated in subsequent articles by other reporters using the original stories as background material. If the paper has an ombudsman, be sure to include that person in your complaint.

Another word about retractions. They're usually brief and buried somewhere on a back page. They rarely reach the same readers who may have paid attention to the error. On the other hand, realize that most people read quickly and forget fast; the errors may not be remembered. Well, you can hope they aren't.

INTERVIEWS — BROADCAST

Most of the preceding recommendations also apply to broadcast media, but here are a few additions:

Be brief. Summarize your major points in 15-20 second "sound bites". It's not easy, and yes, you leave out a great deal of important material, but whoever said television was fair? The average recorded quote in a broadcast news story runs under 30 seconds; it's more like 15 seconds. The shorter your answers, the less editing they'll get.

That doesn't mean you answer all the reporter's questions in 15 seconds. Just make sure that somewhere in your longer answer, you summarize. The average news piece is two minutes or less — unless the station is reporting a large-scale disaster or the latest sex-related, notorious trial. These time constraints mean that only the barest essentials of any story get on the air, no matter how complicated the issue seems to you. Avoid time-consuming details, rambling explanations and complicated answers. However, remember that as long as you're hooked up to the microphone, what you say can be used in the broadcast.

Deadlines for broadcast reporters are even tighter than they are for print reporters. News broadcasts occur within a fraction of a second of the time they're scheduled. Reporters really don't have much time to listen to casual conversation.

Photographers and TV camera crews want the most dramatic pictures possible. Again, you need to be in control. Show them your lushest pasture, and don't go by way of an eroded stream bank.

Of course, it's a different ball game if ranching is the topic of a half-hour or hour-long documentary; these literally take months to prepare and tape. If you're asked to be a guest on such a program, I suggest you get intensive training. You're apt to need it!

Because they broadcast so frequently, radio reporters can be demanding. They want your statement NOW! Again, don't allow yourself to be pressured. There will be another newscast in a half-hour or an hour. Trying to answer a question when you don't have adequate information is a quick way to get into trouble.

When broadcast reporters call you, they do so because they've received a specific assignment from their assignment director. They are under tight

deadlines; they're rarely interested in hearing ideas for other possible stories. Ideas go directly to the station's assignment director.

SUMMARY

The job you do (or don't do) when the media call on you can have a great deal of influence on what people think about ranchers and ranching. It's a job worth doing well. Always be honest, factual, friendly. You can only lie once to reporters; after that, they will doubt everything you say. Show that you're proud and enthusiastic about ranching.

If the article or broadcast is well done, tell the reporters. Better yet, tell their editor. Reporters don't get many compliments, and they'll remember you favorably forever.

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Arizona Ranchers' Management Guide
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SUSTAINABLE RANCHING

George Ruyle [1]

Sustainable agriculture (SA) is a concept that is increasingly being used to describe food production systems that maintain natural resources without large inputs of synthetic chemicals. In practice SA includes social and environmental aspects of resource management in addition to production. Farming and ranching are now accountable to public scrutiny as never before.

The concept of SA is not new to range livestock production. In fact, the use of range forage by livestock on a sustained basis is the topic of some of the earliest range management literature. Methods to detect overgrazing and the application of basic grazing management principles were developed to ensure continued livestock production on rangelands.

Central to the sustainable agriculture theme is the integration of ecological principles into agronomic practices. Range livestock production provided perhaps the earliest practical application of ecology as a natural science. As the science of ecology developed early in this century, so did the application of ecological principles to the management of rangelands. For example, as early as 1917 range managers recognized that various plant species and communities were reliable indicators of overgrazing. Range management continues to use native species and habitats as standards against which to judge the impacts of grazing practices. The current move towards "ecologically-based" agriculture is a continuation of this development.

The sustainability of livestock grazing largely depends upon the inherent carrying capacity of the land and the level of management applied. While not all rangelands should be grazed, sustainable levels of livestock grazing can be accommodated in all but the most extreme environments. To stay in business ranchers must not only conserve this productive potential of the land, they must also plan and manage for environmental enhancement. A major goal of sustainable range livestock production is to harvest range forage without reducing the rangelands' future potential to produce vegetation. But there are other precepts to the concept of sustainability besides maintaining future options for the land.

Obviously the concept of sustainability does not just include environmental considerations. Limits to livestock grazing are imposed biologically, economically, legally and socially. Strict analysis of costs and returns are no longer enough to justify management decisions. Range livestock production requires both short-term and long-term analysis. Long-term economic returns are often emphasized when conservation projects are undertaken while economic measures seem less adequate to measure resource conservation over the shorter-term. A combination of economic and environmental analysis is required to assess proposed conservation measures.

Today, range livestock production operations must strive for sustainable forage utilization without jeopardizing future uses of the rangeland. Society's values may further constrain levels of production not associated with environmental limits, especially where public land grazing is involved. Rangeland resource managers have the added responsibility to document that their management practices

indeed meet all of the demands that sustainability implies.

Current approaches to developing indexes of sustainability for a variety of rangeland uses are focusing on soil protection as the characteristic most directly related to maintaining potential site productivity. Accelerated soil erosion is as old as agriculture itself and continues to be a major problem today.

Vegetation will nevertheless continue to be a major indicator of rangeland conditions and therefore part of the index to whether or not current uses are sustainable. Particular plant communities may not be as important to future potentials as they are to current uses. However, plant communities are not static. They change with climate, species availability and other factors. Additionally, management practices will not always control vegetation change. While some simplistically believe that only complete removal of livestock will correct past damage from overgrazing, rangelands will not necessarily return to previous conditions simply by alleviating livestock grazing.

The SA approach to range livestock production involves meeting future objectives which may or may not relate to past vegetation types. The demands placed on rangelands are also changing resulting in changing demands for products and values. Maintaining a particular vegetation may not be feasible or desirable over the long-term, but maintaining the productive potential of the land is.

To ranchers and other land managers who serve as natural resource stewards, sustainability is often an implicit responsibility. But the public needs to become more aware of the processes that lead to sustainable uses of rangelands. Sustainable range livestock production is achieved through the thoughtful application of science and experience and documented through monitoring resource values and production levels.

The idea of sustainable ranching may serve as a rallying point for forward-thinking natural resource planning and management rather than the popular focus on past abuses. As Dr. Neil West of Utah State University recently wrote “the bigger issue is protecting the ability of the land to produce into the future.” Ranching practices that consider broad environmental and community issues are basic to the concept of sustainable agriculture.

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COORDINATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

William E. Frost[1] and George B. Ruyle[2]

Increasing demand for natural resources has resulted in intensified conflicts between interest groups, land users and resource management agencies. Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) has evolved as a means for reducing these conflicts and reaching mutually agreeable management strategies. In recognition of this process the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension System, USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Soil Conservation Service, and the Arizona State Land Department have signed a Memorandum of Understanding supporting and encouraging the use of CRM in Arizona. In addition, the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts and the Arizona Game and Fish Department signed the memorandum as witnesses, adding their support to the process.

WHAT IS CRM?

Coordinated Resource Management is a process by which natural resource owners, managers, users and related interests work together as a team to formulate and implement plans for the management of all major resources and ownerships within a specific area and/or resolve specific conflicts. The purpose of CRM is to resolve conflicts or issues that may hinder or preclude sound resource management decisions. It can also be proactive in planning for improvement of natural resources and is based upon the belief that people with common interests can work together to develop viable management strategies. The goal of CRM is to enhance the quality and productivity of natural resources by achieving compatibility among the multiple uses in a specific area. The objective is to improve and maintain natural resources in ways consistent with the priorities of the landowners, land users, interest groups and land management agencies.

Coordinated Resource Management is a voluntary, non-regulatory process that uses consensus as the strength of the process. Land owners, users, managers and other interested parties work together as a team from beginning to end. The exchange of values and viewpoints on objectives, problems and alternatives is essential to achieving common goals and meeting resource needs. The most effective process is one which involves the local community from the outset and where the regulating agency is comfortable with the local community being involved at the highest level of decision making.

CARDINAL RULES OF CRM

CRM involves the use of four cardinal rules:

1 - Management by consensus.

Participation in CRM is voluntary and consensus promotes involvement. Everyone will agree on conclusions before it is accepted by the group, with abstentions permitted.

2 - Commitment.

All participants must be committed to the success of the program.

3 - Broad involvement.

All interested and/or affected parties should participate. To leave out interests which care is to invite criticism and generate conflict.

4 - Express needs not positions.

Expressing positions creates confrontation while expressing needs generates trust and the group will take care to address legitimate needs.

INITIATING A CRM EFFORT

CRM is usually initiated because of a resource management problem or conflict that those involved and affected want resolved. Good coordinated management can also exist where immediate problems are not present but plans are developed to keep problems from developing.

Preferably, a CRM program is initiated at the local level by a request from a person, group, organization or agency that sees the need for a group action approach to resolving a local resource management problem. For example, a Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) might receive a request for a CRM effort as these districts are legal subdivisions of the state government with responsibility for land and water conservation. Processing of this request would include assignment of priorities and creation of timetables and schedules with the other agencies, organization and interests involved.

The CRM process should be reviewed with all interests to assist them in deciding whether or not to proceed. If the decision is made to proceed using the CRM process, a list of everyone to be invited to participate should be drafted and notices sent. A chairman should be selected to guide the organization of the planning group, assemble available inventory data, schedule meetings and otherwise motivate the individuals involved in this planning process.

The general flow of a CRM process is:

- CRM program request from private or public entity
- private and public landowners and managers, resource managers, and other interested parties in the general planning area are invited to initial meeting
- at end of initial meeting, consensus is reached to continue
- specific planning area is defined, issues, problems and concerns listed, goals and objectives developed
- information available and needed is determined
- checklist developed to ensure all resources have been considered
- each objective is addressed and all actions needed to accomplish it are determined, for each action who, what, when and how long is determined
- plan is developed using all information from prior steps and plan is reevaluated
- system set up to maintain and implement plan
- plan implemented
- annual reviews of plan, plan progress, accomplishments, problems, new objective development and years plan of work.

For more details about the actual process and steps of the CRM process consult the **Arizona Coordinated Resource Management: Handbook and Guidelines** distributed by the USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Soil Conservation Service, Arizona Land Department and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension in association with the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts and the Arizona Game and Fish Department or **Coordinated Resource Management: Guidelines for Doing,** published by the Society for Range Management.

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PUBLIC GRAZING IN THE WEST: THE IMPACT OF "RANGELAND REFORM '94"

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INTRODUCTION

The general public seems to believe that public lands ranchers pay substantially less for livestock grazing rights than do ranchers who lease similar privileges from private landowners. This impression contributed to the recent public range policy reform movement aimed at, among other things, a substantial increase in grazing fees on federal lands. But what are the differences in the costs of grazing on public and private lands? How do costs vary across states in the West? How will the fee increases proposed in the Rangeland Reform '94 (RR '94) initiative affect public lands ranchers, the Federal treasury, and the economies of the western states? How are these economic impacts distributed among public lands ranchers and between states? And how much is at stake? I will attempt to address these issues in this paper.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GRAZING FEES

Statewide average grazing fees on private lands are available for the years 1965 through 1992 for the eleven western states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Figure 1 compares grazing fees on federal and private lands for this period. The grazing fees in the figure have been adjusted for the effects of inflation so that the amount for each price series in each year is comparable to the respective 1992 value for that series. The unit of measure for grazing fees in the figure, and throughout this paper, is dollars per animal unit month (AUM), where an animal unit month is defined as 26 pounds of dry matter grass per day (equivalently, 780 pounds of dry matter grass per 30-day month). Montana is included in the figure because private grazing fees in Montana historically have been consistently among the highest in the eleven western states. On the other hand, private grazing fees in Arizona historically have been generally among the lowest.

Figure 1. Real Private and Federal Grazing Fees, 1965-92.

(1992 $ per Animal Unit Month)

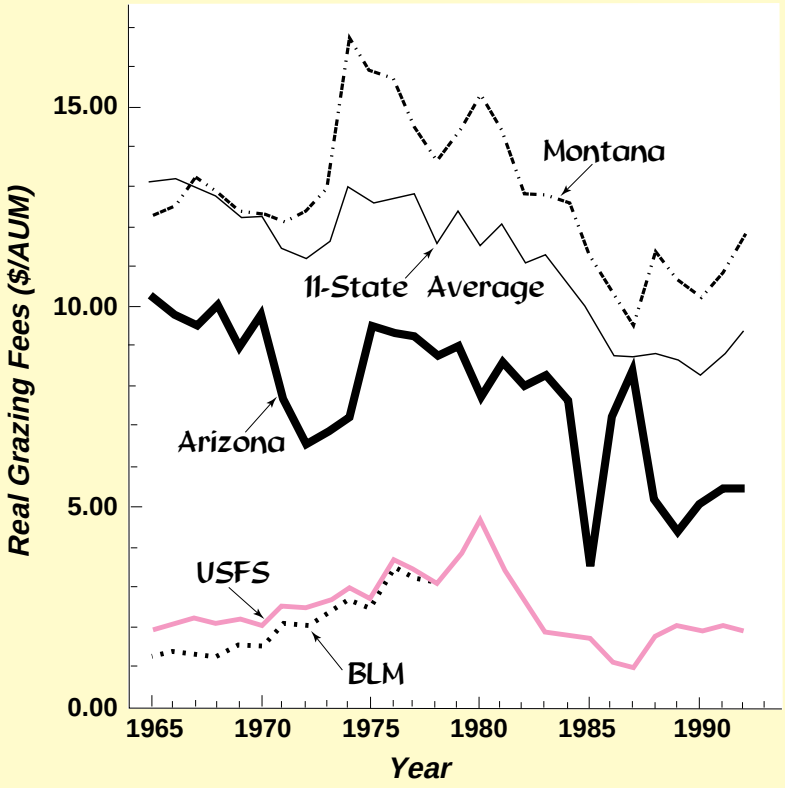


Figure 1 illustrates two aspects of the market for grazing rights in the western states. First, historically there has been, and continues to be, a substantial difference in grazing fees between the private

and public sectors. For example, real grazing fees for Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands have averaged only $2.44 and $2.21 per AUM, respectively, over the 28-year period from 1965 through 1992, while the average real private grazing fees for each of the eleven western states over the same period have been as follows: Arizona, $7.80; California, $13.70; Colorado, $13.20; Idaho, $10.90; Montana, $12.80; Nevada, $7.55; New Mexico, $9.45; Oregon, $12.00; Utah, $10.45; Washington, $13.10; and Wyoming, $12.10. The eleven-state average real grazing fee on private lands over this period has been $11.20 per AUM, nearly $9.00 per AUM higher than real grazing fees on federal lands. Perhaps this provides some insight into the general public perception that public lands ranchers are being subsidized.

However, this perspective misses two aspects of the market for public grazing rights relative to the market for private grazing rights. First, private landowners often provide several rights and services to their grazing tenants that are not part of the bargain in public lands grazing leases. Since these services are costly to provide, their value is built into the competitive market price for private grazing rights. Second, because federal grazing permits can be bought and sold, they have a market value that represents an opportunity cost to public lands ranchers. The purchase price of a public grazing permit is as much a real cost to those ranchers as the initial capital investment required for the buildings, corrals, tractors, and other facilities and equipment necessary to operate their ranches.

The second aspect of the livestock grazing market illustrated by Figure 1 is the fact that there are large, consistent, and persistent differences in private grazing fees between states, ranging from a high of $13.70 per AUM in California to a low of $7.55 per AUM in Nevada. This implies that a substantial increase in federal grazing fees will have a much larger percentage impact on the value of a federal grazing permit in the Desert Southwest (Arizona, Nevada, western New Mexico, and southeastern California) than, for example, in the Rocky Mountain region (Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado).

For example, the results that I present below suggest that, should the fee increases of the RR '94 initiative be fully implemented, two main effects on public lands ranchers in Arizona are likely in the long run. First, the net market value of federal grazing permits will fall considerably, and for some ranchers federal grazing permits eventually may become worthless. If economic conditions do not improve in the market for livestock over the long haul, then we may see an exodus of unprofitable ranchers from this sector of the livestock market in Arizona due to the higher grazing fees proposed in this initiative. Public lands ranchers in the other western states also will experience losses in income and wealth due to higher grazing fees and lower market values for their grazing permits. With the possible exception of Nevada, none of the other western states are as likely as Arizona to experience significant negative incomes for public lands ranchers or the exit of unprofitable ranchers from the industry. Let's now look at these issues in more detail.

LANDLORD SERVICES AND THE NET VALUE OF FORAGE

Private landowners usually provide many kinds of services and rights to grazing tenants that are not provided on public lands. These services often include, but are not always limited to, the following: (1) fencing, including initial investments and maintenance expenditures; (2) access to water, including the initial investment in water facilities and expenditures for maintenance and upkeep; (3) the exclusion of access to the grazing tract by individuals other than the grazing tenant and landowner; (4) hunting, fishing, and timber-harvesting rights; and (5) several miscellaneous other services such as periodic moving, checking, and supple-

mental feeding of the tenant's livestock. Frequent efforts to estimate the value of landlord services have been made in New Mexico over the last decade. Recent estimates by Torell and Doll (1991) and Torell and Fowler (1992) place the cost of landlord services to be $1.88 per AUM for New Mexico in 1989, approximately 30 percent of the private grazing rate in New Mexico for that year. In 1992 dollars, this gives us a figure of $2.10 per AUM in New Mexico as an estimate for the average cost to landlords for providing these services and rights to their grazing tenants.

I have estimated the cost of landlord services for the other western states in real 1992 dollars using two methods: (1) by assuming that landlord costs are 30 percent of the private grazing rate in all states; and (2) by assuming that real landlord costs are $2.10 per AUM in all states. The first method implies that the net value of forage on private grazing lands is 70 percent of the private grazing fee. This assumption is supported by the fact that 30 percent of private grazing fees consistently has been the estimated cost of landlord services in New Mexico from a variety of methods and a number of studies over the past decade (Gray, et al. (1983), Fowler, et al. (1985), Torell, Ghosh, and Fowler (1988), Torell and Doll (1991), and Torell and Fowler (1992)). The second method is equivalent to assuming that both the cost of providing landlord services and the average level of services provided per animal unit month are uniform across states. It is useful to point out that, although the assumptions underlying the second method may not be completely valid, this method is useful as a basis for comparison and to evaluate the robustness of any conclusions we might draw from the first method.

The two methods produce the following range of estimates for the 1965-92 average real forage value per AUM in each state: Arizona, $5.45-5.70; California, $9.60-11.60; Colorado, $9.25-11.10; Idaho, $7.60-8.80; Montana $8.95-10.70; Nevada, $5.30-5.45; New Mexico, $6.60-7.35; Oregon, $8.40-9.90; Utah, $7.30-8.35; Washington, $9.20-11.00; and Wyoming, $8.50-10.00. The overall average real value of forage in the eleven western states appears to be between $7.85 and $9.10 per AUM for this period. These results suggest that the relative cost differences between public and private grazing are not as large as it may appear at first blush. We probably should be using a figure in the neighborhood of $7.85 to $9.10, rather than $11.20, for the overall average net forage value on private grazing lands when making the comparison with federal grazing fees.

It is useful to compare private net forage values and actual federal grazing fees with the fee structure of the RR '94 proposal to develop a feel for the latter's likely economic impacts. The current method for setting grazing fees on federal lands is mandated by the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA; 1977). Under this act, and its temporary extensions in each year since 1985, federal grazing fees are determined by the formula

$$Fee_t = 1.23 \times (FVI_{t-1} + BCPI_{t-1} - (PPFI_{t-1}/100)),$$

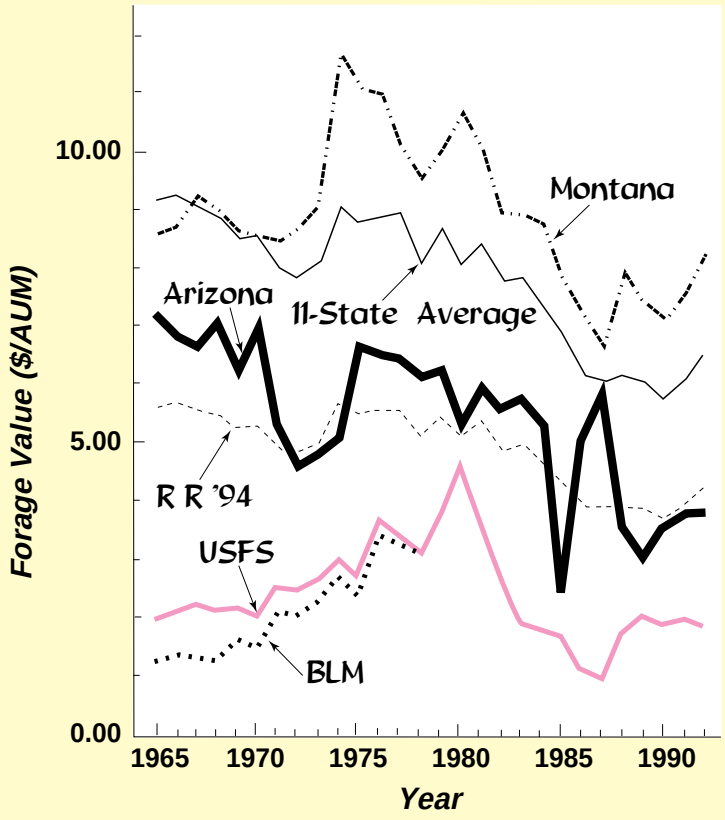
where FVI_{t-1} is a forage value index defined as the eleven western state average private grazing fee in the previous year divided by the 1967 average private grazing fee; $BCPI_{t-1}$ is a beef cattle price index defined as the average price received for all beef in the eleven western states in the previous year divided by the 1967 average price received for all beef cattle; $PPFI_{t-1}$ is the index of prices paid by farmers in the previous year, with a value of 100 in the 1967 base year; and $1.23 per AUM is the 1967 base year Federal lands grazing fee. This formula is applied uniformly across all states, to both USFS and BLM grazing lands, and has been in effect since 1978.

The method for setting grazing fees in the RR '94 initiative is given by the formula

$$Fee_t = 3.96 \times FVI_{t-1},$$

Figure 2. Net Forage Values and Public Grazing Fees, 1965-92.

(1992 $ per Animal Unit Month)



where FVI_{t-1} is the weighted average private grazing fee (weighted by Federal AUMs) divided by $8.67, which is the average private fee for the three-year period 1990-1992. In the new formula, private grazing fees for seventeen western states (the original eleven western states plus the six contiguous states to the east - North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) are included in the calculations. The base fee of $3.96 per AUM is the average minimum net forage value for grazing rights on federal lands obtained from two estimation methods: (1) a 1991 update of the 1983 appraisal of the value of livestock grazing on Federal lands in sixteen Western states; and (2) a 1991 update of the 1966 Western Livestock Grazing Survey. The appraisal update generated a range of estimated values from $4.68 per AUM in the desert southwest (Arizona, southeastern California, Nevada, and southwestern New Mexico) to $10.26 per AUM in the northern plains (North Dakota, South Dakota, and northern Nebraska). The grazing survey update increased the PRIA base rate to $3.25 per AUM for 1991. The base fee of $3.96 per AUM in the new formula is the simple average of the two minimum forage value estimates of $3.25 and $4.68 per AUM.

Figure 2 illustrates the impacts that the RR '94 fee system would have had on federal grazing fees over the historical period 1965 through 1992. In this figure, net grazing fees for the private sector are calculated as 70 percent of the actual private grazing fees to estimate forage value net of landlord costs. Also in the figure are estimates of what federal grazing fees are likely to have been had the RR '94 formula been used over the past three decades. These estimates use the available eleven-state average private grazing fee rather than the full seventeen-state average because the latter figures are not available for the full historical time period. However, this should not create a significant bias in the results since the lion's share of livestock grazing on federal lands occurs in the eleven westernmost states.

Changing the method for setting federal grazing fees to the RR '94 proposal would have increased grazing fees considerably on federal lands over the past three decades. The average increase in USFS grazing fees is $2.48 per AUM in constant 1992 dollars over the 28-year period, while the average increase is $2.72 per AUM on BLM lands. This represents increases of approximately 100 and 125 percent, respectively, over the actual grazing fees for the two agencies. As should be expected, this figure is quite close to the estimated forage values of $5.45 per AUM in Arizona and $5.30 in Nevada. However, for each of the last five years in the available sample period, the RR '94 grazing fee is consistently higher than the estimated net forage value in Arizona. Perhaps this provides some

insight into the furor caused by the proposed increase in federal grazing fees to $4.28 per AUM, as well as some level of understanding of the basis for the compromise proposal of $3.45 per AUM by Senator Reid of Nevada in fall 1993.

If we take these estimates as reasonable, and if current economic conditions persist in the market for livestock, then it appears as though an increase of the magnitude proposed in RR '94 could lead to negative incomes for some (indeed, possibly even a majority of) public lands ranchers in Arizona. Furthermore, because the net forage value is less than the federal grazing fee, we would expect that the average market value of federal grazing permits will fall to zero and that unprofitable public lands ranching operations will eventually exit the industry in the state. However, according to my estimates, although public lands ranchers in the other western states will experience losses in income and wealth due to higher grazing fees and lower market values for their grazing permits, none of the other states are as likely as Arizona to experience significant negative incomes or the exit of unprofitable public lands ranchers from the livestock grazing industry.

HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE?

It is well-established that the relatively low price of grazing on public lands (the 1993 Federal grazing fee is $1.86 per AUM) and the expectation that these low prices will continue into the future has led to a capitalized market value for public land grazing permits (Gardner (1962, 1963, 1989); Hooper (1967); Martin and Jeffries (1966); Roberts (1963); Torell and Doll (1991)). As part of their analysis of this issue, Torell and Doll estimated the real rate of capitalization for the relative cost advantage on public grazing lands to be 3.35 percent per annum, and also estimated that 85 to 90 percent of all current public grazing land permittees have purchased their public land leases from someone else. Thus, most public lands ranchers paid an initial investment cost for their federal grazing permits that absorbs, or at least partially absorbs, any benefits due to a relative cost advantage for grazing livestock on federal lands. Moreover, even those ranchers that have not purchased grazing permits from existing permittees face an opportunity cost associated with the income that is foregone by keeping rather than selling their permits in the open market. Any increase in federal grazing fees will lead to lower net incomes and a fall in the market value of federal grazing permits. The result is a wealth transfer away from public lands ranchers and towards the USFS and BLM coffers.

Table 1 reports estimates of the impacts of the RR '94 proposed fee increase on the value of federal grazing permits for each of the eleven western states. The cost estimates presented in the table were developed as follows. Figures for the total number of animal unit months and number of permittees on USFS and BLM grazing lands in each state for the fiscal year 1991-1992 were obtained from USDA, USFS (1992) and USDI, BLM (1992). The figures for total AUMs per

Table 1. Western States Federal Grazing Permits and Increased Annual Payments to the USFS and BLM under Rangeland Reform '94.

State	Number of AUMs		Number of Permits		Average Annual Cost / Permit			Statewide Cost per Year
	USFS	BLM	USFS	BLM	USFS	BLM	Weighted Average	
Arizona	1,057,895	684,664	498	838	$5269	$2222	$3358	$4,500,000
California	400,169	378,516	880	757	1127	1361	1235	2,000,000
Colorado	882,598	693,303	1151	1774	1902	1063	1393	4,100,000
Idaho	765,524	1,372,839	1162	2240	1633	1667	1655	5,600,000
Montana	516,863	1,317,677	1092	3873	1174	925	980	4,900,000
Nevada	258,679	2,487,130	186	723	3452	9357	8149	7,400,000
New Mexico	783,707	1,922,603	1125	2475	1728	2113	1993	7,100,000
Oregon	443,161	1,043,641	562	1431	1956	1984	1976	3,900,000
Utah	578,283	1,317,800	1232	1744	1164	2055	1686	5,000,000
Washington	112,692	26,377	171	331	1634	217	700	350,000
Wyoming	632,757	2,012,250	703	2748	2232	1992	2041	7,000,000
11 States	6,432,328	13,256,800	8762	18,934	$2116	$2269	$2288	$52,000,000

year were multiplied by the average fee increase of $2.48 per AUM for BLM land and $2.72 per AUM for USFS land obtained from the above analysis of differences in federal grazing under the historical and proposed fee systems. The statewide totals are the sum of the separate costs estimates for higher BLM and USFS grazing fees. The average cost per permittee is calculated as a weighted average, with the number of permits of each type (BLM and USFS) used as weights.

If we focus on statewide totals, or the aggregate figure for the entire west, we see that there really is not much money at stake for the overall economy or for any individual state. Indeed, on a per capita basis for the country as a whole, the issue boils down to a little less than 25¢ per person per year. However, due to the relatively small number of permittees - an average of slightly over 2500 per state - the stakes are considerably higher, amounting to a little less than $2300 per permittee per year. For public lands ranchers that continue to graze on federal lands, this translates into an average reduction in the discounted present value of their net incomes of just under $70,000 per grazing permit if we use the 3.35 percent per year discount rate from Torell and Doll. For Arizona, the comparable net loss in wealth is slightly more than $100,000 per permit, while for Montana it is slightly less than $30,000. The state with the public lands ranchers that have the most to lose appears to be Nevada, where the estimated loss in wealth associated with the RR '94 fee system is nearly $250,000 per operator under RR '94.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions we can draw from this simple analysis are the following. First, there is a small number of individuals, something less than 30,000 public lands ranchers, that have a significant financial stake in the federal grazing fee issue. For some of these ranchers, the economic impacts of the RR '94 proposal will be substantial enough to eventually lead them to close down their operations and exit the industry. Second, there appears to be a large variance in the economic effects across ranchers and between the western states. On the other hand, the grazing fee issue appears to matter very little financially to the rest of the country, both in terms of the Federal treasury and the overall total level of economic activity.

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