



Watersheds Messenger

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Working to protect and restore Idaho watersheds

IWP Billboards Go Up, Cause Stir!!



The IWP Billboards went up in Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls, and Boise, Idaho, and Elko, Nevada in March to general acclaim (at least from those who contacted IWP!). The billboards, which were in place for 30 days, and which remain up in Elko and Twin Falls provided Idaho Outdoor Advertising (the billboard company) with much negative response from cowmen and their fellow travelers. A lawsuit was even threatened unless the billboards were taken down. Of course, IWP was looking forward to such an action as it would have provided an opportunity to invite Oprah to join us in Idaho for a celebration of the First Amendment as well as a legal victory! Fortunately for the cowmen, their attorneys must have prevailed as no legal action has been filed to date.

Readers who would like to see color images of the billboards may do so at the IWP web site (www.idahowatersheds.org) or contact IWP for mailed copies at modest copying costs. IWP thanks political cartoonist Matt Wuerker of Portland, Oregon for his wonderful images and Christine Opitz of Avalanche Graphic Design in Sandpoint for assembling the graphics package for the billboards. Please turn to page 14 for an image of the second billboard. 🐄

Board Meeting Announcement

The annual Idaho Watersheds Project, Inc. Board meeting will be held Saturday, May 9, 1998 at 10:30 AM in Suite N, 16 West Croy Street, Hailey, Idaho. The annual budget will be adopted by the Board and the Board will consider other matters brought before it. All members are invited to attend the meeting. IWP will be providing lunch to all participants.

Who Can Save the Wild West?



by Susan Zakin

Asking a cattleman the size of his ranch is like asking someone how much is in his bank account. It's particularly galling to Western ranchers who run cattle on public land, a touchy subject these days. But Jon Tate, a quail hunter who founded the Western Gamebird Alliance, isn't known for his tact. Tate is also a real estate developer — to many, the New West's

version of the bad guy. So when he grilled Arizona rancher Sue Chilton at a recent meeting, their exchange cut to the heart of the "cattle vs. condos" argument now gripping most of the American West, where even some environmentalists see cattle ranches as preferable to suburban sprawl.

"Just how big is your ranch, ma'am?" asked Tate.

"Eighty-five thousand acres," Chilton responded.

"That's not what I meant, ma'am," Tate persisted. "How much of that is private land?"

"Well, 2000 acres," Chilton said, losing her measured tone. "Would you kick us off that land and give it to the subdividers?"

"Ma'am," replied Tate, "I'd napalm that 2000 acres to save the rest of it."

CASH AND COWS: Tate is one of the more aggressive critics of ranching on Western public lands, which he describes as government-subsidized destruction of wildlife habitat. He doesn't buy into the idea that the cowboy is the only hero who can hold off real estate developers. Recreation is the big revenue producer on federal lands, Tate argues, and the amount of private land that might fall to developers if ranches went belly-up is minimal compared to the public domain now being chewed by cows. Besides, with subsidies to ranchers estimated at \$400 million a year, he says the federal government could pay every rancher to retire to the Bahamas and still come out ahead in about five years.

Tate's group tried to put their money where their birds are last summer and landed in court after the state land department refused to consider their offer to pay \$15,000 — twice the rate being paid by a rancher — to lease 16,000 acres on the Falcon Valley Ranch allotment in Oracle Junction, Arizona, and restore it as wildlife habitat. At a time when more conservative conservationists — from the Nature Conservancy to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation — are sitting down and getting touchy-feely with ranchers, the Western Gamebird Alliance and other small, feisty groups are telling the world that the Marlboro Man is missing his chaps. Since 1993, an increasing number of these groups have bid on grazing leases, but Tate's is the first hunting group to ante up.

In November, Andy Kerr, a private consultant and former executive director of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, met with staff from The Wilderness Society, the National Wildlife Federation, and other middle-of-the-road conservation groups to sell the idea of a campaign to make it

easier for outsiders to bid on grazing leases. Retiring the cowboy has never been a big priority for national groups; their strategy has been to call for higher grazing fees to get people riled up about the bad economics of Western ranching. It's not a tough argument to make when it costs ranchers \$1.35 to graze an animal each month on federal land but the cost to each taxpayer is \$20. And current law makes it almost impossible to chase cows off federal land, even if you're willing to pay for the privilege. But financial arguments alone aren't enough to loosen the hold the cowboy myth has on the American heart.

Sportsmen, who are sometimes given access and sometimes not, are growing more vocal about the big question — who owns the West? With two-thirds of the Western range rated in less than good condition by government agencies and more than half the rivers overgrazed and degraded, even some ranchers are calling for removal of what the Sonoran Institute's economist Ray Rasker calls "perverse incentives" that encourage too many cattle on too little land. But when it takes 80 acres to graze a cow in the American West versus four acres in a wet state like Florida, overgrazing is almost inevitable if a rancher wants to be competitive.

WATERED-DOWN THEORY: Standing on the Falcon Valley allotment, it's easy to see why the hunters chose to make an example of this ranch. In this ironing board-flat valley under the shadow of Black Mountain, the ground is bare dirt, except for patches of prickly pear cactus, mesquite, a few woody shrubs and the yellow-flowered snakeweed, which is poisonous to cattle. The problem, says Jon Tate, is that most people think the desert is supposed to look like this. Traditionally, artificial water sources have been the answer to low game numbers. Tate and his friends broke with Quail Unlimited over this practice last summer. "I went with a guy who had been hunting longer than me to the Triple T Mountains, south of here," Tate tells me. "We went from stock tank to stock tank. There was tons of water but no ground cover and there were no birds. Then we hunted in the Chiricahuas, near the border of Mexico. There was ground cover, but very little water and there were a lot of birds. My friend said to me, 'Are you making the connection!'"

Tate, whose yuppie looks belie his background as a two-time high school dropout, Volkswagen mechanic and oilfield roughneck, is accustomed to finding education on his own. After viewing the tanks, he went straight to the bookstore. There he discovered the work of David Brown, a biologist, journalist and author of Arizona Game *Birds*. Brown's studies showed that quail numbers were related to rainfall that provides cover and forage. Upland quail in the West evolved without much water and there was no evidence that artificial sources did them any good. Tate also discovered that cattle grazing depletes vegetation needed by quail and other game species, such as antelope.

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Tate learned his lessons well, says Brown, who teaches at Arizona State University. "Falcon Valley was a grassland ranch that was occupied by pronghorn antelope," says Brown. "For a long time the world's record pronghorn antelope came from there. But there hasn't been any since 1948."

The land has changed from grasslands to scrublands. Mule deer, javelina and Gambel's quail have taken the place of more prized game species: scaled quail and antelope. And when there isn't enough grass to carry wildfires that promote new growth, the change is accelerated. Land productivity goes down.

Joy Belsky, a range scientist with the Oregon Natural Desert Association, agrees that cattle have changed the landscape. She wrote a much-quoted paper linking the so-called forest health crisis, which threatens catastrophic wildfires, to overgrazing in the West's ponderosa pine forests.

"Western rangelands are better adapted for raising native wildlife than domestic livestock," says Belsky. "Using these lands to establish healthy herds of deer, elk, sage grouse, quail and pronghorn for hunting purposes is ecologically more appropriate and economically more beneficial."

LOSING GROUND: In 1995, New Mexico Republican Senator Pete Domenici fought to roll back minor grazing reforms instituted by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. He lost. Last fall, he reportedly refused to try again. As head of the Appropriations Committee, Domenici is closely connected to the banking industry, so this sends a signal that bankers may be losing interest in heavily mortgaged cowboys. New favorites of the financiers are likely to be agribusiness, water developments and, yes, real estate developers like Jon Tate.

In the face of these threats, what the West really needs, says ecologist Tony Burgess of Columbia University, is "a strong urban coalition that needs land set aside for ecological stewardship."

In the meantime, too many conservationists are spending too much time and too much money propping up a rural aristocracy that is no longer economically viable. Blinded by the sunset colors of the Old West, conservationists are indulging in the same short-term thinking for which they criticize corporations. Their failure to see what's over the horizon may have tragic consequences for the startling landscape that is the true source of the Western myth.

"I don't think cows vs. condos is the real issue," says Johanna Wald of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "If people really didn't want condos, there are ways not to have them. People in other parts of the country engage in something called zoning. Everybody I know thinks it's a Commie plot. But in fact if you want to protect open space, it's a tried-and-true **method.**"

Reprinted with permission of Sports Afield. Susan Zakin of Tucson, Arizona, is an author, a monthly columnist for Sports Afield and a **contributor to** Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News.

News Briefs

Air Force Releases Final Decision on ETI Range Expansion

The Air Force has released a final decision to implement the proposed expanded training range in and around Owyhee County, Idaho to benefit the Mountain Home Air Force Base. Supported by Idaho's Governor and the entire Idaho Congressional delegation, the decision would require the withdrawal of 12,000 acres of public lands for the impact zone and the creation of a much larger Military Operations Area (MOA) for aerial training extending into Oregon and Nevada. The decision would provide a windfall for some Owyhee County ranchers who would likely receive large sums from the Air Force as compensation for lost grazing Aums. IWP has brought public attention to this potential hand-out in press stories carried in the Twin Falls Times-News. The ETI is opposed by the Owyhee Canyonlands Coalition, an umbrella group of which Idaho Watersheds Project is a member. The Air Force decision would result in vastly increased supersonic and low level flights by combat aircraft over sensitive wildlife and proposed wilderness areas along with the dispersal of billions of chaff fibers into Owyhee County creeks and watersheds. IWP encourages readers to let Dirk Kempthorne know: "No bombing range expansion in Owyhee County." Web surfers can visit the new Owyhee Canyonlands web site at: http://www.snakeriveralliance.org/OCC_WebSite/OCC_Home.htm

IWP Web Site Very Busy

The IWP web site which has been open for about one year now is approaching 10,000 hits according to our

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Watersheds Messenger

Editor: Jon Marvel

Watersheds Messenger is published periodically for members, friends, and supporters of Idaho Watersheds project. Change-s Of address, renewals, new subscriptions, undelivered copies, and ideas for articles should be sent to IWP, P.O. Box 1602, Hailey, Idaho 83333, or call (208) 788-2290. Fax (208) 788-2298. please note our e-mail address: idwp@idahowatersheds.org and Web Site: www.idahowatersheds.org.

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Mission Statement

Idaho Watersheds project, Inc. was founded in September 1993 to acquire, protect, and restore Idaho public school endowment lands which have been degraded by livestock abuse, to improve returns to the school endowment fund, to work for positive change in the management of all federal lands on Idaho watersheds, and to raise public consciousness regarding the importance of our shared public lands and waters as well as the animals and plants which depend on them.

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High Noon on the Upper East Fork Salmon Allotment

by Lyme Stone



With peaks towering over 11,000 feet high, the Upper East Fork Salmon River allotment in central Idaho includes some of the state's most scenic vistas. Its rugged topography also makes the East Fork watershed largely unsuited for cattle grazing. Wild, remote, and within the proposed Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA), this allotment is due for a new management plan in late **1998**.

The East Fork watershed contains critical habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead, and for bull trout and west slope cutthroat. The Bowery Guard Station and hot springs area, located within the allotment some 26 miles up the East Fork Salmon River, is critical winter range for elk. There's world class elk and deer hunting for sportsmen willing to walk or horseback. Hiking, backpacking, and mountain biking are popular.

The Upper East Fork allotment contains 53,775 acres of which 5,757 acres (ten percent) are termed "suitable" for livestock by the SNRA (using old suitability standards). Currently 254 cow/calf pairs (1308 AUMs) are allowed from June 18 to Oct. 15.

SNRA standards include 30 percent or less utilization on streamside vegetation and major springs, and require that streambank stability be 90 percent of estimated potential. Also, SNRA guidelines state that grazing will be modified or phased out "where substantial impairment or distraction-of SNRA values" occurs. (The 756,000 acre SNRA was created in 1972 to preserve fish, wildlife, natural, scenic, recreation, historic, and pastoral values.)

I first visited the East Fork Salmon region nearly 20 years ago. Having grown up in the wheat and cattle country of north-central Oregon, I wasn't surprised to see cow-pies on picnic tables, and most riparian areas hammered by grazing. After all, doesn't riparian mean "in need of repair"? But in summer 1996, cattle overuse in Bowery Creek, Bowery Cut-Off, West Pass, and the East Fork Salmon along with blatant trespass into Grand Prize, was so extensive and downright disgusting, I stopped ignoring it. I could no longer excuse cow-abuse as part of Custer County's custom and culture experience. I called the SNRA. The response: be patient, a revised allotment management plan (AMP) was in the works.

I received the AMP scoping notice in early 1997, and volunteered to comment on behalf of three groups including IWP. A month later I sent **30 pages** of comments and **40 with pictures** to the SNRA.

Besides trying to improve cow-related problems in the upper East Fork, I was concerned with the permittee's insistence that allotment boundaries be extended to include East Pass on the neighboring Challis Forest. East Pass is a

vacant sheep allotment, has key bull trout habitat, a marvelous 30-foot waterfall, and 10,000-foot alpine tundra uplands that stretch from Bowery Peak to Long Tom Divide, and from Hunter Creek Summit to Pass Peak. It's been called a wildlife serenity. Upper East Pass is one of my favorite wild places. And it's cow-free.

In 1997 the upper East Fork became my number one priority of several allotments I'd committed to monitor for IWP. On a snowy April day, I made the first of a dozen trips. It's 125 miles one-way and a 2 1/2 hour drive to Bowery Guard Station from where I live near Ketchum (Alas, as the eagle flies, it's only 16 miles from **my house over the Boulder Mountains to Bowery**.)

In June, I saw rapid snow melt send the East Fork Salmon River rampaging through the canyon, eroding stream banks and threatening road washouts. Raw riverbanks, denuded by a century of livestock grazing, were hard hit. As the river roared, cattle turnout occurred on schedule on June 18. Some good news: West Pass Creek was off-limits to grazing because of 1996 overuse.

On August 20th, I visited one of the allotment's two units - the East Fork pasture - with Seth Phalen, SNRA Range Conservationist. Cattle were to be removed by August 15th from this unit, but we saw 60 head still along the East Fork River, **an obvious permit violation. Why the permittee failed to move the animals remains a puzzle to me, especially since our inspection showed herding efforts had brought significant improvement over 1996** along the river. We observed six inches of grass growing at monitoring sites and Seth determined that SNRA stubble height standards were met. However, boot-high grass, couldn't hide other problems: cut, unstable banks; riverside trailing causing erosion, bluegrass meadows gnawed to 2 inches; sagebrush encroachment; mired, compacted springs; and bare conifer understories.



Syd and Karen Downton's grandchildren (l-r) Danny Downton, Cody Kohntopp and Loni Downton sit atop their horses behind the gate barring access to private land owned by the Virginia Leuzinger family.

Reprinted **with permission from the September 4, 1997 edition of the Challis Messenger**, Melanie Hoyt, photographer.

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On this same day, we encountered a locked gate on the East Fork road where it enters the Leuzinger property, two miles before Bowery Guard Station. The permittee, Syd Downton, had installed a sign: "Private Property No Trespassing. This gate is locked because of Enviro-Extremist Harassment of Ranchers and Resource Land Managers."

Later I learned the sign had been installed to coincide with my visit with Seth - originally set for August 16th, but delayed until the 20th. On the 16th permittee Downton, reinforced with several pint-sized buckaroos, and a Challis Messenger reporter had apparently been waiting to ambush Seth and I when we arrived. We never showed. The Challis paper ran a front page story, stating that the Downtons 'knew Seth Phalen was coming to survey utilization and that Lynne Stone might be riding along and they protested." There were also numerous unkind statements about environmentalists.

In the next week's paper, I wrote to ask why the cowhands had time to paint signs, saddle up, and loiter at the gate while 60 head of cattle were trampling the East Fork River, violating the grazing permit. I also said that the locked gate and sign would help to focus attention on the allotment problems.

With regards to the locked gate, according to the SNRA, the forest does not have an easement across the mile-long section of private land, even though the road's been used for decades to access Bowery Guard Station. The SNRA has been mum on any action to reopen public access (see "What you can do" below).

Changes are going to come hard in the East Fork country. The situation is not helped by assorted SNRA staffers who have written rosy reports on a few select monitoring sites and omitted ground-zero riparian problems elsewhere. Beat-up springs, seeps and meadows have been ignored or shrugged off. In 1995 Ranger Paul Ries sent a letter to the permittees saying that 90 percent of the allotment was in "satisfactory condition." I can only assume this is the 90 percent unsuited for cattle grazing.

When the SNRA has tried to be tougher on trespass - an ongoing occurrence in much of the White Clouds - the permittees demand a brand identification before saddling up to find the cows. As a result, IWP now has a brand book. I use it to I.D. poaching cattle by noting the eartag, brand (often hard to distinguish) and location. I also note the breed, color, and ages. Binoculars are helpful. My camera has a room lens and a date printed on the picture. With all this effort and data, one would expect some agency action on cows stealing free grass. Instead, there's no action. Lame excuses are offered like "hikers left the gate open," "elk broke the fence," or use outside the allotment used to be considered "normal" until enviro extremists meddled in. However, under the Endangered Species Act, the SNRA must enforce allotment plan terms, or be in violation of ESA.

There is some hope for change. In the 1997 year end report, Seth Phalen wrote: "Heavy use ... and trampling impacts ... near Bowery Cut-off. ... [and] Fisher Creek was a consequence of trying to keep pressure off the East Fork streamside riparian areas. Riparian use in upper Bowery and Long Tom Creeks averaged 55 percent in most reaches

accessible to cattle ..." Since this was one of the most favorable seasons for vegetative production and grazing use still exceeded 30% along accessible stream reaches, it's doubtful that proper use can be achieved in these areas under the current management system."

Range staff from the Twin Fall's Supervisor's Office reported, after a September visit, that the allotment "may be overstocked for numbers and season of use" and that it's "better suited to sheep than to cattle in many portions." Also, that "the permittee would have to determine if grazing cattle is cost effective in this terrain to meet our utilization standards."

WHAT YOU CAN DO

(For more info/maps: Lynne Stone 726-1065; lston@micron.net)

1. Volunteer to help monitor grazing this season. I'd like some company. There's great exploring in the upper East Fork area of the Boulder-White Clouds. Recommended hikes: Bowery Creek to Bowery Peak and East Pass or Long Tom (after high water subsides); Bowery Cut-off, West Pass; and the East Fork canyon to its forks.

2. Write a letter to the SNRA later this year once the draft EA for a new allotment plan is released. (IWP will send an ALERT).

3. WRITE THE SNRA TODAY on public access to the upper East Fork. Urge the SNRA (1) to sign a bypass trail of the locked gate and private land before this summer. Such a route(s) exists using stock and game trails but needs to be clearly marked. You may be told that long, extensive analysis is required - nonsense - a sign pointing to a cowpath bypassing the deeded land doesn't need an EIS. (2) Urge the SNRA to start the longer process of identifying routes for vehicle access through or around the Leuzinger property.

SIDEBAR STORY

In February, Senator Larry Craig held a hearing in Twin Falls on various aspects of SNRA management. Lynne Stone spoke on the environmental panel. Stone showed photos of severe grazing problems on the Upper East Fork Allotment. On the preceding industry panel, Syd Downton, Upper East Fork permittee was scheduled to speak, but sent someone else. However, his written testimony included the following:

"We find ourselves under duress in our allotment because of excessive permit violations. We could lose our permit for cows being in the wrong unit, improper salting, not maintaining improvements, etcetera. We feel these excessive restrictions are impossible to comply with because some of the boundaries are natural, having no fence, and gate."

"In 1996 we had an extremely dry season ... and the enviro-extremists were able to pressure management into resting a unit the next year." [West Pass Creek]

... I suggest that you create legislation to make it more difficult for radical enviro-extremists to challenge the decision making process." 🐾

Lynne Stone is a founder and former Board Member of IWP.

**"My cows don't read
and I shouldn't have
to pay more."**

— Cliff Hansen

*Comment by former Custer County Commissioner
Hansen at a hearing to establish a library taxing
district around Stanley, Idaho.*



News Briefs (continued)

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counter which is shown on the IWP home page. For readers with internet access, a visit to the web site is a good way to see the latest postings between the publication dates of the Watersheds Messenger. The new URL now in effect is: www.idahowatersheds.org. The old URL of www.poky.srv.net/~idwp/iwp.htm will continue to transfer you to the new address.

IWP E-mail Newslist Attracts New Readers

The IWP e-mail newslist now has about 150 recipients. IWP would like to welcome one new reader in particular, Jani Brackett from Senator Larry Craig's office. Welcome Jani! IWP hopes Senator Craig enjoys being kept up to date on our activities! To sign yourself up send a request to IWP's new e-mail address: idw@idahowatersheds.org.

A Special Thanks To

The following individuals: to Julie Slocum-Dahlgren of Ketchum for completing the inventory of all 1998 expiring grazing leases in Idaho and mapping them on the 1-100,000 BLM maps for IWP; to Jacqueline Harvey of Pocatello for her excellence in maintaining the IWP web site; to an Anonymous Donor for a very significant financial contribution to the IWP billboard campaign, to Ken and Anne Jackson of Sandpoint for a very generous contribution to the billboard campaign; to Matt Weurker of Portland, Oregon for his great editorial cartooning skills which have been seen by 250,000 people on the IWP billboards; to Christine Opitz of Avalanche Graphic Design in Sandpoint for her design and graphics work on the billboard project; to Jane Watkins of Ketchum for a very generous contribution to IMP, to Ralph and Shirley Shapiro of Ketchum for their continuing financial support, to Carlyn Ring of Ketchum for a very generous contribution; to Ralph Maughan of Pocatello for promoting IWP on his home page on his Wolf Page on the net; to Jackie Maughan of Pocatello for taking up another year of monitoring in south-east Idaho for IWP in 1998; to IWP Board member Barbara

Dargatz for her bookkeeping and grants writing skills, and to IWP Board member Gene Bray for undertaking the completion of the billboard effort with great thoroughness.

Castle Creek Allotment Decision Issued and Appealed

The long-awaited Castle Creek Allotment grazing management decision was issued by the Bruneau Resource Area of the Idaho BLM in late December 1997. The decision was required by the settlement of the IWP and Committee for Idaho's High Desert's lawsuit against the BLM of April 1997. In the opinion of IWP the decision is deeply flawed, and IWP has appealed the decision. While the decision does introduce some rest into spring use areas on the allotment, the BLM has still proposed that 62 miles of fencing be built on the allotment at a cost of about \$300,000 dollars for an allotment which has an annual grazing fee of about \$17,000. Is this a good business decision? IWP suggests that it is long past time for the BLM to be held to a positive cost-benefit requirement for all public lands management decisions but especially those regarding public lands ranching.

IWP Applies For Utah School Trust Land Grazing Permits

On March 1, 1998 Idaho Watersheds Project applied for two expiring grazing permits on Utah public school endowment land. One permit is for a 640 acre section on Clear Creek in the Raft River Mountain in Box Elder County near the Idaho border. The other permit, of over 5,500 acres, is located just east of the Cisco Beach State Recreation Area on Bear Lake in Rich County adjoining the Idaho border.

As part of the permit applications IWP has included a bonus bid of \$1,000 for each permit which the current leaseholder must match or face losing the permit. The bonus bid process is designed to increase the returns to Utah's public school endowment fund which benefits the school children of the state. The Box Elder County grazing permit currently is leased for less than \$100 per year while the large Rich county permit returns less than \$500 per year to the Utah school endowment fund. Ranchers must match the

Getting to Know and Appreciate the BLM

A Report to Cow Flop Fans

by John McCarthy



At the special request of Linn Kincannon, I ventured out to Fed-Mart for the opening ceremonies of the three-day BLM meeting on Standards and Guidelines -- attended by more than 100 white guys and some token females.

Arriving five minutes earlier than the headline agenda item, in LK's assessment, I caught the tail end of Dave Brunner's remarks. The entire festivities were running about a half hour ahead of schedule, within the first hour no less, so I missed most of Brunner's inspirational exhortations. The main thrust of these stunning comments was -- Idaho will be a leader nationwide in implementation of Standards and Guidelines. Wow. A BLM employee assured me the rest of his remarks were equally wild.

After a short break, for everyone to calm down from the excitement, Peter Janss gave the perspective of the RACs. First he outlined the composition of the RACs, explaining it was difficult to represent even all livestock people on RAC and even more difficult to rep all the interests on RACs in his talk. To demonstrate the difficulty, he said, "it's not *often* I'm asked to give Linn Kincannon's perspective." People laughed at that absurdity. No one booed or yelled, "get a rope."

Janss went on to describe S and G as not rigorous science but as a product of a democratic and representative process, which represents the public interest. The RAC S and G is what public wants to see and is politically legitimate, which trumps special interests from all directions who attempt to tear it down.

The fear of the SE RAC is "the Bureau may become too timid" in implementation of Standards and Guides.

The RAC message to BLM is no more studies/no more delays. The RACs are relying on BLM to get something on the ground, now.

"Permittees still face a relentless and well financed campaign to stop all grazing on public land." (He's speaking in code here) and if livestock industry resists compromises such as S and G they will hurt themselves in long run. The democratic nature of the RACs should isolate the anti grazers. At the same time, "Those (grazers) that are stonewalling and continue to resist, they'll be swept away." He continued with his message -- implement quickly, make certain "significant progress" is occurring.

Bill Reimers had the only question, is 10 years realistic to get some real recovery done? Janss replied yes, a lot can be done in 10 years, especially in riparian areas.

The next guy was from the Washington office. He put up some overheads that would have required 10x binocs to read back where I was. After about 10 minutes of his droning about something like 24180 regs and the cosmic importance, I got up to leave. I had to crawl across many people's laps and over the tops of chairs to get out, but it was dark and most of these people are used to getting stepped on.

So, that's about it. I think we can rest assured the BLM will charge ahead with implementation of standards and guidelines -- making the world a better place and safe for democracy.

It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway, Linn -- you owe me one. Onward. .jm

John McCarthy is Conservation Director of the Idaho Conservation League.

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IWP bids by April 30 or forfeit their permits to IWP.

Students are Making a Bid for the Environment

IWP congratulates a student environmental group at the University of Idaho which has decided to extend its message beyond hanging flyers and holding rallies. The Student Environmental Action Coalition submitted applications on March 24, 1998 to bid on two state grazing allotments near Kooskia in Idaho County. The group hopes to protect the land from degradation it says is caused by grazing and at the same time bring higher returns to the school endowment fund.

"We're a school group and we want to help fund schools and protect the land," said SEAC member Wade Gruhl.

The group is expecting a chilly reception from the Idaho Department of Lands and the State Land Board.

Group members claim the land board has acted to subsidize ranching by turning down high bids from environmental groups such as the Idaho Watersheds Project.

Idaho Wildlife Federation Completes Study of Riparian Grazing Abuse on The Curlew National Grasslands

The Idaho Wildlife Federation has just completed a lengthy study of the failure of the Caribou National Forest to protect public resources on riparian areas from abusive livestock grazing on the Curlew National Grasslands in Oneida County, Idaho. This study which was carried out in cooperation with the Caribou National Forest and with the professional assistance of Al Logosz, a retired BLM range expert, and Dr. Bill Platts, one of the most respected riparian experts in the west, will be posted on the Idaho Watersheds Project web site (www.idahowatersheds.org) for review and downloading. Be sure and stop by to see what the Forest Service does to ensure that streams are degraded! 🐾

Of Frost Heaves & Microflora

by Janet OCrowley

Summer of 1997 I was engaged by Idaho Watersheds to monitor grazing on the public lands near Murphy Hot Springs, where I live. Except for this quarter section, all around is public land, with just the private holdings in some of the valley bottoms.

From long years of habituation to cow-watching, I went out to learn the boundaries of the allotments, where water sources were located, look at cows standing in the meadows and lumbering through the streambeds. So what's new? I made photos and took notes on stream and grass conditions. Occasionally encountering agency personnel or permittees, we would introduce ourselves. I liked that, in spite of a wary look in their eyes, and tried to project that "I live here; we are neighbors of sorts and should be able to talk about our common concerns. I am, above all, an advocate for public lands." I guess in time they will accept me just like el Nino, or a plague of locusts.

Monitoring, I began to search for ungrazed places to use for comparison. I needed scientific validity for my observations. Up on the plateaus I have not yet discovered any. Considering the grazing history of Owyhee and Elko Counties, how could there be?

In the last part of the 1800s sheep were everywhere, and soon, herds of wild horses so numerous they could be harvested and harvested. An 1893 tax receipt issued by Owyhee County Assessor, Brunzell to the Wilkins Co, covered 1000 horses and 400 cattle ranged at Bruneau and above the Hot Springs on Wilkins Island.

When the wide California valleys were becoming exhausted in the 1870s cattle herds were driven overland into Nevada and Idaho and Oregon. Jordan Valley, O'Neill Basin, the headwaters of the East Fork of the Owyhee, and from there filtered out across the Owyhee Mountains. Cattlemen and sheepmen ranged and wrangled until the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 attempted to bring order by the permitting process.

History can be seen in these mountains by the sheep terraces around the hillsides, as in the hills ringing the Mediterranean Ocean, cultures that exhausted the soil and have gone extinct, leaving sandy plains and windswept barrens as memorials. In Eastern Oregon, Wayne Elmore, the BLM's Mr. Riparian, writes: "The changes began with the beaver trappers. Degradation was widespread before we were born."

Toward the end of last summer, it began to dawn on me that if we want to restore the verdant watercourses with their suite of birds, mammals and microbotics in the soil; if we want to restore the luxuriant sage/grass plateaus, then as a critical observer I'm looking at the wrong side of the equation - the vegetation. I've got to look at the soil itself. The question to ask is: what would this quarter-mile of meadow be like in a year, in 5 years IF the very best conditions prevailed?/what would the best conditions be?

As a novice soil observer, I'm only able to list some conditions that should not be, and I've not collected enough evidence to list the priority of 'should note.' But to quote



Janet OCrowley and Jon Marvel - Buck Creek Allotment
Elko County, Nevada, 1996

from that grand old agricultural specialist, Sir Albert Howard (Soil and Health, Rodale, 1947) "Trees and undergrowth break up the rainfall into fine spray and the litter on the ground further protects the soil from the impact of the descending water stream; the residues of vegetable and animal life are converted into humus, which is then absorbed by the soil underneath, increasing its porosity and water-holding power. As well might we expect a living creature to survive without its protective skin as to suppose the earth can live without her proper covering."

From what I see and read, I would say that the best way to hold the soil on our ranges is

- strive for 100% overstory and litter coverage
- retain 100% of the vegetable matter as a nutrient reinvestment
- avoid compaction.

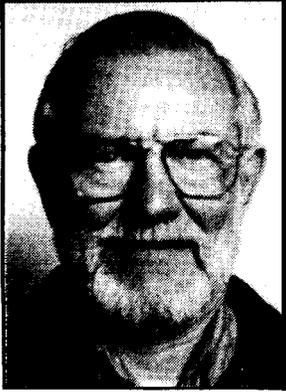
This would be my prescription for all of the range. For the riparian zones there would be one added prescription - not allow weighty animals nor vehicles on or in the stream.

There is one important factor in the Owyhees not mentioned by Sir Howard: frost heaves. I don't know yet, but I suspect they are highly instrumental in opening up soil to water penetration as well as oxygenation, seed deposition and litter distribution. What I am calling frost heaves are golfball sized clumps that appear when the snow melts off. The crack between heaves allow meltwater to go below. Then, it seems that these heaves all settle back down as the surface dries. And, of course, we can't neglect the factor of the microflora, that mossy cover of tiny plants matted together. On grazed land these only exist under the canopy of perennials, but on canyonsides, under brush and trees, the cryptoflora cover the

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The Stubble Height Caper

by Gene E. Bray



In 1981 the Owyhee Resource Area (ORA) of the BLM approved a Management Framework Plan (MFP) that has by default become the guide for resource decisions for nearly two decades. The Wildlife-aquatics section included land use plan objectives to improve on-site fisheries habitat condition from poor to good on 64 miles of stream by fencing to exclude livestock and from fair to excellent on 32.35 miles of stream by intensive livestock management. The target stream reaches were inventoried and prioritized.

There were defined six Standards for good riparian habitat condition:

1. High streambank cover: streambank cover should provide at least 60% shading to a
2. Low streambank cover: vegetation should be mostly over 4" with sod mostly intact less than 10% bare soil with broken sod.
3. Streambank stability: no more than 10% of banks with active erosion.
4. Stream channel stability: no more than 5% lateral movement, no more than minor scouring and changing channels within the stream bed.
5. Sedimentation: no more than 15% fine sediments in stream bottom composition.
6. In-stream cover: at least 25% in-stream cover.

After a gestation period of 15 years, in September 1996 the BLM instituted a training program for the ORA permittees covering half of Standard 2., the 4" vegetation or stubble height requirement. (This criteria was selected as the best indicator of the condition and trend of riparian habitats.) That was followed in 1997 with issuance of over 60 (ten year) term permits that included the stubble height, but not as an immediate requirement. The implementation started as a voluntary objective in 1997 with the more progressive permittees.

For the 1998 grazing season more grazing schemes and facilities are intended to improve compliance and by the 1999 season, all permittees having a targeted stream within their allotments are expected to comply. This presupposes that agency money is available for fencing and other cattle management facilities and that grazing can be rearranged so that cattle are out of pastures with sensitive stream segments by July 15 to avoid hot season grazing. In the interim, permittees are being urged to be more active in herding, more aware of the forage utilization in riparian areas, and more thorough in driving all cattle out of the pasture being vacated.

Unfortunately this persuasion will work with some ranchers and not at all with others. Those not choosing to

cooperate will find as many excuses as are now offered in trespass situations and the BLM will be as powerless in enforcement of stubble height as they are today with meaningful trespass penalties.

Another factor is the subjective nature of the stubble height determination. Already in the case of 1997 end of season results, the cowboys and their allies are disputing BLM's measurements. For the Cliffs Allotment #0501 on Cabin Creek, BLM found median (longest blade) measurements of 3.5" in 1996 and 2.5" on October 1, 1997. Readings by the Owyhee county Ag Extension Agent on October 17 portrapd a median of 4.0 inches. (Why are we having this meeting?)

On October 4 this author observed on Noon, Corral, Cabin and Juniper Creeks in Cliffs Allotment, rather uniformly denuded riparian areas where it would be impossible to hide or even moderately obscure a golf ball. If you have in mind the looks of a lawn or pasture mowed to a height of 4 inches - forget it. The stubble height measurement technique uses the longest blade on the plant nearest the boot tip after a stride along the transect. The average blade length could very well be only an inch and there is no penalty for barren soil unless barren for two to three feet from the measurement point. Leaving 4" by this measurement still results in badly denuded streambanks that won't provide cover for a field mouse.

The series of stubble height meetings held in January through March of this year (three per week) with several dozen permittees were really Gaston - Alfonse routines. Since adjusting or suspending the current grazing preference levels are off limits politically, the only levers left are more intensive herding by the cowboys or adding significant range facilities at agency expense to exclude cattle. Permittees are loath to commit to significantly more riding, and field experience shows that even more manageable exclosures of modest size have been ineffective in keeping cattle out of the creeks for long.

The fencing solution is not only expensive initially but requires high maintenance and intensive surveillance every year thereafter, which just aren't in the cards. In Wilderness Study Areas, other special designation areas, and in many ledge, canyon or exceedingly rocky areas, reliable fencing is prohibited or virtually impossible to install. (In a few allotments, there may be pasture rotations involving private holdings and FFRs will allow cattle exclusion from riparian pastures after July 15, which should show improvements.)

Barring genetic creation of a strain of hydrophobic cows, this scheme of intensive livestock management is doomed to failure on most of ORA terrain. There will be a lot of effort expended (churning if you prefer) but little real progress on the ground to show for it. On lands so unsuited for efficient herding and not cost effective for holistic grazing fencing schemes, the only real solution for high desert stream rehabilitation is to continue along paths that will result in total removal of the cattle. 🐄

Gene E. Bray is a member of the IWP Board.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING ON PUBLIC LAND IN SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO PRELIMINARY SURVEY AND FINAL REPORT: 1997

by Jackie Johnson Maughan - Range Monitor



OVERVIEW

In 1997 the Idaho Watersheds Project (IWP) hired me on a halftime basis to monitor range practices and conditions on public land in southeastern Idaho from May until October, the maximum of the grazing season. Stipulated were lands administered by the Caribou National Forest and the Malad and Pocatello Resource Areas, Upper Snake River District, Bureau of Land Management. Also of interest were state lands in the Blackfoot Reservoir and Grays Lake vicinity used by the Eastern Idaho and the Idaho Citizens Grazing Associations. In addition, lands on the Targhee National Forest were mentioned.

I was contracted to learn about the land use plans and to choose grazing allotments to monitor "with riparian, water quality, and stream functioning problems." I was to determine compliance with existing land use plans and allotment management plans where they existed.

After becoming acquainted with agency, **user, environmental, and other interests, I decided which watersheds would be most worth** my time. In addition to looking at those likely to be in the worst state of decline, I also wanted to see those in the best condition. Since time, money, and resources were limited, I believed it most efficient to look at the largest allotments within each administrative unit where possible and germane.

The administrative units consisted of the following: the Caribou's three ranger districts, Montpelier, Pocatello, and Soda Springs; two of the Upper Snake District BLM resource areas, the Malad and Pocatello; and the two, large state allotments already mentioned. I did not visit any portions of the Targhee National Forest.

In general, I found land management personnel cooperative and willing to work with me. This was especially true of the Caribou National Forest. I went to some effort to establish good working relations and did not want to condemn or make judgments or assumptions.

The difference in the health of grazing lands was very dramatic and very obvious. Some areas were in excellent condition and proved to me that it can be done. Notable were the Toponce Unit of the Portneuf Cattle and Horse Allotment and the Toponce Sheep and Goat Allotment on the Pocatello Ranger District of the Caribou. Also notable were portions of the Montpelier/Elk Valley Allotment on the Montpelier Ranger District of the Caribou. I do not mention lands on the Soda Springs Ranger District because I just didn't spend enough time there to make a judgment. This does not mean that good to excellent conditions don't exist there nor is this a criticism by exclusion.

On the other hand, those in extremely poor condition were portions of the Pleasantview Hills and Samaria Moun-

tains Allotments on the Malad BLM. I have already written an extensive summary of my findings on Pleasantview which can be seen at the IWP web site and which is included in this report. I must also disclaim any notion that all BLM lands in the two resource areas are in bad shape. I simply don't know.

What you will find here is a summary, not an exhaustive blow by blow accounting. I have tried to be objective and entirely honest. Every site visited is documented with photos and legal descriptions.

CARIBOU NATIONAL FOREST

Pocatello Ranger District

The Pocatello and Malad Ranger Districts have been combined into one administrative unit. A Range Monitoring Plan [enclosed], the only current one for the Caribou, was completed in April 1997. The plan does not include the Curlew National Grasslands.

The Pocatello Ranger District has Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) in place for most of the 28 allotments, issues and concerns identified, and monitoring needs established. Where problems exist, such as on the Dry Creek Allotment, they are clearly identified and documented.

I asked the range conservation officer to show me the best and worst on this district and accordingly he showed me Toponce Creek and Dry Creek.

Toponce Creek, located on the east side of the Pocatello Range 20 miles due east of Pocatello, is being managed well and this was visible through such factors as plant diversity, forage height, stream depth and sinuosity, bank stability, and the presence of such amphibians as the leopard frog, thought to be a potential indicator species. Not only the Forest Service but the permittees on this allotment should be commended for the good work here.

The Dry Creek allotment, located in the Malad Range just east of Malad City, has been named the number one monitoring priority on the district. All 12 units have been identified as needing updated management plans. Along with overgrazing and degraded riparian areas, leafy spurge has possibly six) of



Caston Beatty Spring, near Crater Mt.. state allotment, north of Blackfoot Reservoir. August 1997

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the units. Leafy spurge, to quote the Noxious Weed Action Plan [enclose] for the disk, February 1997, is the "top priority. . .Rapid spreading, highly competitive and hard to kill, this weed has the highest probability of spreading throughout the district and becoming a weed pest forestwide" (1).

To date, scoping for an Environmental Assessment has been done and the actual EA is close to completion. Sheep will be brought in as an experimental attempt to control the spurge and the actual herding will be overseen on a full-time basis by a former Forest Service range conservationist. In addition, the Caribou plans intensive management, rather than a reduction in livestock numbers, with no one unit being grazed more than 30 days.

Other problems do exist and a few are related to recreational use. For example, Lead Draw, in the Mink Creek watershed just south of Pocatello, has been degraded by off-road-vehicle use. A barricade will be constructed this spring with a \$1000 donation from the Sierra Club, labor promised by the Pocatello Trail Machine Association, and materials donated by the Bannock County Road Department. It will keep out the 4x4s and additional measures will be taken to keep lighter vehicles off the sidehills.

The Curlew National Grasslands remain for me an enigmatic and complex issue, one which deserves further investigation. I did little but visit there and become familiar with some of the major issues and publics.

Montpelier Ranger District

The Montpelier Ranger District is in the process of updating their Range Monitoring Plan. To paraphrase their range conservation officer, it is being designed to concentrate monitoring where it is needed most. They will be looking closely at planned use for the upcoming grazing season and designing their monitoring based on this. Therefore, the plan is a work-in-progress until they get through all of their annual operating plan meetings with permittees, which are taking place now through May. IWP will be sent a copy as soon as it is completed.

Of particular interest is the Montpelier/Elk Valley Grazing Allotment (MEV). This is an enormous piece of land covering approximately 133 square miles (42,560 acres) with 25 permittees running 3217 head of cattle. Much of this is pristine and remote country with navigation on some roads impossible without four-wheel-drive.

MEV is important because of the Bonneville Cutthroat trout. This trout is on the Intermountain Region, Forest Service sensitive species list and is a U.S. Fish Wildlife Service Category 2 candidate for listing. Consequently, in 1995 a Conservation Agreement for this allotment was signed off on by various government agencies plus the Caribou Cattlemens' Association. Streams harboring known populations of the trout include Preuss, Dry, and Giraffe Creeks.

I spent three days in this area in the middle of July and looked at these three drainages. My impression, relatively early in the season in a good water year, was that the allotment was in generally good shape. However, I was



Clarks Cut Creek, southeast corner of Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, BLM land with a patch of private in the middle of section. July 1997

concerned about cattle gathered in the lower reaches of Preuss Creek, right on the stream banks. The banks were not trampled but I did think this to be cause for further investigation.

I looked at the top of Dry and Giraffe Creeks and was extremely pleased. Solar-powered electric fences had clearly done the job here and it was evident that the land was beginning to recover. However, I did not actually hike down to the riparian areas to make a closer inspection. I was, frankly, too worried about rain and navigating the road out. From a distance, with binoculars, they looked good, but an on the ground take-look is needed.

Other concerns about this allotment are the Aegetter Hollow drainage above the Montpelier Reservoir. This manifests extreme damage, not at all typical of the rest of the allotment. In addition is Montpelier Creek itself and the proposed highway U.S. 89 improvement which could certainly damage all the good work that has taken place on the MEV allotment to safe-keep the Bonneville Cutthroat trout. (The Eastern Idaho Group of the Sierra Club is monitoring the situation and considering legal action on the Idaho Department of Transportation U.S. 89 Environmental Assessment.)

Upcoming on this district is the Environmental Assessment for the Montpelier Range. A decision date is scheduled for December 1998. Also being monitored by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition is the Eight Mile Canyon area, one experiencing heavy recreational use and other user issues. I did not visit any of the Malad Range or look into issues beyond what I've reported here.

Soda Springs Ranger District

I had meetings with two of the range conservationists on this district and did some volunteer work with riparian monitoring. This seemed to end up my last priority, not because it wasn't important but simply because time ran out. Of major concern, however, is the Rich Allotment complex. This must be visited because of reports of grazing problems in the general vicinity of the Caribou Mountain roadless area.

STATE ALLOTMENTS BLACKFOOT RESERVOIR

Many visits were made here covering lots of miles.

Owyhee Grazing Suit Will Force BLM Changes in Livestock Management

Blarid Lucas - Litigation Director LAW Fund

Idaho Watersheds Project and Committee for Idaho's
iigh Desert filed their latest grazing lawsuit against the BLM
n October 1997, challenging BLM's management failures on
he 1.8 million acre Owyhee Resource Area - our biggest
grazing challenge yet. The groups are represented by the Land
and Water Fund of the Rockies.

The lawsuit resembles the Castle Creek allotment
case we filed last spring, in the neighboring Bruneau Resource
Area. As there, our case is largely based on BLM's own
documents showing severe and ongoing degradation of
streams, water quality, and riparian-dependent species due to

livestock **grazing impacts**. And
as in Castle Creek, here BLM
again has utterly failed to live
up to the area plan adopted in
the early 1980s (the Owyhee
Management Framework
Plan), which promised
significant improvements in
water quality, fish habitat, and
riparian areas due to "inten-
sive" livestock management,
which never happened.

Much of our evidence
of BLM's management failures
comes from the August 1996
draft Owyhee Resource
Management Plan and
Environmental Impact

Statement - a three volume study which catalogues, allot-
ment-by-allotment, the harms that grazing is causing in the
resource area. For example, the draft RMP documents that
91% of all inventoried fish habitat in streams on the Owyhee
Resource Area is in "unsatisfactory" condition; and that two-
thirds of streams monitored were violating state water quality
standards.

The draft RMP also reveals that BLM knows
significant steps are needed to begin addressing this livestock-
caused degradation. BLM proposes, for instance, a 35%
reduction in grazing levels - with SO-60% reductions in
allotments with key riparian areas - and numerous measures
(like 6" inch stubble heights and streambank stability
requirements) intended to prevent further livestock abuse.
The RMP also emphasizes the importance of making changes
on a number of large problem allotments within two years.

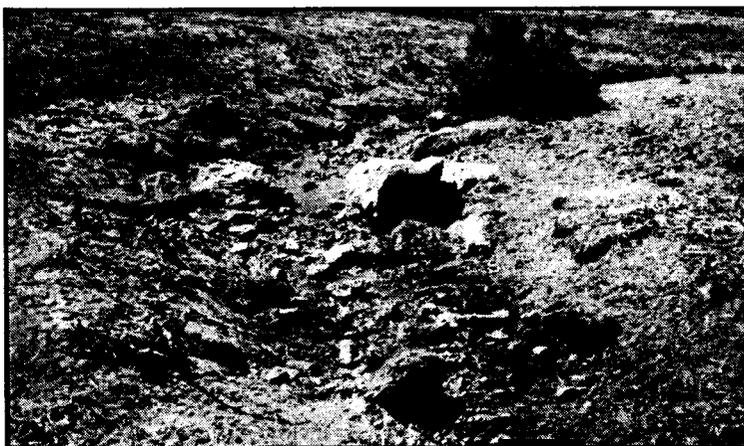
It is now almost two years since the draft RMP was
issued, and BLM has still not taken the steps it recommends.
In fact, the RMP is apparently on hold indefinitely, as BLM
tries to attain "consensus" over the RMP proposals. And
BLM just reassigned Jay Carlson, the area manager who
issued these proposals, to a backwater post.

The Owyhee lawsuit is intended to break this logjam
and force BLM to undertake prompt and meaningful grazing
management reforms. Our claims are based in part on the
'fundamentals of rangeland health,' adopted in August 1995

as part of BLM's rangeland reform regulations. They establish
four key ecological criteria which all BLM lands are supposed
to meet, or be making "significant progress" toward meeting.
These include meeting state water quality standards, keeping
watersheds and riparian areas in proper functioning condi-
tion, and maintaining habitat for all endangered, threatened,
and sensitive species. These "fundamentals" complement
other federal law requirements, including the Clean Water
Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Federal Land
Policy Management Act, which we also raised in the
complaint.

The "fundamentals of rangeland health" further
mandate that BLM must
revise grazing management
"promptly" upon deter-
mining that any of these
requirements is not being
met, or in no event later
than the next grazing
season.

In light of the RMP's
admissions that virtually
every allotment on the
Owyhee Resource Area is
in poor condition, we
sought a preliminary
injunction from the
federal court ordering
BLM to make significant
management changes



*Degraded portion of the Middle Fork of the Owyhee River typifies the
environmental disaster over which IWP has sued the BLM for mismanage-
ment in the Owyhee Resource Area.*

before March 1, 1998, or to forbid turnout of livestock if
changes were not made.

In a two day preliminary injunction hearing in
December - before a courtroom packed with ranchers,
bureaucrats, and conservationists, with a guest appearance by
"congressman" Chenoweth -- we presented evidence and
testimony documenting the severe degradation which
livestock grazing has caused to streams, riparian areas and
water quality across the resource area. We were particularly
lucky to have the assistance of Robert Ohmart, a riparian
habitat specialist from Arizona State University, who
presented slides and commentary to the judge about the
impacts of cattle grazing on riparian areas throughout the
West, including the Owyhees and other parts of Idaho. We
were also assisted by declarations from volunteer experts
Donald Chapman and Don Johnson, both fisheries biologists
who addressed the serious threats to redband trout in the
Owyhee country.

Federal Judge Lynn Winmill issued a decision on our
injunction request in early February, which was both encour-
aging and disappointing. On the positive side, Judge Winmill
rejected the ranchers' and BLM's argument that we could not
even sue in federal court - an important precedent for future
grazing challenges. The judge also expressed serious concerns

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There are two large allotments held by the Idaho Citizens and Eastern Idaho Grazing Associations. I spoke with one of the Idaho Citizens permittees and he told me this was their best water year in ten. It showed. Still, I would characterize the condition of these areas as poor *with* thistle and cheat grass the primary source of animal nutrients. The watersheds showed all the signs of long-term overgrazing including shallow and disappearing creeks, muddy to nonexistent streams, increaser vegetative species, and thistle, thistle, thistle.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

This is where most of my time was spent. What I found here was so degraded that I fixed on it and eventually asked Jon Marvel to come over and take a look. I didn't want to waste his time on minor issues on small allotments, so saved this for him to get really mad about.

He did. It was magnificent and scary and deserved. My report, already written up and also put on the IWP web site, follows. However, I must say in all fairness that certain portions of the Malad BLM, specifically northeastern portions of the Samaria Mountains, do show good efforts at maintaining and improving riparian areas. 🌿

Jackie Maughan is a writer and teacher *in* Pocatello, Idaho.

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about the impacts of grazing on the Owyhee country and about BLM's extended delay in finalizing the RMI? He ordered BLM to submit a timetable for "expeditious" resolution of the RMP, indicating that the eight year process should not drag on for ten years.

However, the judge denied our specific request for an injunction requiring earlier action by BLM, in light of his order that BLM promptly finish the RMP. Unfortunately, the judge did not really address our claims that BLM is violating the 'fundamentals of rangeland health" and is also violating federal law by not adhering to its MFP requirements.

This week BLM submitted its proposed timetable for finishing the RMP. Its basically a joke. BLM claims it will take 10 months just to print the document, and that it needs about another year and a half to be ready for printing. We will be filing comments asking the judge to impose a more reasonable, quicker timetable. But if BLM persists in its stalling tactics, we will again ask the judge to order reforms.

In summary, the Owyhee lawsuit is far from over. Judge Winmill's order serves notice to BLM and the rancher permittees that the time for substantial grazing reforms is here. While the court has not required the immediate changes we would like to see, it has made clear that BLM's future management of the Owyhee Resource Area will need to effectively protect streams, riparian areas, water quality, wildlife, and fish. We will be closely following BLM's action! and progress, and seeking further judicial relief as necessary.

"No force in modern civilization has changed the Western lands as much as livestock grazing."

Steve Johnson, IWP Member

Ranchers' Rights Bill

Glenns Ferry Senator Robbi King's "rancher's rights" bill, awaiting the governor's signature, reflects the xlorous progression of privilege to right to absolute ownership. The bill is to help ranchers negate federal attempts to restrict grazing and would require compensation for any interference with grazing.

The outdated Taylor Grazing Act allows grazing on public land and allows ranchers to buy and sell their leased permits. The inference of ownership of leasing rights on public lands (buy and sell) was a terrible mistake and may be unconstitutional. Public property and all rights thereto are owned by the public. To add to the insult, King now wants the public to pay ranchers for any reduction of a "right" they should never have had in the first place.

Ranchers, as a very favored few, should be thankful for 100 years of privileges and take grazing cutbacks like a man.

Raymond E. Bowden, Boise

Reprinted from the Idaho Statesman with the permission of Raymond Bowden. HB735 alluded to by Mr. Bowden was signed into law by Governor Batt in March 1998.

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ground.

Conditions here in Owyhee/Jarbidge-land are not those written about in soil texts. We have here high, arid, windscored plateaus on volcanic ash and decomposing basalt. These cut by knife-edge canyons whose floors are still a mile high. How deep are the soils on the tables and on the canyon walls? How can there be any soil at all on a 27' slope, whereas you often see only a pebble surface out on the flats? What conditions obtain where the soil stays put? What changes where the land lies flat to the sun? What do these frost heaves do to rooted plants? Where do the seeds germinate best?

There's only one way for me to find out: test plots in different conditions and careful observation. As Chris Maser, the forest ecology man, says, "Soil is the most dynamic part of the ecosystem." If you can't understand what's happening underground, how can you hope to understand and manage the above-ground?

Ranchers want stability, while the soil steals away from underfoot. I know mining is a way of life out in the West, but soil mining benefits nobody but the continental shelf.

Look for me next summer down on my knees measuring root, estimating litter coverage, looking for the answers. 🌿



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