

COOPERATIVE APPROACHES IN WILDLIFE AND RANGE MANAGEMENT

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In representing a range biologist view on this panel today, I hope that my comments, which are supported by nearly 20 years of experience in several different land areas, reflect also those of the majority of my fellow range professionals.

To address the subject of successful management approaches in range and wildlife management which we are challenged with today, I believe it necessary to reflect first upon our educational foundations and to assess how well prepared we are, or have been, to accept the resource management challenges before us, and to work cooperatively in a positive manner to ameliorate any given problem.

As a range student at a Montana university, I can recall some of the animosity which was evident and demonstrated between wildlife and range students, and also the lack of contact when classes and labs were shared. The range students were obviously coined as pro-cow and the wildlife students anti-cow, the range students pro-herbicide, the wildlife students anti-herbicide, and the list went on and on. The range students were given tours of range project areas which were chemically treated, or plowed and reseeded, and were shown all the positive attributes, such as increased forage production, improved watershed protection, and so forth. The wildlife students toured the same area and were told how several hundred deer would be dramatically impacted because abundant sagebrush was no longer available for deer winter cover or sage grouse habitat.

It's amazing how the things that we learned through these activities have extended into our post educational careers. I recall that government cost share programs such as those administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and the Soil Conservation Service were under continual assault by wildlife interests in Montana to eliminate those portions of the programs which provided cost-share dollars for herbicide treatments of sagebrush on private rangelands. We were all heavily influenced in those days and probably remain so today, by the preachings of our profound and infallible university professors, the field specialists of the various agencies, and of course our own personal biases, which are not always rationally founded.

While I was deeply embroiled in this controversy at times, I failed to see a rational alternative until, of course, the other side would see the light. And you know what - the other side rarely ever did! Perhaps the reason is, we have a propensity to push hard for those concepts, approaches, and ideas which we individually accept as being the most reasonable, despite what others say and feel. If we explain our plan once, we feel that should be good enough for anyone to fully comprehend and embrace with open arms.

In reality, in order for any idea, concept, or proposed treatment to be accepted and supported, we have a responsibility to first sell what we are proposing. If no one is buying, then the idea just might have a flaw or lack adequate backup. Also, in today's management, particularly on the public lands, advancing an idea means selling it to more than one interest or discipline. With all the multiple resource activities today such as cultural resources, critical wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and recreation use, what we do in one area can potentially effect several other resources sometimes in a less than desirable way.

Growing concerns, and a more interested and informed public, in recent years have led to the need for new approaches for resolving resource problems. As we proceed into a new era of resources management some innovative and obviously concerned folks have either created or resurrected some techniques which provide a forum for addressing the complex challenges encountered in today's resource management.

Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) has blossomed as one of the primary vehicles for use in resolving resource problems and providing the all critical local input into a planning process. While not being flaunted as a panacea for resolving all resource problems, it has experienced considerable success through its infancy in Nevada and California. Probably one of the most notable aspects of CRMP, in my opinion, is the ability to bring various interests together in a technical review team and direct site specific technical expertise on-the-ground in an attempt to develop viable alternatives for the CRMP core group to evaluate.

The CRMP process also provides a key role to the livestock permittee who

comprised of range researchers, range managers, wildlife habitat specialists, and consultants who represent several State Grazing Boards. The committee is working to hopefully standardize the criteria and approaches to evaluate and rate riparian habitats in the state. If we are all using the same guidelines and speaking the same language, then a new direction for progress and less interpretive conflict becomes apparent. Nevada has experienced success in a previous effort by the State Monitoring Task Group in developing Statewide guidelines for monitoring our rangelands. In essence, we resolve our problems if we're talking and working together.

Overcoming the problems which exist between resource disciplines can and should begin at the University level. Students have an ideal opportunity to interface in universities where range and wildlife are taught in the same department or college, particularly where curriculums overlap in important fundamental ecological classes such as soils, plants, ecology, and so on.

In this manner, the basic principles of

resource management are learned in common as the foundation for building individual philosophies.

When all is said and done, we are all attempting to carry out effective management with the same resources - the land - with the common denominator of protecting and enhancing the natural resource base to provide sustained use. In actuality range and wildlife management are not all that far apart.

The range livestock industry is struggling with immense economic woes and is desperately in need of practical alternatives to help generate additional cash flow. I am convinced that coordinating range and wildlife expertise on any given operation can result in one or more viable alternatives for additional marketable resources on the range. Opportunities exist for fish farming, recreation, hunting, and several other alternatives when all the various resource areas are evaluated. Perhaps the real challenge is still before us. I trust that we're up to meeting that challenge in a progressive and professional manner.