

MANAGING RANGE AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES ON THE MODOC NATIONAL FOREST

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The Modoc National Forest in north-eastern California contains about 1.6 million acres. We produce about 120,000 AUM's of domestic livestock forage each year. Our forest is also in the middle of the Pacific flyway and we provide nesting habitat for 3000 geese and 5000 ducks. We also provide resting areas in both the spring and fall for migrating waterfowl. In fact, if you're a duck hunter, it is a pretty good place to live. About 26,000 migratory deer in 5 herds spend all or part of their time on the Modoc National Forest. Also, about 3000 antelope can be found on the forest.

There are many miles of trout streams in the Warner Mountains. I don't know that we produce any record breaking trout but the fisheries resource is important as far as we are concerned. There are many other species of wildlife on the forest such as pine martens, goshawks, bobcats, and sandhill cranes, but I mentioned the others because they represent the greatest opportunities for cooperative approaches to resource management. They are also the area where we can get into our most bitter conflicts.

The forest wetland program is one of our biggest successes in cooperative management of wildlife and range resources. It started out in the mid 1960's when we started building nesting structures for Canada geese. Geese will nest almost anywhere and don't need residual vegetation for nesting material. The geese start nesting in early March and have usually fledged their young prior to the opening of the grazing season, hence, no conflicts.

Our success with Canada geese prompted us to try increasing duck production. However, ducks need residual vegetation with which to build nests and also to use for bedding cover. They also don't fledge young until well into the grazing season. Our challenge was how to provide nesting cover for waterfowl in an area that was grazed.

We looked at many possible schemes and finally, by working with ranchers and waterfowl enthusiasts, came up with an idea to build islands in areas that were wet in the spring and early summer and dried up in late summer and fall. The tops of the islands were fenced and seeded. We then had a situation where we could raise water-

fowl and livestock simultaneously in the same area. The forest currently has about 2800 acres of wetlands that are being managed in this manner.

Another example of cooperative range and wildlife management occurs on an area that is used by the Interstate and Glass Mountain deer herds in the late fall and winter. The primary winter forage species is bitter brush. The area is also grazed by sheep. Working with both the California Department of Fish and Game and the grazing permittee, we first defined our management goals. The deer needed the current year's production of bitter brush leaders for winter forage. The sheep producer wanted succulent forage early in the spring. We've worked out a grazing strategy where by the sheep enter the area after the migratory deer have left, around May 1, and leave the area around June, before the bitterbrush has started to produce its current year's leaders. This program has been in effect for about five years now and we believe that it is working well.

Our biggest challenge as federal land managers occurs in riparian areas. Uncontrolled livestock use is detrimental to those wildlife species that spend all or part of their time in riparian areas. Fisheries are also greatly impacted when livestock use is uncontrolled. The key to using the riparian areas appears to be the control of domestic livestock.

We have had several successes in riparian area management on the Modoc National Forest. One example is a riparian area which was about 1 mile long and about 1/4 mile wide. There was an extensive, active gully system in it. The area was grazed by cattle season long. The Soil Conservation Service had designed a series of gully plugs that would stop headcutting and raise the water table. These structures would have cost \$125,000. However, by reducing the stocking level and changing the grazing system from season-long use to spring use only we stopped the gullying process, raised the water table, and increased willow production in just 3 years. We're almost to the point of converting an ephemeral stream to a perennial stream. We also saved the cost of the gully stabilization structures.

The key to success with such projects is to get all interested parties to

mutually agree on a set of goals. This means that all sides have to give a little. The all or nothing approach seldom wins. Once the goals are agreed on an action plan can be drawn up and executed. My experience is that it takes more energy to mutually agree on the goals than it does to execute the plan. Admittedly we still have a long way to go in riparian area management. I look at it as an opportunity to collectively work out cost effective

schemes where all interests benefit.

On the way down here I heard George Studinski, one of our biologists, say "I don't want to hear that livestock destroy riparian zones. What I want to hear is 'This was the problem and this is how we fixed it.'" I hope that will be the tone of the meeting and I think we'll adopt it as a philosophy on the Modoc National Forest. I can do that for a while because I'm the Acting Forest Supervisor.