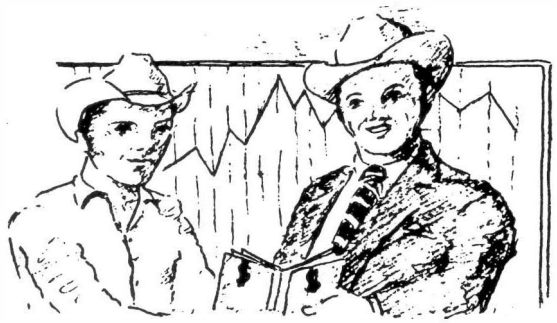
Chapter VII
WELFARE RANCHING



Although cattle grazing in the West has polluted more water, eroded more topsoil, killed more fish, displaced more wildlife, and destroyed more vegetation than any other land use, the American public pays ranchers to do it.
--Ted Williams, "He's Going to Have an Accident" (Williams 1991)

The environmental consequences discussed in the first part of this book by themselves more than justify ending public lands ranching. But, adding insult to injury, we the people are forced to subsidize this plunder. That's right; piles of our tax and private dollars allow the ranching establishment to overgraze our land and develop it for ranching. By exploiting America's fondness for cow meat and cow boys, fostering a healthy public image, exercising its overwhelming political might, and simply maintaining the status quo for more than a century, stockmen have stuck us with the bill -- without our consent or even our knowledge.

As has been detailed, ranchers, government and private entities have been working together for decades to convert our public land into profitable livestock ranches. Despite millions of range developments, they have not been successful; public land remains inherently "a lousy place to raise livestock." Federal studies show that even though the average grazing allotment size per rancher is about 12,000 acres, only about 5% of permittees have herds large enough -- about 500 head of cattle -- to provide sole support for a family (Luoma 1986). However, perhaps most of these large operators are businesses, not families; most of those that are families are wealthy independent of their public ranching operations; and both businesses and families derive most of their livestock feed from *private* land.

They perpetuate a land abuse system -- often called *welfare ranching* -- that eats up billions of tax and private dollars. In fact, in terms of net production public lands ranching is among the most heavily subsidized businesses in America. All levels of government give liberally, from federal to state to county, and even some cities, as do many private entities, willingly or not. Most stockmen themselves admit that most public lands ranching operations would collapse without this artificial support structure. What does this say for an industry whose members boast of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness? According to Steve Johnson, as Southwest Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, "The popular conception of the rancher as a rugged individualist is strikingly at odds with reality." Tom France of the National Wildlife Federation maintains that "Grazing is as close to a pork-barrel issue as the West gets."

Payments to the agriculture industry are called subsidies. In the urban sector, subsidies are called welfare.
--Harvey Duncan, Hanna, Wyoming

Cattle ranching on the public lands of the American West is the most sacred form of public welfare in the United States.
--Edward Abbey

Welfare ranching has become a way of life for the 22,000 Western BLM and Forest Service permittees, as well as most of the 8000 or so stockmen on other Western federal, state, and county lands. This tiny minority -- whose public ranching domain encompasses 41% of the West -- lives well off the liberal generosity of the rest of us 250 million Americans. Partly for this reason, partly because only the wealthy can afford to buy public lands ranches, users of public grazing land are the nation's largest and wealthiest livestock operators. For example, despite the fact that merely 3% of this country's cattle feed comes from public land, an incredible **90%** of all US cattlemen owning 1000 or more cattle hold public grazing permits. (Ferguson 1983)

At the same time, a large percentage of those who graze public land run their operations at a subsistence level or as a secondary business, that is, as a tax write-off or source of extra income that will never fold with endless subsidization. Like other public ranchers, these "ranchers" pay minuscule grazing fees, almost no property taxes on their private land, and are kept in "business" with openhanded government and private technical, material, and financial assistance. They include numerous and powerful politicos, businessmen, and corporations such as Union Oil, Getty Oil, Texaco, Phelps Dodge, and Anheiser-Busch, along with investment partnerships, feedlot operators, agribusiness companies, railroads, land speculators, foreign investors, doctors, lawyers, actors, and whoever else has half a million bucks or so to slap down on a public lands ranch.

Also included are more than a few underworld figures. They find ranches perfect "front" businesses -- comfortable

and isolated strongholds where they may engage in criminal activity unhampered or, if necessary, "lie low" until things "cool off on the outside." A case in point is a large Forest Service ranching operation down the road from where my family and I lived in southwest New Mexico; it was known to locals as a hideout for the Mafia, including in the past the underworld dignitary Al Capone.

With an indomitable line-up like this, is it any wonder welfare ranching continues unchecked?

They lease the land for less than market value; the mortgage value of the right-to-lease is a lucrative source of capital; and for some of them, the entire operation is a tax write-off. They complain that they have a "bad deal" because of agency meddling and neglect. On the other hand, they make large campaign contributions to assure they get to keep their bad deal.
--Jim Fish, Director, New Mexico BLM Wilderness Coalition

The government and private sectors subsidize public graziers in innumerable ways. Much is given openly in the form of ranching-assistance efforts. These most direct subsidies include low grazing fees, range developments, and ranching administration, and total roughly $100 million annually. In an article by columnist Jack Anderson, Oklahoma Representative Mike Synar states that if Congress decided to grant these subsidies to all US livestock producers, based on the fact that federal lands ranchers represent less than 2% of US livestock producers, the subsidy (not including low grazing fees) would cost taxpayers more than $2 billion annually. Including low grazing fees, the figure would surpass $7 billion.

However, a vastly greater amount is subsidized *indirectly*, in multitudinous ways often having little apparent connection to ranching. Consequently, it is impossible to compile precise subsidy information on public lands ranching; no government agency nor private entity I am aware of compiles such records. For example, through hundreds of federal/state/county/private funded Agricultural Extension Service offices, public lands ranchers receive millions of dollars worth of assistance annually; because accounting does not distinguish between beneficiaries, no one has any idea how many millions. Extension Service agents I spoke with would not venture even a rough guess. Other indirect subsidies include range "restoration" projects, university range programs, range experimental stations, research and testing programs, federal wool incentive payments, livestock disease and parasite control, and much, much more.

Of the money the public unknowingly spends on public lands ranching each year, how much is intentionally hidden and how much simply reflects tradition/status quo must necessarily remain a matter of debate and subjective analysis. For instance, state fish and game departments commonly design "wildlife enhancement" projects that benefit livestock interests as much, if not more. Exactly what percent is actually designed for ranching is anyone's guess.

In any event, 20 years of observation have left no doubt in my mind that government agencies habitually mislead the public about ranching subsidies. Facts and figures are juggled and misinterpreted; assessments are distorted; hidden costs and ill-defined projects are buried in obscure government reports; range developments, activities, and their effects are not made public or are misrepresented.

More than for any other public land user, subsidization for ranching comes in disguise, concealed under labels such as "riparian enhancement," "soil conservation," "range research," "fire prevention," "type conversion," "wildlife water development," "cooperative management," "aesthetic enhancement," "open range," "access improvement," "watershed seeding," and dozens of others. These shrewd euphemisms are used to draw more dollars into the ranching trough without public or legislative interference. Known as "institutionalized ripoff," it has become even more prevalent in recent years as multiple use mandates force the agencies to increasingly conceal subsidies from scrutiny.

This subsidization system is protected by an unwritten policy that absolves the ranching establishment from accountability for its influences. Thus, for example, when one of Oregon's finest trout streams, the Donner and Blitzen River, was virtually destroyed by overgrazing, BLM expressed concern but said it could do nothing until "wildlife funds" were appropriated to fence cattle out (Ferguson 1983).

This covert policy operates at even the most basic level. A Forest Service district ranger picks up a dozen salt blocks at the local feed store "as a favor" for an influential rancher. A BLM range specialist helps Rancher Jones round up stock under guise of "checking out the range conditions." A state range manager can get a stockman friend "a good deal on a cattle guard for your new fence . . . maybe even get it for nothing if we play our cards right." Government employees spend time chasing cattle and sheep out of unauthorized areas, closing gates, and mending broken or cut fences, rather than insisting that the ranchers responsible do so.

These little stories are day-to-day reality on the Western range; I've seen them all and more. There are, of course, many conscientious agency employees. Still, much covert, mutual back-scratching is prevalent between government officials and stockmen. Both realize that they have a good thing going at the public's expense, so why jeopardize it by letting the public find out?

In sum, government "range" (ranching) expenditure statistics are only the tip of the public lands ranching fiscal iceberg. Total tax and private expenditures are not only many times higher, but cannot be accurately measured. Nevertheless, we can study available information, read between the lines, scrape off some of the crap, and try to get a better look. The remainder of this chapter makes that attempt.

Those who receive special benefits and services from the federal government should be the ones to bear the costs of these services, not the general taxpayers.
--President Ronald Reagan, "hobby" rancher

Grazing Fees

"That's right, cousin," the ringtail answered. "The ranchers around here rent this land from the US Government for almost nothing. And most of them treat it as if it's not worth a dime! They put too many cows on the land, trying to raise as much beef to sell as they possibly can. You can't blame them, I guess, if the Government lets them get away with it."

--Gerry Bishop "Adventures of Ranger Rick," *Ranger Rick* (March 1985)

The low price of grazing fees on public lands is probably the longest-running scandal in the West.

--J.J. Casserly, "Financial Farce of US Grazing Fees," 4-4-85 *Arizona Republic*

A *grazing fee* is a periodic assessment charged ranchers for the privilege of grazing livestock on public land. Over the years federal, state, county, and city governments have used a great variety of parameters in determining the price to be charged. Because BLM, FS, and most other government agency grazing fees -- even at their highest level -- have rarely exceeded 1/3 of fair market value, they are the most conspicuous form of welfare to public lands ranchers.

During the initial decades of Western ranching, stockmen paid nothing to graze their animals unrestricted on public land. Conversely, unlike today they received few government subsidies, other than political, legislative, and judicial favoritism.

Subsidies increased gradually in the late 1800s, and when the Forest Service was established in 1905 it felt justified in unimposing a 5-cent-per-AUM grazing fee on the newly designated FS grazing permittees. (Different FS areas had different base values; 5 cents was the average fee charged.) The new fee, which went into effect in 1906, was defined by the Forest Service as "reasonable," though it didn't even cover administrative costs; $0.05/AUM was equivalent to about $0.80/AUM in today's dollar, or only a small fraction of what the herbage would have been worth on the private market.

Nevertheless, many ranchers labeled the new fee "outrageous." Through their political power structure they pressured Forest Service Director Gifford Pinchot and President Teddy Roosevelt to revoke the grazing fee. When the two wouldn't budge, the ranching-enamored Congress retaliated by drafting a bill to withdraw presidential authority to create National Forests in several Western states. Roosevelt quickly designated 16 million acres of new National Forests in those states, and then signed the bill into law. The industry raged against the Forest Service and filed a lawsuit, though to no avail.

FS grazing fees remained extremely low, fluctuating between $0.03 and $0.15/AUM until 1940. The Forest Service had apparently learned its lesson, for when in 1920 the House Committee on Agriculture tried to increase fees up to 300% (from the existing $0.13/AUM average), the agency opposed the attempt.

On the other hand, several government agencies, some of the public, and many private stockmen complained that Forest Service permittees were being unfairly subsidized with low grazing fees. Subsequently, a comprehensive study, the Rachford Appraisal, was conducted from 1920-24 to "provide a basis for fair and justifiable fees." Per the Rachford report, grazing fees were, beginning in 1924, to be annually appraised relative to livestock prices. Stockmen again objected and deferred the new fees for 4 years. In 1928 the new fee system was finally implemented, but it did not significantly raise the grazing fee. In fact, the fee was actually decreased dramatically, to $0.07-$0.09/AUM, in the early 1930s due, ostensibly, to the Great Depression.

If we charge no fee it would amount to a government subsidy, and a government subsidy is always subject to scrutiny, criticism, and investigation. You stockmen set some fair fee . . . we will want fees for our own protection.

--F.R. Carpenter, first Director of the Division of Grazing

In 1934 powerful cattle ranchers pushed through the Taylor Grazing Act and created the Division of Grazing, which became the Grazing Service in 1939 and, combined with the General Land Office, the Bureau of Land Management in 1946. During its first year of operation the Division of Grazing charged no grazing fee. Thereafter, until 1946, it charged the same $0.05/AUM fee as did the early Forest Service, ostensibly based on administrative costs.

For 2 main reasons early FS and BLM grazing fees were set only at token levels. First, as mentioned earlier, public lands ranchers were the major formulators of both of these agencies, and subsequently they exerted much control over their operation. Second, low fees made it much more likely that disgruntled ranchers would cooperate with the new federal grazing programs.

Of course, as with the Forest Service fee, the $0.05/AUM BLM fee never covered even the cost of range administration. So during the mid-1940s a coalition of agency, political, and private interests made the first serious attempt to raise the Grazing Service fee. It was promptly crushed by the ranching colossus. In fact, the Grazing Service was punished for its involvement; its budget was slashed by 50%, its range staff was reduced from 250 to less than 50 and, in 1946, it was eliminated altogether and replaced with the Bureau of Land Management. Consequently, the new BLM was so short on funds its first year that grazing "advisory" boards allotted range "improvement" funds to help pay range salaries (Foss 1960).

However, pressure to raise the BLM grazing fee continued, and in 1947 a fee study and recommendation, the Nicolson Plan, was formulated. Under its authority, the fee finally was raised -- to $0.08/AUM, where it stayed until 1950. This fee likewise failed to recover administrative costs, and in 1951 and 1955 BLM officials convinced permittees that other nominal increases were needed to partially compensate for increased administrative costs and inflation. After all, how could ranching subsidies be implemented without funding?

The Western ranching interests did not want to pay fees representing the true value of the forage, and they were particularly desirous not to have any principle established under which grazing fees would ever be related to the value of forage.

--Wesley Calef, **Private Grazing and Public Lands** (Calef 1960)

But even these increases scarcely kept pace with inflation, and everyone knew that federal grazing fees were still embarrassingly low. In 1954 BLM's "cost of administration" concept was abandoned and the method for determining the grazing fee was changed to reflect the going price of beef and mutton at Western markets. Consequently, the 1955 BLM fee was raised to a whopping $0.15/AUM. Since then BLM has gradually increased the fee in response to market trends, inflation, and pressure from US budget officials. Forest Service fees since 1928 rose similarly. In 1980 BLM and FS grazing fees peaked at $2.36/AUM and $2.41/AUM respectively -- still less than 1/3 fair market value -- after which the 2 agencies began charging the same fee.

Meanwhile, Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. FLPMA established a policy to "receive fair market value of the use of the public lands and their resources unless otherwise provided for by statute." Two years later, Congress enacted on a temporary 7-year basis the possible statutory exemption mentioned in FLPMA. This statute, the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), contained a formula for setting grazing fees. PRIA provided that during the 7-year experimental period the Departments of Agriculture and Interior were to evaluate the fee and other options, then recommend fees for 1986 and beyond. (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986) The resulting study, *Grazing Fee Review and Evaluation* (which cost the Departments $4 million to conduct) showed clearly that the fees charged for grazing federal land were far below those charged for private land (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986).

THE PRIA GRAZING FEE FORMULA

(from *Grazing Fee Review and Evaluation* -- USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986)

BASIS OF FORMULA:

The PRIA formula consists of a base value of $1.23 per AUM that is updated annually through a series of indexes that measure changes in the private grazing land lease rates, the price of beef cattle, and the costs of livestock production. The base period for the indexes is 1964 to 1968. The PRIA formula is:

$$\text{Calculated fee (CF)} = \$1.23 \times \frac{\text{FVI} + \text{BCPI} - \text{PPI}}{100}$$

Where:

CF = The Calculated Fee to be charged, which Congress defined as fair market value, which is the estimated economic value of livestock grazing to the user, and where annual increases or decreases in the fee are limited to a plus or minus 25% of the previous year's fee.

$1.23 = The base value established in 1966 through the Western Livestock Industry Survey (WLIS).

FVI = The Forage Value Index, an index of annually surveyed private land lease rates, 1964-1968 = 100.

BCPI = The Beef Cattle Price Index, an index of USDA annually reported prices of beef cattle over 500 pounds, 1964-1968 = 100.

PPI = The PRIA Prices Paid Index, indexed prices that producers of livestock pay for selected production items, 1964-1968 = 100.

Subsequently, since 1978 the annual federal grazing fee has been calculated according to the PRIA formula, which multiplied the number of AUMs a rancher uses by a predetermined rate based on changes in private grazing land base rates, beef cattle prices, and livestock production costs. These estimated production costs are based on numerous factors, such as prices of ranching supplies, fuel, rentals, repairs, new equipment, utilities, insurance, etc. They are set at arbitrarily high levels, rather than on what ranchers actually pay. Livestock losses to predators, poison plants, drought, and so on are treated essentially as deductions, and ranchers commonly inflate these estimates. The PRIA formula itself is likewise loaded, arbitrary, hypothetical, and confusing, with its base rates, price indexes, weighted averages, alternative bases, and so on. PRIA was created by the public lands ranching establishment to assure low grazing fees.

In short, the revenue collected from ranchers for public allotment grazing is computed by multiplying the total number of AUMs used times the PRIA grazing fee formula: AUMs X PRIA formula = grazing fee. This means that a stockman, corporation, or cattle or sheep company is charged a grazing fee based on "ability to pay" and not as a competitive, commercial enterprise using public land. This sliding grazing fee formula is similar to the ability-to-pay fee formulas used in many government welfare programs. Thus, when beef prices fell and production costs rose in the mid-1980s, the federal grazing fee was reduced to $1.35-$1.40/AUM for 5 years straight.

When the PRIA formula expired in 1985, Congress did not renew it. Instead, in February of that year, in a slick move that infuriated many reform advocates, rancher Ronald Reagan rode to the rescue and (while vacationing at his California ranch) promulgated an executive order directing the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior (at their advisal) to permanently adopt the PRIA fee formula -- contrary to initial proposals by the White House Office of Management and Budget to increase the fee. Both Secretaries promptly did so, with a new provision that established a floor of $1.35/AUM. Consequently, the federal grazing fee remained $1.35/AUM through 1987. BLM spokesperson Joe Zilincar stated that without the minimum, the grazing fee would have dropped below $1.00/AUM.

The agencies accepted their marching orders despite their own 1986 report, *Grazing Fee Review and Evaluation*, which appraised the average market value of federal lands grazing at $6.65/AUM in 1983 (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986). President Reagan's executive order conflicts with the spirit of FLPMA to "receive fair market value of the use of public lands and their resources" (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986).

In 1987 a group of Congresspersons led by Oklahoma Representative Mike Synar (a private land cattle rancher) introduced legislation that would have raised the grazing fee from the then-current $1.35/AUM to $9.00/AUM, and that would have appropriated 25% of fee revenue to help restore degraded riparian areas. The ranching political establishment reduced this proposal by half in committee and then killed it when it reached the Senate floor.

In 1988, several factors -- Synar's bill, public pressure, revelations about public lands ranching's economic and environmental impacts, and increasing inflation of beef

prices -- combined to raise the grazing fee by 14%, to $1.54/AUM.

Also in 1988, the Natural Resources Defense Council and 8 other conservation organizations sued the federal government (*NRDC v. Hodel*) in an attempt to force it to raise the grazing fee to fair market value. The ranching industry again flexed its mighty muscles. One of its chief legal collaborators, Mountain States Legal Foundation, intervened in the case and the court ruled that the grazing fee did not violate any relevant statutes and, instead, that it fell under the broad authority of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

In 1989, under the same influences described above, the federal grazing fee was raised 17% to $1.86/AUM. Much of the media, playing up the "poor, noble rancher," portrayed these 2 small increases as "drastic." Because the fee had always been extremely low, that is how it seemed to some people. In fact, however, the fee could have been raised **400%** and still not have reached fair market value! According to the California Wilderness Coalition, real estate appraisers conservatively calculate that the increase to $1.86/AUM brought the fee up to only 20%-29% of the market value of federal grazing privileges.

Moreover, USDA in 1989 predicted that the federal grazing fee is likely to remain at this low level for many years. In 1990 its projection got a good start when the grazing fee was *reduced* 5 cents to $1.81/AUM, ostensibly in response to increasing production costs. However, beef prices currently are near an all-time high; when they drop the grazing fee probably will decrease even further. In other words, the huge gap between the federal fee and private fees will probably continue to widen.

Even if grazing fees are raised in the future, Reagan's executive order limits the increases to a maximum of 25% per year. At that rate, if the fee was raised from 1990's $1.81/AUM at the maximum each year -- an almost impossible scenario -- it would take *nearly 8 years* just to reach the average herbage fee paid for private rangeland. This assumes an inflation rate of zero, rather than the common 5%-10%, and the unlikely possibility that the cost of leasing private grazing will not rise.

After recent rule changes, National Forests in the East are divided into 6 grazing sub-regions, where grazing fees charged range from $0.84/AUM to $4.36/AUM in 1990. The new rules gradually phase out fixed fees and phase in competitive bidding; a "grandfather clause" allows ranchers to continue paying fixed fees until grazing permits change "ownership." So far, roughly 1/5 of the 1000 or so Eastern National Forest permittees are on the competitive fee system, though they pay on the average only slightly more than those on the fixed fee system.

Another bid to raise the grazing fee occurred in 1989, when Georgia Representative George Darden introduced legislation that would have rewritten the fee formula. And the latest attempt was once again organized by Representative Synar -- an amendment tacked onto a 1990 federal appropriations bill that would have raised the fee gradually to $8.70/AUM, or approximately fair market value. Both proposals occurred in the midst of a fiscal crisis in which Congress was desperate to trim fat from the federal budget, yet both were as usual promptly squashed by the ranching establishment's political behemoth. Synar vowed he would "be back again and again until we stop cattle rancher welfare once and for all . . . ."

The federal government allows ranchers to "lease" a land expanse nine times the entire state of New York for less than the rental cost of a single office building in downtown Manhattan.
--Robin Hur, "Six Inches from Starvation" (Hur 1985)

We're pleased with the current [grazing fee] *system. We have never said we want to pay less than the value of the product. We want to pay what's fair.*
--Ronald Michieli, Director of Natural Resources, National Cattlemen's Association

The history of the federal grazing fee "controversy" has been extremely one-sided. Ranchers must be said to have won each and every year, for they have never paid even 1/3 fair market value, and have averaged 1/5 to 1/10 what the range was worth. By far most proposals to increase the fee have been defeated, while those nominal increases that have been allowed scarcely keep up with inflation. Fees have been reduced in response to drought, wars, and depression, and there have been at least 4 moratoriums on scheduled increases, all for various reasons. Every decade since federal grazing fees were instituted stockmen have lamented to Congress about inflation, economic downturns, rising production costs, wartime hardships, livestock surpluses, low livestock prices, predation, drought and blizzard, rustlers, poor range conditions, and any other crisis that ostensibly justified continued minuscule grazing fees. Indeed, records show that nearly every fee raise proposal in history has met a flurry of these complaints. From the tenacity of these overwhelming problems, one might get the idea that public land is not a good place to raise livestock.

Ranchers, since 1934, pay fees for their use of public lands. Since 1966, these have been set at fair market value as determined through national studies.
--BLM

In most instances, the costs between private leases and public leases are comparable.
--Peter Decker, public lands rancher, former director of Colorado Agricultural Department

They lie.
--Mike Roselle, progressive activist

The BLM and FS grazing fee was **$1.81 per AUM** in 1990, while various other government agencies charge fees ranging roughly from $1/AUM to $15/AUM, with the vast majority of these AUMs going for under $3. (On federal ranges, calves graze for *free* until 6 months of age, and up until a year of age if they enter public land before 6 months of age, with the rancher paying only for the mother, even though calves eat forage and a lactating mother eats more [USDI, BLM 1978].)

In contrast, grazing fees on the Army's McGregor Range in southern New Mexico and the Navy's Boardman Bombing Range in northeast Oregon are determined by competitive bidding and approach fair market value. Ranchers there

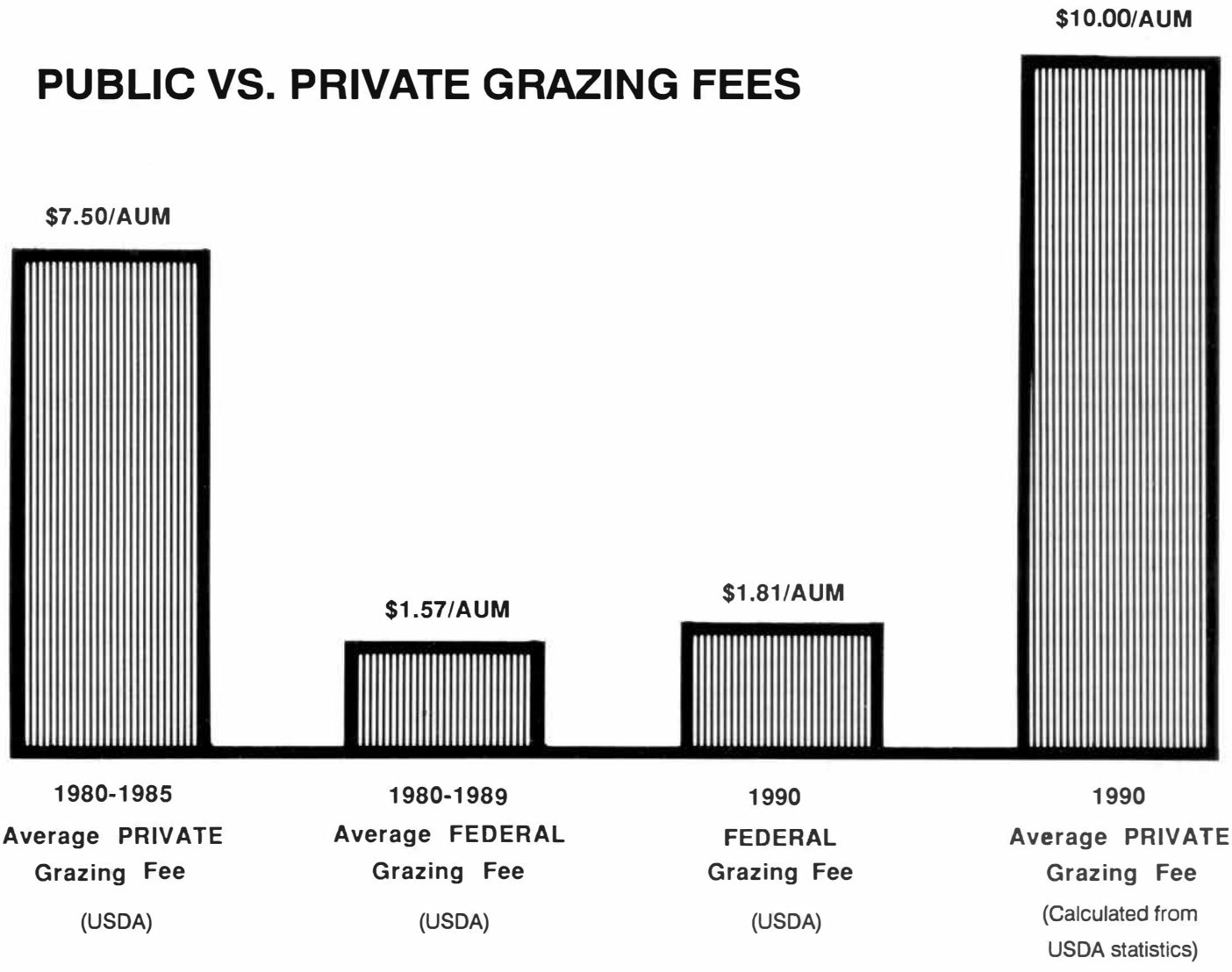
gladly pay an average of about $7-$8/AUM, even though precipitation at both of these installations averages less than 10" annually. Surrounding federal grazing, of course, goes for only $1.81/AUM. Buffalo National Wildlife Refuge in Texas charges $13/AUM -- perhaps the highest federal grazing fee in the country -- and has no lack of takers. (Matteson 1989)

In 1984 BLM and FS defined "fair market value" as "The amount that livestock owners would probably pay for the grazing use if it were offered for rent or lease in the open market" (Tittman 1984). According to the federal government's own *Grazing Fee Review and Evaluation*, the fair market value of the grazing privilege on federal lands was $6.65/AUM in 1983, or nearly 5 times higher than the $1.40/AUM federal grazing fee that year (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986). The report also revealed that rates charged for private AUMs averaged about $7 during the early 1980s. In **Sacred Cows**, Denzel and Nancy Ferguson place the private lease rate at $8.83/AUM in 1983 (Ferguson 1983), while University of Colorado researchers Kerry Gee and Albert Madsen reported that government statisticians estimated -- in *Agricultural Prices*, USDA, Statistical Reporting Service, Washington, DC, Dec 30, 1983 -- that the 11 Western state average private grazing lease rate was $10.32/AUM that year (Gee 1986). Rates continued to rise in the 1980s, along with inflation. According to most estimators, private lease rates currently average roughly $8-$12/AUM; *$10.00/AUM is probably close to average fair market value in the West.*

Thus, today we find the BLM and Forest Service still selling ranching privileges for roughly **1/5** as much as do owners of private rangeland. Consequently, grazing fees represent only a small percentage of public ranchers' operating costs. Stockmen pay $21.72 to feed a cow on public lands herbage for a year (12 AUMs). If you have ever fed a cow, horse, pig, chickens, dog, or even a cat for a year, you'll appreciate this bargain. According to the Committee for Idaho's High Desert, "1 AUM provides a total weight gain of 28 to 90 pounds per cow. At 50 cents per pound wholesale each AUM produces $14 to $45 ($168-$540/year) for the rancher."

Just as the federal government collects fees for camping in public land campgrounds, the BLM and USFS collect grazing fees from ranchers whose cattle and sheep harvest public land forage.

--Mosley, *et al.*, *Seven Popular Myths About Livestock Grazing on Public Lands* (Note: The average cost for a night's camping in a federal campground would buy a public lands rancher about *4 months* of public forage for his cow.)



Commercial river runners are especially distressed at the low fees charged ranchers for their grazing cattle because they, the river runners, have to pay $1.90 per person per day, which works out to around $57 per month. There is no environmental impact from these people (they pack out all their trash) yet each of them is charged 42 times more than a head of cattle that does impact the environment.

--Helene Klien, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

The privileged few who use our rangeland for livestock are practically *given* the forage and browse! As reported in the Committee on Government Operations' 1986 *Federal Grazing Program*, "The difference in the appraised market value and actual grazing fees paid under PRIA average $75 million per year in Government revenue foregone" (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986). If we divide this $75 million evenly among the 22,000 Western BLM and FS permittees, we find each being subsidized $3409 per year by low grazing fees alone. This aligns with a 1980 study (when grazing fees were about 10% higher) showing each permittee being subsidized approximately $3500 annually by low fees.

In fairness to taxpayers and to competitive stockmen on private land, as long as public lands ranching is allowed, herbage should be offered at the going market rate, or be sold by competitive bidding, as are leases for timber, mineral and oil, etc. Better yet would be open bidding (see Chapter XII).

In every case where the federal government puts up AUM's for bid, they bring in 4 or 5 times more than the standard fee. I'm talking about exactly the same kinds of range, the only difference being that one fee was set by Congress and the other by the free market. . . . If it did cost so much more to graze public land, then the boys wouldn't bid those forage prices so high. But even if it did cost more to graze public land, my reaction as a cattleman is, "so what!" If it's too expensive, then don't graze it. Go somewhere else or get out of business. In any event, don't ask me as a competitor in the market place to subsidize your operation.

--from a letter by Lonnie Williamson of the Wildlife Management Institute to the President of the Nevada Cattleman's Association

Public lands graziers argue that the tiny fees are "fair" or even "excessive" because federal rangeland is less productive than private and the costs of maintaining fences, herding livestock, transportation, and so on therefore are higher. With brilliant reverse psychology, John Ross, Executive Vice-president of the California Cattlemen's Association says that, "Ranchers will always tell you the fees are too high, but basically the formula is a fair formula" (Hartshorn 1988). Some professional industry lackeys even recommend doing away with grazing fees altogether, as in the good ol' days. For example, a grazing fee study by John Fowler, professor of agricultural economics at New Mexico State University, concludes that grazing fees on some New Mexico state rangelands should be eliminated because ranchers can't afford them (McClellan 1985).

Few would argue against the claim that public land is generally less conducive to practical ranching than is private land. But it is ridiculous to suggest that additional production costs are **5** times as high, as many ranchers claim, or even twice as high. Indeed, an extensive study of grazing fees by the federal government in 1986 found that production costs for cattle and sheep on public land were only slightly higher than on private -- $3.28/AUM compared to $2.75/AUM for cattle and $4.53/AUM compared to $3.89/AUM for sheep (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986). That's **16%** and **14%** higher -- **not 500%** -- as claimed by welfare ranchers. The study calculated that, based on comparisons with private land grazing fees, in 1986 the market value for grazing a cow on public lands was $6.40 to $9.50 per month (O'Neill 1990).

At any rate, whatever expenses a public lands rancher incurs above and beyond the price of the herbage should have nothing to do with how much is charged for the herbage. Basing the grazing fee the government charges on ranchers' expenses is like a tire dealer basing the price of tires on the kinds of roads customers drive on.

Perhaps BLM PR man Joe Zilincar can set us straight. He says the grazing fee system was not set up to "return dollar for dollar. It's based on the cost of production." Since he claims that "producer" costs are far higher on public land than on private, we might ask him why public land is grazed at all. According to Zilincar, it is because "there is more public land than private land." (They don't call him "Bogus Logic Joe" for nothing.) Arizona Senator Dennis DeConcini, defending his powerful ranching constituency, expands upon Joe's twisted rationality:

Many ranchers are forced to graze Federal lands because of the lack of private lands in the West. Additionally, the conditions of rangelands in the arid regions of the Southwest are very different from the private grazing regions of the East and Midwest. For these reasons, a larger land area is necessary to sustain the needs of livestock. . . . I support the current [grazing fee] *formula, because ranching families need to be protected.*

The contention that public lands grazing fees should be kept artificially low to compensate for the higher costs of grazing public lands is a self-defeating argument. However much more it may cost to graze public land than private is just that much more reason why it makes no economic sense to graze public land in the first place. It is not logical to subsidize an unneeded business that is inherently unprofitable. The unspoken contention is that ranchers should to be kept in business artificially because they are somehow more worthy than other people of being subsidized.

Public lands ranchers certainly maintain a vast competitive advantage over their private counterparts. In fact, simply by virtue of their geographic proximity to and use of public rangeland, they enjoy numerous subsidies unavailable to the other 97% of the nation's livestock producers -- who must buy land or lease ranchland at fair market value, pay taxes, finance many or most ranching developments, and so on. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of private stockmen to demand an end to public ranching.

Though some are doing so, by far most private lands stockman remain locked into a traditional system of "cowboy camaraderie" -- self-perpetuating mutual support and machismo that require approval of ***all*** ranching, regardless of what form it takes. Further, long-time public ranching expert Steve Johnson thinks that the livestock industry uses the public lands rancher as a "hood ornament" -- an insignificant, though prominent, publicly appealing cowboy/western figurehead.

They may not fully understand, but private lands ranchers thus hurt themselves in 2 important ways. First, they support their unfair competition. Second, and perhaps more important in the long run, they align themselves with a comparatively wasteful industry which probably will only continue to lose public support until it finally collapses. By association, the public may begin to perceive private lands ranching as little different than public (which, in environmental terms, it is). Because Western ranching has always ridden high on a platform of public sympathy, erosion of public support could well mean decline for Western private land ranching as well (no great loss to the Western economy or to the American meat supply).

F. Dale Robertson, Chief *Nov. 6, 1987*
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090

Dear Sir,

As a full-time cattleman with a lifetime of experience in this highly competitive and economically treacherous business, I am disturbed by your agency's refusal to extract full market value from leasees now grazing cattle on the public lands of the West. A decade or so ago I thought the unfair taxpayer subsidies to the West's welfare ranchers were going to be phased out, and that fair market value on leases and permits would become actual policy and practice.

I am currently paying $9/AUM for leased grass here in south-central Oklahoma. In the past 15 years I have paid as little as $7/AUM and as high as $10/AUM. My 78 year old father can only remember a few times when grass was worth less than $2/AUM -- in the past 60 years! The $1.35 - $1.50 you are charging is offensive to every cattleman I know who is aware of this practice.

Now I'm finding out that you want to abandon the fair market value policy without ever giving it a real try. This year my 500 head of cattle on leased grass will cost $54,000 for grass alone. At the standard Forest Service rate of $1.35/AUM I would be paying $8,100, or $45,900 less than fair market. Where's my subsidy money? -- I want to know where to apply. I'd like to know why you're giving up on fair market rates on public lands permits.

Sincerely,

David Sheegog
3SJ Land & Cattle Co.
Pauls Valley, OK

Not even bothering to go through the trouble of grazing livestock to fleece the taxpayer anymore, many permittees have taken to *subleasing* the herbage on "their" allotments. The permittee leases his base property, yet retains ownership of the ranch. The lessee, who then controls the base property, is treated by BLM like a permittee. The new permittee pays the federal grazing fee for the public land and pays the ranch owner *an undisclosed amount* for the lease itself.

Subleasing, per se, is not allowed on Forest Service land; however, FS officials say that they detect an average of 1 or 2 subleasing cases a year on each of the West's 98 National Forests (undoubtedly many more are not detected). Additionally, much illegal subleasing occurs on BLM land, and subleasing payments are concealed by confusing arrangements that defy the attempts of outsiders, including BLM, to uncover and prove. (Stein 1989) The US General Accounting Office concurs: "Unless reported by the permittee, livestock lease arrangements are difficult to identify" (USGAO 1986a).

In 1984 appraisers for both the BLM and Forest Service uncovered more than 2000 secret subleasing deals providing the original holder of the grazing permit "the opportunity to profit at the expense of the Treasury" (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986). A recent study by Colorado State University researchers found more than 900 cattle permittees were subleasing "their" BLM allotments. Considering there are only about 19,000 BLM permittees altogether, 900 (almost 5% of the total) seems to indicate a serious problem. And one further wonders how many subleasers were not revealed.

These 900 were subleasing at an average rate of $7.76/AUM -- more than 5 times the then-current $1.35/AUM grazing fee charged by the federal government. Most of the difference went into ranchers' pockets. For example, according to the 5-11-87 *Reno Gazette-Journal*, multimillionaire Willard Garvey collected $120,000 rent in 1986 from a Humboldt County, Nevada rancher, while the government received only $14,587 in grazing fees for that public land. A 5-23-89 *Los Angeles Times* article states, "In one extreme case, a rancher along the Idaho-Oregon border reportedly paid more than $26 an AUM -- almost 20 times the government rate -- to graze cattle on a parcel that was 97% public land" (Stein 1989). This arrangement lasted 3 years, costing the rancher $18,000 annually, while the original permittee paid the government $891 annually.

BLM has "investigated" many cases of subleasing, though apparently with little intent of doing much about them. In 1984 Congress enacted legislation to recapture some of this lost government income, and instructed BLM to begin taking steps to do so. But BLM, by utilizing loopholes in its regulations, had by 1986 managed to collect only $8000 on 2 allotments accounting for the difference between $1.35/AUM and the fees actually charged, even though it had identified 633 "illegal subleases." This $8000 doesn't even cover the administrative cost to recover the funds. Failure to collect the difference on these 633 subleases alone represents a loss of government revenue of probably over $1 million. (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986)

In the 1986 Congressional report by the Congressional Committee on Government Operations, *Federal Grazing Program: All Is Not Well on the Range*, the following conclusions were reached:

This insignificant amount [$8000 recaptured by BLM] *is due to a narrow and questionable interpretation of the statute, delays in administrative proceedings, inadequate recordkeeping, and a "hands off" attitude toward permittees who benefit*

financially from these arrangements. As a result, Congress' efforts to collect for the public fair market value in, at least, those instances in which market forces yield payment of a fee greater than that paid into the Treasury have met with failure. (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986)

Responding to the outrageous situation, an Inspector General's report stated: "One solution to the problem of subleasing, in our opinion, is an increase in the grazing fees to market value, which would eliminate most of the potential for subleasing grazing privileges at a profit."

The beneficiaries of this federal largesse [federal grazing subleasing] *include the family of the head of the BLM, Robert Burford, as well as the multimillionaire businessman Willard W. Garvey, who heads a national tax protest group and opposes most other kinds of federal subsidies that don't pay off for him directly.*

--9-30-87 *Sacramento Bee*

The federal grazing fee also creates many associated administrative problems. Generally, grazing fee bills are prepared and mailed out in advance, and permittees are supposed to pay their grazing fee charge *before* letting their livestock onto allotments. If bills are paid late, it is technically defined as "trespass" -- unauthorized grazing subject to penalty. However, the Inspector General's office in a 1984-85 investigation of BLM offices in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon estimated that roughly 60% of all grazing fee payments involved some form of delinquency. The IG reported that BLM does not vigorously follow up on delinquent bills and is failing to collect trespass charges when permittees fail to pay their fees in advance. IG found that 105 of 180 bills for 1985 grazing fees they investigated were not paid until *after* livestock had been placed on the allotment -- and **no** trespass notices were issued. Further, only 5 delinquent bills were issued. The IG conservatively estimated potential trespass fees in the 105 cases they investigated would total anywhere from $58,000 to $173,000. (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986)

A number of other associated administrative expenses caused by permittees are not recaptured by either BLM or FS. These include duplicate billing charges where the permittee was at fault, allotment use changes where the agencies do work supposed to be done by the permittee, and inadequate service charges for replacement billing.

Who controls the land, controls wealth.

--Calvin Black, infamous San Juan County, Utah, Commissioner

It's a right. Grazing permits are bought and sold. They're recognized by the IRS. They're taxed. No one else can graze my [public] *land or sell my permit but me. It's mine.*

--Bob Piva, Sawtooth National Forest, Idaho, permittee (Jones 1991a)

When base properties are sold, grazing permits are waived to the government, which nearly always reissues them to the purchasers. (Occasionally permits are reissued to purchasers of allotment livestock.) In effect, it is nearly impossible to obtain a grazing permit without buying a base property. This means that because grazing fees are ridiculously low as compared to the true market value of the herbage they represent, government AUMs are sold as if they were part of private property when a ranchman sells his base property. Combined with the value represented by other subsidies, this is generally known as *permit value*. In their 1984 appraisal report on the fair market value of public grazing lands, the BLM and Forest Service state that "permit value can be defined as a leasehold value that accrues to the holder of the lease when contract rent is less than economic rent or fair market rent value" (Tittman 1984).

Thus, a cost averaging from $400 to $1500 for each cow authorized on a federal grazing permit, or an average of about $80 per AUM, is added to the price of the deeded property when sold (Ferguson 1983). Quite often the value of the public grazing allotment permit actually *exceeds* the value of the deeded property, house and improvements. An increase in the grazing fee or a decrease in livestock numbers would immediately lower ranch value, so of course public lands ranchers and their banks oppose such reasonable moves.

some furnishings), complete set of working corrals. Fronts U.S. highway, gravel road through property from 4 directions. Deserves immediate inspection at $1,380,000, low down payment, low interest loan assumption to qualified buyer plus owner financing.

REMOTE CANYON RANCH
CONTROLLING 34,000 BLM ACRES

No. 2919— 832 acres, $1,500,000. Remote rawhide cattle ranch in Nevada-Utah canyon country has potential to add "dude" or corporate hideout facilities. Excellent county road to ranch, 18 miles to highway, 40 miles St. George, Utah. 832 deeded acres featuring 2 miles frontage on spring-fed river, 4 spring-fed lakes, 6 wells— **full water rights to all!** 325 irrigated acres. Owner has private year-round grazing rights to over 34,000 fenced BLM acres with 10 miles of additional river frontage, some **areas** sown in crested wheat. Headquarters improvements: 4-bedroom home with 2 baths, large sun room; unfinished underground home with 5 bedrooms, 2 baths;

A typical ad for a Western public lands ranching base property, from a Utah newspaper.

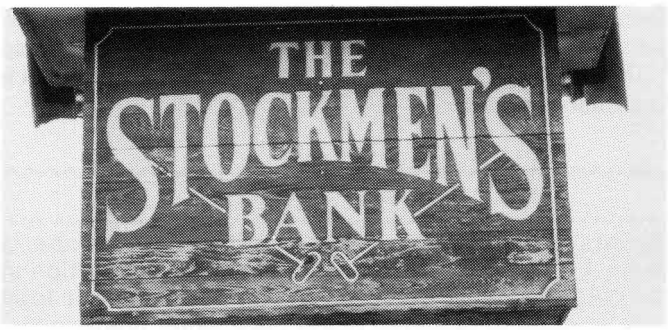
I recently received a call from a realtor (a millionaire public lands rancher) who specialized in public lands ranches. A friend in Kansas had asked me to keep my eye out for a base property with a BLM and/or FS permit, for he wanted to buy it, *not* run livestock on the allotment for 5 years, and then challenge the government in court when the agency tried to force him to graze the allotment or tried to take the permit away and reissue it to someone else. Answering my query, the realtor told me of 4 public lands ranches for sale in southeast Arizona.

All had permits allowing the grazing of between 50 and 100 cattle on allotments yearlong, and all had extremely inflated asking prices because of it. One was merely 56 acres of deeded property not worth more than $100,000, but with 14,720 acres on a Forest Service grazing permit the asking price was $383,000. Another was only a 20 acre ranch with

no house or substantial improvements thereon, yet the owner felt comfortable asking $254,000. According to the realtor, the land could not possibly have been worth more than $5000/acre, yet the owner could reasonably ask $12,700/acre simply because of the attached BLM and state land grazing permits! These examples are typical of public lands ranches around the West.

Say that Rancher Bob owns 10,000 acres. His neighbor, Rancher Bill, owns only 1,000 acres but controls a grazing permit for 100,000 acres of public land. Yet, because of the permit value, Bill might sell his property on the open market for as much as, or even more than, Bob.

Jon R. Luoma, "Discouraging Words" (Luoma 1986)



Public lands ranchers even take out loans using permits as collateral. A 1979 survey of appraisers and loan officers in New Mexico showed that they considered Forest Service permits to be worth $944 to $1163 per animal unit and BLM permits $667 to $888 per animal unit (Ferguson 1983). Some ranchmen have taken federal agencies to court over proposed livestock reductions, contending that the government is taking "their" property (Synar 1986). Here in southern Arizona, after a man inherited a public lands ranching operation from a deceased parent, IRS taxed him on the value of the grazing permit as well as the ranch. Indeed, grazing permits are handed down through the generations like priceless family heirlooms. Obviously, both the government and private sectors consider public lands grazing permits of great value.

If low grazing fees and other forms of government assistance were not really welfare subsidies, then the grazing privilege would carry little or no market value. It would amount to little more than a permit to run a business utilizing public land, not a guarantee of permanent government assistance. As it is, when someone acquires a public lands grazing permit with a purchased deeded property, he is not so much buying the privilege of grazing publicly owned land as use of the many subsidies that go with it.

In theory, all permit values combined should represent roughly the amount the public ranching industry is subsidized over and above the private. Just for fun, let's assume that the value of each BLM and FS ranching operation is $500,000 (probably fairly accurate). With 22,000 permittees, the combined value would be $11 billion. Assuming that the average permit value was only 1/3 the value of the base property, we still find the subsidy value represented by Western grazing permits to be $3.66 billion. Because private ranching is also subsidized, however, this would represent how much *more* is spent on public ranching than on private -- not the total subsidy value. And, of course, this does not take into consideration other net losses to the government and public: degradation of natural resources, decreased use of public land, expenses incurred due to unfair open range laws, and so forth -- all of which could also be regarded as indirect subsidies.

The grazing fee system has other detrimental effects. Because they pay so little to use public range, many ranchers figure they might as well milk it for all it's worth. So they relentlessly pressure the agencies to maintain traditional, very high stocking rates. Because fee receipts per each animal grazed are so low, generally the agencies feel the need to maintain high numbers of livestock just to bring in whatever meager ranching income they can. However, even if livestock numbers were reduced drastically, expenditures on the government's ranching infrastructure would decrease little because most management is based on the mere presence of livestock, not their actual numbers.

Similarly, no matter how poorly ranchers run their operations, the sliding grazing fee is geared to keep them in business. Ranchers may therefore run shoddy, inefficient operations, overgraze and otherwise abuse the land, and then rely on cheap grazing to compensate. Thus, some say low grazing fees traditionally favor range abuse and further subsidization.

Throughout the history of the Taylor Act administration, only a small part of the total grazing receipts has gone ultimately into the federal treasury. . . . Half of all receipts were to be turned over to the states in which they were collected, with the state legislatures being required to expend the monies in the counties collected. I found it a startling exemplification of the political power of the range stockmen to discover that these funds were invariably turned over to the grazing district advisory boards to be expended for range improvements . . . ."

--Wesley Calef, **Private Grazing and Public Lands** (Calef 1960)

(Greg Pentkowski)

By authority of the Taylor Grazing Act, BLM today manages approximately 90% of its grazing land under that law's Section 3 (permits) and 10% under Section 15 (leases). Grazing fee receipts from Section 3 lands are disbursed as follows: Only 37.5% ($4.5 million in 1987) goes to the US Treasury. Some 12.5% goes back "in lieu of taxes" to the states from whence it came. Most of this small amount ($1.5 million in 1987) is used for state and county development, some of which benefits stockmen. Through the Range Betterment [sic] Fund, the remaining 50% ($5.9 million in 1987) *goes back to the grazing districts from whence it came, to be allocated by grazing "advisory" boards for ranching developments*. So tightly are these range "betterment" funds controlled by the "advisory" boards that they are commonly termed "advisory board funds." The BLM and Forest Service, in their *Appraisal Report Estimating the Fair Market Value of Public Rangelands in the Western United States Administered by the USDA-Forest Service and USDI-Bureau of Land Management*, state that:

> *The advisory boards derive their funds from the portion of the grazing fees that are returned to the state and local county for range improvements. These funds are spent in a manner similar to improvement funds appropriated to the agencies.* (Tittman 1984)

The US Treasury receives *nothing* from Section 15 BLM grazing fee receipts. Half ($1.5 million in 1987) goes to the Range Betterment Fund, from which it is disbursed for range developments in the grazing districts it came from. The other 50% goes back to the states from whence it came; again, some of this benefits lessees. (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986; USDI, BLM 1988)

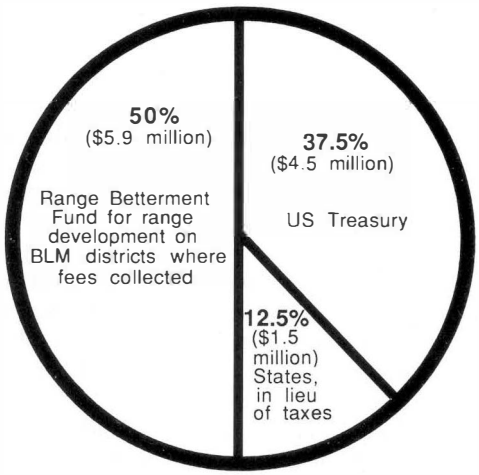
The Forest Service's grazing fee receipts are disbursed similarly to BLM's. Half ($4 million in 1987) goes into the Range Betterment Fund, to be returned to the National Forests for ranching development. Another 25% ($2 million in 1987) goes to back to the states for disbursement to the counties of origin for roads and schools, some of which benefit permittees. The remaining 25% ($2.0 million in 1987) goes to the US Treasury. (USDA, FS 1988)

In other words, BLM and FS permittees actually pay more than half of their federal grazing fees right back to themselves for ranching development. This means that the *actual* 1990 grazing fee, rather than $1.81/AUM, is less than $0.90/AUM, or **less than 1/10 fair market value**. This works out to about 3 cents per day per cow -- roughly what it costs to feed a hamster.

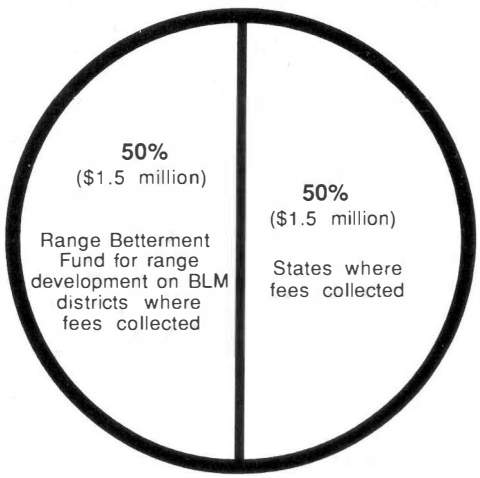
Less than 1/3 (31%) of federal grazing fee receipts end up in the federal Treasury. In 1987 all BLM and FS grazing fees combined yielded only $21 million and netted the US Treasury only **$6.5 million**. Yet, in their blind dedication to their ranching cohorts, the agencies contradict their own statistics. Verbatim from BLM's 1987 report, *Public Lands Statistics*: "Receipts from Section 3 grazing use at $1.35 per AUM returned $11,892,137 to the U.S. Treasury during the fiscal year 1987" (USDI, BLM 1988). And, verbatim from the Forest Service's 1987 report, *Report of the Forest Service: Fiscal Year 1987*: "The range program was funded at $31.4 million [including range "betterment" funds] in 1987, and returned $8.1 million to the Treasury from grazing fees" (USDA, FS 1988). The agencies tell us that they collected about $20 million from grazing fees for the US Treasury in 1987, when actually the Treasury netted only $6.5 million.

FEDERAL GRAZING FEE DISBURSEMENTS:1987

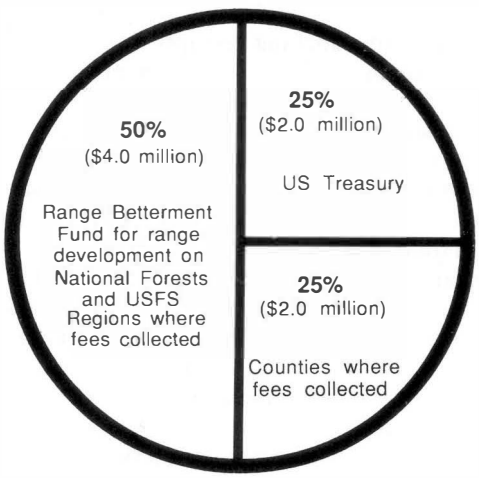
(Source: USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986; USDI, BLM1988a; and USDA, FS 1988)



BLM -- Section 3 lands
Total -- $11.9 million



BLM -- Section 15 lands
Total -- $2.9 million



Forest Service
Total -- $8.1 million

Public lands ranchers' $6.5 million contribution represents about 1/180,000 of the federal government's annual income (US Dept. of Com. 1986). If derived from anyone but ranchers, this amount would command scarcely any notice by a Congress almost overwhelmed by a multitude of enormous fiscal concerns.

Moreover, while the federal government netted this $6.5 million in 1987, it reported spending about 10 times that amount directly on ranching programs that year, with the BLM and Forest Service spending about $34 million and $31.5 million respectively. Less than $10 million of this $65 million was grazing fee money returned through the Range "Betterment" Fund, resulting in a net loss of roughly **$50 million** to the US Treasury. (USDA, FS 1988 and USDI, BLM 1988)

Bear in mind that government figures reflect only money spent directly on ranching programs as defined by the US government, and do not include the many obscure and secret costs (detailed in the next section). Even if stockmen were to pay grazing fees several times fair market value, revenues would not begin to cover expenditures.

BLM and FS themselves report spending an average of $4.50/AUM directly on ranching programs, leaving a deficit of about $2.54/AUM on ranching programs alone ($2.54 x 20 million 1987 BLM and FS AUMs = $50.8 million lost). Furthermore, between 1979 and 1983, BLM received only 11.1 cents for every dollar it spent directly on reported ranching programs, while the Forest Service received only 21 cents on the dollar. A federal study has shown that the government spends about $10 on range "improvements" for each $1 it collects in grazing fees. This compares to an average ratio of $1 spent for every $3 collected from timber, firewood, recreation, power, land lease, rights-of-way, and other commercial public lands users (of course this study does not reflect many of the indirect costs of grazing, timber, or other programs).

The Forest Service reported that the total revenues collected from all commercial National Forest users in 1986 was $1.72 billion. In comparison, gross receipts from grazing fees amounted to only $8.1 million, or 0.47% of the total receipts collected. (USDA, FS 1988) BLM reported receiving about $220 million from all commercial users in 1987, while its grazing receipts amounted to only $14.3 million, or about 6%, of the total. Thus, of the agencies' combined revenues of nearly $2 billion, only $22.4 million -- or about 1% -- came from ranching receipts. If money returned to ranchers through the Range Betterment Fund is included, the figures are $11.2 million and 0.5%.

Further, since 1983 federal oil, gas, and mineral revenue has been received by the Department of the Interior's Mineral Management Service (MMS), rather than the agencies that administer the land. In 1987 MMS collected $621 million in total on-shore mineral royalties in the 11 Western states, nearly all of it from BLM and FS land. (USDI, MMS 1988) So, annual receipts from Western federal land users actually total more than $2.5 billion, of which ranching's net contribution is about 4/10 of 1%. In other words, though the ranching industry utilizes and degrades more public land than all other commercial users combined, it paid about 230 times less than other commercial users combined to do so.

Furthermore, even the *annual worth* of public lands livestock grazing is less than what we taxpayers spend on it. The forage and browse consumed by livestock on BLM and FS land produce an estimated total livestock market value of only **$390 million** annually (Ferguson 1983), and all Western federal, state, county, and city grazing lands combined produce perhaps **$500 million** worth of livestock annually. This $500 million is about half what taxpayers spend on public lands ranching each year.

Compare this $500 million figure to the 1987 value of all US cattle, including dairy cows, which is $41.3 *billion*. Americans spend more each year on strawberries ($504 million), birdseed ($517 million), and jogging shoes ($572 million). In 1990, outdoor recreationists spent about $80 billion, or roughly 160 times more than the value of public lands livestock. They would spend much more if not for environmental degradation and user competition from public lands ranching. (US Dept. of Com. 1986)

In his book ***Livestock Pillage****, Edwin G. Dimick compares the economic values derived from the 6 major "multiple uses" of public land identified by the federal government -- water, timber, minerals, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and livestock. From statistics compiled from federal publications, Dimick summarizes that of the 6, livestock is not only the least valuable and least cost-effective, but by far the biggest detractor from the other multiple uses.*

Abusive grazing practices on federal land are acquiesced to by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management because of the political clout of certain western ranching interests that have grown fat on gigantic government subsidies. The needs of huge numbers of hunters, fishermen, campers, farmers, municipalities, and nature lovers for well-watered ecosystems have been subordinated to the greed of a few who are creating deserts for short-term profits.

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

Regardless of the economic loss, the whole fee controversy obscures the main problem -- public lands ranching. If the grazing fee was raised to fair market value, or even $100/AUM (assuming any rancher would pay this), by far most of its environmental, political, social, and even economic problems would remain.

(For a more complete discussion of grazing fees, see Calef 1960, Foss 1960, Voigt 1976, Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986, or USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986)

Squandering Our Taxes

Dear Brandholder,

"Stand on your own two feet" independence. That's a brand you and I wear with pride. It's a trait you and I share as Idahoans . . . as Americans . . . and especially as cattlemen.
--Public lands rancher Vern France, for the Idaho Cattle Association

The cowboy is a symbol of rugged individualism, of Western independence. No handouts, no special favors, just man and his determination against the elements. How odd, then, that ranching is the most government-subsidized industry in Wyoming.
--Scott Farris, Lander, Wyoming

The BLM and Forest Service annually spend about 50 million federal tax dollars directly on ranching in excess of grazing fee returns -- an average annual subsidy of at least $2273 for each of the agencies' 22,000 Western grazing permittees. Let's look closer at where our money goes.

BLM and FS provide *at least* matching funds for nearly all range developments, and the great majority are financed mostly or wholly by the agencies, often augmented by other federal, state, and/or county agencies. The federal government's 1986 report, *Grazing Fee Review and Evaluation*, states that from 1978 to 1984 permittees contributed an average of only $0.16 per AUM (BLM) and $0.30 per AUM (FS), compared to an average federal subsidy of $3.00 and $6.00 per AUM, respectively (USDA, FS and USDI, BLM 1986). In other words, the taxpayer forks over roughly 20 times more for ranchers' range "improvements" than ranchers do; stockmen pay only **5%** of the cost of ranching developments on public land. Moreover, this neglects that many ostensibly non-ranching developments are designed to benefit ranching, and that many stockmen habitually inflate their development expenditure figures.

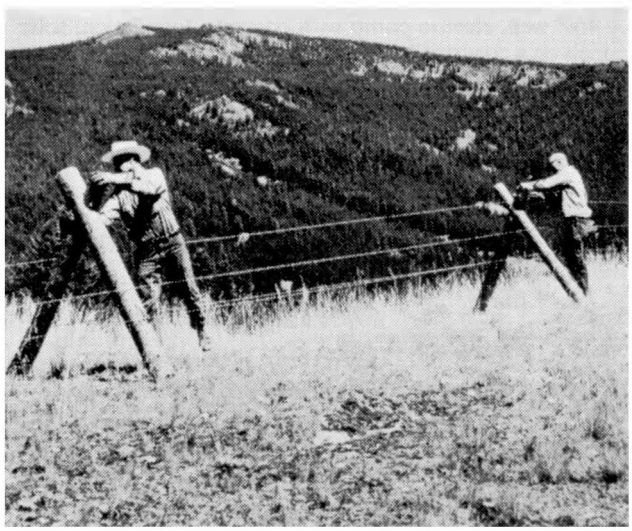
For example, in 1977, the total private range improvements constructed on all BLM rangelands in 11 western states included 9 miles of pipeline, 17 springs, 1 water catchment basin, 1 well, 24 cattle guards, and 14 miles of fencing.
--Denzel & Nancy Ferguson, **Sacred Cows** (Ferguson 1983)

Furthermore, when range developments are made under BLM "improvement permits," permittees are allowed to retain ownership in proportion to their original investment. In practice, often some portion of the "improvement" value a rancher assumes ownership of actually is contributed by the agencies. When a rancher sells a grazing permit with a base property, these values are transferred to the new owner. (Tittman 1987)

Because BLM does not account for range development expenditures by project, it is difficult to determine just where and how BLM range funds are spent. Likewise, BLM does not have an accurate inventory of range developments on BLM land, so no one really knows what is out there. It is also reported that BLM often spends range development funds on projects that are not allowable under guidelines set down by their parent funding sources. (Com. on Govt Oper. 1986)

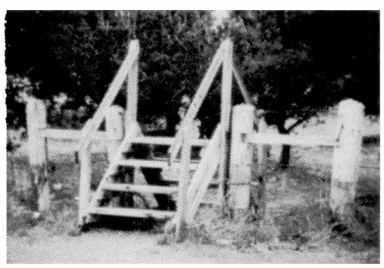
BLM is required to prepare cost benefit analyses for range projects. Yet more than 1/3 of the project files examined by the Inspector General's office in 5 locations in 1985 did not contain cost benefit analyses. Further, BLM often spends money on range projects that are not supported by required cost benefit analyses. (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986) For example, according to the Committee for Idaho's High Desert, "It costs from $11.70 to $43.50 for the BLM to spray grasshoppers to prevent them from eating $1.35 (1 AUM) of forage." BLM's response? None -- it has no valid economic justification for grasshopper spraying.

BLM and FS both "improve" the range essentially whenever, wherever, and however they see fit, assuming they have the funding. Following is a general rundown of range "improvement" costs.



Forest Service employees installing a fence. *(USFS)*

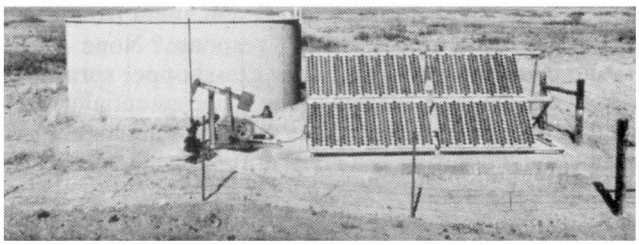
Those ever-present barbed wire fences that criss-cross our public land and line our roads cost roughly $2000 to $4000 a mile to build, and an average of perhaps $10 to $20 annually per mile to maintain (depending on terrain and economic variables). Taxpayers bear most of the cost. Large sections of fence damaged or destroyed by "natural disasters" (fire, flood, earthquake, landslide, etc.) usually are repaired or replaced using tax money. I read of one case where a fire started by a permittee on his private land burned onto adjacent Forest Service land and destroyed a portion of fence and cattleguard braces. A Forest Service range conservationist called the next day offering new wooden posts.



Taxpayers provide thousands of human "walk-overs" on public land.

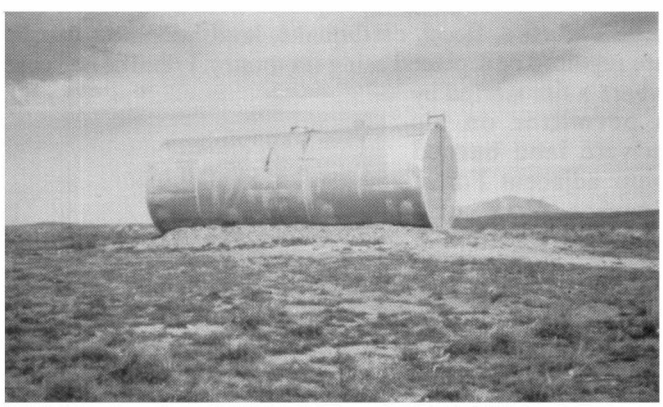
On the Pacific Coast in Los Padres National Forest, California.

BLM and FS construct several thousand miles of fence yearly. Each year other federal agencies, states, counties, and cities erect thousands of additional miles for ranching purposes, or to keep livestock out of developed and agricultural areas, watersheds, parks, recreation areas, seedings and tree plantings, natural areas, riparian zones, etc.



A 400' well, electric pump with concrete foundation, solar panels on a concrete base, and 5000-gallon holding tank on a special gravel bed. Note the fencing to prevent cattle from damaging equipment. Water is piped to a nearby stock water trough. Costs include never-ending monitoring, maintenance, repair, and replacement. *(BLM)*

A BLM cattle watering development on a remote east-central Nevada range.



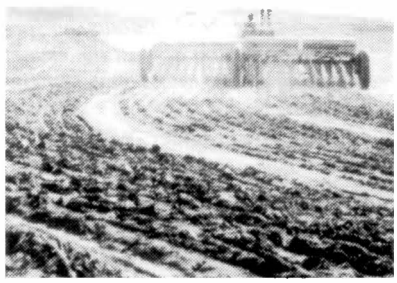
A tax-funded, 12'-high holding tank for cattle. *(BLM)*

The several hundred thousand stock ponds and other stock watering systems that dot our public land vary greatly in price, according to the size and complexity of the projects. Their cost ranges from a few hundred dollars to $100,000 or more; most fall into the $2000 to $10,000 range. Several thousand new water developments are built by BLM and FS each year. Maintenance costs are high.

Believe it or not, livestockmen in Oregon successfully sued the BLM during the '70's when a water development failed and cattle were lost. Like suing Santa Claus, huh?

--Edwin G. Dimick, **Livestock Pillage of Our Western Public Lands** (Dimick 1990)

Range vegetation manipulation projects also vary greatly in cost. The 2 agencies annually spend several million dollars to "treat" hundreds of thousands of public acres with machinery, herbicides, prescribed burns, and grass seedings. The initial cost to seed crested wheatgrass, for example, averages around $40 per acre. After an allotment is seeded by the government and the permittee is able to produce more welfare cattle, he still pays the same $1.81/AUM grazing fee. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance recently prepared a cost-benefit analysis of BLM's draft EIS for its proposed vegetation management program; it revealed that federal expenditures would be $320 for every $1 returned.

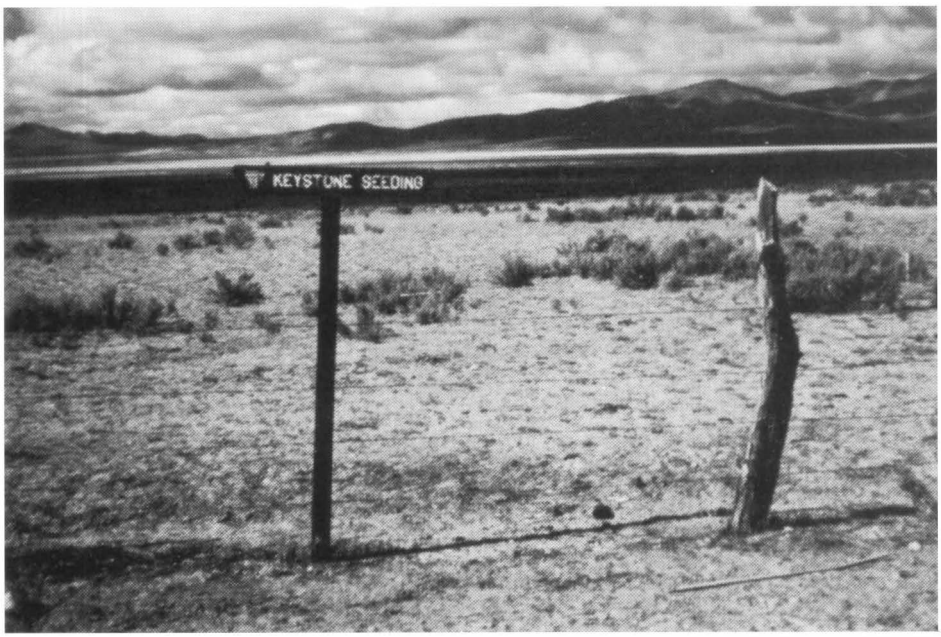


BLM's 267,193-acre Vale Seeding Project in eastern Oregon cost about $307,692 per permittee affected. *(BLM)*

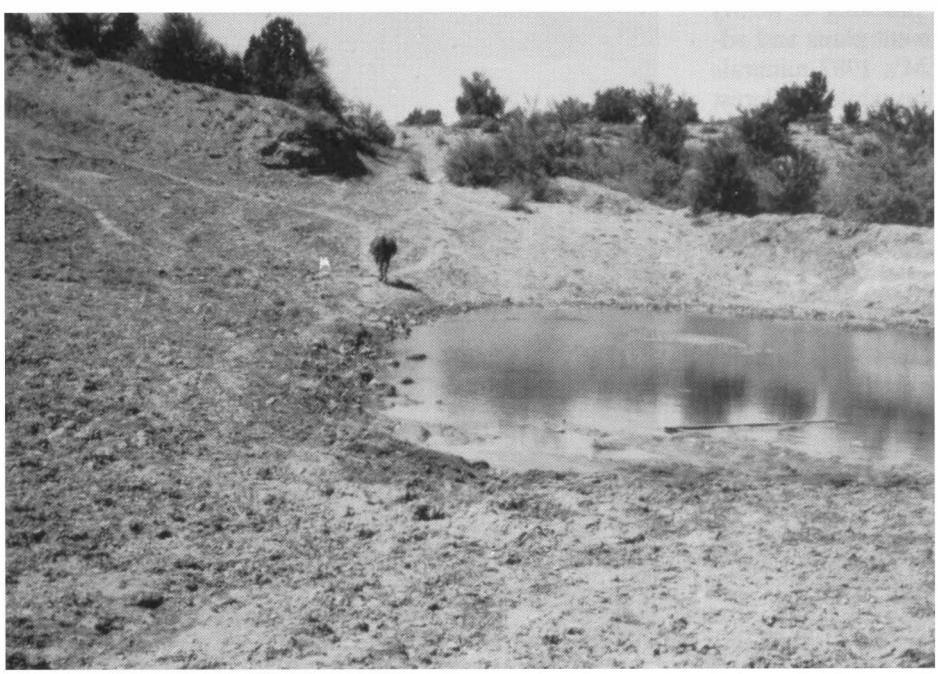
The Forest Service's $30.5 million 1986 range program included: construction of more than 3860 structural improvements, such as fences, water developments, and pipelines; treatment of 12,000 head of cattle for ticks and lice; placement of 315 poisoned bait stations to kill ants; spraying of 23,000 acres with herbicides and 600,000 acres with pesticides; and "forage improvement," such as burning, seeding, and mechanical treatment, on about 100,000 acres. Planning, monitoring, inventory, and administrative costs for implementing these range developments are included in range program budgets, along with general administrative costs. Other range-related expenses include, according to the Forest Service, "salaries and benefits, travel, transportation of things, supplies, materials, and equipment, and other contractual services." BLM's fiscal information on all this is very sketchy.

Approximately 90% of the mass of an iceberg floats below the surface of the water. The ranching subsidies outlined so far collectively comprise what is termed agency "range programs." Now we begin the arduous task of plucking out and revealing the indirect, unseen, and covert subsidization of public lands ranching -- a combined tax burden that represents the submerged ice.

The only [recent] *improvements* [on my allotment] *have been two* accidental *fires, one water tank* for wildlife, *the seeding of the Billy Mountain burn* for erosion control, *and over 10 miles of drift fence which I have built with materials* furnished by county range funds and the BLM. [emphasis added]
--Philip Krouse, Oregon public lands rancher, in a complaint to the Forest Service over the lack of range "improvements"



A cattle-depleted crested wheatgrass seeding on BLM land near Walti Hot Spring, Lander County, Nevada. Though stockmen are the only significant beneficiaries, American taxpayers spend millions of dollars on such seedings. This one is marked "Keystone Seeding."



A stock tank on public land.

As detailed in Chapters III and IV, many BLM and FS projects not identified with ranching are designed as much, if not more, for ranching than for their alleged purposes; and, *most* agency programs are geared to benefit ranching in some manner. Indeed, the agencies spend far more on ranching development indirectly through these ostensibly non-ranching efforts than through the ranching programs themselves -- usually to the detriment of the parent program. The statistics below are taken from the most recent BLM and Forest Service annual reports (USDI, BLM 1988 and USDA, FS 1988) and from BLM's *Budget Justifications, Fiscal Year 1989* (USDI, BLM 1988a). Because few figures on ranching expenditures exist, conclusions, while hard to refute, are necessarily conjectural.

The Forest Service spent nearly half a billion dollars on its Timber program in 1987, while BLM spent $7.1 million on its Forest Management program. Among the timber-related activities intentionally designed to promote ranching are brush disposal, fuelwood cutting, and timber thinning. As mentioned, some logging projects are also covertly designed to create more grazing land, or at least land that is more grazable. Additionally, forest management in grazing areas must allow for (and is sometimes complicated by) fences, gates, grazing plans, rancher access, and livestock themselves. Reforestation and soil erosion control tree plantings, usually of pine or fir, frequently are damaged or destroyed by livestock that eat and trample the small trees and damage structural improvements.

While only a relatively small proportion of the Forest Service's Timber budget is attributable to ranching, it nonetheless probably totals several million dollars. BLM's forest program is much more geared

toward ranching -- including, for example, woodland "removal of shrub stands by mechanical chaining to improve range conditions . . . ." A knowledgeable inside source informed me that roughly 1/3, or more than $2 million, of the BLM's annual forest management budget is ascribable to ranching.

This area of Prescott National Forest, Arizona, was replanted with ponderosa pine saplings in 1972. The half-acre at right was fenced from cattle. *(Rod Mondt)*

Ranching's fiscal impact on federal mineral, oil, and gas programs is obscure, but a definite relation does exist. For example, mining operations are often fenced to exclude livestock. Ranching roads are rerouted. Conflicts arise over access to or use of water sources, and the government must play referee. When mineral, oil, and gas activities impact ranching or vice versa (and because ranching is nearly omnipresent, they usually do), management plans and administration must be altered. The BLM's 1987 minerals management budget was nearly $80 million, while the Forest Service's was $27 million.

(Ginny Rosenberg)

Instead of ridding the Trout Creek Mountains of livestock [to improve trout habitat], *the Vale* [BLM] *District spent considerable sums of public funds in an attempt to improve fish habitat. Thousands of willow seedlings were planted, 49 small trash collector dams were constructed to improve pool habitat, and several miles of fence were built to keep livestock out of some riparian areas.*

[Due mostly to livestock:] *By 1980 nearly all the willows were gone. Flooding destroyed 60% of the trash catcher dams and siltation reduced the habitat effectiveness of the remainder.*

--George Wuerthner, "A Case of Poor Public Range Policy" (Wuerthner 1990a)

In the Trout Creek Mountains, the BLM plans to spend $400,000 over the next several years [the early 1990s] *installing fences, pipelines, reservoirs, and other improvements on 500,000 acres to protect fish and fragile desert streams from cows. The agency takes in about $87,000 in grazing fees annually from the ranchers who lease the four grazing allotments.*

Kathie Durbin, "Storm Brews Over Livestock Grazing" (Durbin 1991)

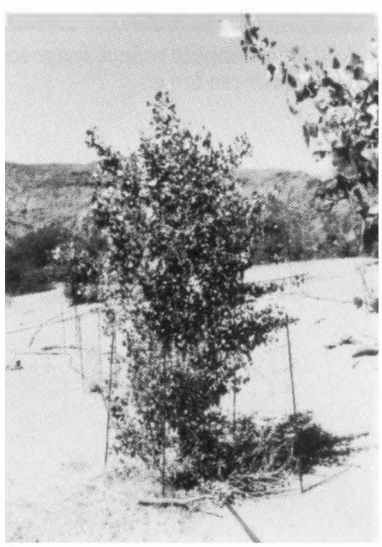
Spruce Grove, Mendocino National Forest, California. *(Rex Kowz)*

"This fence was constructed by the Forest Service to control [exclude] livestock grazing and to protect important wildlife habitat." *(Don Morris)*

As detailed elsewhere, federal wildlife programs are largely at the mercy of the ranching industry. In 1987 the Forest Service spent $42.6 million on its Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management program. Funds were used to "treat" 124,138 acres with prescribed burning, herbicides, mechanical devices, and seedings; to plant trees and bushes; to develop water sources; to fence livestock from riparian areas; to build instream structures; and so on. Most of these projects benefited ranching, while many were necessitated by ranching. Likewise, BLM spent about $17 million in 1987 on its Wildlife Habitat Management program for "58 fence modifications, 611 instream structures, 124 new water facilities, 40,995 acres of prescribed burns, 242 water facility improvements, 148 miles of fences [mainly to exclude livestock], 16 spawning bed stabilization projects, 81 streambank stabilization projects, 314 acres of chainings, 2773 acres of seedings," and other developments.

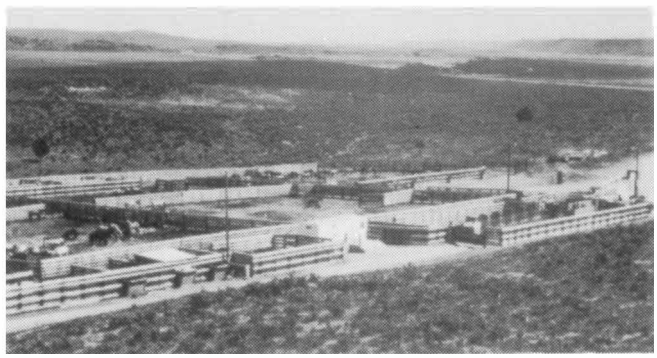
For example, several years ago cottonwood along the Gila River Box in Arizona was not regenerating due to livestock grazing. In response BLM planted and fenced individual cottonwood saplings and installed drip irrigation. The project was funded through the district's *wildlife* budget. (Wuerthner 1989) Recently it was destroyed by marauding cattle.

The BLM's wildlife program is much more heavily geared to ranching than is the Forest Service wildlife program. It is safe to assume that at least $15 million annually of combined BLM and Forest Service wildlife expenditures are necessitated by, or designed to benefit, ranching.



A fenced cottonwood in the Gila River Box, Arizona. *(George Wuerthner)*

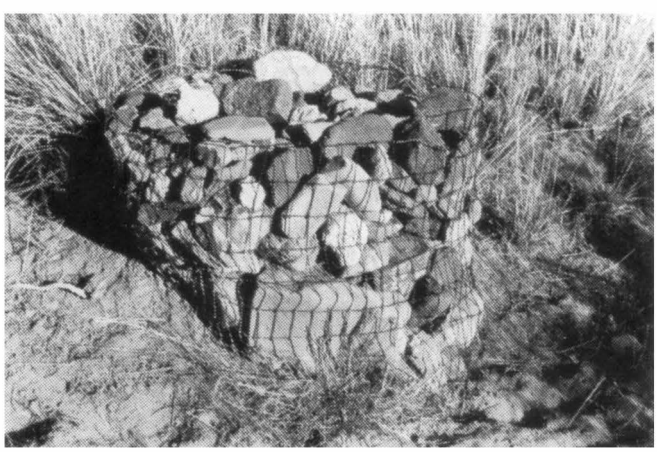
Under stockmen's relentless pressure to eliminate livestock competitors, BLM has spent *well over $100 million* in federal taxes on its Wild Horse and Burro program since the late 1970s. While thousands of horses and burros already languish in federal corrals awaiting adoption, BLM reported that it appropriated $14,735,000 in 1988 to capture, hold, and make available for adoption an additional 8500 animals. In 1980 BLM reported that it "expended an average of $100,000 per year to fund" research projects at 6 Western colleges and universities to explore methods to reduce free-roaming horse populations and their competition with livestock. The Forest Service says it captured and made available for adoption 156 horses and burros in 1987, though it doesn't state in its fiscal report how much it spent doing so. In sum, about $12-$15 million annually is spent by the agencies to remove free-roaming horses from public land, mostly to placate the ranching establishment.



BLM's Wild Horse Distribution Center in Burns, Oregon. *(BLM)*

These [BLM instream restoration structures] *remain functional within the ungrazed Lower Big Creek study site because they have been relatively undamaged by livestock. Outside the exclosure, however, where heavy grazing continues, most of the structures have been destroyed by livestock trampling and subsequent streambank erosion.*

--William Platts and Rodger Nelson, "Characteristics of Riparian Plant Communities and Streambanks with Respect to Grazing in Northeastern Utah" (Platts 1989)



A structure designed to stabilize bank erosion on central New Mexico BLM cattle range.

This "Watershed Restoration Project" is basically a livestock grazing enhancement project. Coronado National Forest, Arizona. The roadside has been devegetated.

The 1987 FS fiscal report shows that its Soil and Water Management program spent about $34 million (some of these funds are appropriated from timber sales). As an "example of a watershed improvement project," the report includes a photo of a newly bladed dirt tank in a meadow. The caption reads, "Benefits provided for improved wildlife habitat and increased forage production" -- but the tank will be used by far mostly by cattle, and it is located in an area already endowed with water sufficient for wildlife but insufficient for cattle.

BLM spent $17.3 million in 1987 on its equivalent program, Resource Conservation and Development. Included were "brush control, seeding, soil stabilization, water detentions and diversions, dikes, pipelines, reservoirs, spring developments, water catchments, wells, cattleguards, and fencing," much of it necessitated by destructive ranching. Much of this activity was unquestionably *designed* to benefit ranching, yet it is all listed under a non-ranching category.

The gully erosion is caused mostly by a livestock-degraded watershed and the direct impact of cattle on the drainage itself.

A BLM attempt to reduce range soil erosion -- a foot high post-and-wire-mesh fence.

An erosion control structure on cattlized BLM range in central New Mexico. Most of these types of developments are located in remote areas, so few Americans ever see them.

This cutbank stabilization structure on BLM range in Socorro County, New Mexico, probably cost several hundred thousand dollars. Note the size of the human figures at top-center.

Ranching is the only permanent, general consumptive activity allowed in designated Wilderness Areas. Roughly half of Western Wildernesses are grazed by livestock, and ranching detracts from their management, environmental health, and public use more than any other land use. BLM spent over $7 million on Wilderness Management in 1988, probably at least $1 million of this to build ranching-related developments, mitigate ranching impacts, minimize conflicts due to ranching, and accommodate Wilderness planning to ranchers' demands. The Forest Service administers 70 times more Western Wilderness than does BLM, and spent $10.3 million in 1987 on its management.

Forest Service benches upended and damaged by cattle.

On their 1987 Recreation programs, the Forest Service and BLM spent approximately $100 million and $15 million respectively (excluding Wilderness funding). Ranching heavily influences these programs. For example, hundreds of Western campgrounds have been fenced to exclude cattle. Those that are not are often trampled and denuded by invading cattle, and helpless campers are left with dust, flies, and cowpies. Livestock damage tent sites, tables and benches, barbecue grates, water lines, drainage ditches, fences, walkways, signs, docks, backpacking shelters, ramadas, buildings, and other recreational developments. Livestock diminish and pollute drinking water sources, necessitating water developments, filtration, and chlorination. To protect natural areas, as well as archaeological and historical sites, hundreds of fences have been erected, while areas left unprotected often have been damaged. Much of the West's 200,000 or so miles of foot trails is trampled, eroded, and covered with livestock excrement. Recreation planning and management must be geared to accommodate ranching; hunting and fishing are adversely affected. And so on. It is probable that public lands ranching forces the Forest Service and BLM to spend at least an extra several million dollars annually on their Recreation programs.

We are in the process of developing a plan to conduct a two stage controlled burn on a 2560 acre area of ponderosa pine and chaparral on the Walnut Creek Allotment. . . . In addition, we intend to construct a 3 wire pasture division fence . . . to better implement the Summer Flex pasture rotation system on the allotment.

--Emilio S. Lujan, District Ranger, Prescott National Forest, Arizona

Fire fighting and prevention, while costly to the public, is often lucrative to the livestock grazier. If not for ranching much of it would be unnecessary, especially on rangelands where there is usually little considered "of value" other than forage and fences to protect. Funding for FS fire fighting and protection in 1987 was $284 million. Most of this amount was, of course, attributable to the protection of structural developments and saleable timber, but ranching also figures prominently. BLM's 1987 Firefighting and Rehabilitation budget was $83 million. Two-thirds of the fires fought with this money were on rangeland; nearly all of the remaining third was on grazed forest, and only 1% was on "commercial forest."

How many fires could be allowed to burn naturally instead of being suppressed to protect forage, range "improvements," 30,000 public lands ranch headquarters, and livestock? How many destructive fires are indirectly or directly the result of public lands ranching: cheatgrass, "weed," and brush "invasions"; artificial forage monocultures; range activities that start accidental fires; range arson; and range fire suppression that allows fuel to build up to dangerously high levels? (For example, ranching-spread cheatgrass is credited with extending Idaho's fire season by 2 months [ONDA 1990].) How much of the brush disposal, herbiciding, controlled burning, and forest thinning done in the name of fire prevention is actually done to benefit public lands ranching? No one knows for sure, but it is clear that without public lands ranching fire prevention costs could easily be reduced by millions of dollars per year.

In 1990 there were more than 375,000 miles of maintained dirt roads in National Forests (Foreman 1991). Federal appropriations of $63 million were used in 1987 to perform road maintenance on FS roads. If we assume only 10% of these costs were attributable to ranching, it adds up to $6.3 million -- approximating the $8.1 million taken in from FS grazing fees that year. Forest Service road construction funding that year was $233 million. An overwhelming percentage of these new roads were logging roads; yet if merely 1% were ranching roads their cost would amount to $2.3 million.

Far more miles of road traverse BLM land, where there is probably several times as much driveable land. Many BLM staffers have admitted to me that by far more of the roads on BLM land are for ranching than for any other purpose. Most are built and maintained by counties and states. Some are engineered by BLM and contracted out for construction and maintenance. The contractees are sometimes the same permittees using them for ranching -- the local rancher with a Cat and blade -- so in effect these people are paid by the government to build and maintain their own range developments.

According to a phone interview with BLM engineering staff in Washington, DC, the actual amount spent on road maintenance is buried in the BLM's budget for buildings, recreation, facilities, and transportation. But they indicated that roughly $3-4 million annually has been spent in recent years on BLM road maintenance. Funding for road construction has been much less, and available only sporadically in recent years; permittees are encouraged to build BLM roads themselves! However, an Arizona BLM official stated that $300,000 was procured for road construction in that state in 1988.

Though roads are a major form of ranching development on public land, neither the Forest Service nor BLM link road construction and maintenance to range programs. And many are constructed and maintained by these and other agencies with taxpayers' money under pretenses. These include "old logging roads" (that happen to still be maintained and that services ranching areas), "fire fighting access roads," "wildlife maintenance roads," "forest management roads," "administrative roads," and (the all-time favorite) "general public access roads" (which were often never requested by the general public, are rarely used by the general public, and just happen to lead to a range development or livestock foraging area).

Large cattle guards such as this cost tens of thousands of tax dollars each.

The next time you bounce over one of those tens of thousands of cattle guards in rural areas, picture $3000 to $25,000 tax dollars floating off to that big ranch in the sky. Our collective generosity also provides those tens of thousands of "CATTLE GUARD," "CATTLE XING," "WATCH FOR LIVESTOCK," "CLOSE THE GATE!," and allotment boundary signs. BLM alone reports spending well over $1 million each year installing and maintaining signs.

The Forest Service spent $15 million in 1987 maintaining its 11,200 buildings and related support facilities, and $25.7 million constructing new facilities. Most of this activity was in the West; perhaps a few million dollars of it would not have been necessary without public lands ranching. The BLM spent about $5 million in 1987 on building construction and maintenance; chalk up another million to ranching.

A partial cost of buildings and their maintenance is another obscure cost of public lands ranching. Utah BLM Henry Mountain Resource Area headquarters.

FS and BLM expended roughly $10 million on law enforcement in 1987. Because the 22,000 ranchers spread evenly across Western federal land exert such powerful control and so heavily impact this land, special agents and law enforcement rangers from these agencies (and state police and county sheriffs) spend much time settling conflicts between ranchers and other public lands users. Disputes over trespass, access, and use are especially numerous, and threats and assaults by stockmen and their hired help are common. Officials also must investigate and process those accused of harming livestock, interfering with ranching operations, and tampering with range developments. Further, the extensive webwork of ranching roads has introduced much of the illegal activity, such as the looting of archaeological sites, that occurs on public land. In sum, public lands ranching probably adds more than a million dollars annually to BLM and Forest Service law enforcement programs.

The Forest Service produced 94 publications pertaining to range and grazing in 1986, and dozens more indirectly relating to ranching. Along with dozens produced by BLM, this amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars expended annually.

BLM's Planning and Data Management program spent $24.6 million in 1987, and will spend twice as much in 1989. The purpose of the program is to "improve resource management decisions" and to develop an effective data management system. This involves problem identification and analysis, conflict resolution, coordination with other agencies, public relations, and modernization of data processing. Because much of this relates directly to ranching, we may assume that at least several million dollars of this program would be unnecessary without public lands ranching.

The Forest Service spent $27 million, and the BLM $12 million, on survey-related activities in 1987, a small portion of it due to ranching allotments. BLM and National Forest land management plans, Environmental Impact Statements, appeals processes, etc. are also sponsored by the federal government. Ranching is involved in much of this, to the tune of millions of dollars.

The Forest Service received roughly $150 million from government sources in 1987 for research. Ranching-related research included watershed management and rehabilitation; wildlife, fish, and range; and fire and atmospheric sciences. The multi-million dollar Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station in Ft. Collins, Colorado, is one of 8 regional experiment stations. Drop a few million more into the public ranching trough.

Aside from range programs and possibly roads, perhaps the single biggest expenditure category for federal ranching is general administration, for which in 1987 FS and BLM spent $263 million and $87 million respectively. That year the Forest Service listed 27,400 full-time, 2901 part time permanent, and 15,783 temporary employees, while the BLM employed 6814 full-time personnel.

The agencies' range programs include salaries for their hundreds of full-time range specialists. But thousands more employees in other programs and general administration spend part of their time on ranching-related matters, trying to accommodate their specialties to the exorbitant demands and destructive impacts of the livestock industry. These include everyone from road maintenance crews to wildlife biologists to recreation staff to upper level bureaucrats. (Even the President of the United States and his staff must meet with public ranching representatives, study and sign appropriation bills, and consider livestock industry needs when dealing with matters pertaining to Western federal lands.) Non-range personnel -- BLM resource area managers and FS district rangers, particularly -- spend countless hours each year listening to ranchers' complaints; writing reports; conducting "educational" tours for the public; attending range-related meetings, hearings, and such; assessing base properties, applications, permits, and fee matters; and communicating with politicians on range affairs. Much time, effort, and money also is expended attending meetings of, and pandering to, grazing "advisory" boards. Agency clerks prepare and check grazing permits, changes in permit conditions, bills, sales of base properties, and all sorts of ranching arrangements. Little of this is linked to ranching fiscally.

Obscure general administrative costs also include utilities; office supplies and activities; procurement and contracting; purchase and maintenance of vehicles, equipment, and supplies; landscaping; and much more. The BLM and Forest Service also maintain state and regional offices, respectively, and both have headquarters in Washington, DC, where regulations and policies affecting ranching administration are established.

In conclusion, from the above we may conjecture that very roughly **$200-$250 million**, total, is spent annually by the BLM and Forest Service directly and indirectly on public lands ranching -- *not* $65 million or so as claimed by these agencies. This corresponds closely to the common "educated guess" that roughly 1/4 of the BLM budget and 1/15-1/20 of the Forest Service budget are dedicated to ranching. (Logging-related expenses eat up well over half of the Forest Service's annual budget.) In 1987 the Forest Service was funded at $2.2 billion and the BLM at $659 million. These amounts multiplied by 1/20 and 1/4, respectively, would equal about $100 million and $165 million, or $265 million total.

I retired from the position of Central Region Habitat Biologist, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife in 1982. For the last 27 years of the 29 in that position I have planned, programed, administrated and physically worked on cooperative habitat projects of various kinds on and with the Ochoco Forest. Through my Regional Habitat program I have spent thousands in public funds, more than I'd like to admit, on these cooperative projects through the years. Projects, few if any of which would have been needed were it not for livestock grazing. Projects such as erosion seedings, fire rehab seedings, prescribed burns, vegetation control, water developments, tree and shrub plantings and miles of fencing; all projects considering for continuance of livestock grazing or habitat conditions resulting from it.

--Harold H. Winegar, in letter to Ochoco National Forest Supervisor, 12-18-86 (Winegar 1986)

BLM and Forest Service expenditure on public lands ranching is enormous, but even this pales compared to taxes spent by other federal, state, county, and city entities.

Predator control is built in to the federal budgets, institutionalized within the bureaucracy, and regarded not as a subsidy, but as a right of the livestock industry.

--Bernard Shanks, **This Land Is Your Land** (Shanks 1984)

The US Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Damage Control (ADC), under APHIS, employs more than 700 field workers and scores of other personnel. Operating in conjunction with state agencies, counties, and private ranchers, it slaughters "injurious" animals, disseminates information, and conducts research. ADC states, "The protection of livestock is the primary operational program of Animal Damage Control." Much of this activity occurs on public land.

According to Steve Johnson, Southwestern Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, ADC spends about $21 million annually in 14 Western states. Arizona, for example, receives the smallest share of funds -- roughly $550,000 annually. Of this amount US taxpayers contribute about 80%, while the state and counties provide nearly all the remainder. Arizona ADC spent about half a million dollars in 1985, mostly to protect livestock, while confirmed losses of sheep, cattle, and poultry to predators totaled less than $60,000. While ADC was killing coyotes and other predators that year, ADC's 1985 *Annual Report* revealed that about $474,000 worth of crop damage was caused by jackrabbits -- a favorite prey of coyotes. (Johnson 1987a)

Other examples illustrate ADC's mentality: Livestock losses to mountain lions in New Mexico were estimated at $30,000 in 1983, yet government agents spent $90,000 to kill the cats. As mentioned, near Browning, Montana, the federal government recently spent $41,000 to have agents shoot from helicopters and remove 6 wolves -- 1 of the only 2 known packs to have recolonized the 48 states in half a century. Their crime? Eating a reported $3147 worth of livestock, for which the owner was compensated $2239 by Defenders of Wildlife (Wuerthner 1987). A more recent ADC killing of only one wolf in northwest Montana cost $40,000. It costs the public more than $200 per animal for agents to shoot coyotes from airplanes and helicopters (Woolsey 1985). In 1988 ADC in California spent $3.2

million to kill 32,368 mammals -- almost $100 for each dead critter -- for allegedly causing $1.4 million in livestock, poultry, and crop losses (Satchell 1990). In Wyoming in 1989, where 4634 stock animals were reported killed by predation at a loss to ranchers of $340,000, ADC spent $1.35 million to kill 7472 predators (Reitman 1990). Montana ADC spent $1.25 million in 1989 to kill predators, though predators there reportedly killed only $235,567 worth of livestock that year (Milstein 1991). During the first year of James Watt's administration ADC spent more money killing predators than the federal government spent protecting all Endangered species (Shanks 1984). In response to increasing opposition to ADC, the General Accounting Office currently is investigating the agency in preparation for a critical analysis of the ADC program.

If taxpayers are asked to pay for predator control -- especially on public lands -- I feel ranchers should have to pay predator supporters like myself some compensation for the loss of each animal destroyed. Ranchers are depriving me and other public lands users the pleasure and experience gained from having predators like wolves around.

--Howie Wolke, outfitter, environmental activist (Wuerthner 1987)

Filling Reagan's cowboy boots, President Bush recently requested a 14% increase for ADC in 1990. According to *US News and World Report* (2-5-90), ADC's 1990 budget will be $29.4 million ($19 million for states west of the Mississippi), plus roughly $15 million in state funds; more than 60% of the total is directed toward protecting livestock. ADC's recently completed long-term management plan EIS cost an additional $1.7 million. Many states and some counties contribute to the annual kill with their own tax-sponsored predator "control" programs. And, state game & fish departments capture and relocate predators suspected of killing livestock, or sponsor hunts to kill them.

In recent years the US Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA's Animal Research Service, other government agencies, and land grant universities have implemented hundreds of projects testing methods of killing and deterring predators and of assessing predator damage. A major portion of all this serves public lands ranchers.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) conducts research on, and eradication programs against, ranching "pests" and livestock parasites and diseases. Along with state, local, and private contributors, it spends many millions of dollars each year to benefit public lands ranching. For example, APHIS currently is spending money experimenting with methods of eradicating several range plant "invaders."

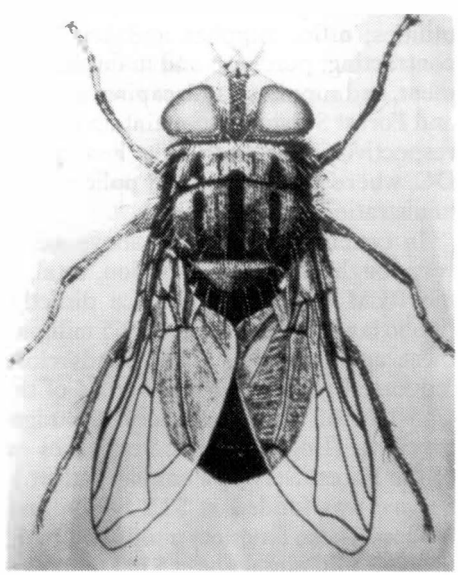
The kangaroo rat: persecuted by APHIS as a livestock competitor. *(Steve Johnson)*

The total cost of the program [grasshopper spraying on 175,000 acres in southeast Arizona, half of it public land] *is expected to come to approximately $600,000, with the state paying $325,000, the federal government $265,000 and the ranchers the balance* [$10,000, or 1.66%].

--5-13-86 *Phoenix Gazette*

In 1985 APHIS spent $35 million to kill grasshoppers in the West, mostly on public ranges. It cost us more than $2 per acre for this "service." Current prices are roughly $3- $4 per acre. Commonly APHIS sprays insecticide on grasshoppers when they number about 15 per square yard, or about 68,000 per acre. At this point, grasshoppers on 1 acre eat about 23% as much as a cow, and poisoning grasshoppers on about 4.4 acres (a cost of roughly $15.40) would prevent them from consuming as much herbage as a cow eats (currently, ostensibly $1.81 per month). Thus, if a spraying eliminated all grasshoppers for an average 4-month public lands grazing season, it would cost $15.40 to prevent grasshoppers from eating $7.24 worth of herbage. And, as mentioned, spraying does not reduce future infestations; evidence indicates that the opposite is true.

To protect livestock, APHIS has spent over $200 million since 1958 to eradicate the screwworm fly and keep it away from US borders. As mentioned, the screwworm fly is exotic; there would have been little problem with the insect in the US had it not been introduced and spread by livestock.



The multi-million dollar screwworm fly. *(USDA)*

The primary responsibility of the US Animal Health Association is to establish uniform methods and rules for the control of livestock brucellosis. USDA's Veterinary Services is responsible for the control and eradication of many other livestock diseases, as well for preventing foreign livestock disease from entering the US. Stockmen can receive financial assistance to eradicate some diseases, and owners of livestock destroyed due to certain diseases are eligible for indemnity payments from the federal and state governments. Under federal law, the Secretary of Agriculture may declare a national emergency to stop any communicable disease that threatens livestock. The US Public Health Service, concerned with the prevention and treatment of disease in humans, must also concern itself with disease and parasites transmittable to humans from commercial livestock.

ADC and government departments of health and game & fish inoculate and treat wild animals for disease, or kill them. We are told that these efforts are to protect wildlife and the public, yet often they are actually designed as much or more to protect *livestock*. This is true even of the anti-rabies campaigns. Livestock are quite susceptible to rabies. Sometimes all possible disease-carrying wild animals in an area are destroyed, whether they are carriers or not. And sometimes livestock spread disease to wild animals in the first place.

The US Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS), whose chief is rancher William Scalding, employs 300 classified range consultants, 150 consultants with range degrees in other classified jobs, and 160 others who are range-trained. SCS spends tens of millions of dollars annually on programs relating to livestock production, and an average of **$30 million** per year on programs directly related to range management. (USDA, SCS 1979) The agency assists ranchers technically and materially with brush management, fencing, stock ponds, range "treatment" and seeding, and other ranching developments. For example, SCS currently is developing a new irrigation system for ranchers on Mill Creek, near Livingston, Montana; the 29 local ranchers will pay $1 million and taxpayers $2.5 million for the project (Wuerthner 1989).

SCS had a budget of $687 million in 1988 (OMB 1989). Its programs indirectly benefitting or partially necessitated by public lands ranching include erosion and flood control, watershed restoration, soil surveys, forage plant research, resource inventories, publications, technical advice, "natural disaster" assistance, and general administration. Mostly due to ranching, 10% of all US soil erosion occurs on Western public land. So, we may safely assume that SCS spends at least several million dollars annually due to public lands ranching.

Under the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962, SCS also administers Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) areas, whose purpose is "Speeding up resource development and environmental protection [the 2 *complement* each other??] in multicounty areas . . . ." Most of the West is divided into RC&D districts, and their offices assist ranchers with planning and implementation of ranching development and cost-sharing for range "improvements." SCS funds most of this, but states and counties also contribute.

USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) was established to protect and promote domestic agriculture, including the grazing industry. Through a complex system it administers low-interest loans, production adjustments/price supports, emergency agricultural activities, cost-sharing (including costs for range development), and whatever responsibilities Congress assigns. USDA maintains an ASCS office in each county, directed by a committee of local ranchers and farmers. Federal outlays through ASCS average $12-$15 billion and the agency itself spends about $1-$2 billion annually, though the amount spent on public lands ranching is anyone's guess (OMB 1989).

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is a government-owned entity for which ASCS provides operating personnel. CCC provides ranchers and farmers fiscal management support. Through CCC, other federal agencies and the private sector, and through legal exemptions, Western ranchers take out tens of millions of dollars in low-interest loans annually. The millions of dollars of interest foregone raises the rest of America's interest rates correspondingly.

USDA's Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) provides ranchers ownership, "improvement," construction, and repair loans, as well as loans to restore ranching-damaged land. Other special FmHA assistance includes loan deferrals and refinancing, as well as emergency loans. In 1987 grazing associations owed $56.7 billion for low-interest loans; individual ranchers owed billions more (USDA 1987). "Repayment is scheduled according to the borrowers ability to pay . . . ."

The federal Farm Credit Administration (FCA) is responsible for the regulation and examination of those entities comprising the cooperative Farm Credit System -- the federal land banks that loan money to ranchers and farmers.

Other federal, state, and county agencies help ranchers with exportation, taxes, insurance, credit, cooperatives, electrical and telephone service -- all ultimately at public expense.

The National Wool Act of 1954 declares it the policy of Congress to encourage the domestic production of wool and mohair. Thus, through "incentive payments," sheep and goat ranchers are heavily subsidized. When wool prices are low, incentive payments are commensurately high. Annual incentive payments to public lands ranchers average in the *tens of millions of dollars*; $2.5 billion has been handed out since 1955 (Reitman 1990). Funds for incentive payments are derived from wool tariffs, which are assessed against imported wool. (Tariff funds, however, don't cover all associated costs to administer the program.) Wool tariffs raise the price of wool to the American consumer and, since US wool is poorly prepared and generally inferior to its foreign counterpart, lowers the quality of wool on the American market. To further support the sheep industry, the US has negotiated agreements with foreign nations to limit the amount of wool and synthetic fabrics they export to this country. (National Audubon Society 1973)

Our governments have paid out *billions* of dollars in "disaster relief" funds to public lands ranchers over the years in response to flood, fire, blizzard, drought, pests, disease, and other "natural disasters." Assistance also includes emergency hay, water, fencing, pesticides, inoculations, seedings,

sandbags, water projects, loans of heavy equipment, livestock transportation, and practically anything ranchers request -- this, even though the "disasters" were often the results of overgrazing and/or improvident ranching development. In 1988, for example, some 380 million pounds of feed were purchased by ranchers for "drought-sticken" livestock under the ASCS emergency feed program at a cost to taxpayers of about $140 million (Atwood 1990). In August 1989, President Bush signed a $900 million appropriation for disaster relief to "flood and drought-stricken" farmers and ranchers.

Further, investigation has shown that disaster funding is often based on inflated AUMs. For example, I was recently informed by a Washington rancher that public lands ranchers there were being paid drought relief funding based on a loss of forage per acre much greater than the land was capable of producing.

COUNTY DECLARED EMERGENCY AREA

DECLARATION ALLOWS LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS TO APPLY FOR HELP

Mojave County was declared an emergency feed area Friday by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). According to Steve Drye, ASCS's county executive director, county livestock producers who are forced to "supplement feed" their cattle can apply for assistance through the ASCS office.

The program is available to all agricultural producers who earn at least 10 percent of their gross annual income from livestock production, Drye said.... "People must file an application with us. Then they can purchase any feed they need and submit the invoice back to the ASCS for reimbursement," the executive director said.

--7-17-89 *Mojave Miner*, Kingman, Arizona

(Governor Rose Mofford subsequently declared 5 other counties -- about half of the state -- drought disaster areas, making ranchers there eligable for the special funding.)

Flooding caused by public lands ranching results in untold damages. Federal, state, county, and city governments have spent **many billions** of tax dollars over the years to repair and realign roads, rebuild and enlarge bridges, install culverts, channelize drainages, riprap banks, haul fill, remove debris, repair structures, revegetate, and build flood control dams -- when what was really needed was a reduction in livestock numbers and range development.

The Beef Board spent its $85 million budget largely on promotion.
--Report of the Secretary of Agriculture: 1987

A host of public relations firms and livestock industry lobbyists work together to secure tax monies to fund research on livestock production and to promote the consumption of livestock products. Essentially a public relations firm, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service spends millions of tax dollars annually promoting the livestock industry, including public lands ranching. The federal Beef Research and Information Act of 1976 established "a program of research, information, and promotion for beef cattle and beef products."

Inspectors for USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) examined 121 million head of livestock for disease and toxins in 1987. FSIS also enforces consumer safety regulations pertaining to livestock products, disseminates literature on the safe handling of meats, and enforces proper labeling. USDA's Office of Transportation promotes more efficient transportation of agricultural products, including livestock. USDA's Packers and Stockyards Administration enforces regulations pertaining to auctions, stockyards, packing houses, and other facets of buying and selling livestock. The US Department of Health and Human Service's Food and Drug Administration is charged with, among other things, protecting the livestock industry from illegal competition and testing the industry's drugs and pesticides.

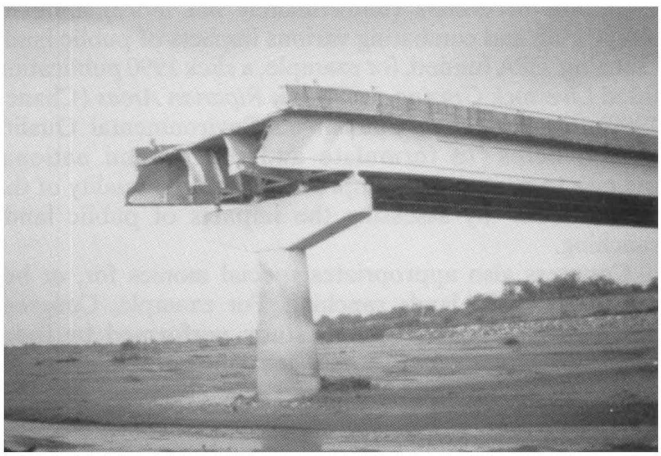
USDA's Agricultural Research Service spends millions of our dollars "cooperating with local ranchers."

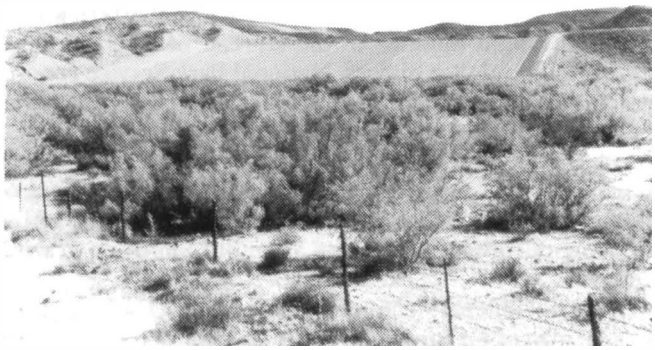
USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Cooperative State Research Service use biologic knowledge (and $908 million in 1988) to search for ways to make farming and ranching more profitable. For example, ARS conducts ranching studies on its 50,000-acre United States Livestock Experimental Station near Miles City, Montana; the 194,000-acre Jornada Experimental Range near Las Cruces, New Mexico; and the large US Sheep Experimental Station in Idaho. USDA's Economic Research Service and National Agricultural Statistics Service use economic knowledge (and $109 million in 1988) to search for ways to make farming and ranching more profitable. And USDA's multi-million dollar National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland, is well-stocked with ranching literature. (OMB 1989)

Numerous other government research establishments serve ranchers. USDA operates an agricultural Research Center, with headquarters also in Beltsville, Maryland, and other laboratories and offices throughout the country. The Denver Wildlife Research Center spends tax dollars on research to find a better anti-predator sheep collar. The Science and Education Foundation employs range conservationists to search for less destructive, more profitable

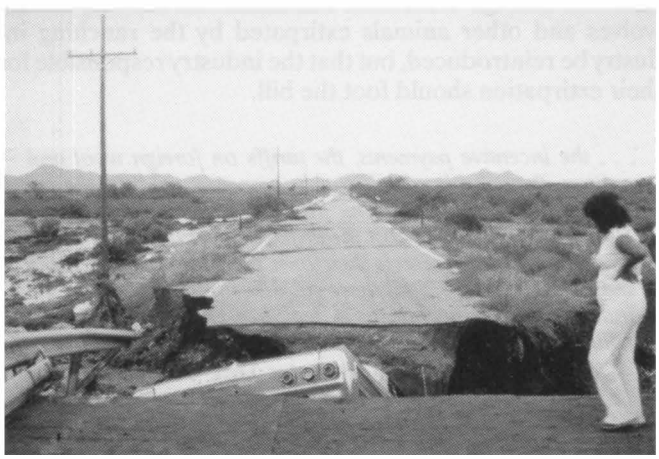
ways to graze livestock. The National Science Foundation and National Academy of Sciences both expend time and money promoting ranching. Even the Veterans Administration gives priority assistance to stockmen!

The Soil Conservation Service states that no less than 110 government entities in some manner serve farmers and ranchers. (Public lands ranchers silently ride the farmers' coattails in some of these.) Ranching-related expenditures are buried in these agencies' budgets, and it would take many thousands of dollars and the Freedom of Information Act to ferret them out. (I haven't the money or ferrets but encourage others to do so).

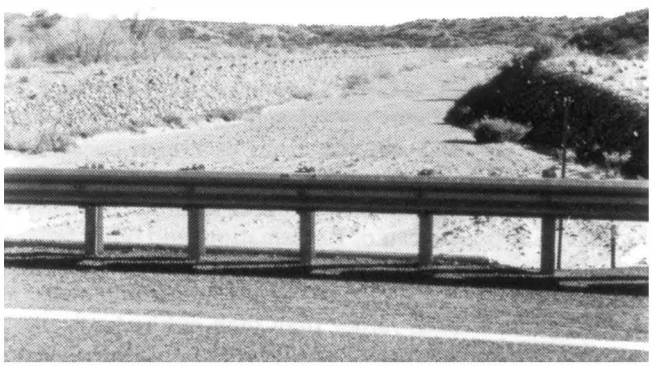




This large, earthen flood control dam probably would not have been built if not for livestock grazing in the watershed. Southern New Mexico BLM.

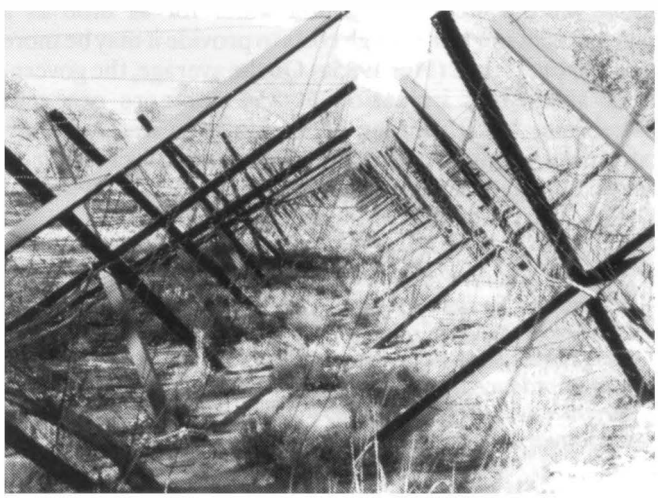


Flood damages in southern Arizona in October 1983 alone were estimated at half a billion dollars. Range soil scientist Bob Dixon states, "The October 1983 flooding in Tucson was caused by the overgrazed watersheds of the Rillito and Santa Cruz Rivers." *(Bob Dixon)*



Flooding caused by public lands ranching necessitates thousands of riprap projects and more and larger bridges.

Flood damage from a heavily grazed watershed.



A stabilization project along the Rio Grande River, New Mexico.

In the Department of the Interior, aside from BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Geological Survey, and Bureau of Reclamation all are in some way involved with public lands ranching. For example, the US Geological Survey operates research stations that conduct livestock grazing studies on public land. Because public lands ranching so heavily affects US wildlife, FWS must add millions more to its half-billion-dollar annual budget than would otherwise be necessary. Likewise, public lands ranching's impact on Western waterways has added millions to the Bureau of Reclamation's annual billion-dollar budget. National Park Service reports reveal that millions of dollars more are spent annually on, and because of, legal and trespass ranching than are netted through grazing fees. And the National Park Service and numerous other government agencies have spent millions of dollars simply on land surveys to locate legal boundaries for ranching purposes, often in an attempt to mitigate grazing trespass.

The US General Accounting Office (GAO) is the investigative arm of Congress. In promoting fiscal responsibility in government, GAO scrutinizes agencies that administer public lands ranching. For example, it conducted 11 studies of BLM and its ranching program from 1986-89 -- a few million more tax dollars obscurely expended.

Those busy beavers, the US Army Corps of Engineers, whose total annual budget is over $3 billion, spend millions of dollars extra each year because public lands ranching has increased flooding, lowered river levels, and silted reservoirs and harbors. Thousands of Western dams, even including large ones such as Glen Canyon on the Colorado and Navajo on the San Juan, were designed in whole or part to reduce flooding and siltation from upstream overgrazed ranges.

Large-scale Western water projects, sponsored mostly by the Army Corps, Bureau of Reclamation, and other federal and state agencies with hundreds of millions of tax dollars annually, also benefit public lands ranchers, though usually on their private lands rather than then public lands allotments. Cornell economist David Fields and his associate Robin Hur report that direct and indirect water subsidies to the livestock industry in California alone total $26 *billion* annually. The Bureau of Reclamation sells private and public lands ranchers irrigation water for as little as a quarter- cent per ton, though costs to provide it may be more than 100 times that. (Hur 1985a) On the average, the government subsidizes irrigation at $54 per acre per year (Wuerthner 1989). Bureau of Reclamation statistics indicate that taxpayers paid $534 million to deliver water to Western irrigators (mostly stockmen) in 1988 (Wuerthner 1990b). According to Fields and Hur:

> *Reports from the General Accounting Office, the Rand Corporation, and the Water Resources Council show that every dollar spent by state governments in irrigation subsidies actually costs taxpayers over seven dollars in lost wages, higher living costs, and reduced business income... most of the water goes to produce livestock, either directly or indirectly. Thus, current water use practices now threaten to undermine the economies of every state in the region.*" (Robbins 1987)

Onward.... The US Government Printing Office prints, binds, and distributes scores of publications promoting public lands ranching. US and state court systems have spent millions of dollars contesting public lands ranchers on numerous and various issues. (More than $2 million was spent over 18 years on court battles with the aforementioned rampant grazing permit and regulation violator John Jay Casey alone.)

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) researches and monitors environmental threats and enforces environmental legislation. EPA spends hundreds of thousands of dollars (unfortunately not more) annually monitoring and combating various impacts of public lands ranching. EPA funded, for example, a slick 1990 publication titled *Livestock Grazing on Western Riparian Areas* (Chaney 1990). Similarly, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) helps "to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment" by assessing the impacts of public lands ranching.

Congress also appropriates special monies for, or because of, public lands ranching. For example, Congress recently ordered a $200,000 study performed by independent biologists to assess the feasibility of reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park. The reintroduction plan detailed in the resulting report, *Wolves for Yellowstone*, is being adamantly fought by public lands ranchers. Wildlife advocate George Wuerthner maintains that not only should wolves and other animals extirpated by the ranching industry be reintroduced, but that the industry responsible for their extirpation should foot the bill.

> *... the incentive payments, the tariffs on foreign wool and mutton, the subsidized killing of competing wildlife, the experimental breeding stations that are located all over the United States and that cost the taxpayer several million a year (most industries research their own products, but the sheep industry doesn't) -- if all these subsidies were ended and the industry had to operate as a real free enterprise, it would collapse overnight.*
>
> --Comment on sheep industry by Dick Randall, former federal predator "control" agent

Western states and counties spend huge sums of tax money on public lands ranching. For example, Wyoming appropriated $22.5 million in state funds directly to agriculture in 1980-81, along with about $10 million in agriculture-related funds. Probably $5 million or more of this went to public lands ranching.

Each Western state has a State Department of Agriculture which renders various services to the public lands rancher. State livestock departments work to minimize livestock disease and enforce regulations pertaining to buying and selling livestock. And every Western state funds a state livestock board, which has broad administrative and advisory responsibilities pertaining to livestock matters within the state. For example, the Wyoming Livestock Board was established "for the purposes of supervising and protecting the livestock interests of Wyoming from theft and disease and to recommend legislation fostering the livestock industry." Today, it spends more than $2 million annually.

All Western states and some counties maintain pest, disease, and parasite eradication programs for the ranching industry. State veterinarians and livestock sanitary commissions also administer to its needs. Owners of diseased stock

ordered killed by state veterinarians are usually compensated by the state for the value of the animals lost plus related expenses. Montana has spent about $30 million just trying to rid its cattle of brucellosis.

State associations of conservation districts coordinate and focus efforts on ranching. Some Western state statutes authorize the creation of livestock districts which are given various regulatory powers. Some states have special legislation designed to assist ranchers in the marketplace. Some have special non-profit commissions, committees, and councils to promote ranching. Some have special water, irrigation, and watershed improvement districts and boards designed to promote stockmen's interests.

Various state agencies fund and/or help secure low-interest loans for ranching programs.

State forestry departments often include range development as part of their forestry programs, as do other state land managing agencies.

Public lands ranching has proven costly to Western state game & fish departments, most of which cater heavily to hunting and fishing interests -- their main sources of funding. They spend millions of dollars to manage and reintroduce species diminished or extirpated by ranching. Under pressure from ranchers, they vaccinate wildlife to prevent the spread of livestock disease -- disease that is often spread by their stock. State game & fish departments also run fish hatcheries. When streams are degraded by livestock and "trash" fish "invade," state game & fish biologists "treat" with rotenone and replant with hatchery trout. The fish hatcheries themselves experience reduced water flow, siltation, and pollution from upstream ranching. These costs are absorbed with "wildlife" funds. Thus, millions more dollars quietly drop into the ranching trough.

Though permittees are already compensated for predator losses by lower grazing fees, tax write-offs, and more, in some states ranchers are further compensated by fish & game departments. In Wyoming, for example, if a mountain lion kills a calf the Game & Fish Department is responsible for paying the rancher the value of the calf. Each year the Wyoming Game and Fish Department also compensates ranchers about $750,000 for deer and antelope hunted on their private lands, and some $250,000 for wildlife damage to private forage or crops. Colorado spends more than $1 million annually on its compensation program, handing out about $180,000 a year for "game depredation," $34,000 of this just for livestock killed or injured by mountain lions. Many of the payees are public lands ranchers. Idaho ranchers recently procured $500,000 from the state legislature for depredation payments. Idaho and other states even dispatch state fish & game employees to shoot elk and other competitors that get into private pastures and haystacks.

A "study committee" is pushing for a similar compensation program in Arizona. According to Richard Stephensen, Legislative Liaison for the Arizona Game & Fish Department, "The study committee consists of two cattlemen, one wool grower, the head of the state lands commission (who has already voiced his support for the program), two legislators who are both cattlemen, and two members of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, one of whom is a cattleman." Stephensen says ranchers have calculated that someone owes them $325,000 a year just for the livestock *salt* they claim wild animals use, including that used on public land!

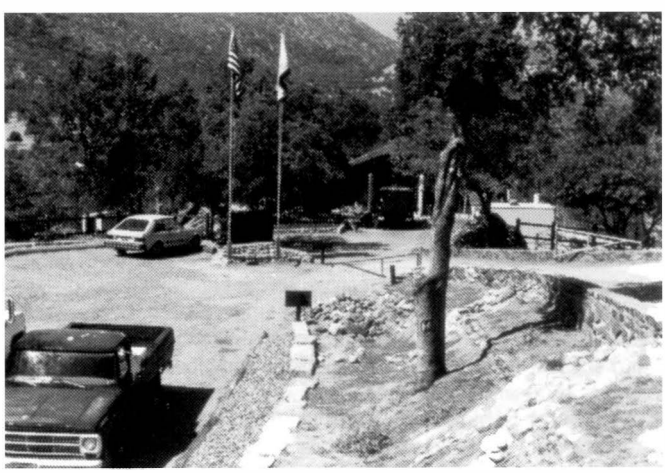
State fish & game departments even supply ranchers with special fences and large wooden panels to keep elk, deer, and pronghorn out of their haystacks, and construction materials to keep them out of their barns. Some states reimburse permittees for damages done (or claimed) to fences and other range "improvements" by wildlife. Professional claims adjusters have found large percentages of these claims to be fraudulent. For example, ranchers have filed claims for wildlife damages to decades-old fence posts already rotted off at the ground, and based them on the value of newer fences.

Public lands ranchers are subsidized in other obscure ways at hunters' and anglers' expense. For example, the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act requires a manufacturers' tax on hunting equipment throughout the country. The collected tax monies are apportioned to the states. The Western states spend part of the money covertly on ranching and on mitigating its destructive influence on wildlife. For instance, hunting and fishing license fee dollars in Colorado were used to chain pinyon-juniper to increase livestock forage and help keep deer and elk at higher elevations (read "off private ranchlands") during winter.

The Arizona Game & Fish Department publishes 2 handbooks which, by its own admission, are largely designed to teach ranchers how to kill coyotes and mountain lions (Woolsey 1985, Shaw 1985).

Despite the conflicts caused by the inherent incompatibility of ranching and wildlife, most state fish & wildlife personnel remain heavily pro-ranching. Like the rest of us, they are enamored of ranching and cowboy mythology.

All Western states maintain vegetation eradication and reseeding programs for stockmen's benefit, as do many counties, often in the form of weed and pest control districts, etc. Montana taxpayers alone spend over $5 million annually to kill "weeds" usually caused by overgrazing. In Texas, literally hundreds of millions of tax and private dollars have gone into killing dense mesquite, also caused mostly by livestock. In every Western state but Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, authorities may legally enter any private land to eradicate "weedy" vegetation -- and then charge the landowner (Bingham 1990).



Hundreds of Western state-sponsored fire stations fight range fires, most partly or chiefly for the benefit of stockmen.

Fire protection on state land (most of which is open rangeland) usually is provided by cooperative agreements between state land departments, BLM, FS, and/or individual counties. State, county, and even city and community fire departments are frequently called in to battle large fires on federal rangeland. According to **Statistical Abstract of the US: 1987**, Western states spend roughly $100 million per year on fire protection (US Dept. of Com. 1986).

To facilitate movement of livestock across highways, aqueducts, large pipelines, etc., special livestock underpasses, overpasses, and crossings are designed and constructed by county, state, and federal agencies. Three highway underpasses are shown above; thousands run under roadways throughout the West, and cost the public *tens of millions* of dollars. Some double as drainages; in these cases livestock concentrations exacerbate roadway erosion. Most are fenced, so as to funnel livestock through, and gated; many have corrals built on; and all become yet another type of sacrifice area. Look for them.

BLM says ranchers cannot drive stock trucks on the plateau under current road conditions. Thus, cattle must be trailed up the road some dozen miles. This, according to the BLM, means the bulls arrive with tired, sore feet, and that they can't perform their primary function. Therefore, the roads must be improved.

--Randy Morris, Chairman, Committee for Idaho's High Desert

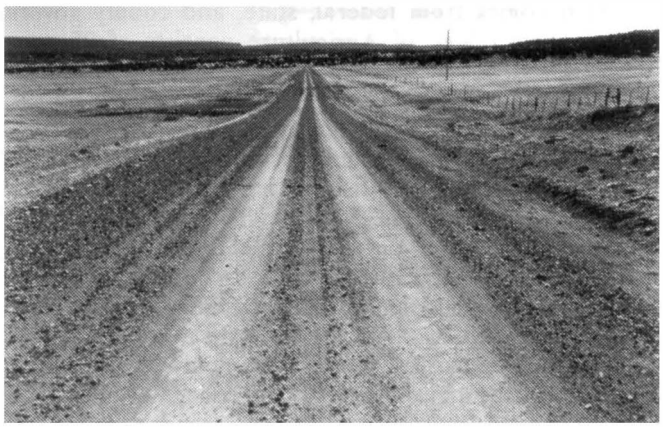
Western county road building and maintenance budgets range from $1 million (sparsely populated Carbon County, Wyoming) to $15 million (Pima County, Arizona) to $30 million (San Bernardino County, California -- the nation's largest county). There are 3041 counties in the US, with a combined road budget of roughly $8 billion, for an average US county road budget of about $2.6 million. There are 407 counties in the West. (US Dept. of Com. 1986) If we multiply the $2.6 million figure by 407, we get a combined Western county road budget of slightly over $1 billion. However, even though county road density is generally higher in the East, Western counties average nearly 3 times the size of those in the East; further, Western road expenses are higher, so we may estimate the combined annual Western county road budget at roughly $2 billion.

What part of this $2 billion is spent on public lands ranching roads no one can say because accountants make no such distinctions. Nevertheless, consider that: (1) 41% of the West is grazed government land; (2) more roads -- more than half a million miles -- serve ranching than anything else (3) many roads traversing other public and private land provide ranching access to public land (most logging roads are not county-maintained and should therefore not be factored); and (4) many Western states and counties have special programs specifically designed to improve rural roads for ranching. It seems reasonable then to assume that perhaps **$200 million** annually of this $2 billion road budget is spent on public lands ranching.

Most livestock and cattle guard warning signs are sponsored by counties and states -- an annual million-dollar-plus expenditure.

The 11 Western state governments spend roughly $7 billion annually on road building and maintenance. Only a small percentage of state roads function primarily as public lands ranching roads, but tens of thousands of miles of state highways stretch across public grazing land. Most are fenced to exclude livestock and have numerous related developments such as cattle guards, livestock underpasses, and signs. Thus do Western state highway departments also spend millions of dollars annually on public lands ranching.

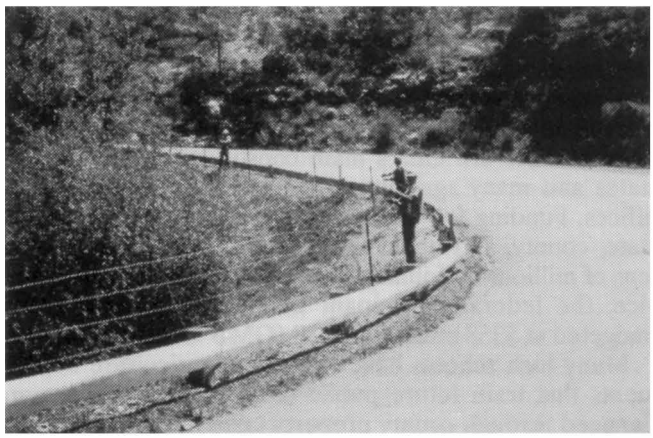
The US government spends billions on federal highways and freeways in the West, tens of thousands of miles of which cross public ranching land. Likewise, millions of federal dollars annually are spent on ranching-related developments. For example, some of the cut-and-fill portions of roadways on hillsides must be constructed wider than they otherwise would be to allow for livestock and rancher access, fencing, and cattleguards -- a significant cumulative expenditure. Just one freeway livestock underpass may cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Some public ranches even have their own freeway offramps.



This gravel ranching road on BLM land in New Mexico is elevated, drained with ditches and culverts, reflector-marked, signed, and fenced on one side -- all at public expense.

Blading a ranching road on BLM land.

Roadside, BLM range, New Mexico. Waste concrete has been dumped along a culvert (itself quite large to accommodate runoff from damaged watersheds) to help prevent road erosion.



County workers installing a barbed wire fence to keep cattle off the roadway in Prescott National Forest, Arizona. Roadside fences alone cost millions of dollars annually.

Government maintains this paved road chiefly for use by just 1 public lands rancher.

A *double* cattle guard, apparently to make *doubly* sure no cattle get misplaced. Cattle guards in public roads soak the public for millions of dollars.

Research by Dr. Denzel Ferguson shows that when a cow pie hits hot asphalt, "the cow pie dries, curls up at the edges, and pulls up huge hunks of pavement with it." The process appears responsible for many of the potholes on roads around the rural West, where cattle often wander freely across paved roadways. *(Denzel Ferguson)*

Cooperative Extension Service (CES) offices are found in the courthouse of almost every county in the West. They are staffed with county agricultural agents (or farm advisors), who are assisted by specialists in various fields. CES offers a variety of services, mostly for agriculture, including referral, consultation, technical assistance, testing, training, and information in the form of publications, videotapes, news announcements, and workshops. In many rural counties, ranchers are CES's main constituents. The Western states and many agricultural colleges also maintain CES offices. Funding for CES is a confused mosaic of federal, state, county, and university monies, in the West totaling tens of millions of dollars annually. USDA's Extension Service, the federal participant in the CES program, was budgeted at $358 million in 1988 (OMB 1989).

Many high schools have vocational agriculture departments that train future public lands ranchers. These are financed through county property taxes and other government funds.

Future Farmers of America (FFA) is the youth agricultural program of the state boards of education. Almost every Western high school agriculture program has an FFA chapter, and there are college offices, state district offices, and a national office. FFA's total annual budget is in the millions, though only a small percentage of this comes from government sources. Similarly, the 4-H is a youth agricultural program of the Colleges of Agriculture at every land grant college in the country, implemented in every Western county by agricultural college faculty and/or the county CES. The 4-H organization, funded through land grant colleges, CES, SCS, and other public and private sources, spends millions of dollars training future farmers and ranchers, some of them for public lands ranching.

Every Western state university has a college of agriculture, each with a range department. They educate future ranchers, conduct range studies, provide technical assistance, produce literature, sponsor range seminars, etc. Some unknown and disproportionate amount of the federal government's annual $800 million in grants for agricultural research and development benefits public lands ranching. Scoring these grants is big business to the range staff at many of these (and other) schools.

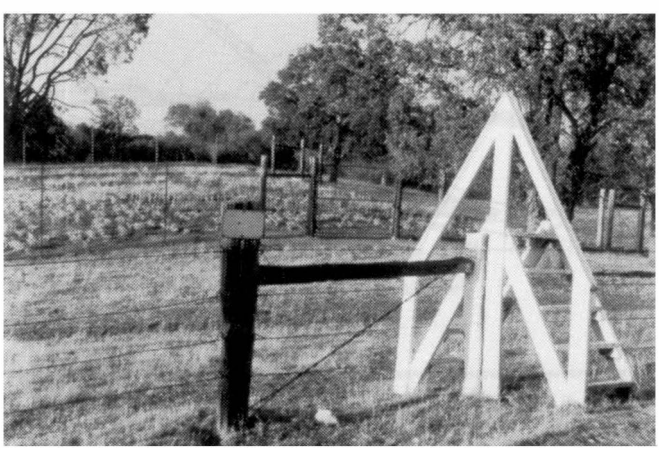
The College of Agriculture at the University of Arizona in Tucson is typical as Western state agricultural colleges go. It has a total annual budget of nearly $50 million, 80%- 90% of which comes from federal, state, and county governments. The College of Agriculture consists of 25 or so divisions, one of which is the School of Natural Resources, which administers the Range Department -- the department most devoted to public lands ranching. Many of the other divisions also are significantly involved with public lands ranching, especially Animal Sciences, Soil and Water Science, the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Range Experimental Station. Because public ranching is so politically significant and encompasses so large an area, it receives a disproportionately large amount of attention at Western agricultural colleges. Separate accounting is not kept, but we may surmise that of the roughly $40-$45 million in government monies spent by this college of agriculture yearly, at least $1 million goes to public lands ranching.

Thus, the tax money lost to public lands ranching at 11 Western state agricultural colleges is probably at least $11 million annually. This would not include indirect costs, such as general administration and buildings. Nor does it include agricultural programs at scores of other Western colleges and universities. There are other hidden subsidies. For example, at the request of the Agricultural Commissioner of Los Angeles, the Department of *Psychology* at California State College, San Bernardino, conducted predator aversion experiments in the Mojave Desert to placate complaining sheep ranchers (Defenders of Wildlife 1982). Arizona State University currently is conducting a study on how elk and cattle affect each other -- a study co-funded by the government, wildlife groups, and the ranchers who hope to gather evidence to use against the state's elk population.

Scattered here and there on Western public land are ranching experimental ranges, areas, and stations. Some are tens of thousands of acres in size (for example, Santa Rita Experimental Range south of Tucson, Arizona, encompasses some 50,000 acres). Usually they are permanently financed with federal, state, and/or county monies, often involving agricultural colleges. For example, the state agricultural experimental station in Wyoming was funded with $4,874,380 in state taxes in 1980-81. Methods of grazing, fencing, vegetation manipulation, seeding, fertilizing, predator "control," etc. are tested for the ranching industry.

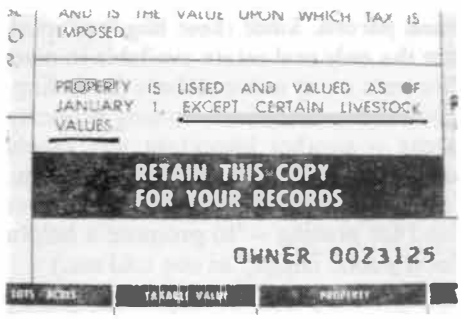
Summers and her husband, Charles, own 20 acres nearly surrounded by the Marley property. The couple paid $873 in property taxes last year on their parcel. In contrast, Marley and his daughter own about 380 times more land but paid only $660 in taxes on it last year. Why the disparity? The Marley land is classified by the county assessor as grazing ranchland. Had it been classified as rural vacant land, like the Summerses' parcel, Marley and his daughter would be assessed with a property tax bill of about $744,000 a year, county officials said.

--8-14-88 *Arizona Republic*



Taxes and private grants support dozens of range-related research stations conducting hundreds of projects.

State and county laws give ranchers huge property tax breaks on private holdings, base properties and improvements. Commonly a public lands rancher will pay $40 or $50 a year on his 80-acre property, home and improvements (paying no taxes, of course, on "his" public lands grazing allotment), whereas a non-rancher owning the same private property would pay $2000 or more. A rancher owning and grazing thousands of rural acres might pay a few hundred dollars property tax, while a non-rancher would pay *hundreds of thousands* on the same land. For example, the average assessed value for Wyoming's 23 million acres of private grazing land was $3.71/acre in 1980, while farm land was assessed at almost $100/acre and non-agricultural land at many times more than that.



Because it ran cattle, the corporate owner of a 321,000-acre ranch (recently purchased by The Nature Conservancy) encompassing nearly the entire Animas Mountain range in southwest New Mexico paid only $8000 in property taxes. A non-rancher would have paid many, many times this amount on the appraised $16.5 million property. (2-7-88 *Albuquerque Journal*)

Why the difference? Ostensibly, according to most ancient state and county tax laws, it is because ranching is a costly business that provides food to consumers, or something like that. Yet, other costly businesses that provide much more necessary goods and services are not subsidized with dirt-cheap property taxes.

You know these people [land speculators] *are in the process of submitting development plans, but they throw out a few cows and shift the tax burden to everyone else.*

--Pima County, Arizona, attorney

Similarly, "rent-a-cow" schemes are gaining popularity with land speculators around the West. Though their intent to eventually sell or develop the land is obvious, they simply rent or buy a few cows to give the appearance of a livestock operation. Their land then qualifies as grazing land, rather than rural vacant land, and they pay practically nothing for property taxes.

The *Arizona Republic*, in a 1984 article, notes that a land investment firm, Nationwide Resources Corporation, paid $4.5 million for undeveloped real estate in Pima County, Arizona. In 1987 the firm reduced its property tax from $92,000 to $150 simply by renting a few cows and qualifying for the county ranchland property tax exemption! In a 1985 lawsuit by the firm, the county court took away the county assessor's authority to determine whether the use of livestock is a ploy to keep property taxes low. In another case, according to the Pima County Assessor, the owner of 640 acres worth over $3 million paid less than $100 in property taxes in 1985 because of a few cattle on the land. Without the cows the owner would have been charged about $53,000.

This taxpayer ripoff is common throughout the West. **Western county governments are being bilked of hundreds of millions of property tax dollars annually because of ranchland exemption laws.** The public, as usual, makes up the foregone revenue.

As a result of these unfair laws, few owners of undeveloped acreage can afford *not* to graze their vacant property. In other words, *livestock grazing is practically mandated on all private rural lands of appreciable size*. Accordingly, only ranchers, land speculators, and the wealthy (often one and the same) can afford to own medium to large rural parcels. Since these larger properties and ranchlands are the only real estate available in many rural locales, this prevents many non-ranchers (including people who would protect the land) from owning property and living in rural areas -- another important way ranchers maintain rural dominance. (Additionally, aside from tax reasons, most large rural land owners feel strong pressure to lease their land for grazing -- "to promote a helpful and co-operative local public image," as one told me.)

These tax scams have disastrous results on the land, and the livestock. As speculators take advantage of unjust property tax exemptions, previously ungrazed land is stocked with cattle. As county assessors and government attorneys (both at government expense) threaten and battle with rent-a-cow land speculators to force them to pay rightfully due taxes, speculators expand livestock operations to make them appear valid under existing tax exemption laws -- if need be even to the point of carrying out full-blown livestock operations. To them it is worth the cost to avoid paying taxes. Livestock may suffer due to ill-conceived operations and/or because the land is not suitable for livestock grazing. For example, on private land north of Tucson cattle currently are eating cholla cactus to survive because the land owners want to qualify for a property tax break.

If capital gains taxes on land had to be paid at the time of sale, destructive ranchland exemptions could be eliminated. Wealthy ranchers and speculators will not allow this reform, however.

In a similar scam, special agricultural exemptions allow ranchers or alleged "ranchers" to develop property as ranchland that otherwise would be protected by various city, county, and state legalities. The crafty rancher may use these exemptions to develop private property (or in some cases even a grazing allotment) to enhance its financial potential for ranching and/or for other alleged purposes. Thus, Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot, by claiming to be developing land for goat grazing, may legally clear trees from 200 acres (in preparation for building hotels and condos); if he had not claimed the ranching exemption, he would have had to submit to the city of Austin for approval (and possible denial, as the land is vital habitat of the Endangered golden-checked warbler) of the clearing.

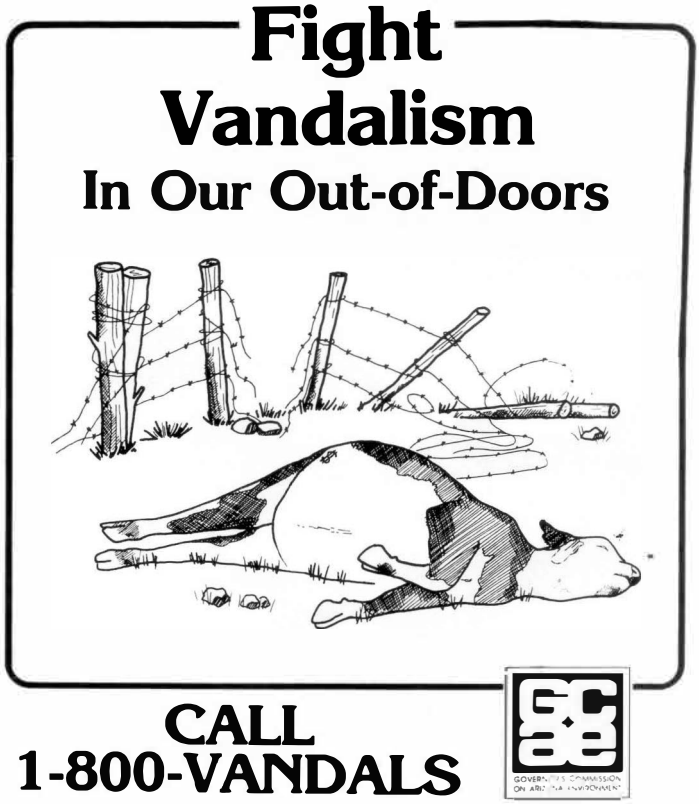
> *It will be another 9 years before this place* [private ranch] *comes back to me and after that time I am going to make sure that another damn cow never walks on this land.*
>
> --Mary Sayrs, Moro, Oregon, personal correspondence

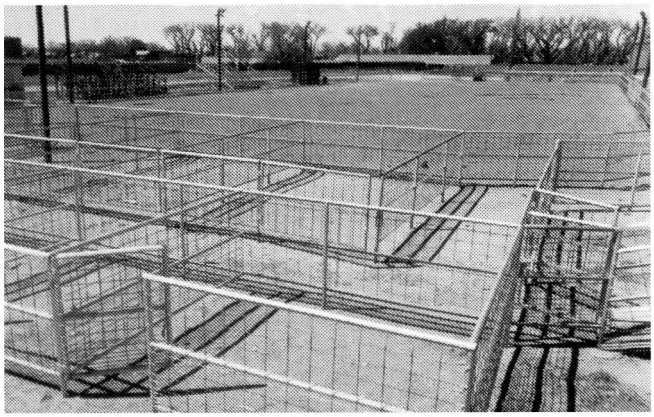
Western counties spend more than $1 billion annually on natural resource, parks, and recreation programs. Some of this cost is necessary because their resources have been degraded by ranching.

Some city properties, parks, and structural improvements have likewise been damaged. Hundreds of Western communities have spent millions of dollars fencing livestock away from domestic water sources, importing water, or pumping groundwater to counterbalance that lost to livestock grazing.

Postal service, police and fire protection, ambulance service, health services, school busing, and more all are substantially more expensive for the taxpayer to provide to remote, widely dispersed public lands ranchers than to perhaps any other group in the West. If the public rancher had to pay taxes on these services proportional to how much is spent on him, other taxpayers would save millions of dollars annually.

In late 1983 a workshop was held in Tucson, largely in response to demands by influential Arizona stockmen. They wanted something done about growing vandalism and "ecotage" of their ranching developments. A committee was formed, and, under the auspices of the Commission on the Arizona Environment, a program was implemented. Using tax-based monies and private, tax-deductable contributions from the same stockmen and other wealthy, commercial interests, the Commission created pro-ranching literature, signs, advertisements, commercials, and a toll-free, 24-hour-staffed 1-800-VANDALS informant hotline. A similar hotline was recently established at the request of Nevadan graziers -- 1-800-SABOTAGE.





A typical small town rodeo grounds -- one of hundreds around the West partially sponsored by taxes. Willard, New Mexico.

The taxpayer sponsors public lands ranching in scores of other obscure ways:

- Land buyouts and swaps between government agencies and public lands ranchers commonly favor ranchers over the public.
- State and county fairs receive government funds to finance projects that benefit public lands ranchers.
- The Sonoran overgrazing/temperature study mentioned earlier was financed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for $1 million.
- In Wyoming, gas tax rebates to ranchers and farmers totaled $2,503,810 in 1980-81.
- Taxpayers sponsor ranching-related conferences, hosted by cities and government agencies.
- The Arizona State Legislature recently authorized a special Range Research Task Force to evaluate range management practices and assist state ranchers. A special investigative unit administered by the Arizona State Livestock Board and a special law enforcement task force composed of members of various government agencies was assigned to pursue and arrest cattle rustlers. (Criminal police have developed a special method of identifying fingerprints on cow horns.)
- Julie Rechtin, an employee at Lava Beds National Monument in northeast California, writes that in 1987 Modoc National Forest came out with its long-range forest plan. The plan considered small cuts in livestock numbers in some of the most heavily grazed areas of the forest. Worried, the Modoc Cattlemen's Association obtained $2500 *from the Modoc County Supervisor's office* as part of $5000 to hire Resource Concepts, a Carson City consultant firm, to review the plan and help formulate opposition strategy.
- Similarly in New Mexico, the Luna County Commission recently voted to spend $20,000 in taxes over the next 10 years to pay a Wyoming legal firm to help county public land users (mostly ranchers) privatize management and developments on public land, as well as the land itself. As part of the "Arizona-New Mexico Coalition of Counties," a growing number of Southwest counties -- 11 at latest count -- have done likewise. Little-known arrangements such as these are common around the rural West.
- Also similarly, a large percentage of rural Western community chambers of commerce actively promote public lands ranching. They sponsor conferences, publish and distribute promotional literature, disseminate policy statements, present awards, woo the media, and generally do whatever they can to help local stockmen. Most chambers are funded primarily by community and/or county taxes.
- Western ranchers often are exempt from: planning and zoning restrictions, building regulations, sight requirements, health regulations, animal control laws, wetlands protection laws, minimum wage laws, alien labor laws, child labor laws, OSHA requirements, provisions of the Worker's Compensation Act, Unemployment Compensations Act requirements, wage reporting requirements, motor vehicle compensatory fees, most fuels tax, ad valorem taxation on livestock, taxation on stock as personal property, sales and use taxes on livestock and some ranching supplies (including feed), numerous credit laws, public lands closures and use restrictions, county special use permits, and almost anything else that would threaten them financially.

Probably no other group in the West receives as much special treatment as do ranchers, in so many obscure ways. In Western states, stockmen are exempt from: numerous vehicular legal requirements, including safety equipment, title, registration, and licensing (even for public roadways); fire and building codes; electrical licensing requirements; normal road width restrictions for stock driveways; licensing requirements for fairs and exhibitions for agricultural purposes; merchant licensing requirements for selling agricultural products; and much more. In trailing livestock, ranchers can legally drive their herds down the middle of roadways, even through small communities. Aside from highway department employees and law enforcement officers, ranchers are the only people permanently authorized to pull onto freeway rights-of-way and enter gates (many of which are installed specifically for their use). Only stockmen are allowed to regularly occupy single locations on BLM or FS land for more than 2 weeks at a time. And so on. Ranchers are even exempt from military draft in time of war!

We may safely conclude that without public lands ranching, each year taxpayers would save *at least $1 billion -- roughly twice the annual livestock value of public lands ranching! In sum, public lands ranching is a massive government give-away to a tiny, pampered minority. It makes no economic nor food production sense.**

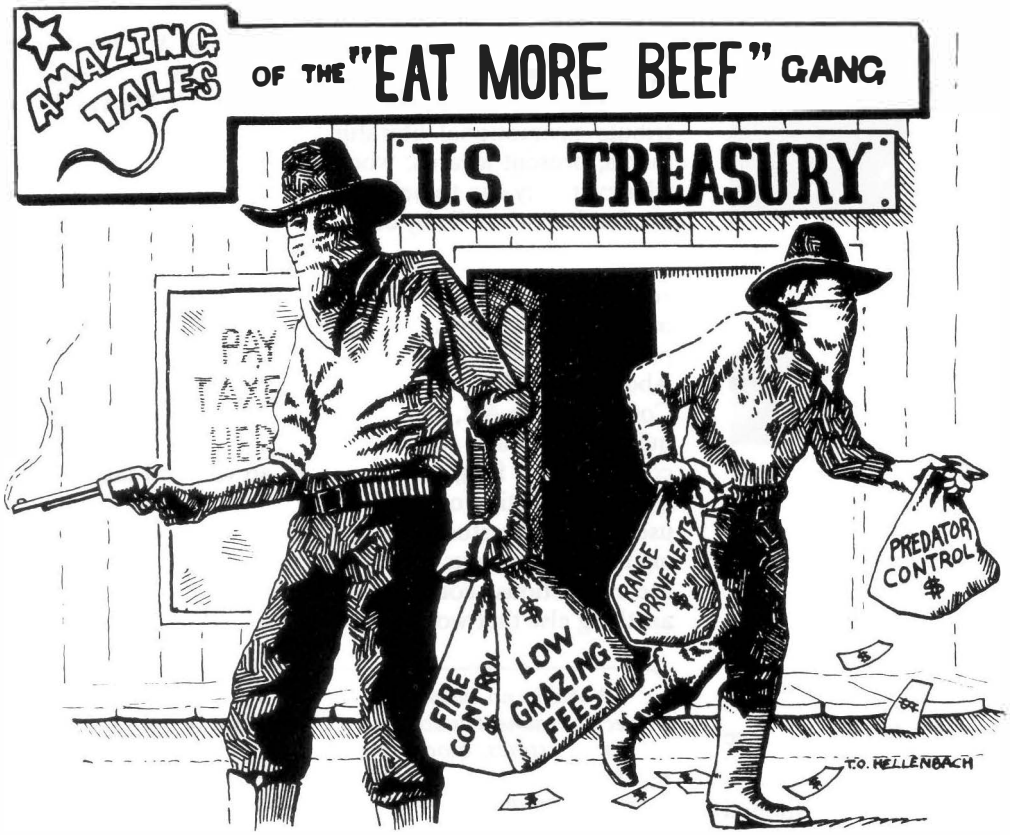
*Note: Soon after completing this chapter, I was informed by a prominent US Geological Survey research ecologist that a well-documented study by a staffer at US Forest Service regional headquarters in Albuquerque likewise found that roughly $1 billion in taxes is spent on public lands ranching annually. The forester's superiors, I was told, forbid release of the document.

As far as the term "welfare ranching" goes, there is no such thing. Ranchers do not receive any subsidies or aid of any kind from any government agency.

--Arizona public lands "rancher's wife" Beth Hawkes, 2-3-90 *Arizona Daily Star*

They lie.

--Mike Roselle, progressive activist



(T.O. Hellenbach)

Other Losses

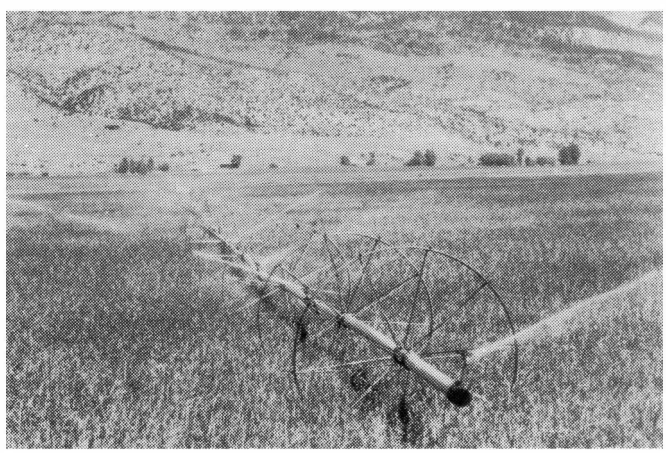
The closer look in the previous section reveals that the various levels of government spend not merely a few million dollars but at least **$1 billion** each year due to public lands ranching -- a subsidy of about $400 per cow year. This is a considerable public burden, yet *private* expenditures on, or because of, public lands ranching probably exceed $1 billion annually. And even this dollar loss seems to pale compared to the other burdens the public is knowingly or unknowingly forced to endure, including an incalculable loss in the quality of life and natural surroundings. What follows is a loosely organized discussion of these impacts.

Perhaps the best place to start is with ranching itself. Harold Dregne, Professor of Soil Science at Texas Tech University, roughly estimates the value of potential forage lost due to past and present overgrazing to be approximately $200 million per year (Chaney 1990). This suggests that if today's grazing industry was dropped into the pre-livestock West (minus the native competitors) it would produce $200 million/year more in today's dollars than it currently does. This assumes, of course, that this level of grazing can somehow be maintained indefinitely; there is no real evidence that anything approaching this level can be achieved without overgrazing or maintained without mass subsidization. The whole proposition is, in the end, self-defeating. Generally, the more grazing, the less production per unit area of range; the less grazing, the more production per unit area of range.

> *Growing an ear of corn takes about 26 gallons of water; a pound of beef requires close to 25,000 gallons of water.*
> *--Earth Island Journal* (Spring 1991)

As detailed earlier, ranching has significantly decreased water production throughout most of the West by damaging watersheds, riparian areas, and water courses. Also, livestock and livestock feed producers account for 70% of all water consumed in the West, mostly for irrigation (Hur 1985a). In most rural Western counties, stockmen utilize more water than all other users combined.

These factors leave less water for municipal, recreational, industrial, and navigational uses and make remaining water more difficult and expensive for other users to procure. As an extreme example, to "save water" some Phoenix restaurants require customers to ask for a glass of drinking water; meanwhile nearby stockmen pour millions of gallons on pastures! Farmers, rural communities, and cities -- usually downstream from public lands ranching -- must take water from what surface flow remains, pump it from the ground, or import it from without. Because ranching has so heavily depleted streamflow, farmers along many Western waterways must build holding dams or pump groundwater, thereby often doubling or tripling irrigation costs.



Most of the water diverted from streams in the West is used to grow hay and crops for livestock, and most Western water development is government-subsidized. *(George Wuerthner)*

Rather than direct their efforts toward banning livestock from watersheds, waterless victims commonly squabble amongst themselves and build more water developments. Under the dominant ranching reality, simply removing livestock is rarely considered a viable option.

A growing number of individuals and organizations contribute labor and money to watershed improvement projects on both public and private lands.
--Livestock Grazing on Western Riparian Areas (Chaney 1990)

Without public lands ranching, *billions* of dollars worth of watershed protection and restoration projects, dams, weirs, reservoirs, dikes, levees, canals, wells, pumping stations, pipelines, and other water developments would be unnecessary. Many of these are privately funded developments on private land.

For example, many rural residents have been forced to drill wells because ranching has fouled or dried up creeks and springs. Likewise, because ranching has lowered water tables, many more wells must be drilled especially deep to reach good water. Professional well-drilling currently costs about $15-$20 per foot; water tables in many areas have fallen a score or more feet due to ranching. As hundreds of thousands of rural residents have had to drill wells in affected areas, this loss alone probably totals tens of millions of dollars.

By damaging watersheds and reducing streamflow, public lands ranching has significantly reduced hydroelectric power potential and has increased production expenses. Increasingly numerous and expensive smaller projects have been built to meet power demand.

More than 80% of electricity production in the Northwest is hydroelectric. Economists calculate that the region loses 17 billion kilowatt hours -- more than 10% -- of its electricity per year to irrigation use by stockmen. (Hur 1985a) Probably an even greater yet inestimable amount is never realized because overgrazing has reduced streamflow in the first place.

Economist Robin Hur further estimates that if the livestock industry as a whole had to pay all expenses for the water it uses, common hamburger meat would cost $35 per pound (Hur 1985a). This cost is borne indirectly by the taxpayer, the consumer, and the environment.

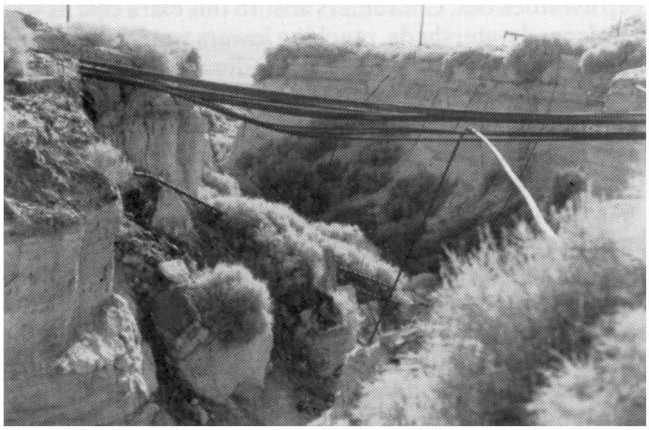
By depleting Western community water supplies, public lands ranching raises production and storage costs -- and therefore water prices -- to consumers. Most communities drawing drinking water from surface waters fence their watersheds or water sources to keep livestock out. Consumers absorb this extra cost as well. In unfenced watersheds, ranching lowers water quality with chemical, mineral, biological, and sediment pollution. Once again, taxpayers and consumers absorb the extra cost for water treatment, not to mention having to drink the lesser-quality water. Even household plumbing systems can be affected by buildup from increased mineralization.

As the public has shelled out billions of tax dollars for flood damage caused by public lands ranching, so has it spent billions of private dollars. Overgrazing and range developments cause untold devastation to downstream landowners, residents, and businesspeople, including destruction of buildings, improvements, vehicles, gardens, and farms; cutting, gullying, and eroding the land; polluting wells; and killing farm animals and pets. In 1963 annual flood damages due to excessive runoff from BLM land alone were estimated at more than $14 million (Sprague 1974); current damage costs probably are several times higher. Over the years thousands of people have been left homeless, and scores have lost their lives.

By far most Western water comes from public land, and ranching is the major reason for increased flooding from these lands. On any given year damages from floodwaters racing off Western public land total in the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. Though probably most flood damages are a consequence of unwise development in floodplains and drainages, much damage would not occur without ranching damaging the land and increasing the incidence, size, and ferocity of floods.

Since the 1800s, floodwaters have consumed hundreds of thousands of acres of bottomland -- the most fertile, productive farmland in the West. Since most is private, this represents a loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in real estate values. However, the loss is far greater if cumulative, long-term loss in productivity to humans and Nature is considered.

Fill excavated from this hill is used to replace bottomland washed away by increased flooding. The entire scene exhibits serious overgrazing.

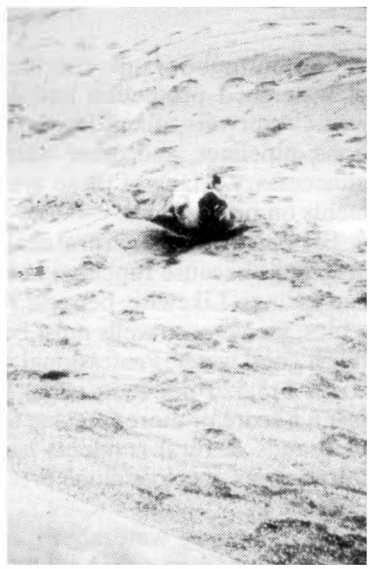


Fifty years ago these oil field pipes in California were underground. Severe downcutting, caused mostly by an overgrazed watershed, has left them useless.

Sediment produced from overgrazed watersheds can drastically reduce the capacity and economic life of irrigation, water supply, flood control, and hydroelectric reservoirs.
--Livestock Grazing on Western Riparian Areas (Chaney 1990)

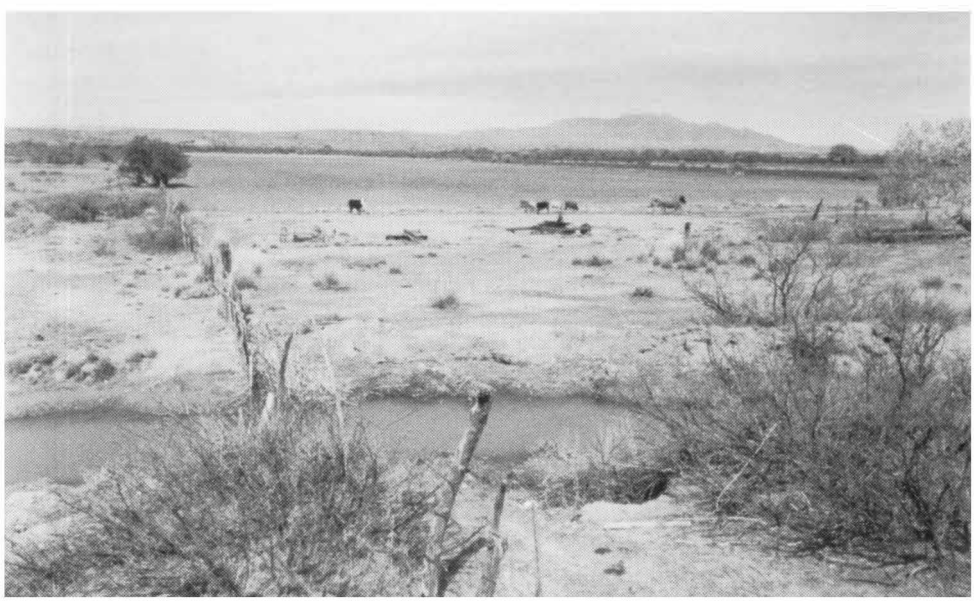
Damage caused by sediment deposits in the United States is estimated at $500 million annually (Ferguson 1983). Considering that (1) much of this sediment damage occurs in the West, where there are countless reservoirs, irrigation projects, and other developments, (2) public range in the West accounts for about 10% of total US sediment load (USDA, SCS 1980), and (3) ranching is the major cause of soil erosion on public rangeland, we can safely conclude that public lands ranching is responsible for at least $10 million in sediment damages annually.

Roughly 75% of ranching-eroded sediments eventually pour into Western waterways, lakes, and reservoirs, thus reducing their useful lifetimes and harming agriculture, hydroelectric production, fisheries, and water-based recreation. For example, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality reports that ranching-caused sedimentation in the Salt River watershed "will gradually eliminate much of the current reservoir capacity which provides a dependable water supply to the Phoenix metropolitan area." Sediments in floodwaters likewise bury culverts, drainage ditches, ponds, roads, crops, and anything else in the way. Sediments from Western public land are carried into harbors and bays as far away as the Mississippi River delta.



This cow became trapped in a sediment-filled canal and died. Curiously, it contributed to its own demise by helping overgraze the range and unleash the deadly sediments. *(Howard Wilshire)*

Irrigation canals are a common recipient of this increased sedimentation, in addition to suffering trampling by cattle. Loss of bottomland leaves these canals without a medium in which to flow. Expanding cutbanks leave them breached and useless. Lowered waterway beds and decreased streamflows often mean inadequate elevation differences and water momentum for gravity flow irrigation, necessitating pumping or importation. To counter all this, Western water users spend millions of dollars on rerouting, dredging, bank stabilization, check dams, flumes, culverts, floodgates, pipelines, cut and fill, channelization, and fences to keep livestock out.



A common Western scene: The irrigation canal in the foreground has been extensively damaged by cattle. The open flat in the background is part of the millions of acres of Western riparian bottomland that have been converted to sterile livestock pasture. Rio Grande Valley, central New Mexico.

It is conservatively estimated that human activities cause the loss of 500 million tons of topsoil from public land each year, most of it due to ranching (Akers 1983). If we assume an annual topsoil loss caused by public lands ranching of only 200 million tons, and calculate the value of topsoil at only 50 cents per ton, this alone adds up to $100 million annually -- about 5 times what the BLM and Forest Service grossed from grazing fees in 1987. If multiplied by more than a hundred years of ranching, it totals $10 billion.

But can you put a price on soil? Without it most terrestrial life ceases, streamflows diminish . . . its loss is incalculable.

An unknown experiment with various conifers has no chance of success without protective fencing. Note the prolific roadside vegetation.

As mentioned previously, ranching has depleted many indigenous Western plants once important as sources of materials for basketry, clothing, ornamental products, and medicine. As well it has diminished hundreds of plant foods, such as grain amaranth; acorns; watercress; miner's lettuce; ground beans; Indian ricegrass and potatoes; wild plums, celery, turnips, and cucumbers. (Some 2500 of the roughly 14,000 plant species in the 11 Western states may be edible [Dimick 1990].) It has reduced plant and seed sources for experimental, agricultural, reclamation, and landscaping purposes. Depleted herbage has also left riding and pack stock less to eat.

Ranching has reduced the amount of firewood available on most of the Western range. Though livestock grazing has caused an increase in brush and trees in some areas, most of this is scraggly growth and thus inferior as firewood. Trees and large bushes have been depleted by: overgrazing and overbrowsing (which lowers water tables, erodes soil, stunts woody plants, kills young plants, etc.); livestock physically breaking apart bushes and breaking off and trampling lower branches of trees; firewood cutting by ranchers; wood-consuming range "improvements" such as fences and corrals; and range developments such as forest thinning, brush eradication and seeding.

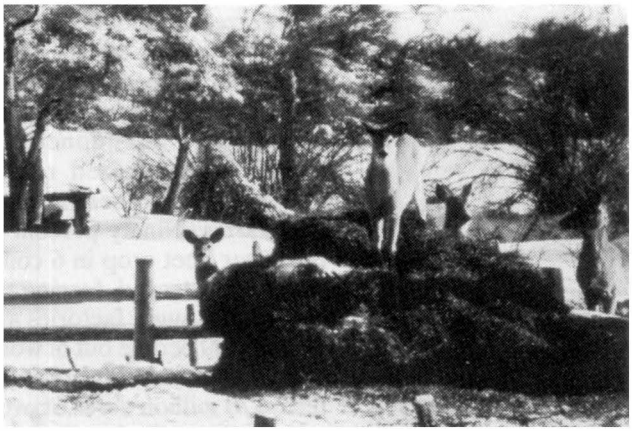
Because of these influences, ranching has also caused a drastic reduction of shade in many areas, especially along waterways -- and most so in areas with the least shade in the first place. Anyone who does much hiking in the open West knows the value of this loss.

When ranges are overgrazed and jackrabbit populations explode, jackrabbits sometimes abandon the livestock wastelands and invade nearby croplands *en masse*. Similarly, hungry grasshoppers, often in the form of winged locusts, and other ranching-induced pests sometimes invade ungrazed range, residential property, gardens, and farms. For example, in 1934 exotic weeds covered millions of acres of overgrazed Idaho rangelands and served as a breeding ground for the beet leafhopper. It being a drought year, the leafhoppers abandoned the parched, overgrazed ranges and moved onto nearby sugar beet farms. Ninety percent of the sugar beet crop in 6 counties was destroyed, forcing the closure of 2 sugar factories and putting 500 people out of work. In 1938-39 Mormon crickets infested 20 million acres of overgrazed Great Basin range and destroyed an estimated 75% of the grain and vegetable crops in the immediate area. Though seldom this extensive, these types of damages from ranching-caused pest infestations are regular occurrences in the West and Midwest.

Plant "invaders" spread across overgrazed Western ranges and infest private fields and pastures, choking out crops and pasturage. They overrun orchards, yards, gardens, and real estate. They harm farm animals, pets, and people. Scientists believe the overgrazing-induced invader yellow star thistle poisons hundreds of Western horses each year and harms thousands of others.

Even public lands ranching's impact on the honey bee (of which 1 species is native to the West) represents a significant economic loss. Over the years, Western beekeepers have failed to realize tens of millions of dollars of income due to the continual overgrazing that reduces wild flowers in most areas and due to range developments, especially insecticide spraying. As a result of APHIS grasshopper spraying, much of it on public land, Idaho beekeepers in 1985 lost 20%-30% of the state's commercial bees, worth more than $1.7 million (Morris 1986, USDA, APHIS 1986). An equally significant negative influence is caused by the decline in pollinating insects on Western farms, orchards, and gardens.

(Anonymous)



Livestock-overgrazed ranges induce hungry wildlife to raid private haystacks (above), domestic vegetation (below), farms, and orchards. *(George Robbins Photo, Jackson, WY)*

If the sportsman want anything to shoot at they had better cooperate with the ranchers and get rid of the cyote and the Fox. [sic]
--Emmett Douglas, Bozeman, Montana public lands rancher

Hunters and fishers, especially, have been hurt by ranching. Though they have much latent power to change public lands policy, "sportsmen" are ironically among the least likely to complain about ranching. Much of this stems from social conditioning; our society fancies hunters and anglers as part of the Old West, right in there with ranchers and cowboys. The livestock industry promotes this mostly imaginary camaraderie to gain the support of sportsmen, and then uses them to help eliminate livestock predators, competitors, and pests.

American hunters and fishers spent about $40 billion in 1990. A recent Montana Department of Fish & Wildlife study shows that hunters and anglers spend $226 million yearly in Montana alone. According to USDA, the 1987 value of hunting provided on National Forests is estimated at $420 million, with the value of fishing at $223 million (USDA, FS 1988). BLM hunting and fishing is worth roughly 1/3 as much. According to professional appraisers, the value paid for hunting privileges alone in many areas exceeds the sale price of livestock. Each year, sportsmen spend more than 50 million days hunting and fishing on Western public land.

Cattle and domestic sheep are getting all the gravy, while deer, pronghorns, bighorns, and other wildlife are left to lick the bowl. . . . It is amazing to me that the American people, including the bulk of this nation's livestock industry, allows relatively few grazing permittees to defile public property and destroy fish and wildlife to such a degree.
--Lonnie Williamson, editor, *Outdoor Life* (Williamson 1983)

Meanwhile, the West has lost more than 90% of big "game" and most small "game" animals since the 1800s, more to ranching than to anything else. The "success" of deer recovery efforts has barely kept the Western hunter appeased. Still, hunters kill an estimated 250 million animals in the US each year. In the West a significant portion of these hunters are ranchers, many of whom surreptitiously seek to eliminate animal enemies. In short, ranching is the hunter's greatest competition.

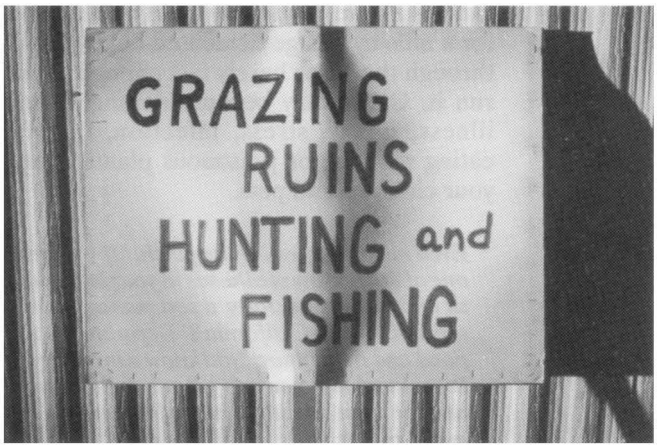
Many private hunting organizations spend time and money mitigating ranching's impact on "game." For example, in recent years the non-profit Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation spent about $200,000 restoring ranching-degraded elk habitat in Central Arizona. While wildlife groups argue among themselves, ranchers control and abuse what matters most -- *the habitat*.

(George Wuerthner)

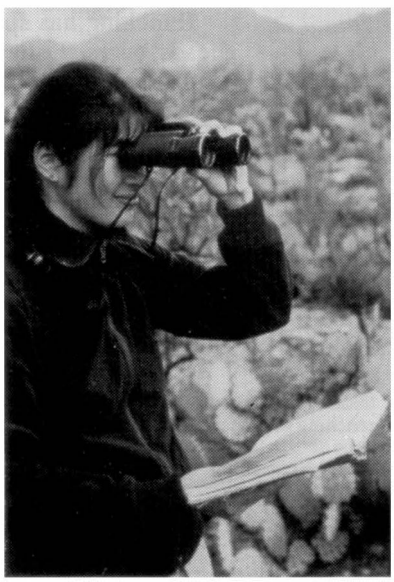
Likewise, ranching is the greatest detractor from fishing in most of the West. At least 20 species of "game" fish inhabit Western waters, and all of them are significantly harmed by ranching. The American Fishery Society in 1983 estimated that the cost of fishery resources lost and opportunities foregone on Forest Service land as a direct result of overgrazing was $112 million annually. This is 10 times more than was taken in from Forest Service grazing fees that year. Without fish hatchery programs and the construction of numerous reservoirs for fishing, Western fishers would be most unhappy. However, in general contrast to hunters, many sport fishers have become strong opponents of public lands ranching after recognizing its devastating effect on trout.

Regardless of one's opinion on hunting or fishing, their diminishment by public lands ranching represents not only a loss of government and private revenue but, to many, a loss of outdoor experience and supplementary food.

It is the first consideration in my own decision of where I will hunt elk and I'm convinced the avoidance of grazed areas is the most important element in the success of these hunts.
--Steve Gallizioli, Arizona Game & Fish Department, *Arizona Wildlife News*



While about 25 million Americans hunt and 60 million fish (and both numbers are dwindling), according to *US News and World Report* (2-5-90), *135 million engage* in some form of non-consumptive wildlife use such as birding or Nature study. Loss of wildlife affects them as surely as it does the consumptive users, as what they derive from the experience is no less important.


(George Wuerthner)

Cattle have a tendency to congregate in level, moist, fertile areas with lush vegetation -- along creeks and rivers, around ponds and lakes, on hill and ridgetops, in meadows and grassy flats. Ranchers also prefer to graze their sheep and goats there. Thus, the most beautiful, productive, and desirable areas for people (and wildlife) are also the most heavily abused by ranching.

M.E. Ensminger writes in **Beef Cattle Science**, "Indeed, cattle and sheep are pleasing to tourists, who come to view the 'Old West.'" Are we that hopelessly indoctrinated!? It is hard to imagine why anyone would want to spend a vacation viewing a barren, fenced landscape pocked with sacrifice areas and scattered with dull-witted, bellowing cows. But for those so inclined, there are more than enough cattle and sheep to view on private rangeland (25% of the West). In fact, this is where 91.5% of all Western livestock will be found (Com. on Govt. Oper. 1986).

"How can this be multiple use?" I asked him, "when no one in his right mind can be in the same area without being eaten alive!?"
--Bill Howard, "The Multiple Abuse of Our Public Lands"

Cattle defecate about 15 times per day, and the average pie is about the size of a dinner plate. Who hasn't stepped in one? Each meadow muffin can produce as many as 1500 flies. Flies are an obvious problem in areas with large livestock populations and to humans sometimes become nearly intolerable -- biting flies and gnats especially.

At least I always thought there was a definite correlation. But then one warm spring day our local grazing permittee set me straight. He assured me that the swarms of flies and gnats that for weeks had made life miserable for our family did not come from the surrounding thousands of putrid piles dropped by his cattle. "No, this is a common misconception," he explained. "In reality, flies are born right up out of the dirt." Perhaps he was right; there was a lot of bare dirt around.

Cows moo. They also bleat, bellow, bawl, grunt, and snort. Only the victim kept awake for hours night after night can appreciate how incessantly loud and grotesque they can be. Some cattle and sheep wear bells, which also clang loudly or tinkle throughout the night. Public lands visitors and nearby residents are commonly subjected to these obnoxious noises. However, vehicular and related noise from ranching roads is perhaps the greatest source of noise pollution on most public land. And nearby ranching base properties provide public lands visitors the pleasures of barking dogs, gun shots, heavy equipment, machinery, water pumps, generators, and other exotic sounds (all of these emanate from public land as well). Only stockmen can regularly create such a ruckus and not be cited for violating noise ordinances.

Smell is perhaps our most primitive sensation. Nature's myriad scents are as much a part of the wild as the sun and wind. The pungent fragrance of broken sage heightens awareness; sweet aroma from pine bark baking in the sun is immensely pleasurable; perfumed whiffs from unknown flowers are exciting. However, probably the most common smell in the West comes from cow shit. Its strong, musty odor drowns out and perverts natural scents. Cows are comparatively filthy animals; often you can smell them before you see or hear them.


Beauty springs from environmental health and integrity.

While ranching has increased unpleasant, unnatural noise pollution, it has also decreased Nature's music. A walk on the ungrazed right side of this fence reveals the wonderful sounds of life -- grass and leaves rustling in the breeze, crickets chirping, flying insects buzzing about, birds singing. Crossing over to the grazed side is eerie -- like stepping into a sound void.

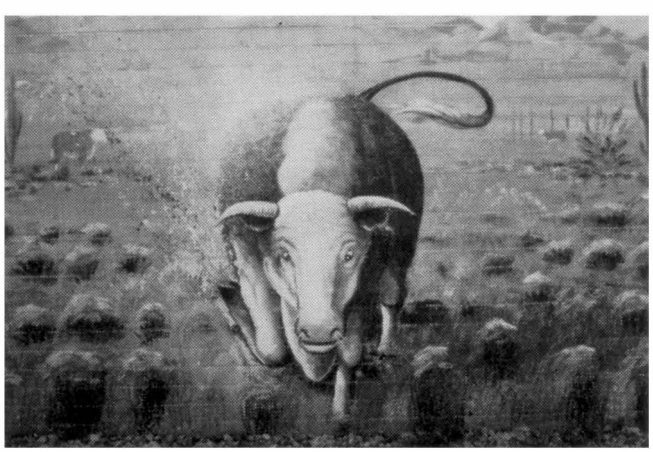
Many visitors to public land come to enjoy its "visual resources." One of the most immediate, though immeasurable, results of overgrazing and range development is just plain ugliness. Trampled vegetation, bare dirt, muddied streambanks, dirty water, cowpies, fences, road scars, and sacrifice areas are more unsightly to most people than is undamaged landscape. Ranching's debasement of "watchable wildlife," such as large mammals and many birds; scenic vegetation such as cottonwoods, perennial flowering plants, saguaros, and tall grasses; verdant, flowing waterways; and unspoiled, undeveloped landscapes, has deprived millions of people of pleasures that should be theirs by right of birth.

While cattle may assault your senses, they may also assault your body directly. Many people have been attacked, some injured, and several killed by raging bulls and deranged cows on public land. For example, many years ago on BLM prairie in eastern New Mexico, in a small car on a very muddy ranching road, my family and I were chased for a mile by a huge demented bull; we spun through the muck barely fast enough to outrun it. Cattle may become deranged from illness, injury, stress, infection, or from eating narcotic or poisonous plants. Watch your children and pets.

> *Even hikers are feeling the pinch. "If you get one of those spiny seedheads in your legs and sit on it," rues Don Joley, a pest management specialist with California's Department of Food and Agriculture, "you know it in a hurry. It's miserable -- you can get pus building up and the spine can stay in there for a month -- and it smarts."*
>
> --Comment on the ranching invader yellow star thistle (Bashin 1990)

Ranching has spread tumbleweeds, goat heads, burrs, thistles, foxtail, catclaw, cactus, and other thorny or stickery plants across tens of millions of acres of public land. A few areas are now so thick with cactus and catclaw that they are virtually inaccessible to humans without protective gear (in some ways this may be a blessing, however). Have you ever come back from a hike to find your socks riddled with foxtails, or from a picnic to find them covering your shirt or blanket? An awn in your dog's eye? Clothing torn on catclaw? Spines in your shins? Stickers in your feet? Goatheads in your shoes?

[Note: I stand accused of "grasping at straws" here and on several other ranching impacts in this chapter. I disagree! Why shouldn't we expect to be able to throw down a blanket or go barefoot or enjoy a day without flies?! Remember, these impacts cause loss, inconvenience, discomfort, or bodily harm to millions of people on millions of acres.]



Loose strands of barbed wire catch and damage vehicles.

Barbed wire fences also degrade peoples' enjoyment of public land in many ways. They impede movement, necessitate the opening and closing of gates, and force the rerouting of many trails and roads, making them longer and thus spreading their destructive impacts.

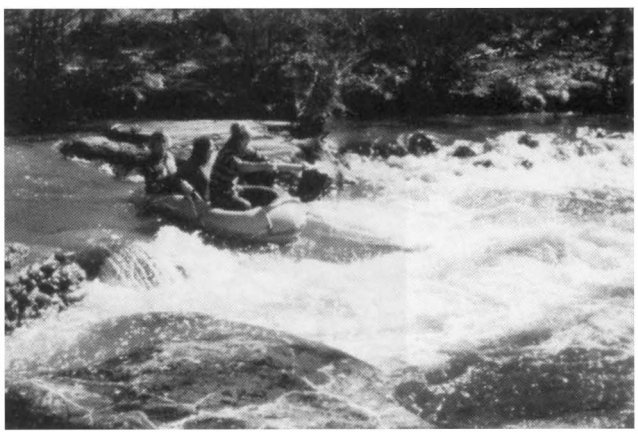
Each July, Olson [an Oregon Fish & Wildlife Service employee] *makes a four-day loop through his district to count and classify sage grouse. Olson is always glad to take at least one other person along -- that way the passenger can get out of the truck to open and close the 52 cattle gates on his route.*
--Oregon Wildlife, 1990

Closing a rancher's gate: a hassle played out a million times a day on public lands around the West. BLM land, Vale District, Oregon. *(George Wuerthner)*

Fences are dangerous. How many people, while climbing over a fence or walking innocently along, have been cut by barbed wire? The number hurt on public land over the years must run literally in to the millions. Many people on horses, bicycles, and motorized vehicles have been seriously injured, and some killed, when they inadvertently collided with fences and gates. Fences are especially dangerous at night, when the strands are poorly seen. (Let me show you my stomach scars.) And who *hasn't* torn clothing on barbed wire?

Government publications warn about river running injuries and damages to watercraft due to fences across public waterways. A friend narrowly escaped serious injury and had his raft gashed. Most river runners have tales of barbed wire to tell. In **Run, River, Run**, Ann Zwinger writes of fences across rivers:

At low water level they may be far enough above the water not to be dangerous, but at high water they can be lethal. . . . Accepted procedure is to hold the paddle up vertically in front of your face, letting the wire slide up the shaft as your head goes under.



Fences across waterways hinder and sometimes injure river runners and damage their watercraft, while overgrazing and withdrawal for pasture irrigation lowers river levels.

Not measurable on the material plane, but important nonetheless, fences destroy the open-space feeling of the land. They are a ubiquitous eyesore.

DON'T FENCE ME IN

by Cole Porter, 1944

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above.
Don't fence me in.
Let me ride through the wide open country I love.
Don't fence me in.

Let me be by myself in the evening breeze,
Listen to the murmer of the cottonwood trees.
Send me off forever, but I ask you please,
Don't fence me in.

Just tum me loose, let me straddle my own saddle
underneath the western skies.
On my cayuse [Indian pony], let me wonder over yonder
till I see the mountains rise.

I want to ride to the ridge where the West commences,
Gaze at the moon till I lose my senses.
Can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences,
Don't fence me in.

Hikers attempt to negotiate barbed wire on public land.

These [recreational] *values have been substantially impaired by defendants' failure to exclude or restrict grazing. In addition, although BLM-administered lands are "public use" lands, the construction of fences on or around them often discourages and even precludes access to these lands, and, along with water developments and unsightly treatments of vegetation growing on these lands, considerably diminish aesthetic enjoyment.*

--from a 1973 lawsuit by the Natural Resources Defense Council

My wife and I encountered at least three BLM "improved" camping spots that day, and each was so cluttered with fresh cow manure that we could only move on. It reminded me of a parallel situation in Nevada where livestockmen attempting to discourage use of public facilities, removed the tops of inlet water pipes into drinking troughs so that if a traveler stopped for a drink of water from the uncontaminated spout he instead would have to drink from the trough with the livestock.

--Edwin G. Dimick, **Livestock Pillage of Our Public Lands**

. . . [An Uncompahgre NF, CO volunteer] *says a day rarely passes that he doesn't receive a complaint from campers who have to chase cattle from their campgrounds or spend restless nights amid cows mooing for their calves.*

--Lisa Jones, "Overgrazing: Feds Move to End It" (Jones 1991a)

Livestock hooves pock-mark millions of acres of meadows, bottomlands, and flatlands across the West, sometimes making travel difficult. Many places are so covered with hoof holes and cow pies that you can't even find a decent spot to lay a sleeping bag. Mosquitoes breed in the rancid, water-filled holes and thrive on the blood of the numerous cattle, and later attack human visitors.

Ranching's degradation of the Western water system has affected a lot more than fishing and farming. No longer can we travel across public land simply drinking from natural water sources. Now we must shorten our trips, lug around water containers, go thirsty, or get sick. Medical bills due to livestock-polluted water alone are high.

Many public swimming areas are fouled and monopolized by ranchers and their livestock. Many others no longer exist. Hot springs have been either dried up or destroyed by overgrazing-caused floods. There is a wonderful hot spring on the San Francisco River in New Mexico's Gila National Forest. Located in a peaceful, beautiful, deep canyon, it is popular with locals and travelers. However, for many years visitors there were met not by the music of canyon wrens and a musty river bank aroma but by the clamor and stench of a gas-powered pump. Water was lifted through a pipe up the canyon wall to cattle on the mesa 500' above. The pump has since been damaged, then removed completely, but similar situations abound in the rural West.

Hike up a desolate desert canyon, gain the rim -- and be greeted by a bawling cow utterly impaled on a yucca. Backpack into a wilderness area and locate a rockface to climb. Struggle to the top and find the glorious amaranthine view you anticipated defiled by the presence of bell-tinkling, bleating, malodorous sheep. That is public lands degradation.

--David L. McWilliams, Rock Springs, Colorado, 3-2-88 *Casper Star-Tribune*

Millions of people enjoy hiking, camping, backpacking, and other "outdoor sports." But most important for many is simply *being* in Nature, *being* natural, *being* free. Nature provides humans infinite lessons on many facets of existence, such as form, function, meaning, time, substance, structure, relations, sense, self, and awareness. These lessons reflect "Nature's wisdom" -- billions of years of natural creation and existence. Moreover, Nature provides a context for life, the proper medium in which to interact with the planet.

When natural systems are altered the underlying principles are perverted, obscured, and rendered invalid. When Nature is no longer natural, the beauty, magic, purpose, and very essence of experience is diminished. Every unnatural environmental influence diminishes Nature's wisdom.

Once we encountered two enthusiastic young Germans traveling through the Southwest in a battered microbus. They were staying in those miserable, expensive KOAs. We got out a map and explained in halting Anglo-German about the wonderful public lands -- Volkslande. "All these cows we see, they are Volkskuhe (people's cows)?" they asked. No, we said, those are private cows and private fences. They were perplexed. "But how can there be private cows on public land?"

--Dennis Brownridge, Mayer, Arizona, personal correspondence

Visitors to Forest Service and BLM land in the US accounted for about 250 million visitor days in 1987, mostly in the West (USDA, FS 1988). Together with other public lands impacted by ranching, the figure would be at least 300 million. Although experience is poorly measured with dollars, if we place an arbitrary value of only $20 per day on each visitor day, we get a total visitor value of $6 billion. Even if only 1 of 100 of these visitors had the quality of their experience degraded by $5 by public lands ranching, it would amount to $15 million.

I remember hiking once on the Concord side of the mountain, when I discovered in a slightly burned area one of the rarest species on the mountain -- the Mt. Diablo Globe Lily, one of seven species of plant life found here but nowhere else on earth. When I returned later in the week, I was shocked to find my discovery, not eaten, but buried beneath a disgusting pile of cow flop.

--Sharon Seidenstein, Berkeley, California

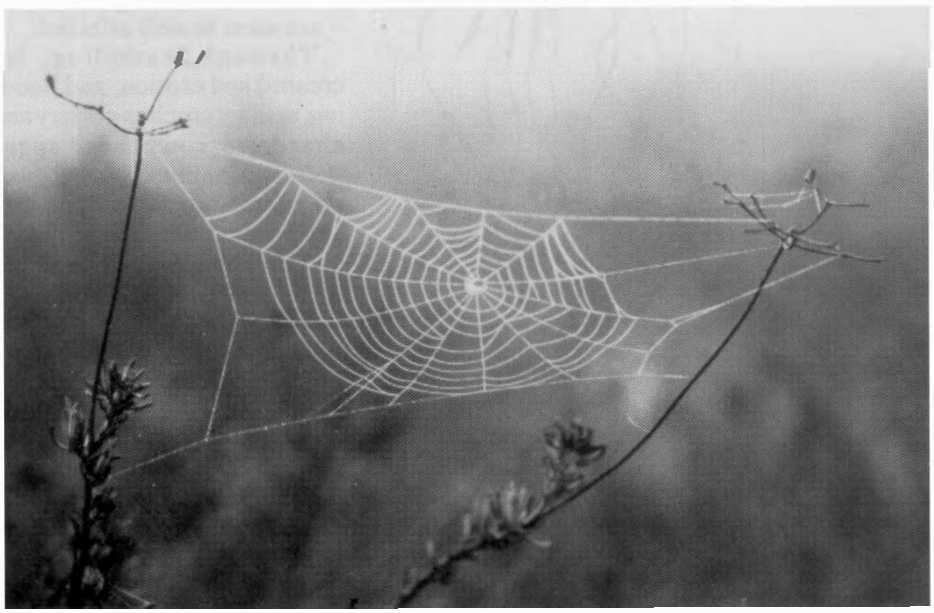
Ranching inherently detracts from Nature, often in ways we do not appreciate or understand. For example, ranching has eliminated more wild flowers from the Western landscape than has any other land use (observe that colorful roadside wild flower displays often end exactly at the right-of-way fence). It desecrates countless fragile, unique, rare, and interesting natural phenomenon. Spider webs, pine cones, mushrooms, ant mounds, ground nests, weather-sculptured pieces of wood, graceful ripples in the sand, wild animal tracks, fragile mineral formations . . . all are ravaged indiscriminately.

Fragile and beautiful natural entities are precluded or destroyed by ranching. This sage skeleton could never have survived intact on a livestock range. Deer step gingerly around it, whereas cattle would have trampled it into scattered debris.

(George Wuerthner)

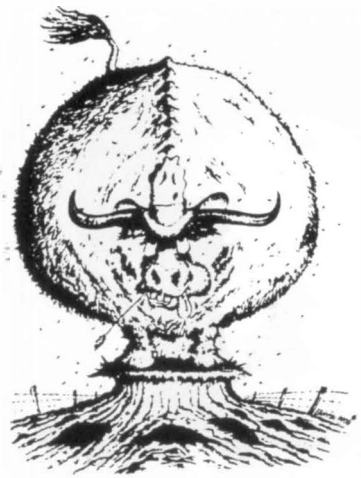
The biological and ecological values of prairie dogs are to some degree measurable or quantifiable. The social and esthetic values defy such measurement. How does one evaluate the experience of a family who spends an unforgettable hour at Wind Caves National Park watching and delighting at the antics of prairie dogs . . . .

--Robert Badaracco, in a conservation publication



How much is a prairie dog worth? An elk? A trout? A vole? A flower? A hot spring? A mushroom? A hollow log? A grassy creek bank? A delicate mineral formation? These things and the experiences humans derive from them are poorly measured with money. Nor can we measure the infinite suffering inflicted on wildlife during the past century, or the worth of billions of wild lives that simply never were.

However, the purpose of this chapter *is*, in part, to place a monetary value on "resources" degraded or lost due to ranching. The impacts detailed above and below show it to be *more than a billion dollars annually*.

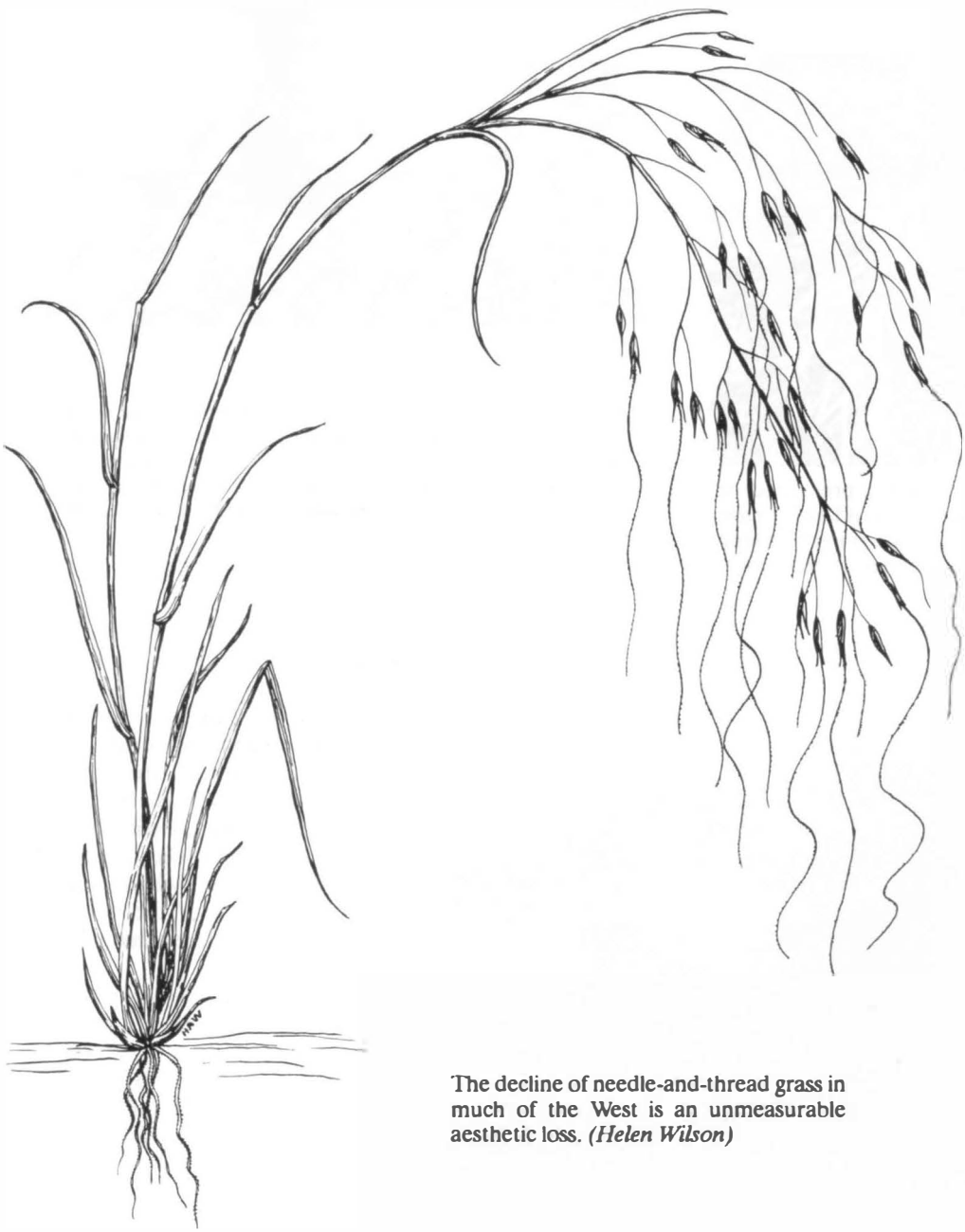


(Roger Candee)

Livestock operators pollute the public lands as freely as if they owned them. And the real owners -- the public -- are expected to accept the contamination of their outdoor sanctuaries by filth, flies, foul water, and fences.

--George Wuerthner, "The Price Is Wrong" (Wuerthner 1990b)

A cattle-trampled aboriginal campsite on BLM land in northeast Arizona.



The decline of needle-and-thread grass in much of the West is an unmeasurable aesthetic loss. *(Helen Wilson)*

I've put in a lot of pipe and never had to put up with all this archaeological crap!

--Sawtooth NF permittee Kyle Adams, in defense of his installation of an unauthorized water line on National Forest land (Williams 1991)

After the ranching establishment helped fuel the conquest and subjugation of Native American cultures, it even desecrated the sanctity of their memory. Most of the West has been grazed for a century, and each year millions of clumsy hooves have stomped and scraped the land's surface billions of times. Further, the areas where aboriginal peoples lived and spent most of their time -- level lands and along waterways -- are most heavily affected.

Through trampling, increased soil erosion, and flooding, artifacts such as pottery and chards; arrowheads, spear points, scrapers, knives, and other stone tools; and mortars and pestles have been displaced and broken. Thousands of historic and prehistoric village ruins, camping and hunting sites, and burial grounds have been ravaged. A travesty to the spirit of this continent's aboriginal peoples, it also has frustrated modern archaeologists.

Even prehistoric cave dwellings are not sacred to the sacred cow. I have hiked to many, only

to have cattle awkwardly stumble out at my approach. Cows like to siesta in the cave coolness on hot afternoons. The insides of many caves are a scrambled confusion of stinking cowpies and overwhelming dust, any artifacts long since pulverized.

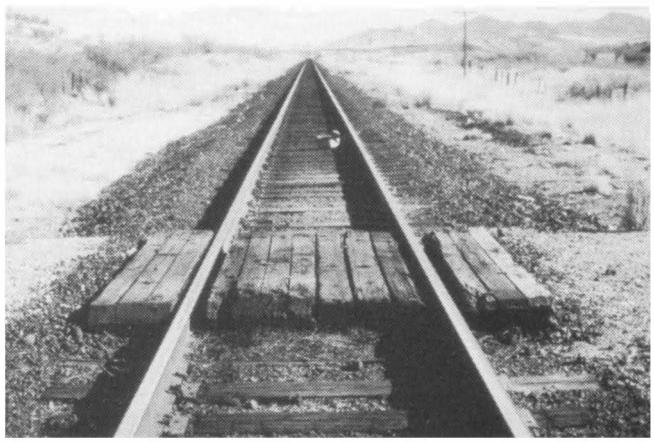
Not as widespread as cows' hooves, but more thoroughly destructive to aboriginal remains, has been range development. Chaining, bulldozing, plowing, and other techniques used in vegetation manipulation, along with other range development, have ruined many sites and certain canyons, mesas, and other places held sacred by Native Americans. In cases where sites were known beforehand, the ranching establishment often proceeded with open callousness. More often, sites are discovered *after* being demolished.

Similarly, livestock and range development have damaged numerous historical sites of the Spanish and American cultures. Old Spanish settlement and encampment sites in New Mexico were damaged by chaining operations. Old Western cemeteries not well-fenced have had gravesites trampled. Cattle wander through Western ghost towns, trampling relics and damaging structures.

Special railroad underpasses for ranching roads and livestock movement cost railroads millions of dollars altogether. This one is *not* a drainage. Note the roadside fenceline contrast.

Railroad corporations owning or operating a line within the state are required to construct, maintain and repair sufficient fence connected with suitable cattle guards at all public road crossings to prevent livestock from entering railways. In addition, railroad corporations are liable to owners of livestock for damage or loss resulting from collision with trains and are required to post notice of the killing or injury.

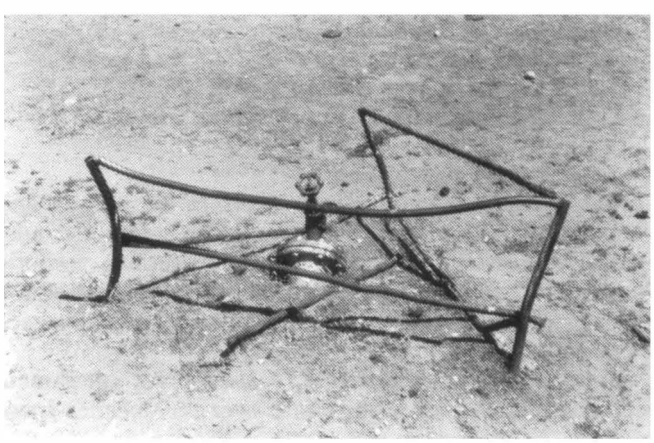
--Wyoming Statutes 37-9-304 through 37-9-308



Public lands ranching necessitates thousands of special, gated railroad crossings for ranching roads.

Roughly 15,000 miles of railroad tracks stretch across the West, with perhaps a third of these miles on public land. Unlike last century, when "cattle catchers" on engines knocked cows out of the way, barbed wire (usually) now keeps cattle off the tracks. Special crossings are constructed for ranchers and their livestock at each of the thousands of places where ranching roads intersect railroad tracks. As with roads, railroads also have special underpasses for livestock. Again, the consumer ultimately foots the bill.

Structural developments on public and private ranges, such as in this oil field, must be protected with sturdy enclosures or risk damage from cattle. This cost alone totals millions of dollars, and is generally passed on to the consumer and taxpayer.



The dark patches in the foreground are crude oil from a pipeline damaged by trampling cattle and cattle-caused erosion.

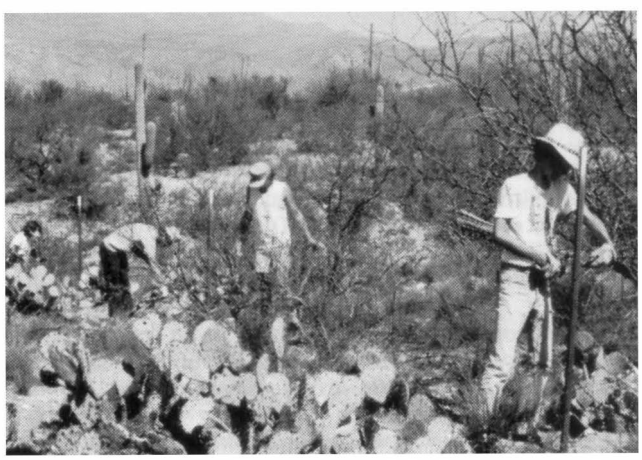
When oil and gas drilling, mining, tourist development, powerline construction, organizational gatherings, movie making, and other activities on public land disturb ranching operations, users are required to compensate ranchers for the value of their ranching losses. This can include lost herbage, depleted water sources, damaged range developments, greater access costs, scared cattle, and just about anything else a rancher can dream up. Values commonly are inflated, and at times the scam is essentially subleasing. In New Mexico this type of compensation averages $28,000 per ranchman affected.

> *The* [Henry Lake] *foundation raised money from its members to permanently exclude livestock from the riparian area along a half-mile reach of stream. Foundation members took time off from jobs and vacations to build the fence to the rancher's specifications. The foundation paid the rancher a modest fee to cover the cost of maintaining the fence.*
> --from *Livestock Grazing on Western Riparian Areas* (Chaney 1990)

Many private organizations cater to the needs and demands of public lands ranchers, often under the misguided impression that they are doing something patriotic and worthwhile for America and its dusty, downtrodden cowboy. These include veterinary associations, advocacy groups, and scientific research groups.

Hundreds of environmental, conservation, sportsmen, recreation, and other groups have over the decades spent millions of dollars and hours studying land management plans, writing letters, making phone calls, implementing lawsuits, and so forth to mitigate the influences of public lands ranching. For example, in 1986 a range professor at Oregon State University founded the Oregon Watershed Improvement Coalition with the purpose of mediating disputes between ranchers and others and discussing range "improvement" ideas. The Nature Conservancy and other private groups spend millions of dollars acquiring or protecting ranching-damaged land in attempting to restore Endangered species, riparian areas, watersheds, etc.

In California's San Bernardino Mountains the Sierra Club, Deep Creek Flyfishermen, and others expended much effort and money building range developments to mitigate ranching's impact on waterways, hot springs, trails, and archaeological sites. The Izaak Walton League's Public Lands Restoration Task Force organizes outings where volunteers help restore overgrazed riparian areas by building instream structures, revegetating denuded areas, and repairing protective fences. Trout Unlimited, Oregon Watershed Improvement Foundation, Henry's Fork Foundation, Henry's Lake Foundation, and Chinook Northwest are a few of the many organizations that spend time and money on fencing and restoration projects for overgrazed waterways. BLM, FS, and other government agencies sponsor numerous volunteer outings to build and maintain fences; remove obsolete fences; revegetate denuded and damaged areas; eradicate "weeds" and brush; build erosion control structures; repair trails and facilities damaged by livestock; restore wildlife; study, monitor, build facilities for, and take care of ex-free-ranging horses and burros; protect archaeological sites -- *ad infinitum* (see USDI, BLM 1987, for example). Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, YMCA, YWCA, DeMolay, church, and other private groups conduct similar activities. And, hundreds of times a day around the West, individuals and small groups chase cattle and sheep out of "protected" areas, mend ranching fences, and assist public lands ranchers in diverse ways. The total value of all this volunteer effort and financial expense is in the millions of dollars annually. But, again, rarely do people confront, or even recognize, the ultimate cause.



Here, several men and women spend their weekend dismantling and removing an obsolete fence from Saguaro National Monument near Tucson, Arizona, so the barbed wire and posts will not harm wildlife and humans.

Any public utility may furnish free service to "caretakers" of livestock, poultry and other domestic animals.
--Wyoming statute 37-3-105

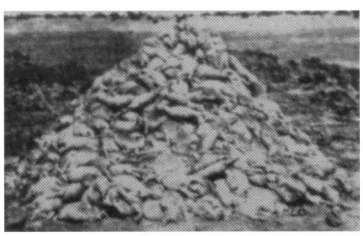
Through special legislation and consideration, stockmen often pay lower utility rates and less for construction and hookup of new utilities than do common people. And, electrical rates are lower for irrigators (mostly stock growers) than for the general consumer. The public, through higher taxes and utility rates, absorbs much of the extra cost for construction and maintenance of the huge utility network that services the 30,000 public lands ranches spread across the rural West.

Tens of thousands of miles of special phone and other utility lines and service roads benefit public lands ranches.

Similarly, many other commercial enterprises experience smaller profit ratios, or losses, in servicing public lands ranchers. For example, the rancher who lives an hour down a remote dirt road pays the same amount for delivered propane as the mechanic on the edge of town. The lower profit ratio in doing business with ranchers is compensated for by higher prices to other customers. We may term this privately based subsidization.

Workers must dismantle and rebuild fences to work on utility lines, which increases consumer cost.

(Unknown)



For the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association to act as plaintiff in the case in which the state Supreme Court ruled against phone-rate breaks for the elderly on assistance is the height of hypocrisy. Even if the rate-breaks would have cost members of the association a few cents each month on each month's phone bill, that pales in comparison to the subsidies that New Mexico ranchers -- especially those on public lands -- receive.
--B. Donald Schwartzenegger, letter to the editor, 9-20-87 *Albuquerque Journal*

Ranching spreads dangerous chemicals and biocides over thousands or millions of acres of public land each year. Some are known or suspected mutagens, carcinogens, or embryotoxins. Especially heavy concentrations of toxins may occur where livestock are treated for parasites and disease, herbicides and pesticides are handled, and ranchers spill or dump used oil, diesel fuel and various chemical mixtures. Any of the above may be hazardous to public lands visitors, or to downstream or nearby residents.

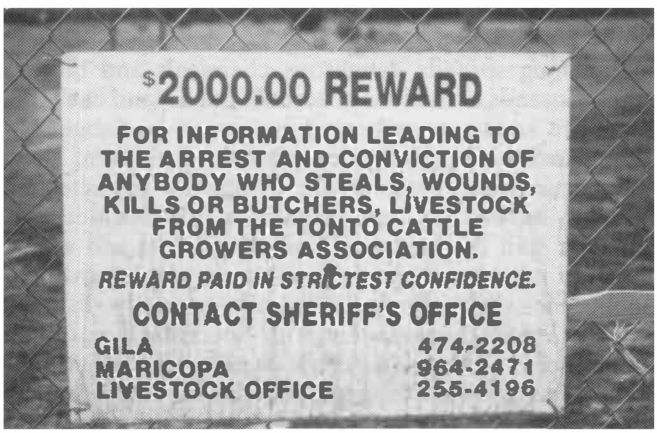
For example, the persistent, wide-spectrum Dow Chemical herbicide Tordon, a defoliant used in the Vietnam War, is also used to kill leafy spurge, an Asian perennial that may cause scours in cattle and "infests" (largely due to overgrazing) roughly 1.5 million acres of range in the north-central US. Residents in areas sprayed with Tordon have complained that it kills their gardens and trees; tests show the chemical exists in their water supplies too. While the government claims Tordon is harmless to humans, a resident near one sprayed area in Wyoming quipped, "When your plants die after being watered with the same water you drink, you think about it." (Hampton 1990)

Ranching traps and poisons kill and maim hundreds or perhaps thousands of pet dogs and cats each year. Traps also catch scores of people each year, injuring some. Bear and mountain lion traps are huge and can do serious damage to a human leg. One story is of an elderly woman who got caught in a bear trap and may have died had she not finally been able to pull the chain from the ground. Larry Sunderland, a Scottsdale, Arizona, resident, was hiking along a wooded road in the Coconino National Forest when his dog stepped into a scented, buried, steel-jaw trap. In trying to free the dog, Sunderland caught his own hand in the trap, causing profuse bleeding. After his visit to a hospital emergency room, the Arizona Game & Fish Department charged Sunderland with disturbing a trap -- a misdemeanor crime. Sunderland was so outraged he filed suit against AZ G&F, but lost. (Baylor 1989) Similarly, a California man seriously injured his hand while trying to free his horse from a leghold trap. When he threatened legal action against the trapper, he was instead cited by the California Department of Fish & Game for interfering with a trapline.

Each year ranchers shoot hundreds of pet and feral dogs that they find chasing livestock. Legally they may even shoot those only "in the vicinity" of livestock. They claim the dogs might run a little fat -- and therefore weight and profit -- off their cattle and sheep. Some even have it figured out mathematically: X yards running = Y ounces weight loss = Z dollars lost.

As I was walking on Forest Service land near my home in central Arizona several years ago, I noticed drag marks in the dirt leading to what appeared to be a crude grave.

Thinking I must have happened across some human murder victim, I gently scraped back a few inches of the loose soil to find fur -- a neighbor's beloved pet dog, with a bullet hole in its side. Later they told me they were aware that the local public lands rancher was the killer. Indeed, they said he had killed 2 of their other dogs. Laws in most Western states allow a rancher to kill any dog or other animal he claims killed, injured, bothered, or even *might* bother his livestock.



A sign posted on public range.

Many other unjust, antiquated laws created by and for stockmen a century ago still stand in every Western state. For example, cattle rustling is a third-degree felony in Utah, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a $5000 fine. Rustling is likewise a third-degree felony in Arizona, with a minimum 3.75-year and maximum 25-year prison sentence. Western authorities manage rustling cases with utmost seriousness, like bank robberies. In Texas, cutting a livestock fence is a third-degree felony and can result in up to 10 years behind bars.

!!! NEWS FLASH !!!

April 23, 1989
Gila County, Arizona

A manhunt by deputies from the Gila and Yavapai County Sheriff's Departments and an Arizona State Department of Public Safety helicopter has resulted in the arrests of 3 bowhunters for the murder of a cow. [The cow was scheduled to die in a slaughterhouse in December.] The search began with the report of the shooting death of a cow in the Fossil Creek area of Gila County. The suspects were apprehended after an extensive all-day search in the rugged, mountainous area. Shooting another man's cow is a Class 5 felony in the state, with a minimum prison sentence of 1-6 years.

(Source: *Verde Independent*, Cottonwood, AZ)

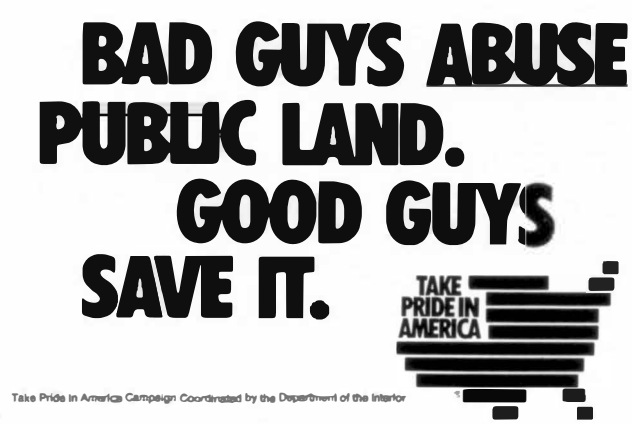
So far as consistent with the purposes and provisions of this subchapter, grazing privileges recognized and acknowledged shall be adequately safeguarded, but the creation of a grazing district or the issuance of a permit pursuant to the provisions of this subchapter shall not create any right, title, interest, or estate in or to the lands [emphasis added].

--[Taylor Grazing Act] 43 U.S.C. 315b, amended by 43 U.S.C. 1701 (1982)

Imagine this: a Western scene, cowboys on horseback herdin' them doggies into a corral. The moos of the cows, the yips of the cowboys, a vast, rugged landscape as backdrop. An appropriately rustic, gravelly male voice says slowly, resolutely, "I work this land. [pause] I share it with others . . . ." A short lecture follows on people throwing trash around and not respectin' range improvements, thus the land. These vandals are hurtin' every public lands user, he says, ending with: "Help ensure continued access to all Arizona's outdoors." To prove the point, the video climaxes with a gate being locked, with what is presumably our public land behind it.

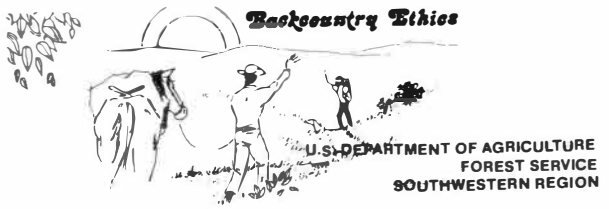
This "public service announcement" is being run by TV stations around Arizona these days. The message is clear: Ranchers work and respect the land. Respecting the land means respecting ranchers' "improvements," and if some people continue to damage range developments the public will be locked out of public lands. Unbelievably, the public accepts such drivel without a second thought as an *environmental* message. That the ad is a lie as much as a threat is, unfortunately, beyond most people. It demonstrates to what lengths stockmen will go to maintain their power. The ad is financed by the Arizona Game & Fish Department and the Arizona Cattlemen's Association, for which it doubles as a tax write-off.

On national TV Clint Eastwood, as hardassed as ever, says there's people out there damaging our public lands, particularly range developments thereon, and as far as he's concerned "these clowns can either clean up their act or get out of town." Make my day.



Out on the range, the machismo gets worse. For example, a Central Arizona permittee is known to shoot over the heads of visitors who dare "trespass" on "his" public lands allotment. Some stockmen make threats, post "no trespassing" signs, gate and lock roads, and even build illegal fences on "their" public land to prevent access. There are many

cases of a road legally accessing public lands running past a rancher's house, with the rancher doing his best to intimidate the public from using that access -- often with many unwieldy gates, blockades, vicious dogs, menacing signs, and various frightening displays. Thousands of public lands visitors are harassed and threatened by ranchers. Some encounters end in violence.



In its pamphlet, "Backcountry Ethics," the Forest Service tells backcountry visitors:

--**DON'T** leave trash.
--**DON'T** disturb soil.
--**DON'T** disturb groundcover.
--**DON'T** girdle trees and brush.
--**DON'T** cut trees, limbs, and brush.
--**DON'T** use firewood or make fires.
--**DON'T** camp within 300 feet of water.
--**DON'T** pick flowers or disturb vegetation.
--**DON'T** clear away vegetation for your tent.
--**DON'T** put foreign substances in waterways.
--**DON'T** disturb historic and prehistoric sites.
--**DON'T** travel between trails or across meadows.
--**DON'T** camp in meadows; "you'll trample the grass."
--**DON'T** defecate on the soil surface or near waterways.
--**DON'T** let pack stock damage vegetation, soil, or water.

Meanwhile... stockmen and their stock do all these things and more -- with many times the impact of all other human visitors combined throughout most of the backcountry West.

I'm tired of cattle grazing all around us May-Sept. every year, always the threat of a trampled garden, etc. Why should we have to fence in our 25 acres to seal out range cattle?
--Meggie Blume, Eureka, Montana

... my property (as well as the National Forest) is constantly being desecrated by cattle from the surrounding forest.... My fencing, orchard, springs, and garden have all experienced destruction at the teeth and hooves of beef cattle.
--David Field, Covelo, California

The snow is melting fast in our canyon here in the south side of Palomar Mountain in Southern California, revealing the true extent of the damage caused by 7 days of uninvited cattle grazing. Broken water stand-pipes, hours of repair time in the dark while it's raining, hours spent trying to run the cattle out of our canyon, and more hours spent repairing fences are the result of this latest trashing by our neighbor's cattle.

We get no apology, no help from the owner of the cows, just grunts and sour looks; no offer of paying for our time or materials....
--Bruce Druliner, Palomar Ranch, Santa Ysabel, California

As my neighbor found out when cattle destroyed the garden he had worked all summer, it is the landowner's responsibility to fence out unwanted animals.
--Roger Owens, Heber, Arizona

The above quotations are from among scores of similar letters I have received. "Open range" laws allow a rancher's livestock to range freely almost anywhere except on another rancher's land or allotment. Essentially, they absolve stockmen from legal responsibility for problems caused by their livestock or range management activities. They also allow ranchers to graze and profit from land they do not own or lease.

Open range laws were enacted during the early settlement of most Western states -- except in much of California, where a high farming and urban population partially overpowered stockmen and caused some big-time ranchers to move elsewhere. These blatantly unfair laws have caused hardship and expense to hundreds of thousands of innocent people over the years.

While public lands ranchers argue for the sanctity of their own private land, they rarely extend this respect to other rural property. Open range laws require private landowners who do not want livestock on their land to fence ranchers' livestock *out*, rather than ranchers to fence their livestock in. To meet state minimum legal requirements, fences must be constructed with 4 or 5 strands of barbed wire on deeply planted, close-set posts, with sturdy support posts at regular intervals. (If a cow is injured trying to squeeze through your illegal fence, you may be liable for damages to the cow!) Requirements vary slightly between states.

If not entirely enclosed with a strictly legal fence with closed, securely fastened gates, your land is legally available for grazing to the opportunistic ranchman. In fact, *most* unfenced and *much* legally fenced rural private property in the rangeland West is grazed *intentionally* by ranchers (this largely discounting land already grazed by the owner or under contract to be grazed). Maintaining a legal fence is no guarantee that your land will not be plundered. Cattle commonly break through legal fences and come through open gates. Many ranchers cut fences and leave gates open to gain access to larger private properties. And I just received a letter from a couple that owns 20 acres adjacent to Washington's Okanogan National Forest who fenced their land a few years ago, only to have the local rancher file a lawsuit to gain easement across their property for the purpose of moving cattle between allotments.

It seemed to me by the end of the fall that the cows must have been half-starved. The meadow had been reduced to a dry rubble by that time, yet the cows continued to chomp the seedless stalks. They ate the compost I foolishly set out to bury. They even ate the jar of Queen Anne's Lace flowers I left sitting by my cabin door.
--Cecelia Ostrow, musician, *Touching the Earth*

LANDOWNERS OF GRAND COUNTY

You have rights too!

A suit is being filed against the BLM and the U. S. Forest Service, alleging that they have been negligent and irresponsible in their management practices of public lands adjacent to private property. In their lack of sensitivity to the needs and problems of private land owners in the county, they have knowingly assisted in the infliction of personal and private property damages.

LANDOWNERS

If you have received damage to your property or person due to the policy of grazing cattle next to your private property, please notify: The Coalition for Responsible Management of Our Public Lands, Box 50, Moab, Utah 84532. We are currently gathering data as to the kind and degree of property damage involved. Describe the damages by breaking them down into three groups:

1. Estimated actual property damage, such as, broken pipe, crop damage, water pollution, building damage, etc. This should include cost of repair or replacement. Include your labor at $10.00 per hour, plus all material expenses.
2. Estimated cost for fencing out livestock being grazed adjacent to your property. Include labor and materials as well as annual maintenance expenses.
3. Personal psychological stress. The continuing destruction of one's homestead can be a very depressing problem in one's life. The court's are often very sympathetic to this type of personal injury.

All claims can be extended back to the 1943 grazing ordinance. This suit may take years to complete, and may go through many courts and appeals. But, should the C.R.M. win this battle, all of your legitimate damage losses will be reimbursed.

PAID POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

A notification in a Grand County, Utah, newspaper.

"They came through the barbed wire fence and just destroyed my garden about two weeks ago," said Kathy Sheldon, 29. "They ate all the corn, they ate my tomatos and they ripped up the drip irrigation system." . . . "The cows tear down my fence and eat my plants," McGee said. "They eat my garden. They eat my bushes. They eat my trees. And they're not a bit afraid of you." . . . "I have a 6-year-old daughter and my main concern is for her safety," said the 31-year-old man. "I have a barbed wire fence around my yard, but they keep tearing it apart to get in to eat the grass."

--8-2-87 *Arizona Daily Star*

Thus do rural landowners and residents very often experience close-up the sight, sound, and smell of cattle. They encounter cow pats on their yards, sidewalks, and patios. They endure eaten and trampled gardens, fruit trees, landscape vegetation, and lawns. They suffer damage to driveways, drainages, vehicles, homes, porches, sheds, well houses, lawn furniture, walls, fences, pipes, planters, pools, swing sets, and anything else damaged by a gouge, shove, or stomp from an awkward, half-ton animal.

Without a protective fence, this central Utah garden would be plundered by cattle from the adjacent Fishlake National Forest grazing allotment. Note the cattle-depleted range in the foreground, which is part of the private property. Many stockmen consider private land near or adjacent to "their" allotment to be essentially part of the allotment.

Public lands cattle also plunder farms, orchards, and nurseries; when rangelands are overgrazed and barren, that juicy greenery is irresistible to hungry cattle. They ravage hay supplies and grain stockpiles. They break pipes. They knock down fences, allowing farm animals to escape. They damage tourist facilities and degrade the experience of customers. They invade any unfenced businesses near public lands. They create hazards on and damage private drives and roads, even airplane runways.

I have visited several small Western communities where cattle wander freely throughout -- yards, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, vacant lots, parks, school grounds. These towns are stripped of most vegetation, littered with cowpies, and experience much physical damage.

Free-ranging cattle also raid private Nature preserves, such as the Arizona Nature Conservancy's Hassayampa River Preserve. Many preserves list legal cattle trespass as their #1 problem.

Who says the "Wild West" is dead?

The monetary loss that public lands ranching causes rural folks is unarguably in the millions of dollars annually. Decreased Western property values (from eroded bottomland, degraded vegetation, depleted water, the presence of livestock, etc.) incurred from legal or trespassing livestock total in the billions.

Lonnie Williams, a forester who owns 640 acres on the mountain, says he's tired of cattle eating his young trees. "I give the cattle credit for destroying 75% of the seedlings I've planted over the past seven or eight years," Williams says. "That's $5,000 in growing stock." . . . [The cattle are] *a big problem because I have to fence them out," says Loyal Fleener, whose wheat farm is adjacent to open range east of Deary.*

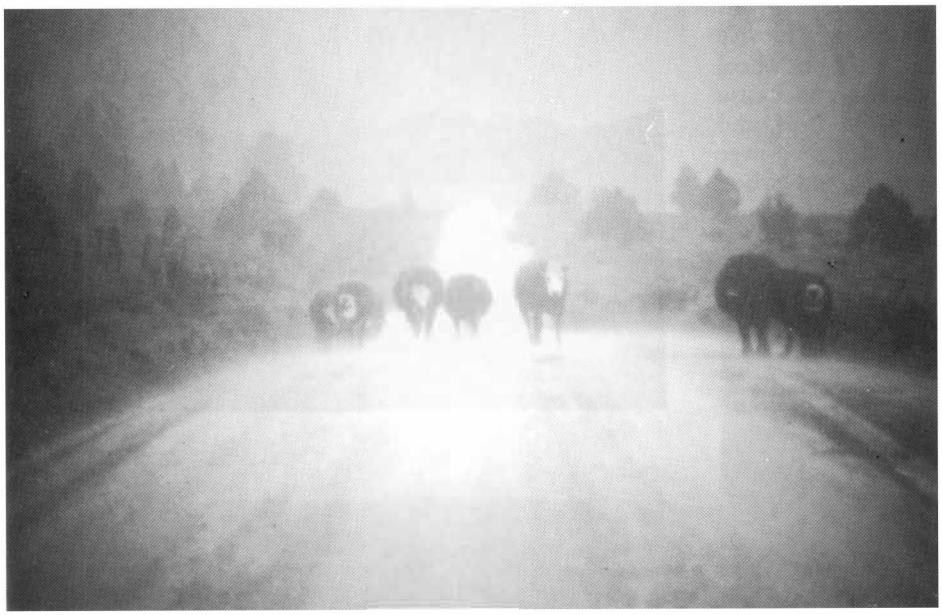
--June 1986 Moscow, Idaho, *Tribune*

While living in the Gila National Forest in the late 1970s, we and most residents experienced numerous problems from the local permittee's cattle, which moved freely between National Forest and private property. Like us, some owners fenced their land, but the cattle invariably broke through. Talking to the rancher and Forest Service proved useless.

We circulated a petition listing 9 major complaints, requesting that the Forest Service ban cattle from the immediate area. Of the area's residents, 54 out of 69 signed the petition (some of those who didn't were the permittee's relatives). When presented the petition, the forest supervisor seemed bewildered by this unprecedented open rebellion against ranching, but he did nothing.

One resident, Mike Lusby, is recovering from multiple broken bones he suffered when his motorcycle struck a cow on the highway on June 17. Attorneys representing the cow's owner have notified Lusby that he is expected to pay for the animal, which was killed in the accident.

--8-2-87 *Arizona Daily Star.*



Open range laws also absolve ranchers from responsibility for their livestock on roadways (and as mentioned, on railways). These laws were unfair a century ago, but with today's high-speed, widespread vehicular travel they are a main cause of carnage on Western roadways.

If while driving you happen to hit a cow, **you** are required by law to pay the owner for damages to the cow. If the animal dies, you pay the claimed value of the cow on the open market. You may even be forced to pay for a partial value of its projected, unrealized offspring if it was a productive animal. Surprisingly often it turns out to be one of the rancher's most valuable animals. You may be required to pay to repair the fence if you crashed into it. All these prices commonly are inflated. Thus, when involved in a vehicular mishap with livestock the rule is: "Keep going!"

All this holds true even if a deranged bull plows unseen from the roadside into the side of your vehicle, or even if there are passenger deaths. In one well-known case, a woman with her baby was driving along a country road at night, hit a cow, and ran off the road into some water. The baby died immediately, but the injured woman was trapped in the vehicle and died a slow, suffering death. But the cow died too. The cow's owner sued the dead woman's husband for the price of the cow, and won.

Damage from a collision with a public lands cow. *(Julie Rechtin)*

Imagine the impact from a 1000-pound cow to a car traveling 55 mph. Envision the bloody scene when a pickup tops a hill and plows into a flock of sheep. (Stockmen frequently drive herds and flocks down the middle of roadways.) Cattle wandering across roadways at night are especially dangerous, particularly black angus, which can be nearly impossible to see soon enough to miss. Cattle commonly plunge suddenly onto roadways; often they actually plow into vehicles rather than being hit. In many cases accidents occur when drivers swerve to miss livestock or cowpies at night. Stumbling cattle also kick rocks, branches, brush, and other hazardous debris onto roadways.

Each year thousands of motorists are involved in cattle-related vehicular mishaps. Hundreds of vehicles are damaged or destroyed, dozens of people are injured, and in most years some people are killed. A study showed that on a 25-mile stretch of State Highway 85 in Arizona's Organ Pipe National Monument alone there were 141 cow-car accidents in the late 1960s (Schultz 1971).

Generally ranchers push the government to fence roadways; they rarely do so themselves. Nonetheless, tens of thousands of miles of roads crossing public land remain unfenced. Ranchers like this because livestock may graze the relatively verdant, well-watered roadsides, but dislike it because their animals may be hit by vehicles. But even where roads are fenced, ranchers often cannot resist allowing their animals onto the lushly vegetated rights-of-way.

A stockman has allowed these sheep onto this well vegetated highway right-of-way.

And even with the best of fencing, gates will be left open, fences will be cut, some cattle will break through, and floods, fires, and other natural disturbances will allow livestock onto roadways. Thus, even if all open range laws were overthrown, many vehicular mishaps with livestock would still occur.

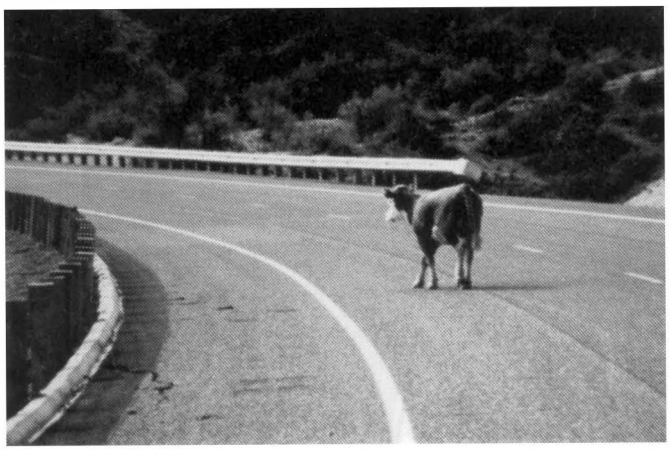
Cattle guards also cause many vehicular accidents. A few years ago a local woman was killed while riding a bicycle down a steep hill; she hit a cattleguard and her front wheel crumpled. Particularly rough cattle guards can cause damage to a vehicle's frame, body, suspension, tires, and human occupants, even without an actual wreck. Paved-over cattle guards, cattle guard support/fence posts, and closed gates also have caused many mishaps and casualties. Add to all this the inconvenience and danger from thousands of slow-moving stock trucks rambling along rural roadways.

Your car is wrecked. You are hurt. The cow is dead. You sue the cow's owner. You lose and have to pay for everything, including the cow. It does not matter that the cow's owner was drunk on champagne and fell asleep watching Lawrence Welk before closing the gate to the corral.

--Rick Braun, Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA 1990)

US 163 between Valley of the Gods and Bluff, Utah. *(Eliot Kalman)*

Stop the Bull*@☆!
End Open Range



In conclusion, the effects on Western motorists alone are a fair argument for ending public lands ranching. Combined with the scores of other detrimental impacts and loss of more than 2 billion tax and private dollars described in this chapter (and this is by no means a complete list), we have an overwhelming economic case for ending public lands ranching. Adding these to the environmental, social, and political ramifications detailed elsewhere in this book, it seems unthinkable that any informed person could support public lands ranching. If not for social conditioning, we might realize that the lovable cowboy and his peaceful cows are a national disaster.

If ranchers were assessed the real cost of doing business in the West, particularly on public lands, the Western livestock industry would be unable to compete with livestock producers in more benign climatic regions. If the many external costs and liabilities associated with public lands livestock grazing were fully considered, livestock would be removed from all public rangelands and these lands would be managed instead for their recreational, wildlife, and biological values.

--George Wuerthner, "Counting the Real Costs of Public Lands Grazing" (Wuerthner 1989)