

Public Lands Council

Public Lands Grazing

An Integral Segment of the U.S. Livestock Industry

History of Public Lands Grazing

- ◆ Livestock grazing represents the earliest use of public lands, leading our nation's expansion westward.
- ◆ In order to organize western grazing, the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 gave grazing preference to ranchers who were already established and making beneficial use of the forage and water on a given range.
- ◆ Today, grazing continues to represent a multiple use that is essential to the livestock industry, wildlife habitat, open space and the rural economies of many western communities.

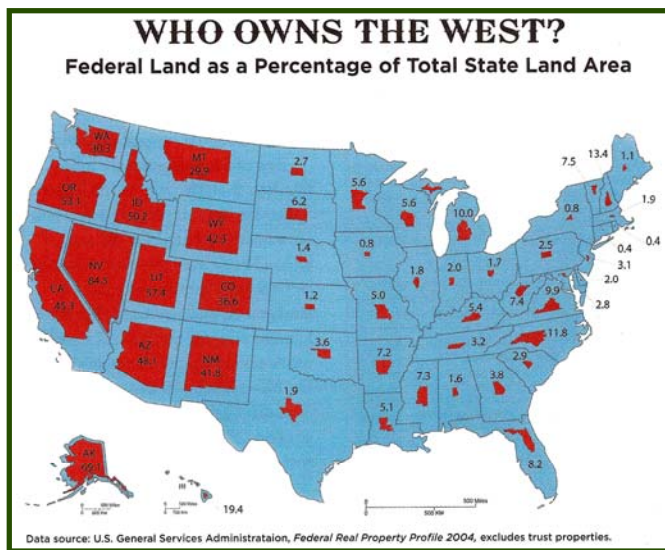
Quick Facts

- ◆ More than 22,000 public lands ranchers own nearly 120 million acres and manage more than 250 million acres of public land.
- ◆ Unlike many other multiple uses, ranchers pay an annual, usage-based fee. They are also taxed on the value of their permits.
- ◆ The private ranchland they are required to own, known as "base property," constitutes a large portion of wildlife habitat and riparian areas in the west.



Environmental Benefits of Public Lands Ranching

- ◆ Over the past 40 years, livestock grazing has become recognized as an integral tool for rangeland management on both public and private lands.
- ◆ According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, areas with flourishing and diverse plant and wildlife populations are often found in their present state because of grazing.
- ◆ Ranchers are responsible for maintaining range improvements such as stockwater systems, vital to both livestock and wildlife.
- ◆ Well-managed grazing helps:
 - ◆ Prevent invasion by noxious weeds;
 - ◆ Decrease fine fuels, thereby decreasing the risk of catastrophic wildfire; and
 - ◆ Encourage robust forage growth and healthy root systems.
- ◆ According to the U.S. Forest Service, 6,000 acres of open space are lost in the United States each day. Continued public lands livestock grazing allows the associated private lands to stay in ranching and providing open space, rather than being converted to urban development and other uses.



Economic Benefits of Public Lands Ranching

- ◆ In the West, where approximately half the land is federally owned, countless rural communities rely on public lands grazing for their tax base, commerce and jobs.
- ◆ About half of the nation's sheep herd spends some time on public lands.
- ◆ About 40 percent of the beef cows in the west spend some time on public lands.
- ◆ Without public lands grazing, grazing use of significant portions of state and private lands would necessarily cease, and the cattle and sheep industries would be dramatically downsized, threatening infrastructure and the entire livestock market structure.