July 2001
Vol 4., No. 3

The Quivira Coalition

Sharing Common-Sense Solutions to the Rangeland Conflict

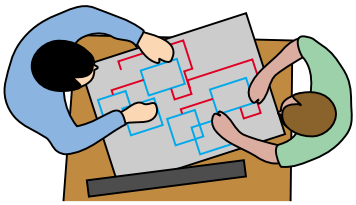
The Malpai Borderlands Group

Building The Radical Center

by William McDonald, Executive Director, Malpai Borderlands Group

The controversy which has arisen over livestock grazing in the West has been characterized by extreme rhetoric and extreme actions. With government agencies nearly gridlocked and decisive legislation not forthcoming, activists increasingly turn to litigation and sometimes "monkey wrenching" or other forms of intimidation in attempts to force their will upon a process that is often so mired in procedure that even the simplest management actions require reams of supporting paperwork.

Traditionally, the antagonists have been identified as "ranchers vs. environmentalists" or "extractionists vs. conservationists." Not liking the sound of those labels, some prefer "wise-use vs. preservation." Those who graze livestock and their supporters have been expected to line up on one side of the issue, while the environmental community and their supporters line up on the other. Stories in the news media, together with the current spate of litigation over land use, has further solidified the grazing issue in the West as one which is black and white, us against them.



In this newsletter, we explore the concept of collaboration in dealing with public land issues in the West by detailing the experiences of several collaborative groups.

As you may have noted, this edition of the newsletter is very late (we've been busy!). So look for the next issue to arrive some time in the next two months (we hope!).

Consequences for the Land

What is being lost in the rhetoric is the only thing that matters—the eventual consequences for the land. I have purposely avoided the term "public land." In most of the West, the character of the public land depends in a large part on what is taking place on the surrounding and intermingled private lands. Even in areas where the public acreage dwarfs the private, often the private land (the homesteaded land) may contain the only reliable water and/or the easiest ground (open meadow, etc.) for miles. It may be the piece that makes the area work ecologically for the wildlife inhabitants.

If the fate of the public lands depends to some extent on what happens to adjoining private land, it is

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The Quivira Coalition Announces its

First Annual Conference

The New Ranch at Work

Friday, January 18 and
Saturday, January 19, 2002
La Posada de Albuquerque

We will bring together ranchers, scientists, environmentalists and public land managers to discuss (a partial list):

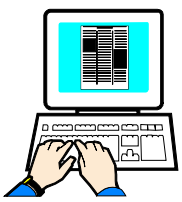
Grazing as a Natural Tool
Principles of New Ranch Management
Endangered Species and Predators
Building the Radical Center

Plus an Awards Banquet
on Saturday evening!

More information will be available soon. Check out our website or wait for a flyer with registration information and form.

Quivira Coalition Website

Our website contains information on current events as well as old issues of the newsletter. You can visit us online at **www.quiviracoalition.org**



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The Quivira Coalition Newsletter is published by **The Quivira Coalition** 4 times a year.

Subscriptions are available for $15 a year. Please send a check or money order to The Quivira Coalition, 551 Cordova Road, #423, Santa Fe, NM 87501. Send address changes to the same address. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

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From the Founders

Jim Winder
Courtney White
Barbara Johnson

Whew!

Although we marked our fourth anniversary on June 11th, we hardly had time to catch our breath, much less celebrate (or, it seems, put out a newsletter!). Needless to say, it's been a very busy year. We put on three major conferences in six months (from November to March)—on grassbanks, progressive ranch management, and collaborative stewardship—that drew a total of nearly 600 people. It was exciting, and exhausting.

In March we published *The New Ranch Handbook*, the fruit of two years' labor. The reviews have been very good and the sales better—nearly $12,000 so far. We're banking the profits, with an eye toward producing a full-color second edition someday.

In January we published a sixty-page report entitled *Of Land and Culture: Environmental Justice and Public Lands Ranching in Northern New Mexico*, authored by Ernest Atencio.

Both publications represent substantial efforts on the part of the Quivira Coalition to influence the nature of the grazing debate as well as to induce change on the ground. It's worked. Ernie's report, for instance, has already had a direct impact on national Sierra Club policy. We hope the *Handbook* will have a similar effect on our rangelands.

In the meantime, we continue to maintain an ambitious educational program, as many of you are well aware, and we have energetically pursued new members. Our mailing list recently topped 2200 names, which represents a milestone of sorts.

Did we mention the incessantly ringing phone?

But don't worry, for an organization with only three staff members, we're doing all right.

Next up is an office.

For four years we have worked out of Courtney's house, dodging toddler toys and the family dog, Madeleine. It was an arrangement that suited our early needs. It was informal, intimate, and nearly always chaotic. It made us feel a bit like a college radio station—three deejays spinning alternative music to a small, but expanding audience from a dark room.

Well, those days are almost over. We realized recently that we need to graduate to a "real" office. After four years "underground," it is time to have an official presence, not to mention more elbow room.

Actually, we're excited by the prospect of opening a real office (finding an affordable location in Santa Fe may take all summer, however). We're ready for the challenge; we have new programs planned, such as Cibola Services, and we're looking forward to the prospect of engaging more volunteers in our work. Hanging out a shingle will help us accomplish these goals.

When we do find a place, we'll have a party and invite all our supporters. So, bring a potted plant and help us celebrate. After four years of hard work, and great fun, we deserve a party!

But just a small one.

The New Ranch Handbook: A Guide to Restoring Western Rangelands is available from the Quivira Coalition at a reduced price. Send $10 plus $3.50 for shipping and handling to:

The New Ranch Handbook
Quivira Coalition
551 Cordova Rd. #423
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Collaborative Stewardship: An Introduction

by Jake Kosek

Editor's Note: *Jake Kosek (above) moderated the Collaborative Stewardship Conference which we held in Taos April 27 and 28. What appears on these pages was his introductory speech to the conference attendees, interspersed with pictures from the Conference. Jake is currently finishing his Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley in Geography. He spent two years living in Truchas and observing the Collaborative Stewardship process in action. (Photo courtesy of Eric Shultz.)*

Background

The long struggle over public lands in New Mexico has left many of us turned off, burned out, and mentally, morally, and physically exhausted. I think, honestly, that, in large part, the collaborative stewardship movement grew out from between the rock and the hard place that comes from the realization that a forest policy cannot be good for the forest if it is bad for the people. This makes forest management a lot more complicated and contentious. So regardless of how shiny the brochures and how broad the current support for this program, it is important to remember that the collaborative stewardship program arose outside the clean, orderly world of policy and politics when a few weary people stuck their necks out. And I mean way out. The question is why did they risk their jobs and reputations and the possibility of going to jail?

I think they took these risks because some were angry enough, scared enough, tired enough, maybe even brave enough to do something for people they knew and cared about who were going to be unjustly affected by the injunction on fuelwood gathering. And because the relationships they had formed were close enough, it was simply not an option to see the wood supply of their friends and neighbors dwindle to a dangerous level. And while this risk taking was about firewood to heat homes, more importantly, it was about these relationships that had been kindled and tended over time.

In many ways this interpersonal connection was the Forest Service's original intent in New Mexico. Gifford Pinchot, the founder of the Forest Service, said that "the future of the National Forest depends less on direct obedience to strict national laws and more on direct connection between people to each other and to the land." He went on to say, during his visit to Santa Fe in 1909, that "forestry and conservation policies here were to help the people, and to give the poor man a chance." I believe that the risks taken in starting the collaborative stewardship program, and that are keeping it alive, are honoring that spirit.

But make no mistake—people sticking their necks out was only the beginning. And as difficult as it is to stick your neck out, this may have been the easiest part. Since then hundreds of people have dedicated themselves to this program in thousands of ways. It is this continued work, hard work, that will make this program go. A lot of this work is rewarding; even more of it is difficult. But some of the results are tangible and sweet. Most notable is a more diverse, sustained involvement that has created a new collective wisdom in managing the forest and has given many of those angry, scared, tired, and brave souls the heart to continue their efforts. It has also encouraged still others to work more directly for the future of public lands in northern New Mexico.

Purpose of the Conference

There is a lot at stake in this conference about collaborative stewardship. People from Washington to San Francisco have been watching this program and arguing over it since its inception. If the program falters here at the source, that will affect what happens in many other

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Collaborative Stewardship

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parts of the West where people have been inspired by this model. More importantly, if it fails, we will lose the opportunity and the energy of people who will opt out of the fight altogether, impoverishing the potential of the program and the future of northern New Mexico irreparably.

But this conference is about even more than the program to date, it is about spreading the seeds of collaboration widely and cultivating new sites and forms of stewardship. More specifically, the conference has two primary purposes.

The first purpose is simply to explore the possibilities of unifying the management of three central resources—forest, soil, and grass—for the creation of healthier watersheds and communities. In some ways, to say that these resources are ecologically and culturally connected in intimate and inseparable ways is to state the obvious. However, agencies and activists too rarely explore the relationships and rewards that come from working on these resources together. This makes the seemingly obvious goal of uniting the stewardship of different resources both exciting and potentially revolutionary.

The second purpose of the conference is replication. That means fostering understanding of this form of collaborative stewardship and replicating, improving, remaking, duct-taping-together a usable model that can work in other parts of the country and with other resources. The model needs to be a conception that is both coherent enough to be workable in the future while being elastic enough to adapt to the different places, cultures, and circumstances in which the many different people here live and work.

Collaborative Stewardship Defined

So what exactly is this thing called collaborative stewardship? To take a little poetic license with Thomas Jefferson's comments about democracy, [collaborative stewardship] is absolutely the worst form of [management] possible except all the others.

More specifically to "collaborate" means to co-labor—to work together. As an observer of the collaborative process, I must say that it sometimes appears more like small-scale tactical nuclear warfare than collaboration, but I have become convinced that contention is an essential part of the process. The process is more contentious at times

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[Left] Max Cordova of La Montaña de Truchas and Crockett Dumas of the Forest Service. Crockett initiated the Collaborative Stewardship process when he was the Camino Real District Ranger. (Photo courtesy of Gene Peach.)

Collaborative Stewardship

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[Top] Cecilia Romero-Seesholtz, current Camino Real District Ranger. [Bottom] Abe Franklin from the New Mexico Environment Department, Surface Water Quality Bureau. (Photos courtesy of Eric Shultz.)

because it includes more voices, with more and different opinions. As such, it is different from the old ways of working by simply informing or communicating to others. Collaboration is about thinking with and, even more importantly, working with others. That means rolling up our sleeves, digging in the mud, moving cattle, and hauling the wood, together.

"Stewardship" is the management and responsibility to care for, in this case, the forests, the soil, the grasslands. Sometimes this management requires tender acts of care; other times it requires the gut-wrenching choices of compromise. Ultimately, though, collaborative stewardship is what we make it—here and when we leave here—in the acequias, forests, and fields. Nothing more and nothing less.

One way or another, there are a lot of people out there who are threatened by what we are doing in this room. It is hard to believe that working together for the well-being of communities and the responsible management and care of nature can be such a radical and threatening step. But people's reactions to this program remind us that it is. Some see this program as simply a front for big timber interests wishing to return to business as usual on public lands. Some feel that collaborative stewardship is beyond the mandates and regulations of their agencies and their institutional traditions. In contrast, others celebrate it as the silver bullet, the solution to all our problems.

I believe that it is none of these things. That, in fact, collaborative stewardship is not an outcome or a product but a process and approach through which different voices, voices that previously have most often been absent or silenced, can be heard. I do not believe that it will eliminate all conflict or controversy, but that it is a way to accommodate differences and to allow them to surface and be part of a debate about the future of northern New Mexico in ways that have never been possible before. Hopefully, if we do it right, we can find, if not always common ground, at least solid ground on which to build new relationships with each other and with the land.

An Honest Look at Collaborative Stewardship

To do it right requires us to look honestly at collaborative stewardship. I could speak about how perfect collaborative stewardship is, but most of you know better, and most of you would not be here if you did not already understand its importance. This conference seeks to take a really honest look at the pitfalls and possibilities of what has happened and what can happen through collaborative stewardship. So with this in mind, I am going to share four things that I learned from watching, listening, and talking to many of you about collaborative stewardship.

First, as someone here told me, "Never tie your shoes while you are in someone else's watermelon patch." I'm not sure exactly what this means, but I think it means that, regardless of your objectives, if your intentions, however well-meaning, are not clear, misunderstandings can occur (i.e., someone's going to think you're stealing their melons). There are two ways to address this danger—transparency and

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trust. Transparency requires continuous communication. Even though this may seem tedious, it allows one to discover problems early, before they grow too big or too thorny. Transparency also requires a vulnerability and openness, a willingness to put your cards on the table and keep them there. This is a tall order, but even harder is trust. Trust takes time, but we have seen it here in northern New Mexico. When I tell other people in other places that community members working in conjunction with the Forest Service can discuss and change burn policies, thinning sites, grazing practices, they treat me like I am describing another New Mexico UFO sighting. The only way to build this trust is through everyday actions—phone calls, chats at the post office, a kind greeting, lending a hand cleaning the ditches, listening, and considering. In northern New Mexico I have seen that these things and many others, when done over time and when done with honesty and respect, will crystallize into bonds of trust.

Second, be bold. If there is one thing that the collaborative stewardship program has taught me, it is that success lies in boldness. In an era of legal and political tiptoeing around everything that really matters to us, in a time when action seems to consist primarily of throwing thousands of pages of environmental impact statements, management plans, or organic standards at the problems, there is a genius, power, and integrity to being bold. This is not, by any means, a call for irresponsibility; it is a plea for a thoughtful collective courage. People here have demonstrated that success lies not in hiding behind papers, defending procedures, laws, and habits, but sometimes in the boldness of simple acts. Others will criticize and be threatened by these bold actions, but if we stand together—and if our practices are reflected in the health of the land and the well-being of the people—our actions will prevail.

The third thing I learned while being involved in the collaborative stewardship efforts here in northern New Mexico is that the table is not always round or flat. Much of collaborative stewardship depends on bringing everyone to the table to discuss and plan future visions, goals, and objectives for the grasslands, forests, and farms. But the assumption that everyone has an equal voice at the table is just not true. People have different access to information, the law, and the press, different experiences, and all of that affects the strength of their position, their ability to raise concerns, and the extent to which they are heard at the table. With this in mind, it is important that we seek not just stewardship through collaboration, but justice through our acts of stewardship. That means putting shims under the table's legs—being attentive to the differential access to resources that the people at the table have. In the short term, focusing on the equity of the process will develop trust and confidence. In the long term, I believe, being attentive and just will assure a more lasting and solid basis for the management of all these natural resources.

Finally, and most importantly, if there is one thing that is crystal clear from a hundred years of forestry in New Mexico, and even

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Collaborative Stewardship

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[Top] Estavan Lopez of the Santa Barbara Grazing Association. (Photo courtesy of Gene Peach.) [Bottom] Lynda Prim of The Farm Connection. (Photo courtesy of Eric Shultz.)

Profile of Good Stewardship:

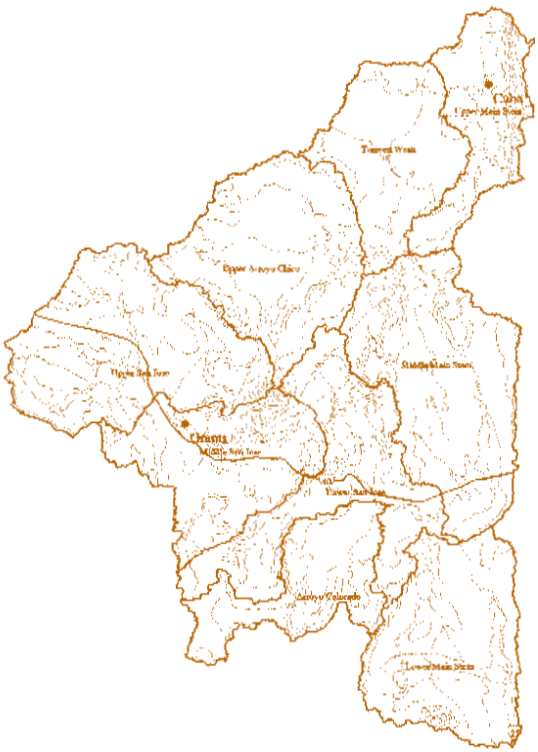
The Rio Puerco Management Committee

Going places and becoming friends may be the unsung keys to effective collaboration.

That seems to be the experience of the participants of the Rio Puerco Management Committee, a congressionally mandated collaborative committee chartered in 1997 to tackle the "poster child" of degraded watersheds in the Southwest.

Once upon a time, the Rio Puerco, which flows southeasterly past Cuba and into the Rio Grande near Socorro, was called the "breadbasket" of New Mexico. Traditional villages dotted its banks and extensive farm fields tapped its waters. Today, however, the Puerco flows (when it flows) far below the old floodplain, a victim of highly erodable soils, channelization, poor land management historically, and a complex mix of state, tribal, federal, and private ownership within its massive, 4.7 million-acre watershed.

Rio Puerco Basin Major Watersheds



A watershed, by the way, that is the primary source of sediment to the Rio Grande, the nation's fifth longest river.

In 1996, Congress decided to get involved. It passed a law authorizing the Rio Puerco Management Committee, directing it to be composed of all stakeholders in the watershed who were willing to come to the table and discuss restoration projects. Currently, the Committee is comprised of individuals representing state, federal, and tribal entities, soil and water conservation districts, representatives of county government, conservation groups, residents from rural communities, and the public at large. Quivira has been an active member of the Committee since 1997.

Congress also promised, but has not yet delivered, money to fulfill the Committee's mission—a fact that has frustrated some committee members no end.

Friendships

Fortunately, friendships have been forged in adversity.

"One of the greatest accomplishments of the Committee," says facilitator Merle Lefkoff, "was to stay together as a group even though promises were broken." She credits the consensus process, the strong relationships between people that have been established, and the goal of the Committee—to restore health to the land—as keys to the group's tenacity.

She also credits the BLM, which, though nominally in charge, sits on the Committee as an equal voice. "They've allowed the process to become a community-driven effort," says Merle. "It's been a truly unique experience." The lack of funding, she notes, might have caused the BLM to throw up its hands and quit under normal circumstances.

But these are not normal circumstances.

Few know that better than committee member R. W. Johnson, a rancher and former Sandoval County Commissioner from Cuba. After decades of stalemate and deteriorating conditions on the ground, he now thinks collaboration is the only way to make a difference. He says the Rio Puerco Management Committee has promoted a "better

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Good Stewardship:
The Rio Puerco Management Committee
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understanding between different groups" and demonstrated a willingness to be open to new ideas. "It's a different way of doing business," he says, "people are talking to each other."

For Anthony Armijo, who represents the Pueblo of Jemez on the Committee, it's all about community. "We found out who our neighbors were," he says, "and that's been positive." Anthony notes that the concept of collaboration is an ancient one for Native Americans. He's glad it's finally catching on elsewhere.

Better yet, he likes the collaboration that comes from field trips and work. The BLM recently awarded the Pueblo, through the Committee's consensus process, a grant to construct erosion control structures in the Thompson Springs area. Committee members "rolled up their sleeves and helped out," says Anthony. "It was great." (See photos.)

process."

It helps that Committee members have also become friends. Richard Becker, of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, calls his time on the Committee an "outstanding, once-in-a-lifetime experience." The bonding between participants, and the respect people have for one another (and their opinions) has been an inspiration to him. "It's not something you can mandate by law either," says Richard.

As a bonus, Richard believes he is participating in an act of civic democracy. "All opinions are respected," says Richard, "and we are paying attention to the people who live in the watershed without compromising our ecological values." Again, it's all about community. In fact, Richard calls the frequent field trips "community explorations." He thinks the Rio Puerco Management Committee is a model of collaboration. "It's the future," he says, "it's here."

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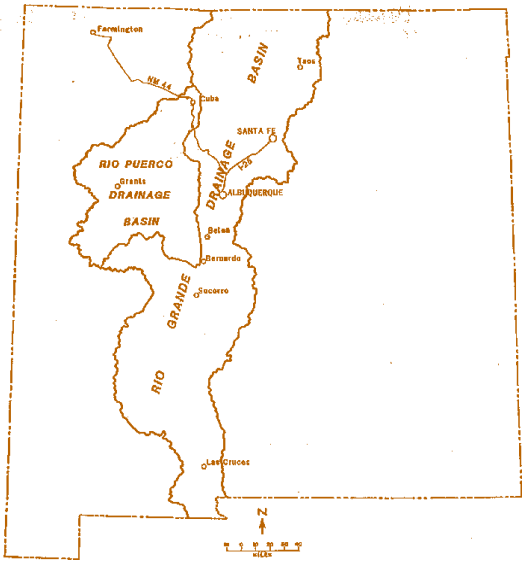

[Below Left] Arroyo Dedos Gordos before work. [Right] The headcut has been shaped. Geoweb is laid out to stabilize the new disturbance.

Field Work

Successful field work is possible, says Susan Rich, who represents the Ciudad Soil and Water District, because the Committee is dedicated to expanding common concerns to include both geographical and human diversity. Respecting that diversity, even when the road gets bumpy, is fundamental to the Committee's success, she says. "People have remained because they believe in the

Looking for the "Radical Center"

by William deBuys

(Noted author and historian Bill deBuys is the Director of the Conservation Fund's Valle Grande Grass Bank on Rowe Mesa and is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.)

"Radical Center" is a term I first heard from Bill McDonald, one of the founders of the Malpai Borderlands Group (see story, page 1). Once I asked him where he heard it and whether he'd made it up, and he said he couldn't remember and anybody should use it who wants to use it.

Bill used "Radical Center" to describe the work of the Malpai Group, which is basically a grassroots bunch of ranchers who got together and realized they needed some help to deal with the labyrinth of agencies and regulations governing the use of the country they depended on. To get the help they needed, they made alliances with the Nature Conservancy and with various land management agencies to pursue a different kind of fire regime in their country, to fight landscape fragmentation, to improve the quality of science on which management decisions were based, and to effect a whole range of things. Their goals were to preserve their way of life and to restore the large landscapes in which they lived. And they knew very well that those two goals were really just one.

Breakthrough

The Nature Conservancy also had a bit of a breakthrough in this process. The more its people grappled with the complexities of owning and later reselling the Gray Ranch, the more they realized that, if they wanted to preserve the diversity of large landscapes, they had to work constructively and meaningfully with the people who inhabit and use those landscapes.

That's what the Radical Center is about, I think. It's a place where folks get together to resolve that business as usual isn't working. For ranchers, it means we can't do this alone. We need to work with other people. We need to work with other people for pragmatic reasons of having ideas and programs and funds and cutting through red tape. We need to work with other people also for the sake of just getting our message out to a broader audience. We need friends in this world, and part of this whole package is understanding and accepting that this generation must attain a higher level of environmental performance than previous generations thought was necessary. Society insists on it. The old norms, by themselves, don't cut it anymore.

Departure

For environmentalists, the Radical Center requires a similar departure from comfortable habits. If we want to protect the land, restore and maintain diversity, we've got to find a way to work constructively with people. The old business of saying, "It's got to be this way and do it the way I say or be sued" isn't going to get us where we want to go because the place where we want to get is characterized by a widely shared ethic of environmental stewardship. You don't get people to adopt an ethic by beating them over the head with your version while pretending they have none of their own. In the Radical Center, environmentalists learn as much, if not more, than they teach.

There is a third generalized group in the Radical Center. They are the agency folks from the Forest Service, Cooperative Extension, BLM, NRCS—the list is long—who are fed up with sacrificing their professional lives to responding to lawsuits and who are ready to take action and risks in order to get needed work done on the ground. They don't get bogged down defending procedure; instead they find ways to make real things happen.

Work in the Radical Center

I think that the Radical Center has four principal characteristics:

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1. Work in the Radical Center involves a departure from business as usual.

2. Work in the Radical Center is not bigoted. By that I mean that to do this kind of work, you don't question where somebody is from or what kind of hat he or she wears, you just question where that person is willing to go and whether that person is willing to work constructively on the question at hand.

3. Work in the Radical Center also involves interesting tools. There is not one way of doing things. There can be many ways of doing things. We need to have large tool boxes and to lend and borrow tools freely.

4. Work in the Radical Center is experimental—it keeps developing new alternatives every step along the way. Nothing is ever so good that it can't stand a little revision, and nothing is ever so impossible and broken down that a try at fixing it is out of the question.

These days, we've basically got two major modes of working on environmental issues. We read about one of them in the newspaper virtually every day—it is argumentative and rights-based. "I have the right to this. You don't have the right to that. I'm going to enforce my right. I'm going to enforce your responsibility to respect my right."

The other mode is the mode of the Radical Center. It's the mode of the Quivira Coalition. It is collaborative and interest-based. We all need to know what our rights are. But at the same time we also need to keep in mind what our interests are. And when we are smart enough to separate our interests from our political positions, then we can really do some good work. Then we can have the flexibility to experiment, to innovate, to make mid-course corrections, to take on partners we never thought we'd be working with, and so on.

Change

One of the reasons this kind of experimentation is essential is that any difficult task, certainly the task of trying to save the land, is a little bit like trying to land an airplane on a revolving runway. Things are always changing, including the land. The land doesn't stay the same. We know, for instance, that in northern New Mexico, we've lost over fifty percent of the grassy element of the ecological mosaic in the last fifty or sixty years. We have to work with those changes if we are going to maintain traditional public land grazing. We've got to open the uplands back up. We've got to get fire back into the system. We've got to air things out a little bit. And, frankly, that'll be good for all species that depend on grasslands, from jack rabbits and juncos to curlews and cowboys.

No less than the land, society is also changing. Society's standards for environmental performance are different today from what they were in the 1960s. The bar has been raised. And it is going to continue to be raised. The person, or the group, or the business that's going to be effective five years from now, ten years from now, will be keeping an eye on the ways society changes and will be ready for them.

The best way to contend with these changes is to live alertly and attentively. This requires learning continually. It is the only way that we're going to preserve our working relationships to the land, together with all the heritage that comes with those relationships. It is the only way, in fact, that we're going to be able to keep large landscapes intact for their ecological values and to prevent either their abandonment (which is hardly the same as restoration) or their colonization and fragmentation by ex-urban expansion.

Looking for the "Radical Center"

(con't from page 10)

"We all need to know what our rights are. But at the same time we also need to keep in mind what our interests are. And when we are smart enough to separate our interests from our political positions, then we can really do some good work."

March 10, 2001: The New Ranch Conference, Las Cruces

Dr. Nathan Sayre, Conference Moderator and author of *The New Ranch Handbook: A Guide to Restoring Western Rangelands*. Dr. Sayre holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago, and is presently a post-doctoral researcher with the Agricultural Research Service—Jornada Experimental Range.

Almost 200 people attended the Quivira Coalition's New Ranch Conference on March 10 at the Farm and Ranch Museum in Las Cruces, where progressive ranchers from Arizona and New Mexico, scientists, and public land management agency personnel discussed new approaches to ranch management on private and public land, restoring watersheds, and protecting open space.

Among the speakers were: Roger Bowe, Rafter F Ranch; Dave Bradford, U.S. Forest Service; Mac Donaldson, Empire Ranch; Sid Goodloe, Carrizo Valley Ranch; Dr. Kris Havstad, Jornada Experimental Range; Bill McDonald, Malpai Borderlands Group; David Ogilvie, U Bar Ranch; Scott Stoleson, Rocky Mountain Research Station; and Jim Winder, Double Lightning Ranch.

Topics included: proper ecological stewardship of watersheds; herding; how to make a profit in ranching; holistic planning; ranching and endangered species protection; the best science; how to make public

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[Top] The room was so crowded that many people had to stand at the back. [Middle] The many ranchers present took off their hats and put them under their seats so those behind them could see. [Bottom] David Ogilvie and Scott Stoleson discussed the large population of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers on the U Bar Ranch.

The New Ranch Conference

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Dave Bradford and Karl Burns, discussing herding on the West Elks.

lands ranching work in the new millenium; collaboration; and monitoring.

The Quivira Coalition debuted *The New Ranch Handbook: A Guide to Restoring Western Rangelands*, authored by Dr. Nathan Sayre at the conference. This comprehensive guide to the issues surrounding science and progressive management in the Southwest has been called "required reading for anyone interested in natural resource issues" in the region (Bill McDonald). George Ruyle of the University of Arizona says it "may serve both as a textbook and as a reference manual."

Bill McDonald.

[Top] Roger Bowe. [Bottom left] Mac Donaldson. [Bottom right] Sid Goodloe.

(All photos on these two pages are courtesy of Gene Peach.)

The Far Horizon

by Courtney White

"When the West fully learns that cooperation, not rugged individualism, is the pattern that most characterizes and preserves it, then it has a chance to create a society to match its scenery."—
Wallace Stegner

The recent proliferation of collaborative organizations across the West, many of which are organized around specific watersheds, is beginning to look like an act of radical democracy in action.

The reasons for this proliferation are as diverse as the organizations themselves, but two stand out. The first is a sense of frustration by westerners at an appreciable lack of progress on the ground. We need problems solved, and we need them solved soon. Gridlock is hurting, not helping, the land and the people who live on it.

The other reason is the American tradition of fighting tyranny. In the mid-1990s, debate about natural resource use and conservation in the West was dominated by the extremes on both sides. There was no "radical center" to speak of—no mechanism by which ordinary folks could participate in events that directly affected their lives.

The grazing debate, for example, was ruled by individuals and organizations that were not accountable to the average citizen. The debate had become a shoving match between tyrants. And when the water buffalo fought in the marsh, to use a Chinese parable, it was the frogs that paid.

Finally, the frogs are fighting back.

The Frontier

The rise of collaborative groups is the latest expression of a long and intimate relationship between the landscape of the West and the history of American democracy. In his famous 1893 paper entitled The Significance of the Frontier in American History, historian Frederick Jackson Turner went as far as to declare "American democracy is fundamentally the outcome of the experiences of the American people in dealing with the West. . . .

"The existence of an area of free land," wrote Turner, "its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development." The process of conquering the wilderness, creating new communities from scratch, and enduring many hardships, promoted, according to Turner, "individualism, economic equality, freedom to rise, democracy."

Over the years, Turner's "frontier thesis" has been subjected to vigorous attack, for good cause. What remains indisputable, however, is Turner's premise that this nation's interaction with its western landscape has influenced the character of its democracy. For example, President Franklin Roosevelt once said "There is nothing so American as our national parks. The fundamental idea behind parks is native. It is, in brief, that a country belongs to the people."

It is a premise that resonates today. Edward Abbey, a self-professed anarchist, once wrote, "True human freedom, economic freedom, political freedom, social freedom remain basically linked to physical freedom, sufficient space, enough land." Similarly, Wallace Stegner wrote, "What freedom means is freedom to choose, and

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between what options. Democracy assumes, on the strength of the most radical document in history, that all men are created equal, and that given freedom they can become better masters for themselves than any king or despot."

The American West has always been about options. It has been a place of renewal, of reinvigoration, of hope. It has existed as an ideal almost as long as the ideal of American democracy has, and helped spawn generations of idealists and dreamers—everything from the Monkey Wrench Gang to the Militia Movement. People worked hard from the frontier period on to create their vision of a society to match the West's scenery—and most did so cooperatively—a point made by historian Bernard De Voto who observed, "the only true individualists in the West wound up on the end of a rope whose other end was in the hands of a bunch of cooperators."

The West, in other words, has invigorated American democracy over the years—and is doing so again.

Watersheds

Collaborations are stirring the democratic pot by employing a radical motivating principle: get on-the-ground results. Organized mainly around watersheds (a development that would have warmed the heart of the great explorer Major John Wesley Powell who argued over a century ago that the West should be organized by ecological boundaries, not political ones), collaboratives bring together people who are willing to explore their common interests, not argue their separate positions. People who want results.

For many in the West, including many environmentalists, writes Donald Snow in Across The Great Divide: Explorations In Collaborative Conservation and the American West (Island Press, 2001), "collaborative conservation represents a kind of homecoming, a way of bringing the implementation of sound environmental policy down to the ground and back into the lives of people who are directly affected by the outcomes."

Moreover, the idea of getting results is proving infectious. "Collaborative processes are breaking out in many other settings and across nearly all environmental issues," writes Snow, "from the reintroduction of species to the management of timber, wildlife, and grazing, to the control of suburban sprawl and the protection of valued habitats, and more."

Despite its obvious appeal, however, "getting results" remains a difficult concept for many to accept, especially those more interested in process, and conflict, than product. That's because, according to Snow, "collaborative conservation runs counter to the normal course of environmental politics, counter to the course of most politics of any kind in the United States."

This may be why Michael McCloskey, when president of the Sierra Club a few years ago, attacked the concept of collaborative conservation in a now-famous editorial. The issue, he admitted, was power. "This redistribution

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"Despite its obvious appeal, however, 'getting results' remains a difficult concept for many to accept, especially those more interested in process, and conflict, than product."

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"Where contemporary environmentalism emphasizes ecocentrism, collaborative conservation integrates ecocentric and anthropocentric goals; where most environmentalists embrace regulatory democracy, collaboratives prefer civic democracy; and where environmentalists put great faith in science and technocratic management, collaboration advocates seek to integrate science with local knowledge."

of power," he wrote, " is designed to disempower our constituency," which is heavily urban. Few urbanites are represented as stakeholders in communities surrounding national forests.

Disempowerment, however, is not the only threat to the modern environmental movement posed by collaboratives. They challenge a variety of paradigms, including some cherished ones.

Philip Brick frames the issue well in Across the Divide when he writes: "Where contemporary environmentalism emphasizes ecocentrism, collaborative conservation integrates ecocentric and anthropocentric goals; where most environmentalists embrace regulatory democracy, collaboratives prefer civic democracy; and where environmentalists put great faith in science and technocratic management, collaboration advocates seek to integrate science with local knowledge."

By demanding, and achieving, on-the-ground results, collaboratives challenge the increasingly individualistic, and oligarchical, behavior of the traditional players on the western stage, including national environmental organizations. The rise of the "radical center"—represented by collaboratives—constitutes a direct threat to the "Cattle Free" and "Cattle Galore" tyrannies of recent years.

Growing grass cooperatively has become a subversive endeavor.

Citizenship

How does collaboration contribute to civic democracy exactly?

Historian David Crislip has an idea. In an article he wrote for the ***Chronicle of Community*** (1997, Vol. 2, no.1), he sets out four criteria for a "new" democracy:

1) Any activity must produce tangible, substantial, and sustainable results.

2) Any activity must bring people together in ways that heal rather than divide.

3) Any activity must engage citizens in new and deeply democratic ways in the process of defining visions and strategies for their communities and regions.

4) Any activity must enhance the civic culture of the community or region.

Crislip thinks collaboratives accomplish all four goals. "The experience of working together," he writes, "creates the norms of trust and reciprocity, the sense of responsibility for the common good, and the networks of concerned citizens that undergird the success of governing institutions and civil society."

It's all about citizenship—identifying it, exercising it—what Crislip calls the "politics of engagement." Citizenship requires partnerships, trust, respect, and results. To be effective it requires participants to explore their common interests and seek solutions that lift all boats evenly. Citizenship is anti-oligarchy; it rejects the politics of advocacy—a process by which small groups of people attempt to overpower other groups to achieve their ends. As Crislip

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[Left] Members of RPMC join range users in covering the geoweb with soil. [Right] Rock is placed on top to "armor-plate" the area. (Photos on this page and page 9 courtesy of the BLM.)

Rio Puerco Management Committee *(con't from page 9)*

Results

The Committee is seeing tangible results, too. The Committee felt that a plan by the state highway department to realign State Route 44 south of Cuba did not adequately address the problem of the Rio Puerco's channelization. They wanted the river put back into its old meander, if possible; and they wanted the highway to acknowledge the river's right to function properly.

The Committee applied pressure on the highway department and to their delight, the department responded by redesigning the road. "This is a real important spot to fix," says Committee member Steve Fischer, of the BLM, "and without the Committee's pressure it wouldn't have turned out as well as it did. They had to take us seriously."

Other on-the-ground projects are slowly, but surely, being funded.

This is not to say that the process has been free of problems.

Frustrated by the lack of money and the slow pace of progress, a number of early participants have dropped out of the Committee, including two Pueblos and two federal agencies. The persistent lack of involvement by environmental groups has been another disappointment.

Steve Fischer, however, remains optimistic. "It's a neighborhood association on a watershed scale," he says. "Who can beat that?"

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observes, "When advocacy works, it leaves us divided. When it does not, it leaves gridlock."

Democracy still matters, in other words.

The success of the collaborative movement across the region means we are at another watershed moment in the West's history (pun intended). A generation's worth of paradigms are being challenged at a variety of levels, resulting in the erosion of oligarchical hegemonies. The Conflict Industry, the Compliance Industry, the Custom-and-Culture Industry, the Wilderness Industry, and others are showing visible cracks in their foundations as the cyclic, and inevitable, replacement of another "Old West" with a "New" picks up steam.

This time, however, there is a difference. This time the forces at work are democratic, community-based, and cooperative. This time, hopefully, we will finally begin to construct the society that Wallace Stegner called for—a landscape of shining rivers, healthy land, and robust communities. It is a society within reach, as the recent proliferation of collaboratives across the region implies. It all starts with soil, grass, and water.

And a handshake.

The Radical Center

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even surer that the fate of much of the private land depends on the ability of the ranchers who own it to graze their cattle on adjoining public land. Denied that ability, many would no longer be able to maintain viable grazing livelihoods. The alternative source of livelihood, in many cases, has been to sell the land to developers.

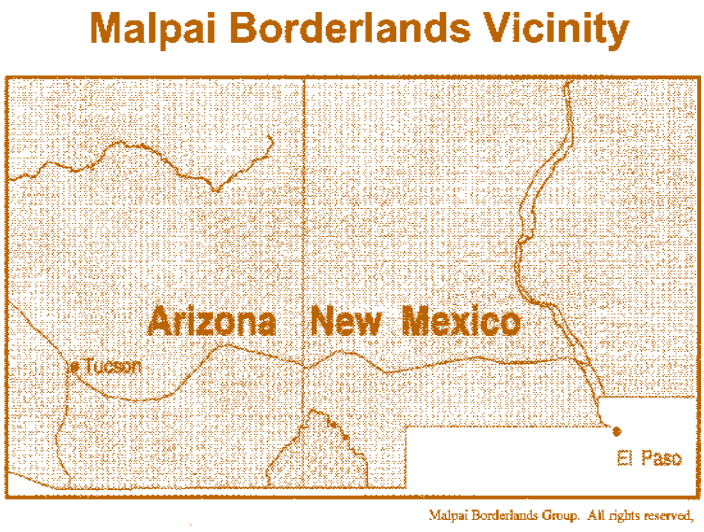

Figure 1 shows the geographic location of the 782,000-acre planning area of the Malpai Borderlands Group

It was with these concerns in mind that in 1991, a small group of ranchers in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, along the Mexican border, sat down with some folks from the environmental community to break from the traditional stereotypical positions and to try to find common ground, to begin to build, if you will, the "radical center."

At stake was nearly 800,000 acres of unfragmented landscape, the northern tip of the Madrean Archipelago, where Arizona and New Mexico join the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua (Figure 1). As happened in many places in the West, the area had seen a major influx of people and livestock around the turn of the century. The numbers proved to be unsustainable. Fire suppression, overgrazing, and other activities associated with nearly unrestricted settlement exaggerated the effects on the landscape of a climatic regime that is characterized by extremes. Harsh economic reality followed the ecological abuse, causing most to leave in search of other opportunities.

Two Concerns

Today, about thirty families live on ranches within the huge area, possibly the fewest number of human residents in centuries. The concerns of those who gathered together in 1991 focused on two things.

One was the continuing loss of grasslands to woody species, believed to be partially caused by century-long fire suppression. The other was the anticipated threat of fragmentation of the area from a renewed influx of people. On three sides of the area, subdivision was accelerating. In looking for allies to address these concerns, the ranchers found them in, of all places, the environmental community.

Calling themselves the Malpai Group, the ranchers and their new-found allies met for discussions in ranch houses over a two-year period. This discussion period had the effect, intended or not, of cultivating trust and friendships which became indispensable factors in the group's success when it turned later from discussion to action. An enormous advantage lay in the fact that the participants were farsighted enough to address their concerns before they became crises.

The role of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) proved to be essential in helping move the group from being a forum for discussion into an action organization. The Conservancy had been the area's largest landowner, having purchased the 320,000-acre Gray Ranch in 1990. They then confounded nearly everyone by selling the property to a local ranching family who purchased it with a con-

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servation easement attached, which guaranteed that the Gray would never be developed. The relationship that developed between the family and Conservancy personnel led to their inclusion in Malpai Group discussion sessions. TNC brought organizational skills, fundraising expertise, legal know-how and additional contacts in the political world and in the scientific community. To some, however, there was a downside. Some ranchers feared the direct involvement of an international environmental group in a grassroots organization, believing the Conservancy would inevitably take over control. A few ranchers disengaged from the group and some went so far as to begin a campaign of opposition.

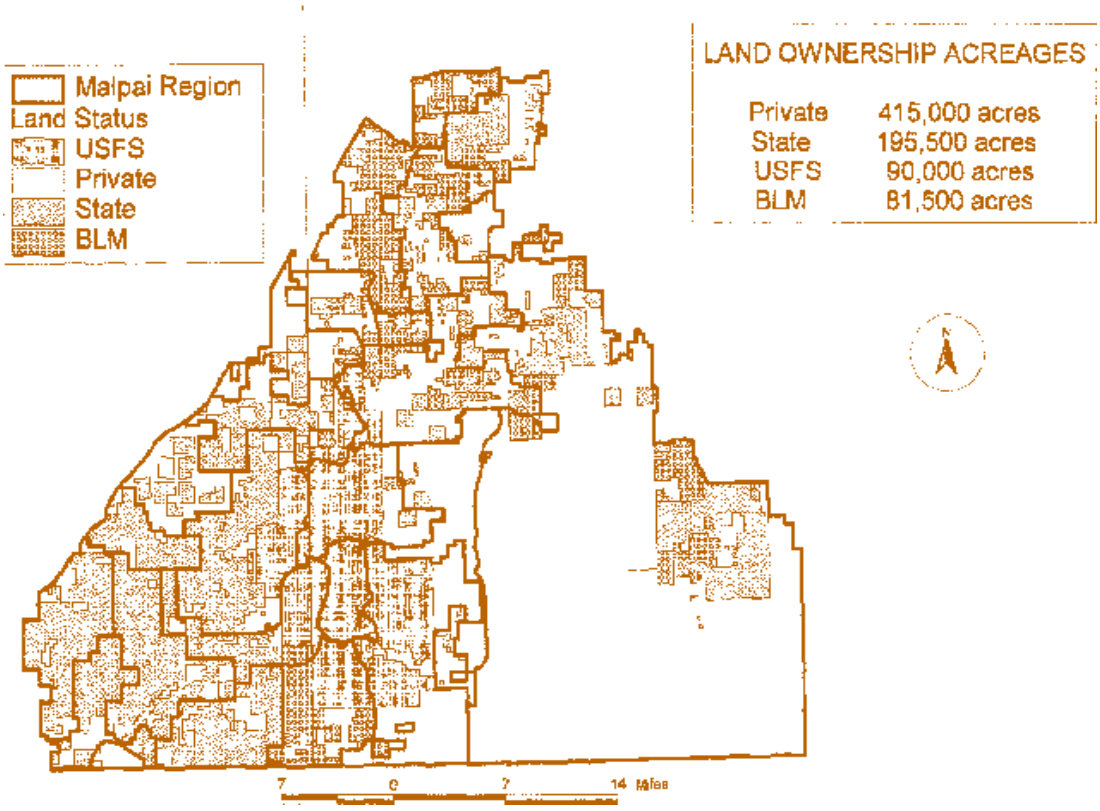

Figure 2. Land ownership. (Figures 1-4 courtesy of the Malpai Borderlands Group. All rights reserved.)

Challenge

One huge challenge for the group was trying to involve the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and two State Land Departments (altogether, owners of nearly 50 percent of the area's land) as true partners in an effort to realize an open space future for the 800,000-acre landscape (Figure 2). The Malpai Group addressed this issue by rallying the agencies around the idea of a regional fire management plan, which would include private landowner input. Agency personnel showed enthusiasm for the initiative and encouraged expansion of the idea to a whole ecosystem approach to management of the area's land. The timing was fortuitous. With a mandate for ecosystem management coming from Washington, and no one exactly sure what it meant, some of the progressive minds in the agencies saw this as an opportunity to define it "on the ground."

In 1994, the Malpai Borderlands Group (MBG) was born as a nonprofit organization, establishing official status in order to receive tax-deductible contributions and hold conservation easements. A board of directors was established, made up initially of the remaining participants from the Malpai discussion group.

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The Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service each assigned individuals to work with the fledgling organization. An additional boost came when a multi-year grant was awarded to the research arm of the Forest Service to do long-term fire and watershed studies in coordination with the group's efforts.

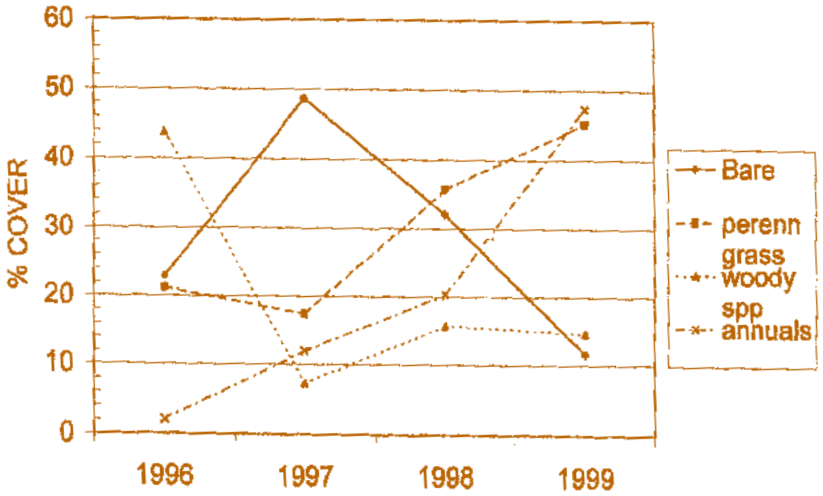

Figure 3. Monitoring results after prescribed burns.

Shared Success

In addition to many tours and meetings with key officials and occasional trips to Washington D.C., one of the things that has made the partnership with the agencies work has been the shared success in achieving stated goals. All parties (agencies, ranchers, scientists, and the environmental community) agreed that fire needed reintroduction into the landscape. The timing was right as 1994 proved to be a big year for natural fires. Because of our working relationship with the agencies, over 100,000 acres were allowed to burn. Successful prescribed burns were carried out. The Baker Burn in 1995, the Maverick Burn in 1997, and the Miller Burn in 1998 all involved multi-agency and multi-landowner cooperative efforts. The prescribed burns allowed the use of "before and after" monitoring to document whether the results met expectations (Figure 3). Did the hoped-for impact on woody species occur? Was the grass invigorated? Is the anticipated increase in biodiversity taking place? Over 200 monitoring plots are now in place in the region, many measuring fire effects.

Different challenges presented themselves depending on the land ownership involved in the burns. For prescribed burns on state and privately owned land, the biggest concern was being able to obtain the resources to actually implement a burn and ensure that the fire did not spread to places where it wasn't wanted. On federal land, abundant resources are available, but planning costs and delays resulting from different opinions on the short-term effects of fire on endangered species present (or believed to be present) made for an excruciating process leading right up to ignition. Currently, MBG is immersed in a programmatic approach to consultation on endangered species in the area. We hope this will result in a more efficient and more predictable method of implementing prescribed burns in the future.

Endangered Species

The Malpai Borderlands Group has been proactive in rare and endangered species issues. The group's work in helping an area ranching family with their efforts to save a threatened species of leopard frog (Rana Chiracahuaensis) led to a cooperative effort that included the Arizona Game and Fish Department and established a new water source on the ranch that benefits both the frogs and the family's livestock operation. Some

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of the tadpoles that hatch on the ranch are placed in ponds constructed at schools in nearby Douglas, Arizona as part of an education and recovery project overseen by herpetologists from the University of Arizona. Eventually these frogs will be released back in the wild as appropriate habitats become available.

A chance encounter with a jaguar by another Malpai participant presented the group with an additional opportunity to be proactive. Instead of shooting the animal, the rancher took photographs, which were published in a booklet. The MBG helped initiate a Conservation Plan that became the template for the Jaguar Recovery Plan when the animal was listed as endangered in the United States. As a result of proceeds from sales of the booklet, the group maintains a fund to reimburse ranchers for any losses to livestock from a jaguar and actively funds and participates in research and monitoring efforts, most of which are conducted in Mexico.

These proactive efforts by the MBG have enhanced its credibility when it has been forced to react to court-ordered biological opinions involving federal grazing allotments in the area, which result from lawsuits being filed against the agencies. The group's ability to bring good science to bear on individual species issues has become respected in this arena where the law requires answers to what is often unknown.

Threat of Development

The most immediate threat to the Malpai Group's goal of securing a million acres of healthy, unfragmented landscape is the inexorable movement of people into the remaining open spaces of the West. In its attempt to keep development at bay, the group has been obtaining conservation easements on working cattle ranches in the area. Combined with the easement held by TNC on the Gray Ranch, approximately half of the land area is now permanently protected from development (Figure 4).

Conservation easements have been the biggest single factor in the recruitment of participants in the group's activities. By being flexible in anticipating and meeting the needs of ranchers, MBG has been able to provide them with more than just protection from subdivision. In exchange for the first four easements MBG received, the landowners' cattle were given multi-year access to forage on the Gray Ranch while their home ranches received needed rest from grazing following a severe drought. The Malpai Group paid for the forage by raising funds from individuals and grant-making institutions. The money is also used by the Malpai Group to work with the ranchers to share costs on the installation of watering facilities and fences, which will make the ranches more efficient and the ranchers better able to manage for droughts in the future. In two other

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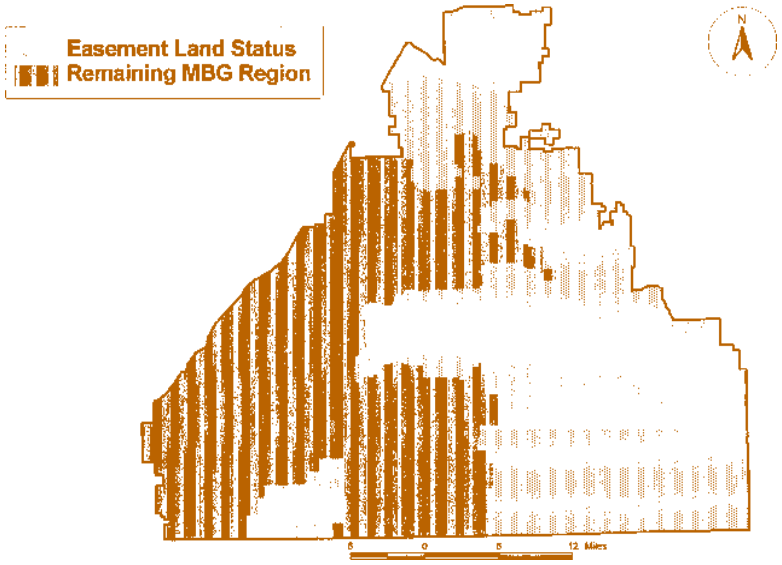

Figure 4. Easements protect about half the land area from development.

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"Encourage and include. Do not try to force things on people. Make opportunities available to them."

instances, the MBG purchased the easements outright and the ranchers used the money to purchase adjoining land that will make their operations more sustainable.

In attempting to find ways to improve the economic return and provide more security to the area's ranchers, the Malpai Borderlands Group has spent considerable effort in investigating the possibility of initiating an effort to market ranch beef directly to the consumer. The idea would be to establish a premium market for quality beef from cattle raised in a beautiful, unfragmented landscape by people who were committed to keeping it that way. As appealing as that concept sounds, the reality of putting a program together in this remote area, with a limited supply of cattle (approximately 5,000 from all ranches combined), far from packing facilities, distribution centers, and urban consumers, has proved to be much more challenging than asking ranchers to work together toward conservation goals. The group is hopeful of taking some steps cooperatively to position the ranchers' cattle to be part of a larger program, if a successful one emerges. It remains a challenge for American society to find ways to reward those who keep the land open and manage their livelihoods in an ecologically sound manner. At the least, the Malpai Group has helped to raise the visibility of the issue.

Just Beginning

Although the Malpai Borderlands Group is being hailed as a success and a model for others after just seven years in existence, it is clear to the group that its work is only beginning and many challenges lay ahead. While the novelty of ranchers and folks from the environmental community moving away from traditional adversarial positions and working together in the radical center has brought the group popularity and political strength outside the region, it will be the ability of the group to stay the course over time and build on its success that will bring the eventual acceptance of those who live in the region, but have not yet participated in MBG's efforts. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the MBG has found a formula for success that has been elusive for many other similar efforts. In conclusion, I offer a few "truisms" derived from my experience after nearly a decade of involvement with the group's efforts:

•It is important to have a written goal against which you gauge your actions and measure your success.

•Encourage and include. Do not try to force things on people. Make opportunities available to them.

•Communicate, communicate, communicate.

•Provide everyone equal access to the tools of information and analysis.

•Teach and learn. There is ample opportunity to do both.

•Obtain and use the best science available.

•Don't start what you can't finish.

•Be aware that people work hardest when it is in their best interest to do so. They work hardest together when it is in their mutual best interest.

Our zip code was changed to 87505, effective July 1. Please use the new zip code or the Postal Service says mail to us will be delayed.

Collaborative Stewardship

(con't from page 7)

longer traditions of farming and grazing, it is that embedded within the pitch of the pines, flowing within the water of the acequias, and growing in the fibers of the grasses are memories, passions, and histories that cannot be ignored. Sometimes through arrogance, ignorance, and even good intentions, we have insisted, in the name of science and progress, that we can separate the workings of nature from the workings of communities. But the separation of cultural communities from the landscape has been a violent act and has proved a destructive one for both the landscape and the people. If we ignore this fact of the inseparability of the culture from the landscape, we will relive some of the most painful aspects of resource management of this last century. As uncomfortable as they are to talk about, colonialism, poverty, and racism are intimately bound to resources here and have left their marks on the landscape and in people's minds in ways that can never fully be erased.

What this means for collaborative stewardship is that we cannot avoid talking about, arguing over, and hopefully learning from these deeply personal, profoundly complex histories that have become inseparable from these lands. To not acknowledge or to brush aside this history to get to the supposedly real issues is to miss the key to long-term, effective, on-the-ground conservation of these lands. It is also to miss an unprecedented chance for uniting social justice with environmental well-being.

[Top left] Kay Matthews of *La Jicarita.* (Photo courtesy of Eric Shultz.) [Left] Approximately 70 people attended the post-conference field trip to the Santa Barbara Restoration Project. (Photo courtesy of Courtney White.) [Above right] Matt Mitchell, organic beef rancher. [Lower right] Joe Torres of the Valle Vidal Grazing Association. (Photos courtesy of Gene Peach.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Surviving Dry Times
Saturday, August 11, 9am-4pm Roswell, NM (at Jack Hagelstein's ranch, east of town)

A FREE one-day workshop on drought and livestock management. The workshop will go over planning procedures and the 10 management principles to apply in a drought. Instructors are Kirk Gadzia and Guy Glosson.

Big Things on a Little Place! Saturday, August 18, 9:30am-12:30pm
a few miles south of Bernalillo on Hwy 313 (across from the Pueblo of Sandia)

This is a FREE tour of Sam Montoya's operation. He rotates 220 head of cattle through 30 pastures on 90 acres, using nothing more than some electric fencing and irrigation. He produces healthy food and a healthy profit too! Come learn about this unique operation and what it may mean for land and food in New Mexico.

Outdoor Classroom at Sid Goodloe's Carrizo Valley Ranch
Saturday-Sunday, August 25-26, 8:30am near Capitan, in southcentral New Mexico

Our annual trek to Sid's ranch is a highlight of the year. Come learn how watershed rehabilitation, progressive ranch management, and forest restoration can be accomplished together. Our instructor will be Kirk Gadzia, co-author of the National Academy of Sciences book Rangeland Health. Our host will be Sid Goodloe, rancher extraordinaire!

As an added bonus, on Saturday night, Sid will lead a discussion on the value of conservation easements to ranchers and others. He will make a presentation on his Southern Rockies Agricultural Land Trust and answer questions over dinner. This will be a great opportunity to learn about easements from the founder of the only ranch-focused land trust in the state. The cost for the two-day Classroom and conservation easement discussion is $35 per person, which includes food. Space is limited to 25 people.

Upcoming Events in September:

Outdoor Classroom at the CS Ranch (rescheduled)
Tour of Roger Bowe's Ranch
Hands-on Riparian Restoration Workshop on Largo Creek

For more information, call the Quivira Coalition at (505) 820-2544 or check out our website.

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