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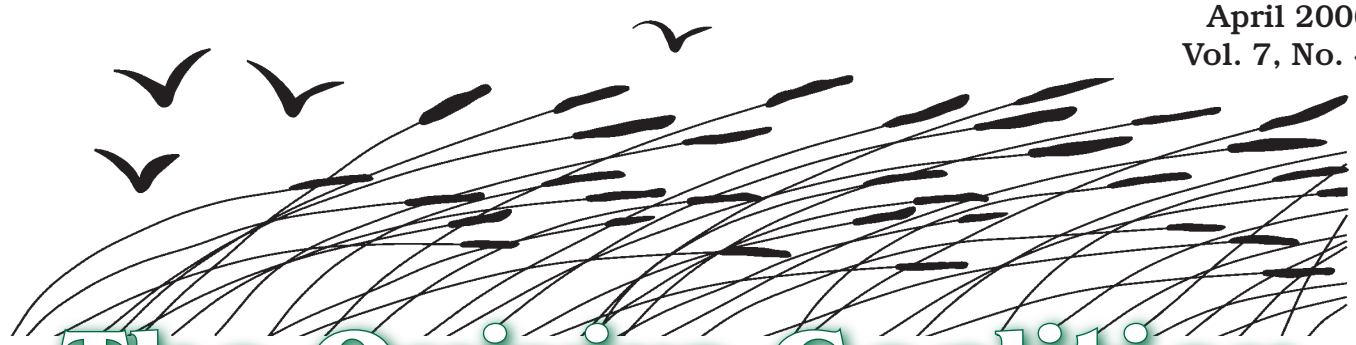

The Quivira Coalition

Education, Innovation, Restoration... One Acre at a Time

Mugido: Rethinking the Federal Commons

by Courtney White

I am tired of 'no.'

Recently, I attended a meeting at the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada where two ranchers, a husband and wife team, tried hard to convince the BLM to let them implement a visionary and audacious plan to restore life to Teel's Marsh, once a thriving terminal lake but now a lifeless salt flat. They passionately argued that they could revive the marsh by repairing the dysfunctional water cycle in the 100,000-acre watershed. Their daring idea? Break up the capped soil (often impervious to water infiltration) with the ground-disturbing impact of a thousand, or more, cattle hooves.

The ranchers' credibility rested on their long experience in range restoration, including their success in creating life on sterile mine tailings through the 'poop-and-stomp' action of animal impact. And their work was backed up by monitoring data, they explained.

They were supported at the meeting by a prominent environmental activist who had built a formidable reputation as an outspoken critic of the livestock industry. These ranchers were different, she insisted. She knew them to be careful stewards, having watched bird populations rise steadily on their grazing allotment for nearly a decade. And as a dedicated birder she knew that the marsh was part of an important historical flyway in the region.

The BLM's response to their entreaties, however, was 'no.'

The usual reasons were cited: the grazing permit wasn't in order, old paperwork had been misfiled, the proper bureaucratic procedure had to be followed, archaeological clearance would have to be done, workloads were too heavy, staffing levels too light, budgets were declining, demands rising, and, ultimately, an admission that 'higher ups' were too skeptical.

The ranchers responded by saying they would assume all the risk, including the financial cost, and do all the work. All they needed was a 'green light' from the government. Teel's Marsh, part of a congressionally designated Wild Burro Refuge (though overgrazed by burros, they noted), was essentially dead. It had nowhere to go but up, they said. They could do it.

"It'll never happen," said a sympathetic BLM range conservationist.

By the end of the meeting I was as frustrated and upset as the ranchers and the activist. That's because this is a too-common story across public lands in the West today. Progressive, innovative proposals to repair damaged land, to employ new land management models, to implement 'out-of-the-box' tools and ideas that produce results too often meet the same fate: 'No.'

This has to change.

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Reaching Across Fences

This is the last of our series on the challenges and opportunities of cooperative management in the West. In this issue we take a fresh look at federal lands and propose some new ideas on how it may be more effectively managed.

Moving Full Circle

This issue of our newsletter marks both an end and a beginning.

It marks the end to the four-part cycle on collaboration in the West that began over a year ago. With it comes the end of the newsletter's "old style" – both in form and structure.

After nearly eight years, we thought it would be good to shake up this publication's look and feel without changing its purpose or, hopefully, its effect.

The new publication (we call it a "newsletter" but it has always functioned more like a "journal") will include a new series called 'Voices of the Radical Center' which will feature the thoughts of 'radical centrists' from around the country.

We'll continue our profiles of innovative practitioners, though under the title "A West That Works." And we will continue to publish substantial articles on topics of interest to ranchers, conservationists, restorationists, scientists and others.

On a personal note, this issue also marks the end of my column "The Far Horizon" (for reasons that I explain inside). In the next issue I commence a new column titled "From The Ground Up" the purpose of which will be to analyze results from a new project that I am undertaking, thanks in part to a grant from the Claiborne-Ortenberg Foundation.

Over the next few years I plan to interview landowners, permittees, conservationists, scientists and others. My goals include: surveying the The New Ranch (see page 18); exploring a Land Health movement; expanding the New Ranch Network; and beachcombing for innovative ideas, methods, and policies.

More and more, I believe that the key to the future is innovation. Therefore, the objective of this project is to find out what works, what doesn't, what needs to change, and how we can do a better job of sharing what we know so all may benefit. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and, with permission, reporting on what I have the privilege to learn.

In the meantime, we will continue to aim for provocation in this publication!

From all of us at The Quivira Coalition, thank you for your support.

Courtney

The Quivira Coalition
1413 Second St., #1
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Ph: (505) 820-2544
Fax: (505) 955-8922

Executive Director
Courtney White
505-820-2544 Ext. 1
executive@quiviracoaliton.org

Associate Director
Craig Conley
505-820-2544 Ext. 2
cconley@quiviracoalition.org

Programs & Finance Manager
Tamara E. Gadzia
505-820-2544 Ext. 3
projects@quiviracoalition.org

Administrative Coordinator
Sheryl Russell
505-820-2544 Ext. 0
admin@quiviracoalition.org

Education Coordinator
Deborah Myrin
505-820-2544 Ext. 5
education@quiviracoalition.org

Grassbank Ranch Manager
Michael Moon
505-470-1721
mmoon@quiviracoalition.org

Grassbank Administrator
Catherine Baca
505-820-2544 Ext. 2
cbaca@quiviracoalition.org

Mapping Coordinator
Gen Head
505-820-2544 Ext. 4
genhead@hotmail.com

Visit the Website

www.quiviracoalition.org

Collaboration and Government Agencies

by Frank Hayes, District Ranger,
Clifton Ranger District, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona

When asked to write a thought-provoking article on the challenges, barriers, and difficulties of collaboration in the Forest Service, I had to think about this a bit.

As a land managing federal agency whose mission is 'Caring for the Land and Serving People,' why do we often struggle with collaborative efforts? As a District Ranger in the Forest Service for the last 15 years, I have had the very best job in the agency. Every day I have opportunities to work with all kinds of people, both from the government and private sectors, in the creation and implementation of ideas and projects whose intent is to foster land and community health, and allow people to learn and grow in a positive and productive environment.

We did not think about collaboration as a way to develop and nurture these relationships, we just did it because it was the right thing to do.

On the Clifton Ranger District we have had, and are enjoying, some real success stories. I am blessed to work in a District office full of people from diverse interests who love their work and work together extremely well as a team. Over the past decade or more, I have nurtured and enjoyed an excellent working relationship with County officials and Road Managers, and their employees who understand and share our unit mission and vision in all aspects of our work.

With the support of an outstanding range management specialist, I have watched and been a part of a budding association of permittees who have tremendous potential for changing the way we do livestock and land management on the District (Upper Eagle Creek Watershed Association, Quivira Coalition newsletter, Nov. 2004, Vol. 7, No. 1).

Most recently, once again with the able assistance and energy of District fire and range personnel, we have funding and commitments from various agency and public interest groups to achieve landscape restoration efforts across the District. Our combined goal is to restore and maintain land productivity and promote land stewardship and wise use.

All photos in this article were provided courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service.

January 2006 prescribed grassland burn on 4-Bar Mesa.

I am keenly aware that collaboration is a key foundation block in the mission and vision of Quivira Coalition. Though not an expert, but based on some experience, I might share some thoughts with you on successful collaboration, and perhaps some insights on why government bureaucracies often fail at collaborative attempts.

Collaboration is not a new practice. There are lots of ideas on which collaborative model is best for your organization, as well as what are the key aspects of collaborative success. A person or organization can spend a lot

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of money getting "collaborated" with the result, instead, of getting clobbered, overwhelmed, or misled.

I did a quick search on the internet to locate a new, perhaps more modern definition of collaboration, and to see what I was missing. Even as technologically challenged as I am, there were lots of ideas and information available. Perhaps that in itself is why we as an agency often struggle with collaboration – why we too foster and sponsor various workshops and learning activities about collaborative partnerships, when in fact the answers are always basic, and almost always right before us.

The proverbial "can't see the forest for the trees" cliché.

Insights

I have a very simple, basic definition of collaboration, learned from a lot of mistakes, misconstrued and sometimes lost relationships, and time in place: *collaboration is simply working together to achieve a common vision that is best cemented through hard work and shared results.*

There is an old saying that I believe captures the definition of collaboration (I don't know who said it – it might have been Aldo or Baxter Black): three things bind people together – blood, sweat, and tears. Binding people together is a cornerstone of collaboration at its very basic level. It's the answer to successes or failures of collaboration within agencies.

> *"...three things bind people together – blood, sweat, and tears."*

The very best example, the essence of the collaborative model, is a working and thriving marriage, plain and simple. I can attest to that – try building a new home with your spouse. That takes some collaboration skills! Collaboration is not something you can force on anyone, it just occurs, and it must become an everyday participatory effort.

When I think about the examples of our successes on the Clifton District, and how collaboration works, I think of these values and phrases:

- **Tenure = Sincerity**
- **Integrity = Honesty**
- **Credibility = Understanding**
- **Ownership = Land Ethic**
- **Commitment = Visions**
- **Sense of Community = Smiles, handshake, hug**
- **Hard Work = Blood, sweat, tears**

Insight One: As a rule, the people who work for the Forest Service have a lot of pride in their work and a sense of commitment to the agency and its mission and vision.

However, government employees who work at the Districts and Forests, where the good work occurs, swim through a sea of policy and regulation that often confuses, if not intimidates, most private citizens or forest users.

Due to the many controversies with such issues as livestock grazing, harvesting old growth forests, or roads and access – regularly highlighted in the news – the vast majority of the private citizenry do not equate the values listed above with federal employees. However, it is important to remember that the basic characteristics of government, federal or state agencies, with complex policies and regulations, do exemplify or exhibit these attributes. This is the first challenge to overcome.

Insight Two: If the values and simple concepts listed above are fostered by a federal agency at any level, but particularly at the ground level where the real work between people and the land occurs, then there is collaboration. Upper levels of the agency can best promote this by never losing sight of the mission and by incorporating these values into our policies. Often, however,

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like in any large organization, we begin to manage the structure and form of our agency, not the function.

This concept of function before form is worth thinking about. For example, after Tom Lasater, a rancher in Colorado, developed the Beefmaster cattle breed, his son wrote a book about his philosophy of raising cattle, highlighting seven important steps. The first and foremost step was to manage for cow function, not form. To stay in the breeding herd on open rangeland, a cow had to produce and keep a calf every year, regardless of circumstances. Later, Tom Lasater got more focused on when she calved, the size of the calves she had, where she grazed and how well she grazed, things like that.

It's the same with an organization or a government agency. When an organization or agency becomes so focused on form, we lose sight of function - our mission and vision.

Insight Three: Never weaken the bearing wall. Agencies are founded on policy and regulation, grounded in law and often cemented by litigation. While the mission and vision of the Forest Service is still as valid today as it was a century ago, our flexibility and options to move forward at the same pace and scale as private industry is extremely limited.

The agency's foundation or bearing wall is its policies and regulations – guidelines that cannot simply be changed overnight. But like any well-built bearing wall, modifications, additions, extensions can all be done around the original framework. Remember – it is often fear of weakening the bearing wall that prevents progressive and successful modifications, including successful collaborations.

Insight Four: Generally, the public wants to put the term "collaboration" into a nice neat box defined as a '50 – 50' split. However, time constraints, budgets, unbending regulations, and multiple commitments rarely allows Forest Service employees to give a full 50% to each collaborative team or effort they may be involved in. This is not a reflection of commitment or interest on the part of the agency employee –it is a simple statement of math. The 50% cannot be there for everyone.

A Partner Day celebrating the Centennial Service Award. Partners include Janette and Harold Filleman, Arizona Game and Fish, South East Arizona Sportsman's Club, Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona Elk Society, Arizona Mule Deer Foundation, Arizona Antelope, Audubon, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

I keep an old saying around in my clutter of book case antiquities in my office. It's faded now, but still as meaningful as ever: "I am not everyone, I am only one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do."

Insight Five: The common perception is that a relationship through a collaborative process means a 50-50 match in money, time, or both. Too often, we don't realize that good partnerships fostered by effective collaboration (remember the list of values) are never, ever 50-50 matches. The contribution in time, spirit, energies, and support along with information transfer often go way beyond a simple monetary match of dollars.

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Success

Several months ago, during an Upper Eagle Creek monthly meeting, we discussed an upcoming grant program funded through the Arizona Department of Agriculture. The application process looked like a "Who's Who on Eagle Creek", and it was obvious that the District could greatly assist in development of the application materials. By bringing together some basic information available in our GIS and hard files, we helped eight permittees submit for various levels of grants for a large list of existing range improvements sorely in need of complete reconstruction or refurbishment.

Centennial brass plaque that recognizes the Centennial Service Challenge Partnership effort. The plaque will be placed in a large boulder near interpretive panels overlooking 4-Bar Mesa.

Net result: over $700,000 dollars awarded to these permittees. Our current Forest Service budget for range improvements is $23,000 annually.

Like all valued relationships, contributions for collaborative success must come without a measure of time or priority. Keep in mind, however, that there are more and more time constraints and demands being placed on federal employees to produce results (e.g reduction of fuels near urban interface to reduce wildfire risk).

Employees are often rewarded more for targets of environmental analyses than for collaborative successes. National and international priorities are now draining funding sources. Outside funding sources are now essential to meet the mission of the agency, and effective and appropriate use of such wealth resources rarely occurs except through valued collaborative partnerships.

For those who do not know where Clifton Ranger District is located, it's near the pit of the earth, once the stepchild of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. It is the wild Blue Range where Leopold cut his teeth on Southwest forestry and discovered or developed many of his philosophies about the land, and the value of both people and what it would take to achieve restoration. Fortunately, there are many people who believe the first part of this statement, and many now who are discovering the last part.

Leopold said the following in his Sand County Almanac, and gave us some answers for collaboration and restoration: *those things that created the land wreck – the axe, cow, and plow, are the very things that would enable us to restore the land*. He also gave us vision about the land. Land is in fact a living, breathing thing that is forever tied to the success or failures of mankind. Land should be understood and allowed to function.

The other important point he emphasized was that people are an integral part of the land equation. This is more so today than ever before. There will never be more land, always more people. Collaboration must occur among people to ensure that the land remains functional, sustainable.

The future of the Forest Service, in my honest opinion, will depend on how quickly we realize and ensure our tie back to the land, with people working together to achieve common vision. Our

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successes at restoration and maintaining land productivity will depend on both the vision and the financial resources of our partners in achieving our mission.

Given the financial forecast for our country in the next few years, with commitments for continuing the war against terrorism, helping to rebuild hurricane-wrecked communities, and the inevitable onslaught of wildfire disasters that will again occur this year, collaboration with partners in shared vision and shared financial resources is the only hope for continued successes.

It is also important to never lose focus on what matters most in the agency: land and people. No matter what term or buzz word surfaces next that describes the need to work together as partners, collaboration will still remain. The concept of working together will not be done by people talking from podiums or writing essays about how this process should work, but by the folks who have there heads down and nose to the grindstones, turning concepts into realities on the land, day after day.

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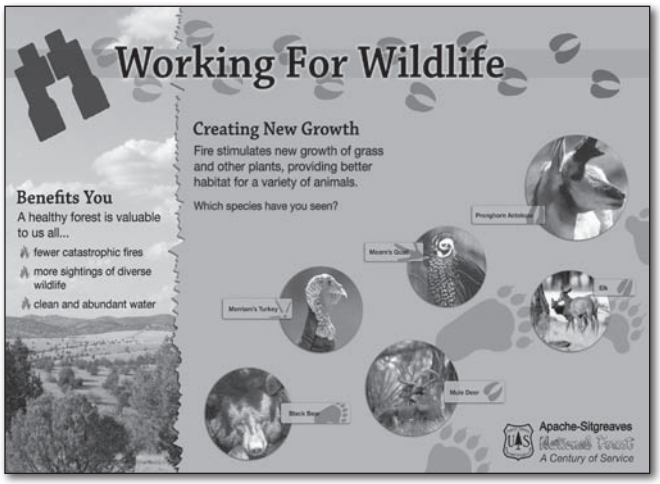
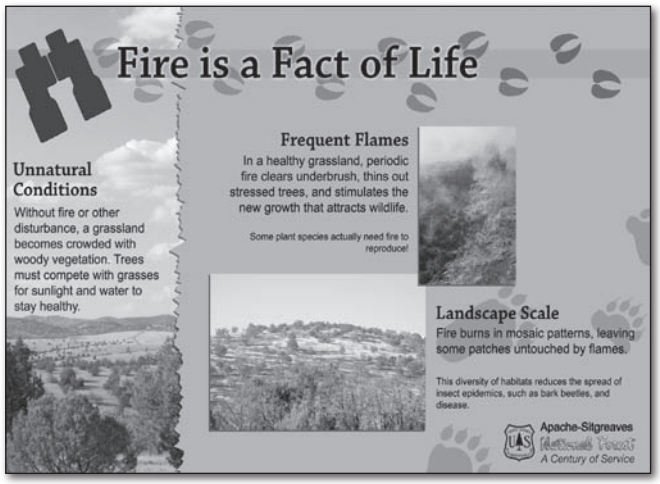
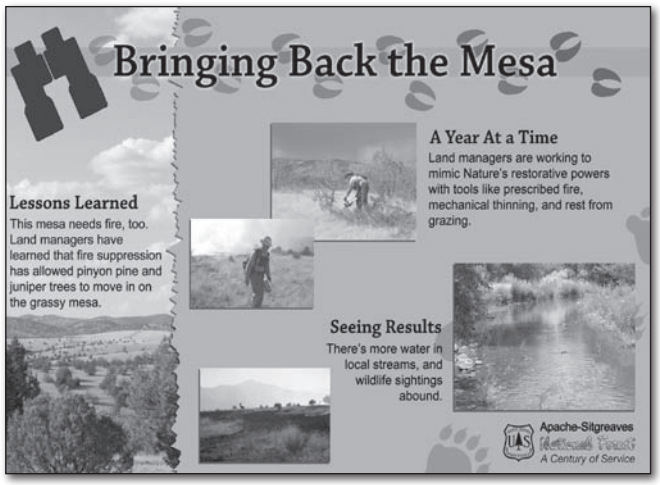




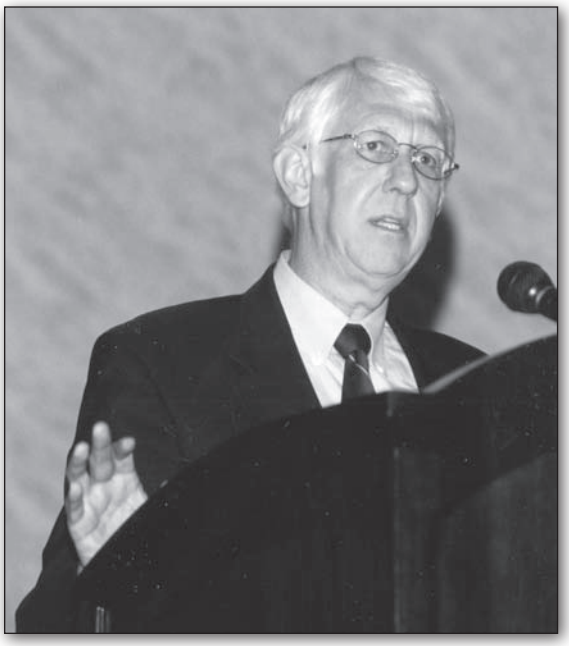


4-Bar Mesa Restoration interpretive panels.

Re-Examining the Governing Framework of the Public Lands

by Daniel Kemmis[1], Director, Center for the Rocky Mountain West, University of Montana, Missoula, MT

The need to examine new approaches to public land management has been gaining broader recognition from both sides of the political aisle. Former Democratic Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus has described the public land governance system as "the tangled web of overlapping and often contradictory laws and regulations under which our federal public lands are managed."



Dan Kemmis speaking at The Quivira Coalition's 2nd Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM; January, 2003.

Republican Congressman Scott McInnis, former chairman of the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, describes "a decision-making apparatus that is on the verge of collapsing under its own weight." Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth speaks of this phenomenon as "analysis paralysis," while former Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas simply calls it "the blob."

The Forest Service itself recognizes the all but impossible circumstances under which it operates. In June 2002, Chief Bosworth presented to Congress a report called "The Process Predicament" describing the effects of regulatory and administrative gridlock on national forest management.

The report focuses heavily on the agency's increasing inability to fulfill its primary duties. With regard to the agency's obligation to maintain forest health, the report states that "Large portions of the National Forest System are in poor or declining health," and concludes, that "the Forest Service operates within a statutory, regulatory, and administrative framework that has kept the agency from effectively addressing rapid declines in forest health."

Throughout the report, the Forest Service maintains that one result of the "process predicament" is that the health of forests in the West is suffering. That linkage may be debatable, but it is hard to argue with the fact that the health of civic culture and public discourse is seriously undermined by the time-consuming and often frustrating procedures that are now typical of daily life in and around the Forest Service.

The effect on morale within the agency is no less pronounced. People cannot be expected to remain enthusiastic about their work when its results often disappear into a procedural quagmire. Finally, while several factors—including global market forces—have contributed to the decline in the timber economy in many communities surrounded by

[1] This article was originally published in the *University of Colorado Law Review*, Vol. 75, Issue 4, Fall 2004 and reprinted with permission of the author.

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public land, the frustration of many local residents over the paralysis they see within the Forest Service is very real.

Portfolio

Given the amount of complexity that has been built into the public lands system over the years, a "diversified policy portfolio" may be the best path forward. Investors dealing with similar complexity keep some money in stocks, some in bonds, and some in real estate to maximize the chances of substantial gains while diminishing the risk of losing all their investments.

By a similar logic, a public lands policy portfolio should probably now include at least three elements: (1) comprehensive review of the entire public lands system, (2) incremental reform of the system, and (3) a deliberate period of experimentation.

The first element might involve creating a twenty-first century form of a public land law review commission. It has been nearly forty years since the last public land law review was commissioned by Congress, making this the longest period that the system has gone without comprehensive review.

Beginning a new public land law review raises a number of questions, including how it would be formed, who would be included, and what the political costs would be. If it were proposed and supported by strong, credible, and above all, bipartisan congressional leadership, a comprehensive review of laws might get to the heart of many problems facing the public land agencies. It could at least attempt to systematically address the basic structural problems that plague them.

While considering large-scale solutions to the operating system, attention should also be paid to opportunities for change on a more immediate scale. An example of this type of incremental reform was the bipartisan congressional effort to address the problems associated with the failing payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) program.

Because both sides of the political fence saw the need to address the problems of an incentive structure that encouraged local governments to push for unsustainable levels of timber harvest, while still leaving many of those local governments with dwindling revenues from the public lands, the political capacity developed to successfully adjust the program.

The result was the bipartisan Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which gave local communities incentives to balance restoration work with more sustainable levels of harvest, while stabilizing their revenue streams.

Congress, agencies, and other interested parties should continue to look for similar opportunities to address acute problems and bring positive incremental change to the system.

> *"Adaptive management derives from an acknowledgement that while ecosystems are appropriate units for public land planning, they are too complex and unpredictable to be managed according to traditional planning models."*

The third element of the proposed policy portfolio, deliberate experimentation, is reflected in several recent proposals to experiment with new approaches to managing public lands. Many of these proposals call for legislatively authorized experiments or pilot projects that are to be implemented, monitored, and evaluated through various forms of collaborative governance. One of the more promising examples of this approach has emerged under the title of "Region Seven."

New Idea

In 1998, a group of individuals with a variety of perspectives on the Forest Service met several times at The University of Montana's Lubrecht Experimental Forest to discuss the

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complex issues facing national forest management and governance. This symposium, organized by the Northern Lights Institute with assistance from The University of Montana's Bolle Center for People and Forests and the Center for the Rocky Mountain West, came to be known as the Lubrecht Conversations.

The group addressed the changing management philosophies within the Forest Service, collaborative methods in forest management, shifting public expectations, and the agency's complicated mission. It concluded by proposing that the Forest Service establish a framework for deliberate experimentation in national forest management.

Volunteers help build exclosures to protect riparian vegetation from elk and domestic livestock grazing and trampling. Comanche Creek, Valle Vidal Unit of the Carson National Forest, NM, September 2005.

The framework that the group described would test innovative approaches to forest management, including collaborative governance structures and other mechanisms to overcome some of the problems that now beset the agency. It suggested that the experiments be implemented under a "virtual region" within the Forest Service, to be called Region Seven.

The significance of choosing the name Region Seven derives from the unusual configuration of Forest Service regions. More than thirty years earlier, as a result of a 1965 national review of Forest Service management and organization, two existing regions of the Forest Service were combined and the original Region Seven in effect disappeared. The Region Seven designation has not been used since.

The Lubrecht Conversations proposed that Region Seven be given new life, not as a geographically contiguous region but as a collection of experimental projects on national forest lands across the country. Such a framework would allow innovative solutions to be tested and evaluated at sites throughout the national forest system and would encourage agency managers and public land stakeholders to develop better options than those that currently exist.

Perhaps the strongest element of Region Seven is its emphasis on adaptiveness, in particular its incorporation of adaptive management concepts into the governance of public lands. Adaptive management derives from an acknowledgement that while ecosystems are appropriate units for public land planning, they are too complex and unpredictable to be managed according to traditional planning models. Ecosystems simply will not conform themselves to five- or ten-year plans.

Conceding this, adaptive managers start with the best-informed management plan they can devise, knowing at the outset that applying that plan to a living ecosystem will produce unexpected and unintended results. As those results begin to accrue, the adaptive manager revisits the plan, adjusting it to the endless complexity of the ecosystem in question. Region Seven would apply this adaptive approach not only to public land management but to public land

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governance as well. It recognizes the impossibility of providing an immediate and final fix to every problem within this very complex system and instead concentrates on building adaptability into the system.

The value of such an experimental approach is that it does not attempt to change the entire public lands system at once but recognizes problems and invites innovative solutions to test in a few carefully chosen settings.

Principles

Although the experimental component of the policy portfolio needs to be aggressively adaptive, and therefore should not be heavily constrained in advance, some overarching principles should guide development and implementation of a framework like Region Seven. To encourage the generation and careful testing of alternative approaches to national forest management, the enabling legislation for Region Seven should:

* Create a national competition for selecting promising projects;
* Establish a broadly representative advisory committee to guide project selection and monitoring;
* Emphasize the experimental, adaptive nature of projects;
* Authorize and encourage projects across a range of administrative and geographic scales;
* Require monitoring of both process and outcome against established baselines;
* Mandate the keeping of a cumulative record of project activities and outcomes; and
* Ensure broad dissemination of lessons learned.

The first step in implementing Region Seven legislation would be to conduct a national competition for the selection of experimental projects to test new models of management or governance. A blue-ribbon commission made up of respected representatives of all major public land stakeholder constituencies would be organized to solicit proposals for alternative approaches to public land management and governance, select promising projects, and guide the implementation process. The projects selected would make up the new Region Seven.

A prescribed burn on Rowe Mesa, NM, April 2005.

The Region Seven projects should test a broad range of models. The types of experiments tested would depend largely on what public land stakeholders are currently attempting or would like the opportunity to try in their own communities. The following list is not meant to be prescriptive but merely to suggest the possible range and variety of models:

* Trust Model. The public land in question would be managed by a board of trustees, pursuant to a binding trust instrument.
* Budgetary Incentives. After some initial period of federal budgetary support, the experimental area would be expected to generate most or all of its own funds.
* Collaborative Planning Model. A collaborative body would write a

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Albuquerque Wildlife Federation and other volunteers pose for group photos after a fun riparian restoration work day on Cedro Creek, Cibola National Forest, Tijeras, NM; April 2006.

management plan for the area, while existing public land managers would be charged with implementing it.

* Collaborative Governance Model. A collaborative group would be empowered to write and oversee implementation of the management plan.

If these experiments are to be of consequence, it is very important that they be carefully monitored and evaluated and that the results be analyzed honestly. The resulting information must be broadly disseminated so that as many people as possible can learn from the experiments and adapt the lessons to their own settings. The experiments should also be allowed to operate for at least five years— preferably ten or even fifteen years—so that their long-term viability can be legitimately evaluated.

In summary, public land planning and management has become increasingly embroiled with statutory, regulatory, and judicial imperatives that too often prevent the system from working effectively, leaving both agency personnel and the affected public deeply dissatisfied with the process and the results.

No comprehensive solution to this state of affairs is likely to be achieved in the foreseeable future. But there has been increasing interest, both among public land constituencies and within Congress, in authorizing a period of deliberate experimentation where a number of carefully conceived, broadly supported, and carefully monitored experiments could test the viability of alternative forms of public land planning and management.

The opportunity that the Region Seven concept presents is to move beyond adaptive management to adaptive

Exploring Region Seven

An Interview with Daniel Kemmis, January 2006

QC: How do we get innovative ideas and practices into the federal lands system?

K: There is already a lot of innovation on the ground. My take on it is that we have more and more very skilled and able people who care a great deal about public lands, who know their own stretch of public land; they know their own ecosystems; they know their own local communities, and they have some very good ideas about new ways to achieve good, solid public objectives on public lands. Some are employees of agencies themselves, many are members of nonprofit organizations. Often the people with good new ideas are members of collaborative groups and sometimes they might include public land permittees. It's a broad range of people.

But the basic idea is just that there is this classic 'yankee ingenuity' at work with people coming up with good ideas about new ways to do things. But you have a public lands management system that, through no fault of anybody's, has become more and more bureaucratized and it is more and more set in its ways. That bureaucratization is almost inescapable.

The basic idea behind Region Seven is simply that there's probably no single fix that you can successfully apply to a system that big and that entrenched. Personally, I don't think you should try to apply a single fix to it. But it sure would be helpful if there were at least some room within the system for some serious, well-chosen experiments that would enable us to try some new things, that would enable us to monitor how those experiments are doing, and then see if any particular idea would be worth applying more broadly within the system or not.

QC: Region Seven would be a 'virtual' region would it not?

K: Right. The idea would be to establish a framework for experimentation – something that could be used throughout the entire national forest system. I might just say where the name Region Seven comes from. Back in the 1960s, there was a consolidation of a couple of national forest regions in the East and Region Seven disappeared. So when we started talking about this experimental framework, we said 'why not create a new Region Seven that would not be located in any one place, but would be a collection of different experiments?'

The idea is to create a Congressionally-approved structure that would establish a competition where people with good, sound innovative ideas could bring those ideas into the competition. What I think would be best would be to have a blue-ribbon panel made up of representatives of a broad range of groups that are interested in the public lands. Serious, seasoned people on this panel would both review the submissions and establish monitoring criteria and so on. And then you would pick a few varied experiments and they would be allowed to run for a period of years. In some cases they might be relieved of some of the regulatory burdens that so often get in the way of innovative approaches, while still being subject to all the major environmental laws, etc.

QC: Won't that be tricky?

K: There have to be ways to do this that keep the statutory framework firmly in place, so that it is clear that the objectives of national legislation must be achieved, while providing a framework for achieving those national objectives in a more creative way.

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An Interview with Daniel Kemmis

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QC: How would Region Seven be funded?

K: I have not generally been favorable to an approach that would require any substantial amount of new funding. Essentially, what we're talking about is doing what's being done now, just doing it in a different way. Hopefully, it would be possible to move around already appropriated funds to accomplish what those funds are already meant to accomplish, but to do it more cheaply. This shouldn't be thought of as a new spending program.

QC: Couldn't part of the 'experiment' be finding alternate funding sources, especially through entrepreneurial activity?

K: Right. Clearly part of the strain on the public lands agencies is the question 'How are we going to come up with the funds to do what we want to do?' I think we need to be innovative about that as we are about any management mechanism. Ideally, a broad range of experiments would be brought forward - some of them new ways of approaching governance, some of them new ways of approaching management or planning, and some of them, hopefully, would be new ways of generating the revenue it takes to manage these lands.

QC: In a sense, we're talking about 'adaptive governance.'

K: We are. That is what I have argued Region Seven is all about. We know well what adaptive management can be, but I really think we need to acknowledge that it is time to bring the same principles to bear on governance.

QC: It's a bit ironic that some of the experiments might go back to earlier models, including herding, grassfed food, and so forth.

K: In a sense we're getting in touch with some ancient wisdom. That doesn't mean that we go back and do things exactly the way they did them a hundred or two hundred years ago. This is not a matter of nostalgia. But one of the things that makes human history interesting is that we do continue to learn from the past and to learn from some of the mistakes that we have made. In fact, one thing we can be certain of is that we're not going to stop making mistakes.

Part of the idea of an experimental framework is that we need to be clear up front that some of the experiments won't work. That's just in the nature of things. Scientists have always known that. You put forward hypotheses and some of them are wrong, but some of them are right. If you test them carefully enough you can advance, and we can do that with public lands management.

QC: What does your crystal ball tell you about federal lands in fifty years?

K: The idea of the public lands is a great and noble experiment of its own and one that deserves to be continued. It's just that by the nature of things it has become institutionalized in ways that make it harder and harder to be responsive to new ideas. I think there are possibilities to inject some flexibility into the system that allows for creativity, that allows for us to carefully monitor new approaches and find out what works well.

Frankly, that's the way most of us live our lives. Most of us would not live our lives according to the Forest Service rulebook (laughs) and we wouldn't want to try. We can get more flexible about this and achieve public goals more thoroughly than we're doing now. We can do that, and we should do it.

The Far Horizon

by Courtney White

When I began this column the horizon seemed far away indeed.

In fact, I wondered at the time if we might be staring at a mirage. This is one of the reasons we chose the word "Quivira" – it signified an elusive dream as much as it marked unknown territory to early explorers of the Southwest.

Dream or not, one thing was clear - we had no idea of how long the journey would be or how far down the road we would go.

Almost as proof, we nearly stumbled on the very first step.

On a fine June day in 1997, Dan Dagget and I arrived at the Unitarian Church in Santa Fe to set up The Quivira Coalition's inaugural workshop, only to discover that I had the wrong key to the front door. We were locked out. Panicked (because we were running late), I drove to the nearby Sierra Club office and made a desperate call to a fellow activist, who, luckily, was home.

We secured a key, and had a marvelous day. To our surprise, and delight, over fifty people attended, including ranchers, scientists, and conservationists. The mood was convivial, and the speakers – Dan, Kris Havstad, Jim Winder, Ray Powell, and Frank Hayes – were as provocative as they were informative.

Organizationally, we were armed with only two things that day: our first newsletter, which we distributed to every chair, and hope.

Our second event, held in a motel meeting room in Silver City the following January, went more smoothly. Over one hundred people came to hear the "Dan, Kris, and Jim show," including another healthy mix of ranchers, agency folk and conservationists. The meeting also attracted our first vocal anti-grazing activist, who held his tape recorder up in the air for all to see. It also attracted our first reporter.

The meeting had been denounced the day before in a press release issued by a coalition of environmental organizations, who branded us, as I recall, "handmaidens" to the cattle industry. This must have been news to the New Mexico Cattlegrowers' Association who had recently written me a very chilly letter.

I took both the denunciation and the chilly reception as positive developments.

A Quivira Coalition tour of Jim and Joy William's ranch, August 1998.

Grassroots to Village

Meanwhile, we took our case to the ground. One of our original goals was to become a true "grassroots group" – meaning, we wanted to start over at the level of grass and roots. To do this, we organized Outdoor Classrooms on well-managed ranches, taught by Kirk Gadzia. These proved popular – again somewhat to our surprise – drawing the now familiar mix of people.

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We were also pleasantly surprised by the large amount of media attention we received in the first year. We assumed that since we were wearing neither a Black Hat nor a White Hat, the press would ignore us. Quite the opposite happened.

In fact, over time a curious thing took place: the public denunciations dropped off – and not just of The Quivira Coalition, but of livestock grazing in general. Not so long ago, if a "pro" cattle story appeared in a magazine or newspaper article there would invariably be a tide of angry rebuttals, some of them personal.

Kirk Gadzia leads an outdoor classroom at the Gray Ranch, October 1998.

But the rebuttals and the charges have evaporated – and I think this is a significant sign of change, and success.

At the same time, I believe the core message of the conservation community – that ranchers, especially those who run livestock on public lands, must perform to higher environmental standards – has been heard too. Is overgrazing still a problem in the region? A quick glance out the window as one drives suggests that it is. But it seems clear that 'business as usual' on our rangelands today is more hindrance than help in a rapidly changing world.

Meanwhile, the idea of 'The New Ranch' – a term I made up to describe the progressive ranching movement emerging in the region – continued to evolve and grow as we met more landowners, consultants, and conservationists doing innovative things. In particular, our work with Bill Zeedyk opened our eyes to the important possibilities of restoration.

All of which lead us to change our mission statement in the fall of 2002. It now reads: "The mission of the Quivira Coalition is to foster ecological, economic and social health on western landscapes through education, innovation, collaboration, and progressive public and private land stewardship."

Over the years, our work has expanded to include demonstration restoration projects on Comanche and Cedro Creeks and the Dry Cimarron River, owning and managing the only federal lands Grassbank in the West and publishing manuals on fixing ranch roads, and monitoring grasslands.

And yet we have tried hard not to lose sight of one of our core original goals – to provide a meeting-place for the 'radical center.'

A sign of how close the horizon has come happened in April 2006, when a reporter writing for the online magazine 'New West' wrote the following headline about a Report on the State of the Rockies: "The New Ranch May Be Key to the Success of the New West."

In the beginning we tried to provide a 'neutral ground' on which various people of diverse backgrounds could meet, talk, look, learn and listen. Upon the conclusion of our Fifth Annual Conference this past January, however, when another five hundred people showed up, it became clear that 'neutral ground' has become a village.

And ours isn't the only village. Across the West, a movement has been building slowly for a decade, focused

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Nearly 500 people attended our Fifth Annual Conference, "Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide," January 2006.

on exploring our common interests rather than arguing our differences. Little villages, widely separated, popped up first in watersheds and on ranches – collaboratively determined to break gridlock. Over time, these villages proliferated to the point where they seem to be everywhere today.

Nearly nine years later, in other words, the horizon doesn't seem so terribly far away anymore. We still have a long way to go, of course, but I can say with confidence that the dream is no mere mirage.

It's time now to focus on the village, not the horizon – and even here we are consistent with our original goals. In fact, I'll conclude *this* column with a quote from the end of the *original one*:

"A good place to start is with affection. We love the land, but so do ranchers, and for reasons that are more similar to ours than we suppose. Each of us loves the open space, the blue skies, the wild critters that live there, and the feeling of a fresh breeze in our face. Going outside is going home, John Muir said. It is a home that we all share."

The New Ranch: A Definition

"*Healthy land is the only permanently profitable land*." – Aldo Leopold

During the past thirty years, while the debate over public lands grazing has grown increasingly shrill, a small number of people have quietly worked to resolve problems where it counts: on the ground. They have come together at the local level, where their knowledge and concern are strongest, to learn from each other and from the lands they share. Their work has been neither fast nor easy, and many questions remain to be answered, but they have produced results: grasslands that are more productive and diverse, where erosion has diminished, where streams and springs that were dry now flow, where wildlife is more abundant. As a result of these changes, they are also ranches that are more profitable for their owners.

Kay and David James own and operate a 'New Ranch' near Durango, Colo.

The Quivira Coalition has coined the term The New Ranch to refer to these places. Founded in 1997 by two conservationists and a rancher, the organization's mission is to foster ecological, economic, and social health on western landscapes through education, innovation, collaboration, and progressive public and private land stewardship. Central to this goal is spreading the word that the natural processes that sustain wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and functioning watersheds are the same processes that make land productive for livestock.

The key concept is land health which the National Research Council defines as "the degree to which the integrity of the soil and ecological processes of rangeland ecosystems are sustained." In other words, before land can sustainably support a value, such as livestock grazing, hunting, recreation, or wildlife protection, it must be functioning properly at a basic ecological level. The New Ranch, therefore, is a grassroots movement that literally starts over where it matters most: at the grass and the roots.

Elements of The New Ranch include:

1. Implementing innovative land management practices that succeed in improving both the conservation values and the economic sustainability of ranches across diverse landscapes. These practices do not add up to any single blueprint or recipe for successful management. Indeed, one of the lessons of The New Ranch is that management must be flexible and attentive to the particular circumstances of each ranch's ecological, economic and social conditions.

"...before land can sustainably support a value, such as livestock grazing, hunting, recreation, or wildlife protection, it must be functioning properly at a basic ecological level."

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The New Ranch

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Cattle on the James Ranch.

2. Documenting the success of these land management practices with scientifically credible monitoring protocols and articulating their results to diverse audiences.

3. Helping to create a common vocabulary for ranchers, scientists, agency officials, and conservationists to use in addressing rangeland and other land health issues. These groups share a concern for the land, but all too often they lack a common language to communicate their views and resolve their differences.

4. Educating various audiences about the complexity and difficulty of managing rangelands well. While no single person or group – public or private, commercial or non-commercial – has the "answer" to good stewardship, many have parts of the "answer." The key is to put the parts together collaboratively. This means respecting "old" knowledge, especially local knowledge, and integrating it into current practices. The New Ranch does all of this through a willingness to share one's knowledge, to look, listen, teach, and be taught in turn.

5. Restoring damaged land to health. Many landowners are engaged in an effort to restore and maintain the basic ecological processes and functions that support rangeland health, including: soil stability, watershed function, nutrient and energy flows, and resilience to disturbance. At the same time, many are exploring the economic potentials of restoration – a financial payback that some consider the next significant new frontier for The New Ranch.

Mugido

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Legacy

Unhappy thoughts about federal lands management is a new and uncomfortable feeling for me. For all of my adult life, plus a few of my teenage years, I believed in the ubiquity of public lands. When traveling to national parks, for example, I invariably expressed this belief by writing in every visitor book: "Buy more land!"

I meant it too. Like many of my fellow urbanites, I believed the simple answer to the complex questions surrounding land use in the West was increased federal ownership, especially if it meant an expansion of our national parks.

My belief took root in my youth. Shortly before my sixth birthday, my family and I emigrated from Philadelphia to Phoenix in a covered station wagon, becoming part of the great demographic shift that would irresistibly transform another sleepy western town into a bustling, and apparently boundless, megalopolis.

Photo right: Teel's Marsh, now a salt flat.

Photo Below: Looking for signs of life below a surface of capped soil in the Teel's Marsh Watershed.

My parents, like so many of their generation, had farm roots, though neither was interested in agriculture anymore. As an unconscious compromise, perhaps, they moved us to what was then the edge of town and bought horses. This meant I lived in two worlds as I grew. Driving through an asphalt jungle by weekday and prowling the desert on foot and horseback by weekend, I careened back and forth between urban and rural, which, like so many of my generation, meant having the best of both worlds for a time.

It didn't take long, however, to notice changes. The edge of town, for instance, kept moving. This prompted a barrage of questions of my beleaguered father: why was some land being developed, and some land not? Why did the tide of houses stop at an invisible line halfway up the mountain behind our home? Why was there another invisible line at the edge of the Indian reservation? More achingly, why did the spray-painted message on real estate signs at the edge of town that shouted "SAVE OUR DESERT" never actually save anything?

The answer came at me in a rush during the summer of my sixteenth year when I took a backpacking tour of western national parks with high school chums. What I discovered, of course, was the ***federal commons***. I learned that the invisible line separated public from private, wild from non-wild, non-commercial from commercial, sublime from soiled.

I returned from this voyage of discovery believing wholeheartedly in the observation of Lord Bryce, who wrote years ago that our national parks were the "best idea America ever had."

"Saving" my precious Sonoran desert, I saw, meant only one thing: public ownership.

Over the years, as my interest and knowledge about the American West grew, my core belief in the primacy of the

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federal commons remained unshakeable. It even survived my stint as an employee of the idolized National Park Service, where exposure to the dysfunctional side of bureaucracies failed to rattle my faith in the preservation paradigm. If the federal government had warts, it was still preferable to any alternative.

I don't believe that anymore.

I still believe in the federal commons – the system of national parks, refuges, BLM and Forest Service lands that comprise half of the land in the West. And I still support public lands for the same reasons I did as a youth: the democratic ideal they represent, the beauty and biodiversity they protect, and the bulwark against residential development they provide.

I am also aware of history – that the idea of public lands retention was forged on the anvil of hard use; that a late 19th and early 20th century legacy of deforestation, overgrazing, and other forms of short-term exploitation of land and people contributed significantly to the popular demand for protection. And as long as the threat of hard use still exists – as unfortunately it does – the federal commons remains necessary.

But while the ideal is still valuable, its implementation has become a dilemma. Though it wrenches to say so, I'll put it bluntly: the old model of governance of these special lands is worn out. I believe this for the same reason that I think the traditional ranching and environmental paradigms are wearing out as well: old thinking and old structures have become obstacles to innovation.

The management of federal lands, proactive and innovative in the early years, has become today, for a variety of reasons, all about 'no.' This is a dilemma because although in recent years new ideas, new practices, new paradigms, new values, as well as new threats, have emerged in the West, few of them can get past the 'no' log-jam on public lands.

Rather than despair, however, I began to look for a new model of public lands management that would serve as a starting point for a discussion on how to substantially reinvigorate what is still one of the "best ideas we ever had."

Two Examples

A few years ago, the state of Colorado used lottery money to purchase a medium-sized ranch not far from a major city along the Front Range. The goal of the purchase was to protect open space in a rapidly fragmenting landscape, as well as ensure environmental values for the long-run.

The trouble was the state had neither the capacity nor the desire to manage the land. So it issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) to see who might be interested in leasing the ranch. This was a competitive process, and, in fact, when the smoke cleared a rancher and his family had won.

The rancher promised to do the following: 1) he would make an annual lease payment to the state of Colorado; 2) he would keep the land in agriculture; 3) he would meet, or exceed, high environmental standards (documented by monitoring); 4) he would provide educational and other forms of outreach programs on the ranch, aimed particularly at the residents of the major city nearby; and 5) he would provide hunting and recreational opportunities to the public.

And in doing so he would accomplish the state's goals: open space would be protected and environmental values would be ensured.

In turn, the rancher received assurances from the state that he would be able to run the ranch as he saw fit, with a minimum of regulation. Most importantly, he would be allowed to make a profit (which enables him to make his lease payment). Regulation by the state was swapped for innovation, flexibility, and entrepreneurial energy

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"Though it wrenches to say so, I'll put it bluntly: the old model of governance of these special lands is worn out. I believe this for the same reason that I think the traditional ranching and environmental paradigms are wearing out as well: old thinking and old structures have become obstacles to innovation."

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on the part of the rancher. Colorado owned the land, and retained oversight, including, potentially, enforcement of environmental standards, but otherwise it basically got out of the rancher's way.

Why can't a similar deal take place on federal land?

Many of us thought something of this nature might happen when the US government purchased a 98,000-acre working cattle ranch, located in a large collapsed volcano above Los Alamos, New Mexico, and created the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) in 2000.

A Quivira Workshop on the East Fork of the Jemez River, flowing through Valles Caldera National Preserve.

The deal was brokered by New Mexico's senior Senator, Pete Domenici, whose support was contingent on the creation of a new model of federal lands management. Apparently as frustrated with the log-jam on the federal commons as anyone else, Domenici insisted that the VCNP be governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees, each representing a different "use" (wildlife, grazing, forests) of the land.

Although the legislative mandate of the Board is to protect the conservation values of the property, Domenici also insisted that the Board manage the Preserve for eventual financial self-sustainability – truly a remarkable goal for public lands. The only other example in the nation of a Board of Trustees managing federal land for conservation and financial gain simultaneously is the Presidio, an old military fort located in the heart of San Francisco – a wholly different kettle of fish.

But nearly six years later, the VCNP is nowhere near financial self-sustainability; and many observers, including this one, are doubtful that it will be able to achieve this important goal. Part of the trouble may be with the Trust model – perhaps managing land by Committee is easier said than done – or perhaps the trouble simply was elevated expectations. In either case, the VCNP "experiment" is beginning to look like a golden opportunity missed.

Take the livestock grazing program, for example. It has struggled from the get-go as a result of shifting directions from the Board, unimaginative performance on the ground, and poor public relations. Worse, it has lost money every year of operation – an astonishing fact given that the grasslands of the Preserve are some of the most productive in the Southwest.

Could things have been different?

Instead of micro-managing the livestock program, could the Board have done what the state of Colorado did: issue a RFP? Why not turn the grazing program over to a progressive land manager and let him or her do the work? If it were a matter of targets and conditions, such as environmental health, or educational activities, or outreach to local communities, why not write those conditions into the RFP? The role of the Board would have been then to provide clear objectives, do the monitoring, and collect an annual payment.

I firmly believe that the grazing program on the Valles Caldera, in the hands of any of a number of progressive ranchers I know, could be ecologically robust, responsive to social and cultural needs, and economically profitable – profitable to the Board (and thus the American people) as well as the rancher. And it could do so while being

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public land – owned and shared by all Americans.

I further believe this could be true of much of the federal commons. The rise of the progressive ranching model, coupled with an explosion of ecological knowledge and new methods of scientific documentation in recent years, means there is no intrinsic contradiction any longer between commercial activity and ecological function. This may have been the case once upon a time, but it is not now. The trouble, then, is not with the toolbox, or the profit motive.

The trouble is with the model.

Mugido

The examples of the Colorado rancher and the Valles Caldera National Preserve, coupled with my brief, but sobering, experience with the Rowe Mesa Grassbank, a 36,000-acre ranch on Forest Service land, have led me to a new idea for the federal commons.

I'll call it a 'mugido' – the Spanish word for the moo or low of a cow – though it can also be referred to as a 'RFP' model.

A mugido is a stretch of public land where the government vastly reduces its regulatory role in exchange for high environmental stewardship by a private entity. In a mugido the government's role is to set ecological and social standards and objectives through collaborative goal-setting, provide technical assistance (fire, archaeology, biology), and conduct oversight and monitoring. The role of the private entity is to meet, or exceed, the collaboratively-derived goals and objectives.

In other words, a mugido is an equitable public-private partnership. It would remain part of the federal commons, still influenced by national and regional goals, still owned by the American public, but operated by a private entity in collaboration with the overseeing federal land agency.

For example, while the Forest Service or the BLM would set environmental goals for the allotment (or landscape) it would be the permittee's decision on how to achieve them. The goals would be set collaboratively, drawing on each member's strengths, but the permittee would have discretion over the toolbox: what type of livestock to use, for example, and their numbers, timing, and intensity.

The permittee would be empowered to be as innovative, flexible, and entrepreneurial as he or she wanted to be; and the government would retain the right to judge the effects of these actions and respond appropriately.

Not all regulation would disappear. Ensuring the recovery and maintenance of endangered plants and animals, for instance, would be subject to enforcement. But collaborative decision-making coupled with innovative implementation of best management practices, audited by the government, means that the "hammer" of regulation could be laid down.

I need to be clear that by proposing a mugido model I am not trying to poke federal employees in the eye. Nearly all civil servants that I have met over the years are hard working, dedicated, and imaginative people. It's not their fault that the system has basically ground to a halt. Rather, a mugido acknowledges their plight – declining budgets, increased workload, more and more layers of rules and regulations – and seeks to find a positive role, as partners, for them on the land.

Nor am I proposing that all federal lands become mugidos – far from it. In the beginning, in fact, they will be few and far between. That's because they should be carefully created on a case-by-case basis and only when an allotment or permit has become 'open' – i.e. when it has been vacated by its previous owner.

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Mugido

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> *"A mugido is a stretch of public land where the government vastly reduces its regulatory role in exchange for high environmental stewardship by a private entity.....The goal of a mugido is to get innovation on the ground by blending the best of both worlds – the entrepreneurial spirit of the private community (which includes nonprofits) and the 'big picture' ideals of the federal commons."*

Mugido

(con't from page 23)

Another option would be to create a mugido when a current permittee is ready, willing, and able to make the transition. In either case, to succeed the private entity has to have the right set of skills, credibility, and financial resources in place. At the same time, a mugido cannot be imposed by the government – it needs to be voluntary. And if a particular mugido doesn't work out, then the government reserves the right to go back to the old model.

The goal of a mugido is to get innovation on the ground by blending the best of both worlds – the entrepreneurial spirit of the private community (which includes nonprofits) and the 'big picture' ideals of the federal commons.

"Achieving and maintaining land health requires having the entire toolbox at one's disposal. It also requires having the flexibility, and incentive, to quickly choose a particular tool for a particular job."

In other words, a mugido is all about 'yes.'

But what if the 'RFP' results in an out-of-state entity taking away an opportunity from the local community, especially if that community is historically, socially or economically disadavantaged?

I don't have a simple answer to this problem. Currently, grazing permits (and the private land they are attached to) can be bought and sold without regard to the needs of local communities. Ideally, mugidos would be locally-based and would engage local communities. Perhaps this can be written into the RFP in some way – that local partnerships are paramount or that the mugido must serve local interests to a significant degree.

Balancing local, regional, and national needs will be a central task of a mugido.

Elements

Obviously, this is a controversial idea, and undoubtedly there will be objections. But let me try to sort out what I see as the five key elements to any mugido:

1) The overarching goal is land health. The basic idea behind land health is that by restoring and maintaining land function – what Aldo Leopold called the 'land mechanism' – we can create a solid foundation for the social values we place on the land. In other words, if we jeopardize or degrade function (soil stability, water and nutrient cycling), then the land's ability to support our values (food, water, wildlife, recreation, grazing) will eventually degrade too.

Jared Diamond's book "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Succeed or Fail" documents in sobering detail what happens to communities and cultures when land function fails.

Fortunately, advances in ecological knowledge, such as the 'state-and-transition' model, coupled with new quantitative and qualitative monitoring protocols mean we have a much clearer picture of what land health means than we did sixty years ago when Aldo Leopold coined the term.

This means that land health targets can be described, measured, and analyzed. They can be achieved too, as well as enforced, if necessary.

On public and private land, the bottom line is land function – from the soil up. If land exists in a degraded condition and is in need of restoration, then that should be the primary goal of its managers. If it is healthy, then it needs to be maintained. Unfortunately, much of the West is degraded, for a variety of reasons, including much of the federal commons. Tackling this 'land health' crisis, principally through restoration, will require a great deal of innovation, education, and commercial activity.

2) The whole toolbox is available. Achieving and maintaining land health requires having the entire toolbox at one's disposal. It also requires having the flexibility, and incentive, to quickly choose a particular tool for a particular job. Nature is not static – it exists in a constant state of flux, including sometimes violent perturbations. Stewardship, especially restoration work, needs to be equally active – within

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the limits set by collective goal-setting. Evaluation of the effectiveness of any particular tool is necessary as well.

But the freedom to innovate is necessary too. The power of creativity needs to be tapped, encouraged, and rewarded, especially given the scale of the task of stewarding land today.

The initial response by the government to a new idea should be "why not?" If implemented, it should then be followed by monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment. Regulation should follow innovation at a distance – not stand in its way.

In a mugido, the principle role of the government is that of an auditor. It should check progress one or two times a year, maybe more, and suggest or require changes, if necessary. If a permittee has abused a tool, or failed to perform to predetermined standards, then the government reserves the right to terminate the relationship.

It can then issue another RFP.

3) Profit is a good thing. The key to innovation is positive financial incentives for restoring and maintaining land health. Additionally, delivering values that society wants must result in a profit for the steward. Negative incentives – the threat of regulation, for instance, or paying a land manager not to damage land (the traditional response of government) – won't work in the long run.

But the answer doesn't lie wholly in the market either – not as long it remains more profitable to exploit natural resources for short-term gain. Until we can create a 'healing' economy – one that pays landowners and managers to restore and maintain land health on par with what they can earn by damaging land function – the marketplace cannot be allowed to have a completely free hand.

The answer, in the meantime, is to create a public-private partnership that is profitable to both, ecologically and economically. Private entities would be free to be entrepreneurial on public land, within limits enforced by monitoring, and public agencies would benefit from increased land health. Jobs will be available locally, which will help maintain community health. The best 'yes' of all is a paycheck.

One nice thing about land – it will never be outsourced to a foreign country!

Right now, the incentives on public land all point in the wrong directions. Many grazing permittees feel little or no incentive to improve their stewardship partly because they are not rewarded financially for it (and are sometimes punished) and partly because they consider stewardship to be 'the government's job.' That's the problem with regulation – good stewardship needs to be encouraged and rewarded, not policed. And for federal employees there is little or no incentive to 'think out of the box.' Too often, individual initiative hits a brick wall of bureaucratic indifference.

Or as a friend likes to say: "Low input gets you low output."

4) Let government employees be free. Most civil servants don't want to be regulators. They didn't go to college to study how to be bureaucrats. They studied natural resource management, or biology, or archaeology, or planning. They went to work for the government because they wanted to be foresters, range managers, biologists, archaeologists, and planners. They wanted to be outdoors, in the woods, on a horse, doing research, or setting a prescribed fire. They didn't go into government to enforce compliance, sit in a cubicle, push paper, or appear in court.

Government employees need to be professionals again. Let them get to 'yes' by being biologists and archaeologists; let them monitor, and teach, and learn. Let them help.

Since private entities often won't

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> *"Government employees need to be professionals again. Let them get to 'yes' by being biologists and archaeologists; let them monitor, and teach, and learn. Let them help."*

Mugido

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have the technical or educational experience needed to understand all the variables of stewardship, this expertise can be provided by the government. The complex issues surrounding endangered species, for instance, require the involvement of specialized knowledge. This will be tricky since the intersection of wildlife management and land health, not to mention best management practices, is not fully articulated yet. But letting biologists be biologists is the first step.

This way they can become genuine partners in land stewardship.

5) Find a role for urban folks. The widening urban-rural divide is having deleterious effects across the West, politically, economically, culturally, and ecologically. As the West continues to urbanize at a rapid rate, and as city dwellers move to the country (or at least purchase big parts of it), the rift threatens to grow. Fortunately, efforts to close this divide are becoming more numerous, especially around organic farming, agrotourism, water quantity and quality issues, and the protection of open space.

"What is needed now is a way for urbanites to say 'yes' on public land. Restoration is one way – the physical process of getting out on the land and helping to heal a creek or a meadow with one's labor is a satisfying experience. Another is to become active in the stewardship of rural public land. Lend a hand, buy local food, invest in a cow, do monitoring, take a tour."

An effort needs to be made to bridge the urban-rural divide on the federal commons as well. In particular, urbanites who care about the condition and fate of public lands need to be given an alternative to conflict. Right now, the principle way a city-bound person can express their concern for a national forest or park is to write a check to a watchdog environmental organization. The typical response of these watchdog groups is 'no' – often for good reason. There's always a bad dam, development, or oil-and-gas wells to fight someplace. Fighting is as necessary as it is unfortunate.

But it is still all about 'no.'

What is needed now is a way for urbanites to say 'yes' on public land. Restoration is one way – the physical process of getting out on the land and helping to heal a creek or a meadow with one's labor is a satisfying experience. Another is to become active in the stewardship of rural public land. Lend a hand, buy local food, invest in a cow, do monitoring, take a tour.

At the same time, permittees on the federal commons need to find positive roles for urbanites. Pull them in, get them involved, make allies. Take their money, and give them a return on their investment.

Make them part of the solution.

Engaging the public constructively on a mugido should be one of the conditions of the RFP. It is their land, after all. The government should require that the private entity develop a plan for public involvement – tours, food, restoration, monitoring, participation in a grazing association – but it should then let the 'mugidoleros' make the final call.

Ultimately, a mugido is all about healthy relationships.

Will It Work?

A mugido is an exercise in the radical center. In 2003, twenty ranchers, environmentalists, and scientists came together to figure out a way to take back the American West from the decades of divisiveness and gridlock. The document that they produced set the following standards for membership in the radical center:

- The ranching community accepts and aspires to a progressively higher standard of environmental performance;
- The environmental community resolves to work constructively with the people who occupy and use the lands it would protect;
- The personnel of federal and state land management agencies focus not on the defense of procedure but on the production of tangible results;
- The research community strives to make their work more relevant to

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broader constituencies;

- For all, it means the sharing of authority and responsibility.

These are not easy things to accomplish. For one thing, collaboration is a complicated, and sometimes messy, affair. Managing a tool is the easy part – people are usually much more difficult.

But I believe a mugido might have a decent chance at success.

Let's go back to the meeting in the BLM headquarters in Nevada for a moment. The ranchers are proposing to restore Teel's Marsh to health through the innovative use of livestock. Their goal is to restore function to the 100,000-acre watershed that surrounds the marsh by repairing the damaged water cycle, principally by breaking up capped soil so that water and seeds can do their thing.

They are proposing to carry the financial risk – as well as reap any financial reward. They also propose to do all the work.

It's a radical and audacious idea, granted. But what if the BLM said 'yes?'

What if BLM employees sat down with the ranchers and worked on a set of goals, including ecological benchmarks, for the watershed? What if they pledged to do the monitoring, as well as provide the archaeological clearances and other technical support the ranchers needed? What if they provided the oversight needed to satisfy various public values, such as recreation, in the watershed?

What if they then became partners in what happened next?

The ranchers and their collaborative team, which includes environmentalists, could then go to work. They would have the flexibility to improve the watershed with whatever tool they thought appropriate, under the goal-setting guidelines, whenever, and for however long, they thought necessary.

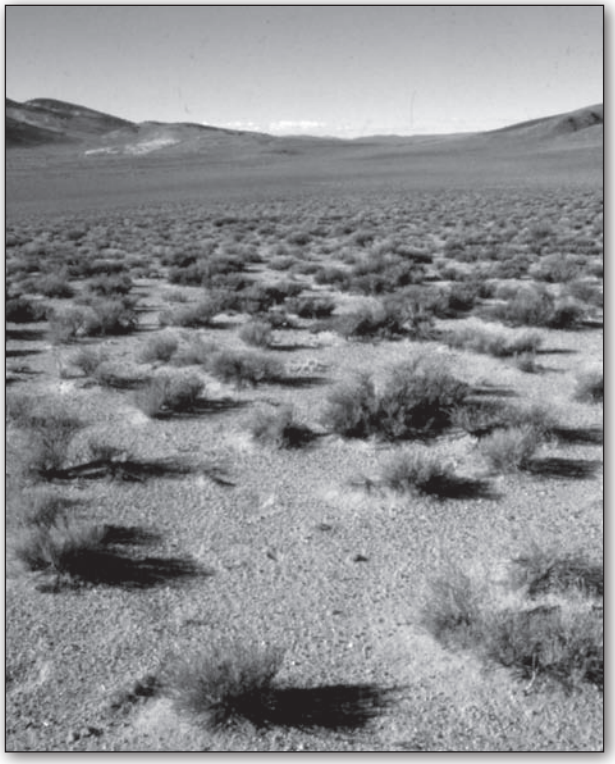
They could find creative ways to engage urbanites in their project. Horse owners could herd cows; school children could monitor land health; they could create a nonprofit organization called Friends of Teel's Marsh; urban elbow grease could be applied to the land.

In the meantime, the ranchers would be evaluated by the quality of their product: the restoration of the marsh. Hopefully, the evaluation won't be too harsh or hasty – restoration is slow business, especially in a desert. But periodic review by the government would serve as a reality check on the project. Are the ranchers moving toward their goals? Do the goals need to be revised? What worked? What failed?

Products would also include better communication, increased trust, stronger relationships, and true adaptive management. The marsh might even be restored!

Or maybe not. Ultimately, the skeptics could be right. Maybe the marsh can't be restored. Maybe cattle are the wrong tool. Maybe a mugido is a crazy idea.

But we will never know if we don't try.



"The Teel's Marsh Watershed: a potential mugido?"

Mugido

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Join the conversation -

(Mugido is pronounced moo jee doh.)

The Quivira Coalition's Sixth Annual Conference
January 18-20, 2007, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Fresh Eyes On The Land: Innovation and the Next Generation

In this Conference we use "fresh eyes" to explore innovative ideas, practices, and relationships that give hope to, and receive inspiration from, the next generation. Creating hope and options for the future is the key to all our efforts. Whether the goal is staying on the land, exploring and understanding nature, or simply 'going home again,' the next generation needs new opportunities to achieve their dreams. To accomplish this goal, the Conference will feature 'take home' ideas for current and future ranchers, conservationists, and public land managers alike.

Please plan to attend.

It is not too early to reserve vendor or advertising space. Contact Sheryl at: admin@quiviracoalition.org or 505-820-2544, ext 0#.

How to participate in The Quivira Coalition:

- **Join or renew your membership.** Visit our website www.quiviracoalition.org and click on "Join Us".

- **Give a gift.** Quivira Coalition memberships make great gifts!

- **Attend a Comanche Creek workshop.** See dates by clicking on "Go to Our Next Event" at www.quiviracoalition.org.

- **Order a Quivira Coalition T-shirt.** Two styles available - long sleeve moss green $15.00 or short sleeve beige $12.00.

WEBSITES

Comanche Creek Project
www.comanchecreek.org

New Ranch Network
www.newranch.net

The Quivira Coalition
www.quiviracoalition.org
(Watch for the new site in June, 2006)

The Quivira Coalition
1413 Second St., Suite 1
Santa Fe, NM 87505

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