



RANGELAND RENDEZVOUS FORUM

builds vegetation assessment, rangeland monitoring skills

Situation:

Rangelands are landscapes on which the native vegetation is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs, or shrubs and are managed as a natural ecosystem. Rangelands cover about half of the earth's land surface and around 85 percent of Wyoming. With this much rangeland and opportunity for education, it was decided to start an outreach effort focusing on these landscapes. Thus, the first annual Rangeland Rendezvous.

University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station's McGuire Ranch is northeast of Laramie and has been used primarily for late summer and fall grazing by the UW cattle herd. The Laramie Research and Extension (R&E) Center director and beef cattle manager determined a more concerted vegetation management strategy was needed for the property. They requested help in collecting information for a baseline inventory to assess vegetation condition and to develop clear rangeland management goals for the property. This was a great opportunity to provide an

educational forum on vegetative communities and rangeland monitoring while collecting a real baseline data set for the ranch.

A three-day camp introduced and was used to discuss the use of Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs), the basics of invasive weed mapping, plant identification, and vegetation monitoring methods. The format was a half-day in the classroom followed by two and a half days in the field. Participants and instructors camped on the ranch. Teams were formed, and each was given two sections (1,280 acres) of the ranch to identify appropriate monitoring locations, install vegetation transects to collect vegetative cover, clip and weigh to estimate forage production, and identify special management concerns. On the last day, data were compiled and analyzed and alternative grazing management scenarios explored. Fifteen individuals participated in the program, and a Natural Resources Conservation Service rangeland specialist, one UW Extension educator, and five state specialists conducted the workshop.

"I think you guys did great for your first time, do it again!"

Impacts:

Monitoring locations were identified and visited to collect data. Vegetation data were collected and calculated to evaluate plant community composition and biomass. The final day of the workshop, data were discussed in accordance to the goals and objectives for the property. Participants brainstormed potential management strategies that were discussed with the beef cattle manager. A final report is being compiled to give to the R&E center director and beef manager as a baseline inventory and analysis for the McGuire Ranch.

Evaluation results

When asked what three concepts or techniques were learned that made the largest impression, participants commonly mentioned:

- plant identification
- selecting monitoring sites
- monitoring methods

Participants were asked how they would use workshop information to change management. A few responses included:

- For my own small acreage and the ranch I consult with
- More transects could be better than more points
- I will try to increase number of transects, ecological keys, and weed mapping GPS method

One of the overall objectives of this first workshop was to gauge interest in the program and if participants believed they would apply the information and knowledge gained. The Rangeland Rendezvous proved successful, as noted from a participant, "I think you guys did great for your first time, do it again!" True impacts will become more evident as the program continues in future years. This multi-pronged approach of time in both the classroom and field coupled with building relationships during discussions around the "campfire" has the potential to impact the management of Wyoming's rangelands.

Table 1. Average responses to question regarding the workshop

Questions	Responses (1=poor or not at all, 5=excellent, very well, definitely)
Overall score for workshop	4.75
Questions answered by workshop	4.75
Information used to change mgt.	4.625



Brian Mealor
Extension Weed Specialist
 Department of Plant Sciences
 (307) 766-3113
 bamealor@uwyo.edu



Rachel Mealor
Extension Range Specialist
 Department of Ecosystem Science and Management
 (307) 766-4139
 rdmealor@uwyo.edu

Collaborators:
Mae Smith, UW Extension Educator, Southeast Area/Albany, Carbon, Goshen, Laramie, Platte counties
Travis Smith, UW Livestock Manager – Beef, Laramie R&E Center
Doug Zalesky, Director, Laramie R&E Center