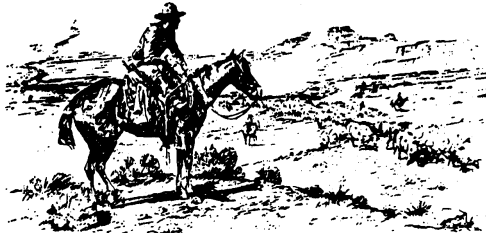


# RANGELAND

# NEWS



TO FOSTER ADVANCEMENT IN THE  
SCIENCE AND ART OF RANGELAND  
MANAGEMENT

NEVADA SECTION – SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

April 2009

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indicate “for the website” in email

subject

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(see map on last page for zones)

## PRESIDENT'S PONDERERS

Time is moving fast and it won't be long before the summer meeting. It looks like a good one is shaping up and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at Squaw Valley Ranch. I realize that not everyone will be able to make the meeting, we are busy people and it's impossible to find a date that is good for all. In the past, at least since I have been involved with SRM, the summer meeting has been held in mid-June. I don't think this is a date that is set in stone but I thought this would be a good opportunity to convey my two cents on the importance of a mid-June meeting.

I suppose, just from the standpoint of summer activities, mid-June is a pretty good time for the summer meeting. Range camp is usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in June, 4<sup>th</sup> of July follows shortly after that, then we get into family vacations, county fairs and before we know it summer is shot.

Mid-June is much more important when considering the nature of the summer meeting. Traditionally the meeting incorporates a campout and range tour. From this perspective, mid-June is the time of year in the Great Basin when range conditions usually look their best. The majority of precipitation occurs during winter and early spring and the window for range conditions to “look good” is in June. In drought years like the past two, that window is pretty small and may be almost non-existent. Generally speaking, however, June is the time of year when we can experience the forging

nature of an oftentimes unforgiving environment. It is the time of year when we can see the rangelands at their true potential.

As the summer season progresses the danger for rangeland fires increases. This puts greater restrictions on camping, campfires and back country travel, all of which are integral parts of the summer meeting. In years with a high incidence of wildfires, manpower demands increase and, because of the makeup of SRM membership, attendance at a summer meeting can be reduced.

I believe some consideration should also be given to the private producer when planning the summer meeting because the meeting usually involves interaction with a ranching enterprise. Ag producers are the busiest people on the face of this earth. I don't pretend to know what time of year is best for their ranch. From my experience, however, mid-June is probably a better time of year than others. Once again, due to the climate of the region, range conditions are usually good. Livestock have been turned out and need less attention. Things have a tendency to work on their own. It's time to reap the rewards of a long winter, usually by just taking a little time to relax before things begin to crank up later in the summer with haying, moving of livestock, gathering, weaning and a multitude of other tasks.

That's probably enough of my rambling on the subject, but I do think it is important to consider these things in future planning efforts and that the tradition of a June summer meeting continues in years to come.

Ken Conley

## **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**

**Jerry Annis**, Battle Mountain, [jerryannis@hotmail.com](mailto:jerryannis@hotmail.com)

**Maura Bradbury**, UNR, Reno, [cocktailbrand@gmail.com](mailto:cocktailbrand@gmail.com)

**Gary Cottle**, NAVFAC Southwest, Fallon, [gcottle@cccomm.net](mailto:gcottle@cccomm.net)

**Jon Griggs**, Maggie Creek Ranch, Elko, [jon@maggiecreek.com](mailto:jon@maggiecreek.com)

**Lesley Morris**, USDA-ARS, Reno/Logan, [lesleymorris@gmail.com](mailto:lesleymorris@gmail.com)

**Marc Pointel**, BLM, Tonopah, [mpointel@nv.blm.gov](mailto:mpointel@nv.blm.gov)

We hope you will join us for the summer meeting and tour at Upper Clover Ranch in June. See article.

## **REMEMBERING "CHEERFUL CHARLIE" FISHER**

Charles S. Fisher, "Cheerful Charlie," created laughter and fun for almost 89 years before prostate and bone cancer took him Jan. 17, 2009. He was born Jan. 31, 1920, "5<sup>th</sup> down and 7<sup>th</sup> up" in an industrious ranching family outside of Brockton, Montana. He attended Fisher Elementary and graduated from Billings HS. After attending Rocky Mountain Polytechnic he enlisted in the Army where he spent 2 years in the Philippines as Team Leader installing radio equipment in control towers.

He married Rhoda Hanson in December 1946 and returned to Rocky Mountain College completing a BS degree in Chemical Engineering and a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree in Biology. He received his 3<sup>rd</sup> BS degree at Washington State College in Animal Husbandry. For 26 years he was employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs first as an Extension Agent in Washington then as Soil and Range Conservationist and Fire Control Officer covering all of Nevada and portions of Idaho and Utah. He retired in 1979, and continued to do environmental contract work.

For 37 years he was a 4-H Leader and supporter, participating in fundraisers, fairs, and projects. He was active in the Society for Range Management for 34 years and was awarded "Range

Man of the Year (1979),” “Dedication Award (1981),” and “Sustained Lifetime Achievement Award.” He was very dedicated to the Washington State and the Nevada Youth Range Camp. As a wild horse lover since the age of 8, Charlie presented educational slide shows on the wild horse issue, testified in legislative committees and served on Gov. Bryan’s Wild Horse Committee, relentlessly promoting common sense and balance between land, animals, resources and people. His motto: “Preserve the Wild Horse and Protect our Rangelands. Charlie was involved in every aspect of Rhoda’s quilting endeavors from cutting templates to setting up the displays. Although he did not sew he kept everyone in stitches...

In lieu of flowers he would appreciate donations made to the Robertson-Fleming Range Management Scholarship, UNR. Checks: Made Payable to - NV Section – Society for Range Management (note for Robertson Fleming Scholarship in the name of Charlie Fisher, c/o Denise Adkins, 1981 Case Street, Winnemucca, NV 89445.

A Life Celebration will be held May 2 at 1:00 at Hacienda Restaurant and Bar, 10580 N. McCarran Blvd, Reno, NV, RSVP if possible [sydmckenzie@ymail.com](mailto:sydmckenzie@ymail.com) or PO Box 33534, Reno, NV 89533

### **UNR RANGE CLUB ANNOUNCES!**

UNR Range Club presents their first in a series of speakers: Kent McAdoo of UNR Cooperative Extension. A lively presentation, “Basque Herders – The End of an Era,” Friday, May 1 on the UNR campus. Doors open at 5 PM, info on location and RSVPs (appreciated) to Brittney Askew at [unrangeclub@yahoo.com](mailto:unrangeclub@yahoo.com). Refreshments served and a chance to see the Will James display.

### **2009 SUMMER TOUR AND MEETING**

The Summer Meeting continues to develop into a not-to-miss event at the Upper Clover Ranch in western Elko County led by Gregg Simonds of the ranch and Open Range Consulting. Further information provided identifies the speakers participating that were listed in the previous newsletter article you can find at <http://www.ag.unr.edu/nsrm/newsletter.html> for more information on the tour. Brian Elmore is president of the Midas Chapter of Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and he has been active in sage grouse work on the ranch, Gary Sundseth is the Surface Resource Manager for Barrick Gold Corporation, and Carol Evans is the Riparian/Watershed Specialist for the Elko BLM Field Office. Rich Temoke is the irrigator on the ranch and Jesse Baatz the cow boss; they bring years of experience to our discussion. Eric Sant is the GIS specialist for Open Range Consulting and Ken Gray is a biologist for NDOW. Craig Mackinnon from BLM’s headquarters office has been working on BLM’s new assessment method that intends to utilize remote sensing.

Gregg reports that the road from Battle Mountain is rougher than the road from Golconda and can be affected by weather. The first ten miles is paved and then it switches to dirt north of the Izzenhood. It is rougher than the Golconda route. The road via Golconda is maintained by the mine and the big trucks drive it at 40 - 50 mph even though it is gravel; weather will not be an issue and any vehicle can make it. Remember this is a remote location so bring everything you need with you. We will be camping with a very few rooms available inside for those who might need them. See the previous article indicated above for other options. **REGISTRATION IS DUE BY MAY 29 SO WE KNOW HOW MANY MEALS.** This includes three meals on Friday and breakfast on Saturday thanks to Gary McCuin and the Dutch Oven Gathering of the Curlew Chapter. It is a heckuva deal and you don’t want to be out there without food so get your registration submitted now. President Elect Ken Visser asks that we plan for carpooling on the tour to reduce dust, time, and wear and tear. Please send the following registration form to Treasurer Denise Adkins in Winnemucca. CEU’s will be available; the final agenda and the number of CEU’s will be sent out in a few weeks. There will be a business meeting Saturday morning, June 13, at the ranch after sourdough pancakes.

**REGISTRATION FOR  
NEVADA SECTION, SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT  
SUMMER TOUR AND MEETING  
UPPER CLOVER RANCH, ELKO COUNTY  
JUNE 12-13, 2009**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact at: \_\_\_\_\_ if need be  
(Email address or phone)

**CEU's will be available for the tour. (#TBA)  
Registration includes 3 meals on Friday and breakfast on Saturday**

**Students** (#) \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 = \_\_\_\_\_

**SRM members** (#) \_\_\_\_\_ x \$55 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Non-SRM members** (#) \_\_\_\_\_ x \$60 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to "NV SRM" - due by May 29 to:**

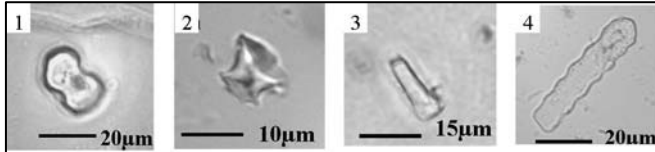
**Denise Adkins  
1981 Case Street  
Winnemucca, NV 89445**

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**PHYTOLITHS**

**A New Way to Explore Changing Vegetation in Sagebrush and Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands  
By Lesley Morris**

Pollen analysis from lake sediment cores and packrat middens are valuable tools for exploring changing vegetation in the Great Basin. Tree rings and fire scars have also been useful for understanding our changing fire regimes. However, lakes, packrat middens and even fire scars are limited within the sagebrush and pinyon-juniper ecosystems of the Great Basin. We need more methods to understand vegetation changes and fire in these ecosystems, especially over the recent past (e.g. since European Settlement). As part of my dissertation research, I examined the utility of soil phytolith analysis to record vegetation changes and fire events over the past 200 years. Here, I describe very briefly the basics of phytolith analysis and the findings from that research.



**Fig.1** Examples of phytolith types 1) Stipa grass 2) rondel 3) sagebrush 4) common grass

What are they? How do you find them? What plants do they come from?

Phytoliths are microscopic silica casts of plant cells that are formed in plants while they are alive and are released into sediments when they die and decay. Being made of silica, they are extremely durable and have been recovered from

sediments as old as the Eocene. Phytoliths are extracted from sediments by oxidizing away organic matter with strong acids and floating them out of the remaining soil particles using density separation. After they dry, what remains looks like a fine white dust to the naked eye. When a small portion of this dust is examined under a microscope, it reveals thousands of phytoliths with varying shapes and sizes (Fig. 1).

Phytolith production is variable between species, genus, family and even environmental conditions. Monocots (especially grasses) generally accumulate the most silica and produce the most phytoliths. But grass phytoliths are often very similar across species within the same tribe. So frequency of production is the measure used to tell them apart. For example, in my dissertation, I discovered that introduced grasses produce the phytolith shape known as a “rondel” with about half the frequency of native grasses. Sometimes there is a diagnostic phytolith for a species. Luckily, there is one for sagebrush! Unfortunately, pinyon pine and juniper do not produce phytoliths.

How can they be used? What do they tell us?

Knowing the types and frequencies of phytoliths in Great Basin native and introduced flora is the first step for making use of them. Then, to test the sensitivity of phytoliths to record vegetation changes over the last 200 years, I analyzed soil cores from locations where vegetation changes and fires were known to have occurred based on human records. Knowing that introduced grasses produced fewer rondels than natives, enabled me to look for increasing invasion over time. Knowing that pinyon-juniper woodlands would not generate a lot of phytoliths while grasses would, allowed me to test for changes in overall silica extraction weights overtime as in indicator of woodland encroachment. Finally, knowing that phytoliths can take on a darkened or charred appearance when the plant is burned, allowed me to use them to test hypotheses about fire. There is still a great deal of work to be done to understand soil phytolith changes in soils, but this research demonstrated their potential as a new method for exploring historic vegetation and fires in the sagebrush steppe and pinyon-juniper woodlands of the Great Basin Desert region.

Lesley Morris is a Post-doctoral Research Associate with the USDA-ARS Forage and Range Research Lab. For more information and to get copies of her publications about phytoliths and their use in the Great Basin, contact her at [lesleyrmorris@gmail.com](mailto:lesleyrmorris@gmail.com)

## 2008 GUND RANCH SUMMER TOUR NOTES

**First stop** on the tour was the bench south of ranch HQ to see the effects of cattle grazing cheatgrass in the fall. There are more Crested wheatgrass and Sandberg bluegrass heads this year and the globemallow and Needleandthread did great. Barry Perryman said if they hadn’t grazed there would probably be 500 pounds of duff here; it has been opened up so the perennials can breathe. They have seen forage kochia move a lot. Barry thinks the liquid supplement given makes them crave dry matter. He advocates that BLM should use this prescription grazing in the areas that it can do good for no AUM charge.

At **Stop 2** Ken Conley gave a thoughtful, reflective description of changed management on the Gund Ranch the last few years. He said if we allow a cow to do what she was meant to do to succeed, she will. A few years ago he looked at the whole ranch, with 20 years experience, both the private and public lands, and asked, "What should we do to make it easy on the cow and ourselves? What do we have that will extend the green feed source of the meadows?" Now calving starts mid April, they go on the mountain (BLM permit) April 1 and the cattle chase the green and are not in the riparian areas. By July 1 they come down onto the meadows in the valley which creates a tighter calving season since the bulls don't have to be scattered. They sell calves the first part of November when California is begging for a 400 weight calf. Their production is up to a consistent 95% conception rate in a 60-day period and only an ultimate 50 pound calf weight difference because mom is on green grass when the calf is born. They are allowing a 60-day growing season on every acre of the BLM allotment with the two-pasture rotation system and the riparian areas look good. During the second trimester the cows are on the valley bottom when they don't need the best feed. Heifers are calving with cows on their own. From January 1 to April 1 they are on the meadows with a supplement. The meadows are fertilized, rotated, and the hay windrowed for the cows to clean up. Hay is only removed if there is extra which reduces equipment costs.

Gund Ranch management is balanced now, the hole had been summer feed and with hot season grazing under the gun everywhere each ranch should consider their operations in full, all permits, private and any private lease land. Gary McCuin stated many ranches are out of balance with timing; in order to make an operation work as well as the Gund it requires meadows. It also helps to have some alfalfa that can be used for winter hay. If the private or leased summer irrigated feed is not available rotations on rangelands or seedings must be considered, whether on public or private lands.

Ken said there is no better time to feed hay than during the critical feeding season, when she needs it the most. Barry reiterated that each ranch should look at their operation in full, figuratively take out the fences between public and private lands and see what can be done to balance whatever resources are available. The most abused land in Nevada is private ground; it is often chewed to dirt or brushed up. We can fix that. Private lands are many of our best for wildlife; Sherm Swanson suggested we are now at a time in history when past competing interests are ready to talk about the mix of values that we all care about. Other ranches should not try to be just like the Gund but look at what they have, and remember, we are the biggest neophobes on the planet! Tracy Shane asked Ken what caused him to change his view and he listed the 1999 fire, declining production sheets and the worst five-year drought he experienced. The drought was a real wake-up call and put his back against the wall. In a good year the old way worked alright. Ken thanked the BLM staff for their cooperation. How can we get this message out so others don't have to get to a breaking point before changing and/or suffer stigma from neighbors by changing? Rick Orr suggested professionals in SRM are beholden to write good synthesis articles to help spread good information.

We drove up **Pine Canyon** to observe a riparian area. The discussion turned to the fact that the BLM does not recognize cheatgrass for Temporary Non-Renewable (TNR) permits. It has to be justified within the intent of the permit or by consultation. If it is covered in a NEPA document it is considered already analyzed and the BLM can just follow through for a decision. Ken had 1100 AUMs that were going to be "stolen" but was able to convince the BLM to put them into research AUMs. A variety of means to use TNR were offered including special use permits and pursuing it as a fuels reduction program. Sherm stated the Winnemucca Resource Management Plan (RMP) hopes to have TNR available for cheatgrass with criteria set ahead of time and the previously done NEPA compliance just needing to be documented. Duane Coombs suggested a December grazing use on the south facing slopes that would solve riparian, north-facing slope and water issues, training animals to use snow for water. Yearlings would be the best option for this but the first winter with no calves to sell would be tough. Rick said to really deal with cheatgrass it must be managed and it should be recognized for

the nutritional value it has. Sherm said range readiness gave a free ride to cheatgrass and seconded what Rick said, stating there is no agency policy now, just institutional thought that it can't be used. Ron Kay said cheatgrass needs to be in the NRCS Ecological Site Descriptions even though they are based on potential because if it is not included in any models the agency will not recognize cheatgrass. The December SRM conference in Reno on Wildfires and Invasive Species in American Deserts hopes to draft policy that can be taken to DC.

There was a spirited conversation on ecological sites. Tamzen Stringham said we are going to have to lump sites as to effect and recognize that it may take different amounts of time to get to the effect and that the models are for the edification of the general public. We need to capture the knowledge of long-time users, what they tried and what failed. The models exist in different times and space and we cross a threshold based on conditions which may never be delineated. She said the emphasis is on moving to recognize has a system lost resiliency and dealing with those and away from the focus on thresholds. Barry said that management and the flexibility to act when needed without red tape will affect the probability of when a threshold is crossed. He reminded all that it is a work of inspiration + craft + discipline, the craft is what is missing today and where we need to get more people involved. Ken said this is the detriment that tradition does to this industry; we have the message out but can't get the point across. A good plan in action by a non-progressive type would help the cause as well as agencies not being road blocks.

The last stop was up **Moonshine Canyon** where intrepid Prohibition-time local Isaacs had the feds convinced he had a still when it was really down by the windmill in the valley. This stream flows year round since the fire even though it was followed by the two driest years and had crickets for several. It was just gravel and cut down two years ago but now shows much improvement with grasses and sedges on the edges. The Nebraska sedge needs a wet environment and will come in after those sedges only needing a semi-moist situation trap enough sediment to change the medium. It was suggested that the uplands should be grazed more to get more fine sediment moved! Tamzen stated her #1 objective would be to manage for willows and Sherm suggested planting coyote willow staubs. As we talked we watched cattle move up from watering back to the higher slopes, right on cue! We returned to the ranch for another excellent meal catered by Mike Holcomb and Larissa Works of Wolfpack Meats.

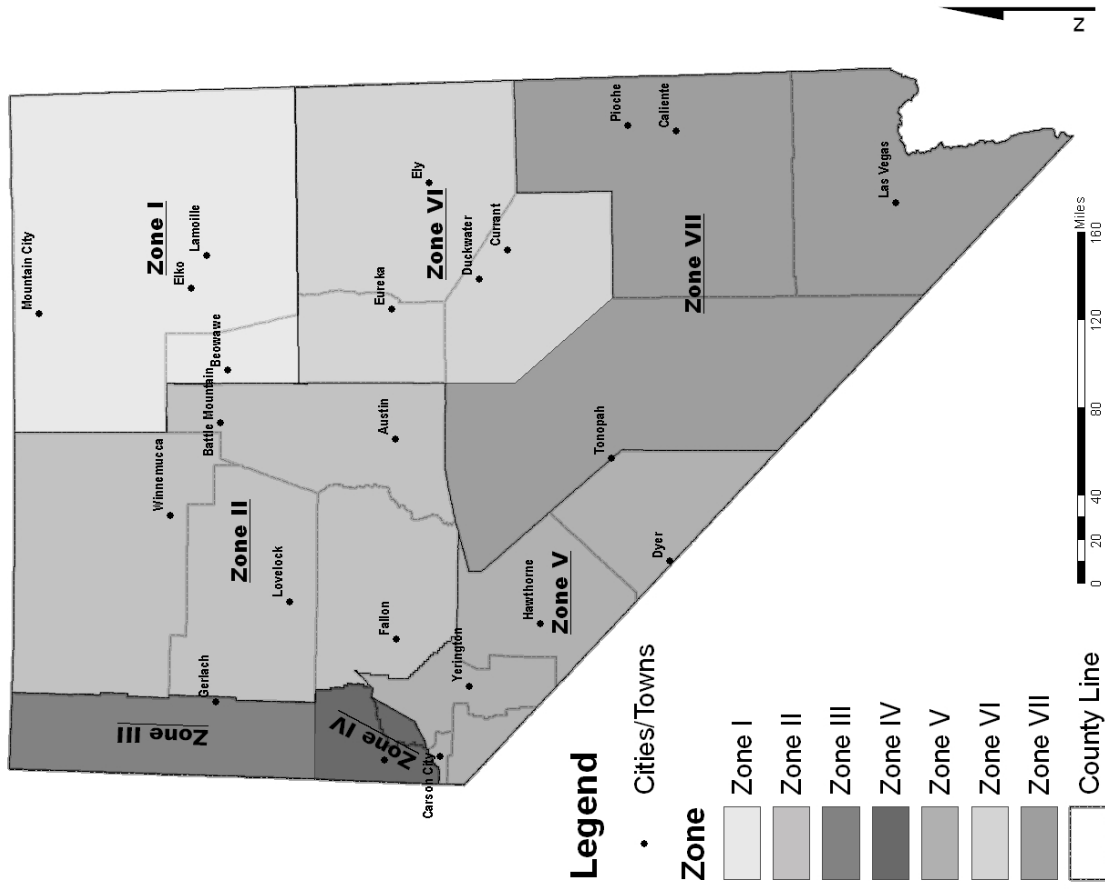
## NEWS AND NOTES

~ June 12-14, Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition Annual Meeting and Field Tour, <http://envlc.org/>

~ Western Legacy Alliance, mentioned by Wally Butler at the winter meeting, now online at <http://www.westernlegacyalliance.com/>

~ SRM helped sponsor the Ranching and Conservation Summit in Salt Lake City in February with its goal: Identify tools and strategies needed to maintain a stable climate for ranching operations and their conservation benefits in the West. People from at least nine states and 47 organizations and agencies including environmental groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund and World Wildlife Fund met to recognize and move forward on their common ground of open space, working landscapes and collaborative efforts. Dr. Rick Knight, keynote speaker at the 2007 Reno meeting spoke on the same topic with new information. A study in southern WY, CO and northern NM reveals that 43% of private landowners within 1 km of public land hold a federal grazing permit. These private lands in essence increase the amount of public lands by buffering them from exurban development. Websites of interest: <http://www.resourcesfirstfoundation.org/programs.aspx>, <http://www.wrlegal.org/>, which is the nation's only training program specializing in legal advocacy for natural resource users, <http://www.maintaintherange.com/>, and <http://www.thepubliclandscouncil.org/plc/default.asp>.

# Nevada SRM Section Zones



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 Silver Springs, NV 89429