

RANGELAND NEWS



TO FOSTER ADVANCEMENT IN THE
SCIENCE AND ART OF RANGELAND
MANAGEMENT

NEVADA SECTION – SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

First Fall 2014

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(see map on last page for zones)

FALL NEWSLETTER #1

#2 WILL INCLUDE ELECTION INFORMATION. CANDIDATES NEEDED FOR PRESIDENT ELECT & ZONE COUNCIL FOR ZONES II, V, VI, AND VII TO CONTINUE OR REPLACE.

THE AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIR IS OPEN.

Thanks to new officers: Meagan Carter was appointed to Zone 2, Gary McCuin now chairs the Producer Affairs Committee and Charlie Clements the Research Affairs Committee.

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

Mark Freese

Have you watched the news lately and seen any unusual or extreme weather or fire events? It seems like there have been many extreme weather and fire events across the nation, from California, Oregon, and Washington forests and rangelands burning up to extreme floods in southern Nevada and Arizona. Unlike the extreme events occurring in other areas, most of Nevada has been stable, albeit there still remains the potential for such fire events, especially given this abnormal precipitation pattern.

At the RAWS data station nearest my home in Reno, 1.78 inches were recorded from October 2013 – March 2014 and 3.29 inches were recorded from April 2014 –September 2014 for a total of 5.07 inches for the water year. Nearly 65% of our moisture came during the late spring and summer

months, which is abnormal! Given the abundant spring and summer moisture that have produced a fair amount of fuels across the landscape, we are lucky to have burned only a few acres this year. In the Western Great Basin Geographic Area Coordination Center (which includes most of the Nevada) 195 human fires have occurred, 264 lightning fires have occurred for a total of 459 fires consuming a total of 57,962 acres as of September 4, 2014. As compared to previous years (see table below), we are on the lower end both in the fire numbers and acreage consumed.

Year	# Fires	# Acres
2013	763	162,907
2012	944	613,126
2011	817	424,170
2010	487	23,869
2009	688	33,366
2008	452	71,930
2007	891	890,414
2006	1,279	1,349,023
2005	798	1,032,114
2004	955	39,794
2003	797	17,582
2002	777	77,927

If you have been across northern Nevada rangelands, you have undoubtedly noticed that the late spring and summer moisture has produced abundant fuels conditions. Fuels management is an important topic, especially given the risk of invasive species and in light of the major threats facing the greater sage-grouse, other wildlife species, and other land users. Grazing is one management tool that may be able to help with such fuels conditions and to help promote rangeland health. However, grazing management to reduce fuel loads is a polarizing topic, hotly debated, and often leads to disagreement between land managers, livestock producers, and other rangeland interest groups. As such, the Society for Range Management is providing a science-based workshop titled, “Grazing Management for Fine Fuels and Annual Grass Ranges: Exploring the Science and Strategic Plan Development” to bridge the gap providing for informed and science based discussion and management. We hope that you will join us.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Tina Mudd, Nevada Department of Agriculture, tmudd@agri.nv.gov
Cayenne Engel, NDF, cengel@forestry.nv.gov (and Counselor at Range Camp)

2015 WINTER MEETING
Grazing Management for Fine Fuels and Annual Grass Ranges
Exploring the Science and Strategic Plan Development
 Ryan Shane, President Elect

Complete information and registration form on the Nevada Section website at:
<http://nevada.rangelands.org/index.html>

National office SRM authorizes 5 CEUs on 1/13 and 2 CEUs on 1/14.

With this conference, NvSRM will sponsor and coordinate a cooperative learning technical session and strategic development round table to help answer how grazing management can be applied to annual and perennial fine fuels to reach a goal of sustainable desired conditions through supportive

policy changes and strategic management applications on these rangelands. Three basic scenarios will be addressed by the conference speakers and management recommendations will be provided. These include:

1. Rangelands that are purely annual grasses and have clearly crossed a threshold – *How do we manage forage and fuel loads for site stability and appropriate resource objectives? How can we be more responsive with management to react to wet climatic cycles (≥ 2 years), resulting fuel loading, and subsequent fire risk/occurrence?*
2. Rangelands co-dominated by annual and perennial grasses – *How do we manage cheatgrass without increasing cheatgrass or having a negative impact on perennials on these sites? Is there a period of time to avoid grazing or to intensify management?*
3. Rangelands with minor or no amounts of annual grasses amongst a largely perennial community – *How do we manage for reduced fine fuels loads while retaining healthy perennial grass-shrub communities?*

Additional answers will be sought for general questions, such as:

- *How do we manage for drought cycles (≥ 2 years) so that growth can be harvested while recovery is protected for plant health?*
- *What are the economic realities of focused management for fuels and/or rangeland health objectives?*
- *Can these objectives be met simply with strategic grazing (unpaid) or does there need to be prescriptive or targeted (paid) grazing employed to help agencies attain resource management objectives for the range?*
- *What commitments are required by producers and agencies for prescriptive grazing planning, fulfillment, contracting, implementation, monitoring and adaptive management?*
- *What are the existing barriers, challenges, and limitations to achieving success for fine fuels management with livestock?*

Schedule of Events

Time: January 13-14th, 2015
Location: Carson City, NV
Hotel: Gold Dust West Casino, Hotel and RV Park 775-885-9000 (gov't rate available)

Tuesday 1/13/15 Technical Session Schedule (*Gold Dust West - Pinion Room*)

0700: Registration (*open all day*)

0800: Welcome and Introduction Speaker - *Sherm Swanson (University of Nevada Reno)*

0830: Great Basin thresholds and states, the latest ecological lessons related to annual grass invasion – *Tamzen Stringam (University of Nevada Reno)*

0900: Wildlife response to threshold crossings to annual vegetation states – *Alan Jenne (NDOW)*

0930: Contrasting livestock production systems: perennial vs annual forage bases and utilizing annual ranges in your annual forage calendar – *Barry Perryman (University of Nevada Reno)*

1000: Break

1015: Post-Fire Grazing Management in the Presence of Cheatgrass: Rest, Season and Intensity Affects Post-Fire Plant Community Response. – *Devon Snyder (University of Nevada Reno)*

1045: Range Management Contrasts: annual grass, perennial native, and annual/perennial co-dominated rangelands; what works and why – TBA

1115: Interaction of grazing and fuel loads in grass-shrub and annual grass dominated rangelands – *Kirk Davies (Oregon State University)*

1145: *Lunch on your own*

1315: Climate variation, trends, and predictions for the Great Basin - *Douglas Boyle (Nevada State Climatologist)*
1400: Response of annual and perennial grass growth, reserves and fuels accumulation to climatic variation – *Brad Schultz (University of Nevada-Cooperative Extension)*
1430: Climate variation, range management mechanisms, limitations and opportunities on public lands: a land Management agency's perspective – *Katheryn Dyer (Bureau of Land Management)*
1500: Break
1515: Feasibility of fine fuels reduction projects by livestock operators – *Stacy Davies (Country Natural Beef)*
1545: Aligning fuels management and post-fire rehabilitation with pre and post-fire monitoring - *Chad Boyd (USDA Agricultural Research Service)*
1615: Panel Discussion: Cooperating and finding the nexus of annual grass, fine fuels, and grazing management to decrease wildfire Frequency, annual grass invasions, and maintain rangeland health
1645: Closing remarks – *Sherm Swanson (University of Nevada Reno)*

Tuesday 1/13/15 Section and Attendees Evening Social Schedule (*Gold Dust West-JuniperRoom*)

1800-1900: Social hour, Plant Identification contest
1900-2000: Dinner and 50-year member awards
2000-2030: Auction Fundraiser

Wednesday 1/14/15 Strategic Development Roundtable Schedule (*Gold Dust West- Pinion Room*)

0700: Registration (*open all day*)
0800: Roundtable Introductions (*Sherman Swanson – Moderator*)
0830: Foundational Information, Current Trends, and Anticipated Needs
0900: Strategic Development Session – Agency, Industry, and NGO representatives to participate in roundtable discussions to resolve pressing issues and provide solutions to current challenges. Audience will be asked to provide facts where needed as well as questions at critical points during the session. Topics to include, but not limited to:

- *NEPA Planning for Climate Variability (e.g. wet cycles and droughts)*
- *Level and kind of NEPA required for strategic (unpaid) and targeted (paid) grazing applications*
- *Monitoring requirements, procedures, and cooperation required for needed management*
- *Targeted grazing vs. traditional fuels management application funding*
- *Agreement on processes needed for progress and next steps*
- *Pilot project opportunities to demonstrate employment of strategies, and future actions*

1200: Lunch on your own

Wednesday 1/14/15 Nevada SRM Section Business Meeting (*Gold Dust West - Juniper Room*)

1300: Nevada Section Business Meeting – Call to order
1530: Adjourn

HONORING NvSRM MEMBERS – 50+ YEARS WITH SRM!

The Nevada Section is honored to appreciate our long-standing members. Another member was recognized at the Summer Meeting in Winnemucca; Al Steninger of Elko.

Al Steninger, president of Western Range Service in Elko, grew up working on the big ranches in NE Nevada and after college he served several years as a BLM Range Con and Area Manager in Lakeview Oregon during the time of re-adjudication. Back then, they would do thousands of acres of treatments each year and were determining livestock numbers for each of the allotments. It was an exciting time to work for the Bureau.

Al moved back to Elko to begin his career in rangeland consulting in 1968. Also an accomplished pilot, Al has held a commercial pilot's license for close to 40 years and logged more than 7,000 hours flight time. Some of Al's accomplishments include using cattle to successfully establish crested wheatgrass. He has seen responsible management lead to very prosperous rangelands and good management decisions that have made amazing improvements on the land, while poor management has led to very drastic differences. Al established a business and career built upon the very principles of the range management profession. He has received great job satisfaction over the years by being his own boss and staying true to his own principles and those of SRM.

See the complete statement at the Section website: <http://nevada.rangelands.org/>. Our members make a difference.

NEVADA WILD HORSE & BURRO UPDATE

Alan Shepherd, BLM Nevada State WH&B Specialist

In late October and early November, BLM Nevada is scheduled to conduct 3 small gathers within the Battle Mountain (BMDO) and Ely Districts (EDO). The BMDO work will involve completing a removal to appropriate management level (AML) and implement fertility control within the Reveille HMA outside of Tonopah, NV. The Ely DO work will involve resolving some private property issues in the Triple B HMA north of Ely and public safety issues along HWY 93 between Pioche and Caliente, NV on the Silver King and Eagle HMAs. At the National level, the BLM is determining what wild horse and burro management actions can be taken on the range across the West for Fiscal Year 2015, within given budget limitations.

RANGE CAMP

Katlyn and Laynie Uhart

Nevada Youth Range Camp was such an amazing learning experience! We learned about all the different parts of Nevada's rangeland, from wildlife habitats to plants and soils. There was so much information that we learned over the week!

The main skills and subjects we focused on during the week were learning how to use a map and compass, identify plants, and learn about wildlife. There were several stations during the first part of the week where we explored pinion/juniper habitat, sagebrush habitat, soil importance, and stream analysis. Throughout each station we would take notes, play games, and learn the skills necessary to assess the part of rangeland we were learning about. On Tuesday evening we completed the compass course, which was both challenging and entertaining!

We were also able to visit one of the local ranches in the middle of the week, and that was very interesting! We got to see how a working ranch applies all of the rangeland skills we had learned throughout the first part of the week. Then we got to do a conservation project; we built beaver dams! That afternoon we went in to Austin and took some much needed showers! That evening we went to a presentation given by Nevada Bighorns Unlimited where we got a real life view of both wildlife and rangeland management.

Range camp was such a great adventure! We now have a better understanding and appreciation for our surroundings and we can't wait to learn more! Not only did we learn a ton, but we also made so

many new friends. All of our counselors were amazing, and we can't thank them enough for making the experience even better. Today we get to apply what we learned as we work on our own rangeland at our ranch. We have used the stuff we learned about plant identification on a daily basis, both in the meadows and on the permits. We finally understand what is growing out there! Everything we experienced at camp helps us to take better care of our wildlife, water, soils, and even our cows. Range camp was an amazing experience, one we can't wait to go back to next year!

THANKS are due to many for Range Camp 2014. NDF Elko delivered and retrieved the Boss Tanks potable water trailer, Gary McCuin brought his grill and helped to cook the steaks and potatoes in Austin, Steve Foster for being the Trailer Master and always available to help, ABC Sheet Metal of Carson City sheathed the refrigerator as a donation so we could keep the pilot light lit in the rain and snow and wind, Suburban Propane of Eureka donated the propane, Boss Tanks of Elko donated the potable water tender, Leonard Jolley, International Director, came to check us out and wrote about us in the international newsletter, Adaven Scronce assisted ably in the kitchen, the agencies sent us excellent staff, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited for the always amazing steaks and they will buy us all new ropes for the tarps/canopy, and the inaugural Set-Up Crew of Bryan and Jessica Frank, Jeremiah and Lani Jones, the staff that arrived Saturday and early-to-arrive campers Cole Crim and Dustin Stewart. The Set-Up Crew was a huge help.

This year's leaders are **Trail Boss** Garrett Bunyard, Trail Boss **Runner-Up** Franci Mendive, and **Big Buckaroo** Cole Crim. Garrett and Franci will represent the Section at the Sacramento meeting High School Youth Forum. You will want to be there to hear their presentations. As we were leaving a new saying was born courtesy of Colt and Adaven Scronce, long time campers, and to be heard in the voice of the Dos Equis man, "I don't always go to camp, but when I do, it's Range Camp!"

HISTORIAN'S HIGHLIGHTS – A LOOK BACK AND FORWARD

Trina Johnson shared Range Camper Robert Dabey's 1971 comment of The Benefits and Memories of Camp, "I recall my first and last sample of chewing tobacco, good fishing, and the great effort to locate the survey marker in total darkness (my pacing was off.) Range Camp was a chance to do some real camping, something I would have missed otherwise. In all, a very enjoyable week."

Looking forward, we have another baby! Range Camp Director Kathryn Dyer brought future camper, Zach, to us in September.

2014 SUMMER TOUR NOTES

Excerpted from summer 2014 *The Progressive Rancher* Article 1 by Ryan Shane and Maggie Orr
See the complete articles at <http://nevada.rangelands.org/index.html> or
<http://www.progressiverancher.com/>

Tour leader Ryan Shane opened the discussion with a quote from Stephen Pyne, professor at Arizona State University, "*We don't have a fire problem – we have lots of fire problems – and we need a lot of solutions to them.*" He went on to say, "*Pyne's point was that 'culture trumps science,' which limits our options for responding to wildfire, particularly on public land.*

So what are we to do? Get through it the best we can, said Pyne.

'We're not going to get ahead of this. We're going to have to deal with what's coming at us. Prescribed fire is too complicated, too expensive, [and] too politically cumbersome. We're going to take whatever wildfires we get and we're going to manage those, try to reduce costs, protect communities... we're going to get a lot more fire on the land, a lot of it is going to be really bad, a lot of

it is going to be really good,' he said. 'It's not about restoration to a condition we liked in the past, it's not about anticipating a desired future condition we want to get to, it's not about applying science to get from here to there – it's about getting through it.' "We've had 50 years trying to resist fire, 50 years trying to restore it; I think we're looking at 50-plus years of resilience, coming out of it the best we can."

On the tour we saw presuppression and rehabilitation efforts by the BLM in the Montana Mountains, heard from ranchers in the Wildfire Support Group and Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) leadership about future possibilities for such groups, and learned from researchers studying what works and doesn't work to manage areas after fire. Tour highlights:

~The issues that face us are many and sometimes conflicting. Rangelands infested with cheatgrass have too much fire. Where PJ is expanding, too little fire is a problem. "Fire-borrowing," has become normal, leaving non-fire related programs paralyzed. Invasive species/fire feedback loops result in habitat and general ecological health declines across rangelands, reducing economic vitality of rural economies. Rehabilitation and stabilization programs are logistically, technologically, and financially out-matched by the scale of lands needing rehabilitation.

~Winnemucca BLM led a collaborative effort with over 40 partners for four years to produce a ROD identifying fire and resource risks and opportunities and management approaches to manage the highly valued grazing and wildlife habitat resources on 346,000 acres in the Montana Mountains area. Maintenance was incorporated into the NEPA so the Winnemucca District can go back at any time and re-treat or re-try. BLM has found it more effective to bundle NEPA under landscape planning as opposed to doing individual project level NEPA. The original NEPA document was written specifically to allow flexibility in the methods used to meet the objectives as well as the places where the methods could be implemented.

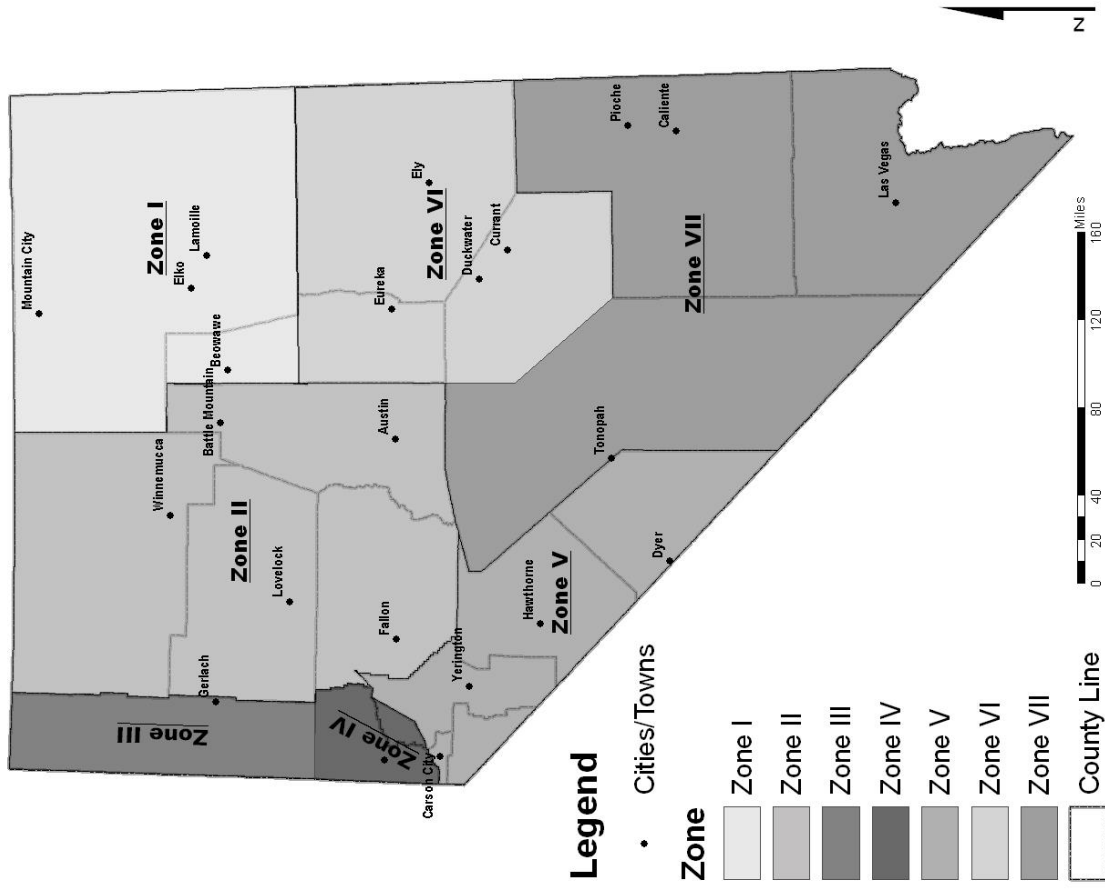
~The plan offers many options including green stripping by mowing brush and applying herbicide to reduce annual competition for remaining and seeded perennials, brown stripping by disking to bare soil, relocating roads and troughs out of riparian and meadow areas, aerial and drill seeding in cheatgrass die-off areas, prescribed fire and hand thinning. The plan includes options for grazing to reduce annual fuels or mowed areas along roads where cultural resource concerns do not allow the extensive soil disturbance of disking. Existing high quality sagebrush habitats surrounded by cheatgrass are being protected and /or expanded through the use of herbicides, harrowing, and seeding of perennial grasses to create buffers between highly flammable annuals and highly valued, intact habitats. This has proven to be almost impossible at lower elevations. (Specifics online and in the next newsletter)

~The intent of the Wildfire Support Group (WSG) is to provide nearby, voluntary Initial Attack capabilities for local fires. A recently employed policy by BLM has somewhat stifled WSG's ability to perform as they have in the past. While the WSG is not a fully recognized Rangeland Fire Protection Association, the opportunity to become one may be near. NDF's number one bill draft request to the 2015 legislature will be to make sure these possibilities get in place by statute in Nevada.

~ By 2015 NDF will be completely out of All-Risk involvement and will just do year round wildland fire suppression. NDF fire resources will be mobile around the state to respond to disasters and fires; NDF will also provide fire prevention, presuppression and rehabilitation support, so workers may implement fuel breaks in the spring, operate a fire engine in the summer, and then a drill seeder in the winter.

~ A huge improvement will be to coordinate work between federal agencies and private landowners; if the BLM or USFS is going to do a project in an area, NDF or NRCS should do something adjacent if appropriate and they have the funds. As land managers, we all need to improve how we select projects to get away from a shotgun approach and put the money where success is more likely to occur. The continuing article on this tour will discuss the specific recommendations offered by tour speakers from the USDA Agricultural Research Service, UNR, and BLM.

Nevada SRM Section Zones



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