

PETITION FOR RENEWAL OF WCC-40

COMMITTEE NUMBER: WCC-40

REQUESTED DURATION: October 1, 2001 - September 30, 2006

TITLE: Rangeland Ecological Research and Assessment

STATEMENT OF ISSUE AND JUSTIFICATION:

Rangelands of the American West form a vast and varied landscape, with nearly 60% of these lands retained in public ownership, American citizens have divided opinions on how these lands have been managed in the past and how they should be managed in the future. The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service are responsible for managing about 34.8 million acres of public rangeland and are presently exploring new methods for evaluating and reporting rangeland conditions. Range scientists have been asked to help develop some of these methods or at least comment on these new methods. Often range scientists are asked to comment on environmental impact statements and new management plans and are very concerned about new developments and management changes that are not scientifically based.

Interpreting rangeland conditions has always been controversial but necessary, especially when debates over public policy and decisions regarding resource allocation occur. Presently, a comprehensive and acceptable method of evaluating and reporting on the ecological status of rangelands does not exist. An on-going debate is, "How should it be monitored?" The underlying question is, "What benefits and costs to the ecosystem result from rangeland use?" Currently rangeland ecological condition models developed by NRCS and used for several decades have been found to be lacking for use in shrub ecosystems of the western U.S. Stable state and transition models for western ecosystems have been proposed but details for specific ecosystems have not been developed. Properly functioning condition (PFC) models for riparian zones and "Range health" concepts have also been proposed without substantive documentation or measurement tools. In addition, use values for condition categories in the newer models remain to be described. WCC-40 will assist in evaluating and improving these range condition models.

It is believed by rangeland scientists that herbivory, including proper use by domestic livestock, and the management of other rangeland activities can play a crucial role in the maintenance of natural ecosystems while continuing to sustain productivity and stability. The major goals of this committee are (1) to foster communication among western range scientists and managers about the progress

and new developments in western range research and (2) to be instruments in providing scientific expertise and leadership in order to enhance our understanding of natural ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To compile and coordinate new range research information to assist researchers, educators, managers, non-commodity user groups, and producers involved in public and private rangeland activities.
2. To coordinate interdisciplinary research that addresses knowledge gaps essential to the management and sustainability of range ecosystems including resource inventory, monitoring, and assessment.
3. To coordinate evaluation of natural resource issues and policies having relevance to rangeland ecosystems.
4. To continue liaison with other WCC and technical committees including western University Rangeland Extension Specialists who address related range research problems in the western region.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS:

1. Identification of important range research issues and development of research pertaining to ecosystem management including methods that determine if ecological processes are working properly and meeting ecosystem needs.
5. Enhanced communication and exchange of ideas on emerging and ecological public policy issues through committee workshops, field tours, regional symposiums, and sponsored conferences at professional meetings (e.g., Society for Range Management and elsewhere).
6. Publish joint research articles on important emerging issues pertaining to range assessment including biological diversity, ecosystem management, and sustainability of rangelands.
7. Coordination among range researchers and managers working on common natural resource issues having western region application to rangeland issues.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LINKAGES:

Following are University participants, some with Extension appointments, institutions and research specialization:

Name, Institution, Department	RPA	SOI	FOS	SY	PY	TY
Barbara Allen-Diaz ballen@nature.berkeley.edu University of California-Berkeley	121 121 131	0799 0330 0799	1070 1070 1070	.1		
William T. Barker William_Barker@ndsu.nodak.edu North Dakota State University Animal & Range Sciences	121	0799	1070	.1		
Stephen Bunting sbunting@uidaho.edu University of Idaho Rangeland Ecology	121	0799	1070	.1		
Dennis Child Dennis.Child@ColoState.EDU Colorado State University Natural Resources						
Maria Fernandez-Gimenez gimenez@Ag.Arizona.Edu University of Arizona Renewable Natural Resources						
Linda Hardesty lhardest@wsu.edu Washington State University Natural Resources Sciences						
Patricia Johnson Patj@ces.sdstate.edu South Dakota State University Animal and Range Sciences	121	0799	1070	.1		
Mort Kothmann m_kothmann@tamu.edu Texas A&M University Rangeland Ecology & Management						

William Krueger William.C.Krueger@orst.edu Oregon State University Rangeland Resources	121 131	0110 0120	1070	.1
Clayton Marlow cmarlow@montana.edu Montana State University	121	0730	1020	.2
Kirk McDaniel kmcdanie@nmsu.edu New Mexico State University Animal & Range Sciences	121	0799	1070	.1
Mike Smith pearl@uwyo.edu University of Wyoming Rangeland Ecology & Watershed Management	121	0799	1070	.1
Paul Tueller ptt@unr.edu University of Nevada-Reno Environmental & Resource Sciences				
Neil West NEW369@cc.usu.edu Utah State University Rangeland Resources	121	0799	1060 1070 3010	.1
Cooperator: David A. Pyke David_a_pyke@usgs.gov USGS Forest & Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center				

In addition to the university participants, representatives from various federal agencies have been encouraged to attend annual meetings. Because of turnover in agencies we have attempted to include members in positions familiar with current range research needs and future direction of their respective agencies. The committee has had excellent participation from public land management agencies and other university and USDA ARS researchers. Complete lists of attendees are kept in the annual minutes.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN:

2. The committee recognizes the need for interdisciplinary involvement in range research and will exchange information with other Western Coordinating Committees sharing common interests including WCC-55 Range Economics, WCC-79 Grazing Animal Behavior and Nutrition Status of Domestic Ruminants, and WCC-21 Revegetation and Stabilization of Deteriorated and Altered Lands. The WCC-40 committee will seek to (1) exchange minutes and publications with those committees, (2) hold joint meetings when feasible, and (3) extend an invitation to interested parties to participate in WCC-40 activities.
8. Committee members and invited speakers will assist in education of participants through presentations at annual meetings and organized symposia.
9. Publications will include WCC-40 affiliation and be distributed through appropriate scientific journals or Experiment Station bulletins.
10. The WCC-40 committee will sponsor workshops, symposia, and publications which will bring together state-of-knowledge on key research topics which address current problems and issues in the practice of range management on western rangelands. The committee recognizes that newer technology such as web sites may provide useful outlets for emerging technology. The committee will explore the feasibility of the use of a web site for communicating among scientists, users, and publics.
11. The annual meeting of WCC-40 will include key government agency representatives involved in range issues to discuss new policy directions and research needs. Through this interaction committee members can explore needs and, where appropriate, develop proposals for regional range research projects and assessments of potential impacts to resource users. Pertinent government agencies with research branches, especially BLM, USFS, and ARS routinely send representatives who act as continuing members. They will be asked to participate as continuing members.

GOVERNANCE:

Chair, one-year term of office, responsible for calling meeting, developing agenda, and conducting the meeting. Also responsible for coordinating activities between WCC-40 and other regional committees.

Vice-Chair and Secretary, one-year term of office, responsible for keeping and mailing minutes and conducting the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

Local Arrangements Chair, responsible for organizing and arranging appropriate field tours, meeting site and accommodations.

AUTHORIZATION:



Administrative Advisor

02/09/2001

Date

Chair, Western Directors Association

Date