



VALUE OF GRAZING

OVERVIEW

More than 22,000 ranchers graze livestock on federal lands. Grazing provides numerous benefits to land management agencies, ecosystems, and rural communities at virtually no cost to the taxpayer. These services, which are provided by public lands ranchers, are regulated under the Taylor Grazing Act.

BENEFITS OF GRAZING ON FEDERAL LANDS

Reduced Risk of Catastrophic Wildfire

Catastrophic wildfires threaten rural communities, sensitive ecosystems and a wide variety of wildlife. Significant buildup of fine fuels, highly-mobile invasive species and inconsistent management across management boundaries all contribute to conditions that cause fires to burn hotter, move faster and last longer. Livestock grazing is a nimble tool that can be applied to reduce the density of these highly-combustible fine fuels to make landscapes more resistant to catastrophic fire conditions. Grazing has been linked with reduced flame height and spread, which makes firefighting safer and fire management efforts more successful.

Healthy Ecosystems and Wildlife

Ranchers are caretakers and stewards of the nation's natural resources. By applying livestock grazing to an ecosystem, ranchers:

- encourage growth and retention of perennial grasses that can be crowded out by invasive species;
- improve soil health and forage growth that allow grasslands to be "carbon sinks";
- preserve healthy, open spaces that wildlife and other multiple-users depend on; and
- make important investments in lands that keep wildlife and habitat healthy.

Enhanced Rural Economic Development

Grazing and related industries are essential economic drivers for rural communities in the American West. Ranchers holding federal grazing permits support local businesses year-round, ensuring their survival during the recreation and tourism off-seasons. Additionally, in rural communities across the West, you will find ranchers serving in diverse roles as community leaders, school board trustees, county commissioners and volunteer firefighters.



WIN-WIN FOR TAXPAYERS

Federal lands ranching is one of the nation's oldest public-private partnerships, enabling the federal government to cost-effectively manage millions of acres of public land. In addition, ranchers are required to finance critical range improvement projects out of their own pocket, including watershed improvements, well installations, and invasive grass treatments, which benefit the native flora and fauna. **In fact, it costs \$150 per acre for federal agencies to reduce fuel loads and fire risk. Grazing does this at no cost to the taxpayer.**

"When you consider all the costs, the [grazing fee costs for private and public lands] are roughly equal. Or in some cases, public land grazing can cost the rancher more."

-John Tanaka, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Wyoming; Researcher, Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable

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