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**Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives**

**Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
Hearing on Working Ranches, Healthy Range and Maintaining
Open Space**

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Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Jason Campbell. I currently serve as the Executive Vice President for the Society for Range Management. SRM is professional organization of people who work with or have an interest in natural resources, more specifically rangelands. Created in 1948, SRM represents nearly 3500 researchers, college professors, students, and federal, state, and private rangeland and natural resource managers. The Mission of the Society for Range Management is to promote the professional development and continuing education of our members and the general public and to facilitate the stewardship of our rangeland resources.

Rangelands are a very broad category of land comprising more than 40% of the earth's land area. They are characterized by native plant communities of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees, and in one way or another evolved under grazing and wildfire systems. In the United States we have nearly a billion acres of rangelands. The Society believes that rangeland ecosystems should be managed to provide optimum sustained yield of tangible and intangible products and benefits for human welfare.

The core objectives of SRM are:

- Properly take care of the basic rangeland resources of soil, plants and water;
- Develop an understanding of range ecosystems and of the principles applicable to the management of range resources;
- Assist all who work with range resources to keep abreast of new findings and techniques in the science and art of range management;
- To improve the effectiveness of range management to obtain from range resources the products and values necessary for man's welfare;
- Create a public appreciation of the economic and social benefits to be obtained from the range environment;
- Promote professional development of its members.

My personal background in land stewardship and resource management began in Alberta, Canada in the mid-1980's, where I worked with oil companies and agricultural landowners to reduce the impacts of oil and gas development on farming and ranching operations. In 1989 I graduated from Montana State University with a

degree in Land Resource Management (soils), and took a position with the State of Montana administering agricultural and grazing leases several million acres of Montana State School Trust lands. In 1995 I left state government for a series of advocacy positions with the livestock industry in Montana and then later in Washington, DC. In 2005 I accepted my current position with the Society for Range Management. I live in Bowie, Maryland with my wife and two step daughters, and I commute a couple times a month to the SRM headquarters in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, a suburb on the outskirts of Denver.

I have been invited here today to speak to you a few of the issues that surround our working ranches, healthy rangelands, and maintaining open space in our western landscapes.

I will open with some comments on conflict, and managing conflict. Then I will share with you some thoughts on partnerships, and I will close with some final thoughts on conservation and how I think we can move our efforts on rangeland management forward in the face of all of this issues.

Natural resource administration on federal lands in today's society is a very complex issue. It brings together the vast complexities of our natural ecosystems with traditional human land uses such as livestock grazing, hunting, fishing and many other outdoor recreational activities. Perhaps one of the greatest threats resides in the desire of many people to have their own little piece of our western landscape, and as such land fragmentation and development is a major concern.

Coupled to these issues are deeply held core beliefs by people of very diverse backgrounds, education, and experiences. Some people focus on wise use of our resources, others on sustainability issues, and still others on ecological conservation. Some want to see the complete preservation of our ecological systems or a specific part of a landscape, while others look to maintain a traditional lifestyle, the economic stability of a community, or a long standing local industry. Some folks focus on the inherent rights of landowners or existing lessees to use our natural resources to produce marketable products for consumers. Other beliefs might address the core value of the simple solitude these lands might provide the people who pass through them, while still others might focus on the development rights of a single acre of wilderness when offered for sale.

One thing in all of this is certain, there is no lack of broad spectrum of conflict when you discuss the issues associated with the topic of this hearing today.

Natural resources and land use allocations combine to form a very slippery and complicated slope that is not easy to negotiate no matter how you approach it. Conflict is around every corner, and our current federal land management systems and processes are being completely overrun with managing the conflicts and the various positions taken by different people and groups who all claim to have the best interests of the resources at heart. I have often thought that our resource managers and landowners are the ones who are really suffering, and while our agencies and their staff have great access to research and scientific information, they have little time to put their resource management skills to use for the benefit of any of the people who claim that resource conditions and land uses are their major concerns.

Perhaps our current federal regulations and conflicting federal policies are contributing to the draining of our federal resources into never ending pools of litigation and procedural challenges. Opportunities for collective agreements on resource management are extremely hard to develop, implement, and maintain. As with most consumer goods, generally a one size fit's all prescription fits only a narrow sliver of the population.

For instance, a nationally directed program intended to address the needs or management of a single endangered species that occupies habitat in a half dozen western states will not accomplish its intended goals. That is not to say that we do not need regulations and policies to govern how resources should be management, but it appears the current system is creating more roadblocks to good stewardship and sustainability than it might be resolving.

Clearly a revamping of the current policies and regulations is in order, and a strong eye towards locally driven and managed decision making processes must be developed and implemented. The involvement of the people closest to the land, with the best understanding of local resource conditions, land ownership and land use patterns, and the productive capability of the largest portions of the collective landscape must be key players in our efforts to resolve this problem. Our federal planning and resource allocation processes need to ensure that anyone with a truly vested interest in the management of a local landscape will be permitted to actively participate in the planning process in a full and meaningful way.

I offer the following points for your consideration

- Involving local university and other technical researchers and professors in land use planning and resource monitoring plans and program developments would also greatly assist land managers in addressing local land management objectives and goals.
- Public Involvement! Local county commissioners, weed and grazing boards, local fire districts, local hunting and wildlife conservation organizations, state land and wildlife managers, and private landowners all seemed to be very open to participating in more open and flexible federal land use planning processes. But having a federal agency come to the table with an inflexible national standard that cannot be deviated from often will cut this process off at knees.
- Funding needs to be put in place to support local educational workshops and field seminars and clinics cooperatively produced and taught by resource professionals of diverse backgrounds. Having only a single agency present information, or only the livestock production elements explained, or having only the fisheries biologists speak will not bring the diversity to the table needed to resolve the landscape level issues that we are discussing today.
- On grazing issues a little more freedom for livestock producers to make grazing management and range improvements to help achieve management goals is very important. Grazing reserves or land banking of forage resources for drought or fire relief would also be a big asset in the west. Outcome based management might help engage livestock producers more actively in the monitoring of rangeland resources.
- An open and honest look at land exchange and consolidation programs between federal, state, tribal, and private landowners to help resolve some of the checkerboard ownership and isolated tract management issues. This will go a long way to correcting some of the fragmentation issues that we are seeing in the west.

Most people understand the overriding implications that come with the administration and management of our federal lands. The best examples of success in natural resource management in areas of large federal holdings have come from those places where local managers have stepped outside the traditional federal "box". In these areas strong efforts were made to form working partnerships with diverse groups all of which have an active interest in seeing a local working

landscape continue to work, while preserving traditional land uses, community values, and conserving and improving resource conditions and rangeland health for future generations.

Right now most of our rangeland health work consists of running from one fragmented snapshot of rangeland health to another fragmented snapshot. Overall health on federal lands is not something we can actually get our arms around at this present time, especially at the national level. Even within our federal agencies we see different methodologies of assessing and classifying rangelands and thus we get differing pictures of the status and condition of our rangelands. Without the use of common terms and consistent rangeland classification systems between agencies and organizations we cannot complete a total assessment of the overall condition of our rangelands on a national scale.

With regards to conservation and cooperation, last year in St. Louis, the White House, and several federal agencies convened a conference on Cooperative Conservation. A tremendous effort went into bringing the kind of diversity together to examine some ways to manage conflict, improve cooperative partnerships, and bring about more much more achievable conservation programs, policies, and actions at landscape levels. Most of all, the program was a national push to examine the exact topics of your hearing today.

I would like to present some of the “tools” that were discussed at that conference for your further consideration.

- **Open Government:** Legal requirement and social expectation for open, transparent, participatory government decision making.
- **Public Participation:** Strategies to inform and educate citizens, as well as to seek their input and advice.
- **Deliberate Dialog:** Innovative ways to foster informed feed back from citizens.
- **Community Stewardship:** People working together, sharing knowledge and resources to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Partnerships:** An agreement between two or more people or organizations to work together and share resources to achieve common aims.
- **Negotiated Rulemaking:** Bringing together agency representatives and other interested groups to negotiate the text of a proposed rule.

- **Intergovernmental Coordination:** Policies and practices to foster coordination among federal, state, tribal, and local governments.
- **Multi-party Dispute Resolution:** Negotiation, facilitation, mediation, and other strategies used to resolve multi-party disputes.

In closing I would like to thank the Committee for the invitation to speak with you today. The Society for Range Management is always available to work with you or your staff to help resolve some of these terribly complex issues.

To quote one of our long standing members Thad Box (who writes for our Rangelands Magazine): **"Range management is both an art and a science. The science comes from experiments, carefully designed, implemented, analyzed, and stored in the written record. Application is by people actively involved with land use. The art comes from experience. Elders pass their interpretations of history, their demonstrations of professionalism, and their understanding why we exist through story.**

Science provides the tools. Institutions provide the organization. But stories analyze deaths and resurrections, promote rebirth into a changed world. They form the basis for change. They point us to the future. They inspire us to go there. They define who we are, and they suggest who we can become. Never underestimate the power of story."

I would like to leave you all with this thought: Everyone involved in the issues associated with rangeland management must come to the table with a story. Future management of our natural resources depends on people who have good stories to tell. Stories that are relevant to the landscapes in which they say they have an interest. It's the stories that will form the foundation for the future commitment to this process. The stories will be the yarn which we collectively weave to form the fabric of the landscapes in which we live, work, recreate, or just sit and observe. Thad Box is correct: Never underestimate the power of story.

Thank you again for your time and opportunity to speak to you in this critical subject.