



**International Mountain Section Newsletter** Special Issue  
*To Foster Advancement in the Science and Art of Rangeland Management*

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Dear IMS Members,

At last month's Advisory Council meeting in Louisville, each section was asked to survey it's members about some changes being proposed to *RANGELANDS* by the SRM's Board of Directors. The proposed changes, recommended by a *RANGELANDS* Task Force, would streamline the publication and bring the cost of producing, printing and mailing *RANGELANDS* into better balance with revenues.

Attached is a document with a ten point summary of what is proposed followed by seven questions that should help you formulate comments. Want to know more? If you go to the IMS website (<http://www.srm-ims.org/>) and click on NOTICE BOARD you will find three other documents that deal with the proposal; the full 8 page report from the Task Force to the Board of Directors, a table summarizing the length and content of *RANGELANDS* for the past three years, and a table that compares expected cost and revenue for the current and three alternative ways of producing the publication in the future.

The Advisory Council has asked each section to send a summary of comments from their members no later that March 14. We are asking for your comments by March 10 so they can be summarized. If you have an opinion about how often *RANGELANDS* should be published and what it's content and format should be in the future, let us know. While succinct email responses are the simplest and easiest way to take comments, written comments are welcome or you can contact an IMS officer or director and express your opinion directly by calling them by phone. The phone numbers and emails for IMS Officers and Directors are attached and can also be found on the IMS web site by clicking on CONTACT. Most of the officers and directors work full-time and could be on the road, in meetings, etc. If you do call and get a voice mail system, please leave a message; calls will be returned when time permits.

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## *Proposed Changes to RANGELANDS Magazine*

The Advisory Council was updated on proposed changes to the *Rangelands* publication as recommended by the Rangelands Task Force. The Advisory Council feels that changes such as these are best made with input from the sections and the membership as a whole. Based on this the Advisory council has asked the Board of Directors to delay actions as described in the recommendations for 60 days to let Sections work with their members to gain input on the proposed recommendations.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### *Why this review?*

Like many professional societies, SRM has seen numbers of members remain stagnant over the past decade. At the same time, operating costs, in spite of ongoing improvements in efficiency, have continued to rise. SRM periodically reviews all aspects of operations to assure that activities are as efficient as possible while still supporting the mission of the society. In 2002, The SRM Board of Directors appointed a task force, led by Dr. David Engle, to review the operations of *The Journal of Range Management* and suggest improvements. In their 2003 report, the JRM task force made several recommendations that have resulted in significant changes and improvements in the quality and profitability of the journal (now *Rangeland Ecology and Management*). One of the most important recommendations (#4) by the JRM Task Force was the separation of finances for JRM (REM) and other society publications, including *RANGELANDS*. Implementation of this recommendation allowed for a more thorough analysis and better informed revisions to JRM, but also exposed some financial weaknesses in the structure and assumptions behind the operations of *RANGELANDS*.

As the recommendations have been implemented over the past 4 years, those challenges have become increasingly obvious. It should be clear and cannot be stated forcefully enough, these financial shortcomings are not the result of poor management or inappropriate actions on the part of staff, but are structural in nature. As such, they are unlikely to be corrected with greater effort or even changes in responsibilities on the part of the staff of *RANGELANDS*. With these limitations and this history in mind, the Board of Directors appointed a *RANGELANDS* Task Force, and charged them to review the operations of *RANGELANDS* and make recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS from the Task Force**

1. *RANGELANDS* should be regarded primarily as a member service and as a member retention tool. The idea of *RANGELANDS* as a public outreach instrument should be discontinued and new approaches to outreach developed. However, even though *RANGELANDS* is regarded as a member service, it should not receive a free pass in terms of efficient management and delivery and the goal should be to at least break even financially, if not show some profit.

2. Revise the mission statement of *RANGELANDS* to reflect that it is a technical, but not an experimental journal. It should be oriented toward practitioners, but with the acknowledgment and expectation that those practitioners are technical specialists or land managers and reliant upon current, scientifically-based technical information to make and implement decisions. The features referred to earlier that had less than or near 50% support in the readers' survey should be dropped or drastically redesigned.
3. Increase the number of special theme issues and reduce the number of contributed articles. Revise the duties of the editor, steering committee and editorial board to include more aggressive action on selection of themes and solicitation of contributed articles. The June 2007 issue is a good example. There is a theme for the issue and 60-70% of the space is devoted to articles submitted for that issue. The remainder of the space is devoted to regular features and contributed articles.
4. The emphasis for the steering committee should shift to helping define the subject matter for special issues and potential authors. The editor would then have the guidance and support to pursue appropriate authors. This approach may require a different mix of people and skills on the Steering Committee.
5. The BOD has already directed the editor of *RANGELANDS* to have all content peer-reviewed (Reno BOD action). This Steering Committee and Editorial Board should be expected to assist the editor to solicit and/or provide peer review.
6. There is strong support for regularly occurring feature editorials (Reading the Land, Essays of a Peripheral Mind). There was also a request from several readers for a more topical review and interpretation of policy matters. *RANGELANDS* should include a regular editorial type feature (not just a list of happenings) with an emphasis on federal policy.
7. Members should receive a copy as a benefit of membership, but should be limited to either a hard copy or an electronic copy. While this will not result in substantial savings immediately, it will force the membership to move toward online access.
8. A trial blog should be implemented in the next 2 years. Good candidates are recurring editorial/opinion features such as Reading the Land or Essays of a Peripheral Mind. The author of the feature **MUST** accept responsibility for managing the blog.
9. Immediately reduce the number of issues from 6 per year to 4 per year, limit the pages per issue to 60 (240 pages per year) and remove the color from inside pages (with an option to authors for color if they pay). This should result in a substantial cost-savings for printing and mailing and would immediately put *RANGELANDS* on a reasonable financial footing (see Appendix 3) so that a vision for the future can be expanded to something other than mere survival. Although this represents a substantial reduction of pages from the current contract, the analysis in Appendix 1 indicates that *RANGELANDS* averaged a little more than 60 pages per issue (360 total pages per year) over the past three years, a substantial amount of the content has low interest among

readers or could easily be moved to online access (i.e. photos of award winners). In addition, several articles in each issue exceed 3000 words and are too long or are thinly disguised rewrites of material that should be in REM. Limiting most articles to less than 3000 words, with one or two feature articles of more than 3000 words per issue, would allow the same number of articles (and authors) to be maintained and increase the revenue producing pages proportionally.

10. The Executive Vice President should write a short piece for publication in *RANGELANDS* explaining these changes, and the reasoning behind them, to assure the membership that they are not losing any of their membership benefits. However, the financial status and implications should be a large part of that explanation. Members should be made aware of the need to get *RANGELANDS* on a solid financial footing AND maintain the member benefits so that *RANGELANDS* has a future.

### Questions

1. Do you value the Rangelands publication?
2. Are you willing to have your dues raised \$10 to cover the costs?
3. How many issues a year would be acceptable? \_\_\_4 \_\_\_6
4. Would you like any issues electronically or on a CD?
5. Would a black and white publication be acceptable?
6. Should the authors be charged for submission?
7. Please check all that apply as you see the purpose of Rangelands:
  - a. Member service \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Outreach tool from the Society \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Used for new member recruitment \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Communication from parent society \_\_\_\_\_

Your comments on the future use and development of Rangelands Magazine should be directed to the Section leadership. They will take comments either in electronic (e-mail) or verbal (by telephone) form. All of the Section leadership listed below have volunteered to accept your comments. Remember, the deadline for receiving comments is March 10, so don't delay.

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