



Volume 1 **International Mountain Section Newsletter** April 2009  
*To Foster Advancement in the Science and Art of Rangeland Management*

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**President's Message**  
**Mike Alexander**

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Well, I guess I have to apologize for being a major factor in delaying this springs IMS newsletter. I could make claims about being incredibly busy and not having time to put pen to paper; and it would be partly true. The real reason, however, was that every time I went to write a few words I got intimidated.... *Boy I guess I am supposed to write something profound, that shows foresight and wisdom...* then I would carefully step back and find something else to do. Finally I realized that you all know me and none of you would expect anything spectacular from me so here it goes.....

They say when you are not sure what to talk about; you can always talk about the weather. Here in Pincher Creek Spring looks a long way off. Today April 29, 2009 there is a foot of snow outside my window and they say we can expect more. Lately I have been putting on a lot of miles traveling up and down the eastern slopes of Alberta. The word of the week is variability. The north is dry and it looks like spring will arrive there before we see it here in Southwestern Alberta. In the south early season moisture levels are looking promising but it all seems to come as snow. If the snow ever melts and we get some heat spring will come gang busters.

With spring coming I am really looking forward to getting out in the field. In today's world I don't think it matters what your interest or expertise we are all faced by a black cloud of uncertainty and challenge. To me everything seems clearer and more worthwhile when I get out in the field and reconnect with the range.

## President's Address Continued:

There are a lot of exciting SRM and range activities coming up this year. Tracy Brewer is organizing what looks like an exciting summer tour. Speaking of Tracy, when you see her be sure to congratulate her for receiving the Outstanding Young Range Professional Award in Albuquerque. Great job Tracy. It looks like there will be a lot of local range events happening in all jurisdictions including some very exciting youth activities in SW Alberta. I encourage people to watch for the events and to get involved. Here's wish'n everyone an exciting and productive summer.

## Important Upcoming SRM-IMS Meetings and Events

An open invitation from Tracy Brewer, SRM-IMS Second Vice President  
**Come visit beautiful Granite County, Montana!!!** The IMS Section Summer Tour and Meeting will be held on the West Fork of Rock Creek July 16-18th, 2009. The site of the Summer Tour and Meeting camp is located on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest's Pintler Ranger District, approximately 20 miles west of historic Philipsburg, Montana. The tour will include exciting stops at sites where we will hear about the challenges of ranching in wolf country and how high-elevation willow populations have changed over time in the presence and absence of livestock grazing. Mark your calendars, tell your friends, plan on attending, and stay tuned for registration information in the upcoming June newsletter!

And an advanced invitation from Mike Alexander, SRM-IMS President  
The SRM-IMS Fall Meeting is tentatively planned as a 1 1/2 day workshop for October 22 and 23 2009. The exact location is yet to be determined, but it will definitely be in Alberta. The meeting is titled: Bears, Wolves and Rural Communities - A Rangeland perspective. Stay tuned for additional information on location, speakers, and details. Mark your calendar now, this is a topic that will attract widespread interest for a diverse audience.

### Other Range related Meetings:

MT Range Days	June 15-17	Miles City
MT Natural Resource Youth Camp	July 12-17	Greenough
IMS Summer Meeting/Tour	July 16-18	Philipsburg
MT Youth Range Camp	TBA	
Governors Range Tour	TBA	

## Calling all Cooks, and Wannabe Cooks

Wanted: Recipes and Stories for the Trail Boss Cookbook! The Information and Education Committee wants your family favourites, timeless classics, traditional dishes and any range stories to include in a new addition of the Trail Boss Cookbook. Please submit them to Merrita Fraker-Marble ([mmarble@montana.edu](mailto:mmarble@montana.edu)) or Cindy Selensky ([chogemark@montana.edu](mailto:chogemark@montana.edu)). Also, if you have a passion for food and for sharing recipes and you want to take the lead in compiling, or helping to compile the recipes and stories for this new edition of a successful classic SRM Publication, Please let us know!

# IMS Fall 2008 Meeting Notes.

During the Fall 2008 IMS meeting in Great Falls all those attending were asked to work in small groups to discuss questions posed after speakers set the stage for discussion.

The following is a summary of the notes kept by each group:

## **How have your ideas and understanding of rangeland management changed in the past (30?) years? What are you doing differently today as a result?**

### Changing ideas about livestock

1. Livestock are truly a rangeland management tool. They can be very effective in improving soil and vegetation, not just harvesting the vegetation.
2. Used to think that winter grazing would have very few adverse effects, that is not always true.
3. The kind, number, class and size of the animals all need to be considered when stocking a pasture. Smaller (1,000 lb cows) fit some operations and landscapes the best. And changing consumer tastes present a challenge for the producer to have the right animals for both the range and the market.
4. To some extent, cattle can be trained to change their diet and their behavior.

### ...about people

1. The manager and his 'team' need to be very clear about goals.
2. Public opinion is now a big part of what needs to be considered by ranchers and government agencies. Public land lessees are getting a lot of scrutiny from advocacy groups and they need to be prepared to respond to criticisms.
3. There have been a lot of changes in the ranching business in the past three decades. Land values have gone sky high in some places and traditional livestock operations are not able to compete with other market forces. There is a need to diversify and apply useful technology if the land base is going to remain as open space and in agricultural production.

### ...about plants, soil, wildlife and the landscape

1. With arid rangelands, there is usually no quick fix.
2. Don't make big changes in an acceptable operation to quickly. Test new ideas over time.
3. Season-long grazing management was much more common 30-40 years ago. Rest or deferment during the active growth period of preferred forage plants and holistic methods have all brought some success in improving rangeland health, habitat conditions and livestock production. And for the past twenty years managers have been learning how to adjust management to improve riparian areas, migratory bird habitat, etc.
4. Back in the day when riders were more common, herding may have a better way to achieve rest and deferment than relying on fencing.
5. Grazing management on public lands comes with a lot of habitat and land use issues – fish, recreation, wildlife, T & E species, invasive plants, etc. These can limit the kind of management practices that can be used.
6. Expect periodic low points in the land's productivity due to fire, insect, disease, etc. Being able to rest areas or reduce grazing pressure when production is low can be crucial to recovery. History can be a great teacher about these things.

...about technology and research

1. High voltage, single strand, (solar driven), electric poly-wire fence is one example of a relatively inexpensive but effective way to improve grazing management. It can be used for temporary fencing, drift fencing, testing fence locations before permanent fence is built, etc.
2. Collection, crunching and evaluating monitoring and other data can be made much easier and faster if you have a computer jock on the team.
3. Need a good way for ranchers and researchers to exchange questions and information if we hope to develop and apply good technologies.

**What, in your experience, is the best grazing method or system to conserve rangelands in a properly functioning condition?**

1. *The one that has the full support of the Manager:* The manager's commitment to whatever system or method is selected is the key to success.
2. *The one that has people on the ground with the animals.* Herding is a very valuable but disappearing practice in grazing management. It's getting harder to find people skilled in herding but labor costs are still the biggest factor.
3. *The one that uses a team approach and takes time to carefully consider the goals:* Be willing to take ideas and suggestions from anyone who has a constructive thought. Carefully evaluate what is happening on the land before developing a management plan.
4. *The one that is customized for a specific operation.* The best systems or methods are those tailored to fit. Can't rely on standard practices or recommendation found in manuals or textbooks –don't get locked into pre-set calendar dates, numbers of pastures, etc. Successful range management relies on a 'hands-on' approach -making day-to-day adjustments, if needed, to fit changing conditions. Managers must have knowledge, experience, good information and flexibility to make things work well. Keep the goals and objectives in mind when implementing the plan, but don't rely too much on the paperwork.
5. *The one that provides rest or deferment of grazing:* While some recent science disputes that rest-rotation and growing season deferment of grazing bring better results, there are many ranchers and agency employees who have had good success using these methods. They feel these are the best practices for their situation.
6. *The one that considers several geographic scales:* Some things are pretty site-specific – like picking the best location for new stock water tanks. Some things can be best dealt with in a general area –how to rotate grazing in summer pastures. Some things need to be worked out across ownerships and political boundaries –preventing or containing the invasion of noxious weeds.

7. *The one that is holistic and considers long term goals, quality of life and a landscape perspective as part of the planning.* Production goals and site-specific problems and opportunities shouldn't be the only purpose for planning.
8. *The one that provides flexibility*

PS: If it ain't busted, don't fix it!

**Do the best practices you know of take care of all your problems and concerns? If not, what do you see on the horizon?**

1. For the most part, current practices do take care of the rangeland health and meet production goals.
2. But, invasive plants are a constant concern. There are not a lot of good long-term options. Prevention and eradication are always the best and cheapest strategy.
3. How to restore badly infested arid rangelands is a problem that needs to be dealt with. Harsh sites –dry, rocky or steep – that are badly infested are a real problem.

## A New Way to Help SRM-IMS Build Financial Reserves, and Network with SRM Members at the Same Time.

If you want to host other SRM members and help IMS build its financial reserves you now have a way to do it. The SRM-IMS Bed and Breakfast program is being launched. This concept has been discussed for several years at both the Section and Parent Society levels. The basis is SRM-IMS members will volunteer to host other members in their private homes and the visiting members will make a reasonable donation to the SRM-IMS.

Some suggested guidelines are:

- 1) Accommodations are open only to fellow SRM members, their immediate family, and friends when accompanied by an SRM member.
- 2) The host member shall receive no personal compensation for services rendered. All donations are payable directly to SRM-IMS and are promptly remitted by the host member to the IMS head office.
- 3) Accommodations provided shall be clean and well maintained. Host will provide reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of the guests (for example night-lights and verbal directions to their homes).
- 4) Neither the guest nor the host may claim the amount charged for the B&B service as a charitable contribution to IMS-SRM.
- 5) The host shall provide reasonable menu choices for breakfast.
- 6) It is suggested that insurance may not cover alcohol-related claims and hosts should not serve alcohol to guests.
- 7) Suggested donations are \$40 single and \$50 double per night.
- 8) Hosts should check their personal homeowner's policy. All guests make a voluntary contribution to IMS.

You can enrol in this program by completing the information below and sending it to:  
George Hirschenberger, 4475 Sundown Road, Missoula, MT, 59804-7109.

Your home will be listed in the SRM-IMS Bed & Breakfast Directory for 2009. If you have questions, you can contact George ([GNHberger@msn.com](mailto:GNHberger@msn.com), or 406-543-8232) or Chuck Jarecki (406-883-2248), both of whom have experience with similar programs in other organizations.

Host's town and State or Province \_\_\_\_\_

Host's name- \_\_\_\_\_

Address- \_\_\_\_\_

Phone- \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail- \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested donation per night, single/double (US\$)-

Smoking/nonsmoking

Limit of stay-

**Seasons available (or months, irregular times, etc.)-**

Pets (yes/no)

Bath (private/shared)

Beds available (king, queen, double, twin)

Advance notice required (in weeks)

Other information (i.e. ranch setting, on a lake, etc.)

### **Rangeland Trivia (answers on final page)**

Roots of Stone Seed (*Lithospermum ruderales*) were used by Shoshoni women:

- a. To make a medicinal tea for treating constipation.
- b. To make a poultice to treat battle wounds.
- c. As a form of natural contraceptive.
- d. As a club to ward off Shoshoni men.

Which of the following is true about how the first cattle came to Western Canada?

- a. A bull and 2 heifers were brought via canoe to Manitoba through the Great Lakes from Montreal in 1811.
- b. They were driven in over land from Montana by Tom Lynch and George Emerson in 1877.
- c. They were herded to the gold fields of the Cariboo region of British Columbia (from Washington and Idaho) in 1865.
- d. They were herded from St. Louis to the Selkirk Settlement (near present day Winnipeg) in 1823 by Michael Dousman.

Scenes from the SRM Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Southern New Mexico is characterized by vegetation that is called Semi-Desert Grass-Shrub. This is a sandy site dominated by sand sage (*Artemisia filifolia*) and a smattering of warm season grasses. The status of this site is determined by climate, not grazing pressure.



Shrubs are interspersed with native grasses that are adapted to the dry environment. Black Grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*) is a common dominant or co-dominant grass species. Intense competition for water in desert environments is manifested by changes in plant density (the drier it is, the further between individual plants).



The White Sands Natural Area in SE New Mexico is a result of wind blown gypsum sand. It is characterized by active sand dunes with small pockets of vegetation sometimes growing in the inter-dune spaces. In the February sun the sand dunes are reminiscent of fresh white snow that northerners are more accustomed to.



New Mexico also has one of North America's first invasive species. Black Brush (*Larrea tridentata*) shows up in pack rat middens for the first time about 12,000 years ago. Today, it occurs on millions of acres of desert rangeland and is an important component of the "native" vegetation.

## **Trivia Answers:**

The aboriginal people of the Great Plains used a wide variety of native plants for a wide variety of reasons. Food, shelter, relaxation, and medicinal purposes were all common uses of native plants. Although Shoshoni women used plants as an aid to ease constipation and as remedies that both reduced pain and aided healing, Stone Seed was used as a contraceptive. They may have also used the roots as a club to ward off Shoshoni men, but this is pure speculation on the part of the Newsletter editor.

All of the statements regarding the arrival of cattle to western Canada are true, so A represents the first. Scottish settlers that formed the nucleus of the first agricultural settlement in western Canada (Selkirk Settlement near present day Winnipeg) picked up a heifer and a bull (called Adam and Eve) at Oxford House on their way to their new settlement. The cattle were yearlings and were moved from Oxford House UP the Nelson River and across Lake Winnipeg (lengthwise) to the newly formed Selkirk Settlement, a 60 day journey by canoe. There are no records that the 2 cattle were transported to Oxford House through the Hudson Bay, the only way for them to get there was as calves in a free trader canoe from Montreal. In the fall of 1811 the Selkirk Settlers acquired another 2 heifers from a Northwest Company trading fort in western Manitoba. Eve had a calf in the spring of 1812, bringing the cattle population of western Canada (Rupert's Land) to 6 head. Interestingly, the first horse of British breeding (the plains aboriginal people of the prairie provinces had already acquired Spanish ponies by this time frame) was also transported from the shores of Hudson Bay to the Selkirk Settlement in a canoe. The offspring of a mating between this British stallion and the Spanish ponies were said to be the very best buffalo horses in the land, fast yet with Great Plains endurance and hardiness. (Source: Grant McEwan, Blazing the Old Cattle Trail)

If you have some interesting rangeland trivia, send it along to the Newsletter Editor (Barry Irving at [birving@ualberta.ca](mailto:birving@ualberta.ca)) for everyone to enjoy.

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