TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

TN - Range - No. 26 (Revision 1)

Boise, Idaho
July 23, 1969

(The following training material originally developed by Don Davis and E. J. Dyksterhuis, formerly SCS Range Conservationists, has been revised by Robert L. Ross, SCS Range Conservationist, Bozeman, Montana)

Many ranchers do not realize the extent of technical services that are available through their local Soil and Water Conservation District. We as a service have not been explicit in providing this information. Understandably, neither have the District Supervisors.

District Supervisors and cooperating ranchers should understand that Range Conservationists work closely with ranchers in developing management plans that are based on the needs of the individual operating unit; and that the Soil Conservation Service is vitally interested in total resource planning on individual ranches and group projects.

For effective results in conservation planning, ranchers must know who they are dealing with and why. In working with ranchers it is good business to start by explaining what isn't or cannot be offered. Technical assistance does not:

1. Tell the rancher how to operate his ranch.
2. Compute the carrying capacity of his range. *
3. Set up a management plan for him by a government agency.

These three do-nots will do much to lay to rest the inherent fears that many ranchers have of "Government meddling" in their private business.

SCS technical assistance through Soil Conservation Districts does offer the rancher:

1. A basic inventory of his unit consisting of:

    a. Range sites.
    These are based on soil, climate, and potential natural vegetation.

    b. Condition classes.
    Relation of where the natural vegetation is to where it could be for the site. They serve as a basis for evaluating possible or potential forage production for his unit. They also serve as a basis for predicting equitable distribution of the grazing load between pastures, and feasible seasons of use for each.

* Exception: FHA Grazing Associations.

c. Cultural features.
Scaled location of roads, trails, buildings, fences, boundaries, and acreage by pasture or unit.

d. Water distribution.

e. Topography.
Location of natural barriers, erosion, drainage, slope.

f. Location and extent of poisonous plants if any.

g. Location and extent of water spreading and water development possibilities.

2. A working knowledge of his native forage plans:

a. How native vegetation grows and how it reacts to grazing.

b. Proper common names and how to identify important species at all seasons of the year.

c. Seasons of growth, highest forage value and productive ability.

d. The behavior of important species in range trends, i.e., decreaser, increaser or invader.

e. Propagation habits and ability to spread.

f. How and where seed of native grasses may profitably be harvested.

3. A practical guide to degree of range use, and instruction in its use.

4. A knowledge of the relationship of vegetation to water-intake, and a way to get more of the moisture that falls into the ground. This allows him to cash in on the additional vegetation resulting from more moisture in the soil.

5. A knowledge of the dynamic nature of native range vegetation and how to get more production from better species by permitting or hastening natural processes (secondary succession toward climax).

6. A suggested intial stocking rate from which to start toward highest possible production under normal climate.

7. How to get high percentage calf and lamb crops through better animal condition by high forage production.

8. A method of using the basic inventory information and the knowledge gained to set goals he can reach for:

A. Improving range condition through one or two classes by:

1) Proper range use.
2) Resting or deferred grazing.
3) Brush control with deferment.
4) Reseeding with deferment.
5) Renovation with deferment.
6) Scalping with deferment.

B. Equal and even utilization through:

1) Water development.
2) Salting.
3) Fencing.
4) Riding or herding.

C. Increasing forage production by:

1) Change in plant composition as range improves.
2) Water spreading.
3) Getting more of the moisture that falls into the ground at the grass roots.

D. High yields on a sustained basis through:

1) Adjustment of land uses to uses within land capability.
2) Balancing acres of harvested roughage, tame pasture, and range grazing to suit the needs of his herd through 12 months -- in his climate with his kind of land.

9. The District can help him reach his goals through technical assistance in location and layout of planned, lasting, economical conservation practices. Technicians are available for planning <u>with</u> him but not <u>for</u> him.

10. The District and the SCS can help him select the best alternatives for land use and range treatment by prouding him with current cost-return data applicable to his operating unit.

11. The District can offer him an opportunity to jointly plan his total operating unit when he has permits on BLM or National forest lands.

In the Soil Conservation Service "a good rangeman" is a man who is good at working with ranchers: in getting <u>them</u> to see and know <u>their grasses</u>, to understand the <u>changes</u> in their vegetation, and to handle it in accordance with its changing needs.

The SCS rangeman's day is occupied primarily by thoughts of climate, soil, vegetation, livestock, and people. The last is the most complex. Our lack of knowledge of the subject "people" may be listed as the major bottleneck in getting management of grazing on cooperating ranches. Do the ranges of cooperators look better than other ranges? That is the final test!

To be effective, the rangeman and rancher make the range site and condition survey together. This gives them an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience while discussing basic range management principles and practical ranch operation methods. The rangeman must be sure that the

rancher is able to recognize his key plants and understand why his vegetation reacts as it does to grazing pressures. Without this understanding, a rancher seldom carries out a sound management plan. Worse still; if the rancher doesn't understand and talk the pros and cons or "whys;" he doesn't tell his neighbors and we never attain community interest in range conservation. On private rangelands our success will be in proportion to our effectiveness in explaining the fundamentals of ecology as they apply in individual cases -- and how they relate to possible individual and community benefits.

A rancher must want to do something as a result of knowledge obtained from you. He will then ask how and you can suggest alternatives. If the rancher is first convinced that improvement from his or the community standpoint is possible, you may well find him suggesting how it can be accomplished when we, without full knowledge of his financial and personal affairs, would be stumped.

"Don't overestimate the public's knowledge. Never underestimate the public's intelligence." -- Raymond Clapper. (They know far less about plants and soil than we commonly assume they do. Tell them. They are quick to learn. You may be asked questions outside your field. Refer them to others or get the answer, but never bluff or hide ignorance of the subject behind words.)

You can afford to spend ten times more time making a conservation rancher or a man whose judgment is respected by ten ranchers than you can on a lone wolf.

To gain acceptance in any ranching community; begin by making these points perfectly clear to individuals and groups of ranchers:

Technical assistance from the Soil Conservation Service is available to ranchers through their local Soil and Water Conservation District. Tell them:

a. "It's strictly voluntary."

b. "It's local and democratic."

c. "It's your program and will be what you make it."

d. "Congress set up the Soil Conservation Service to provide technical services to those who cooperate with Soil Conservation Districts. Ranchers will always be two jumps ahead of us in knowledge of how to operate their particular spread from week to week. But, we intend to stay ahead on knowledge of how to manage water, vegetation, and soil. We hope you'll make it hard for us to stay ahead. It's questions from you, about your range problems, that keep us wide awake as professionals and on the look-out for the answers that you can use."

e. "Our job is to help you in any way we can with your own conservation plans."

f. "There is no better crop for conservation of soil and water than native range in good to excellent condition. That's why the local District and we Civil Service employees of the Soil Conservation Service are interested in rangeland and recognize ranchers in the District as conservationists of the first rank now or potentially."

Next: use every device you can to obtain widespread knowledge and discussion of the names and behavior of the key native range plants throughout each ranching community. A large segment of the community must know them and talk about them. Knowledge of key species, their names and behavior, comes ahead of purposeful range conservation. Grass consciousness among ranchers is the result of a carefully planned campaign by technicians.

To learn whether you or another technician have reached first base, listen to a cooperator talk about his grass. The uninitiated talk about range or grass in general, but mostly about weather, weeds, stock water, and seeding. The initiated talk about this kind of grass and that kind of grass, where it is, how much, and whether there is or should be more or less on specific sites and why, and how weather, stock water, deferments, etc., have or might play a part in improving range cover.

In addition to technical knowledge, the conservationist must develop personal and social skills in working satisfactorily with ranchers and natural ranch and livestock farmers groups.

A. Personal appearance is important.

1. Dress appropriately:

a. In keeping with local customs.
b. Avoid extremes.

2. Grooming - avoid extremes or eccentricities in hair dress.

B. Social Conduct

1. Manerisms which are distracting may delay your acceptance.

a. Avoid affectations, conspicuous traits, or actions.
b. Shake hands firmly and in a sincere manner.

2. Speech

a. Use a clear, moderate tone with sincerity.
b. Use of profanity requires discretion.
c. Appropriate in keeping with local, acceptable customs.
d. Talk to - and not away from - people.

C. Social Attitudes

1. Become familiar with and show proper respect for local traditions, customs, history, religion, and natural backgrounds.

   Take an active part in the life of the community.

   a. Analyze local situations and identify self with those groups and individuals that will help your acceptance in the community.

   b. Do not become over-burdened with civic and social activities.

D. Meeting and dealing with people

1. Avoid controversial subjects not related to your job.
2. Be tolerant of views and opinions of others.
3. Be a good listener and learn by listening.
4. Do not impose personal opinions on others.
5. Be honest, sincere, fair and tactful in all dealings.
6. Discover and allow for local and individual preferences for such things as livestock classes and breeds, sheep vs. cattle, and government agencies.
7. Be friendly but not phony.
8. Be helpful but not bossy.
9. Be local and be specific.
10. Keep current on trade magazines read by local people.

E. Professional Conduct

1. Know your job thoroughly.
2. Defend principles tactfully, but firmly, and with confidence.
3. Do not bluff. If you do not know, say so; but find out and let the cooperator know.
4. Confine your activities to the job of soil conservation.
5. Know the latest developments in your technical field.

F. Develop knowledge of local ranching and livestock farming conditions and customs.

1. Become familiar with local ivestock operations and terms.

   a. Seasonal and recurring livestock and range operations and schedules.
   b. Local livestock marketing procedures and prices.
   c. Visit local ivestock auctions and wool warehouses -- get acquainted and watch their operations.
   d. Leasing systems and land prices.
   e. Construction and costs of fencing.
   f. Local terms and expressions.

2. Identify yourself with rancher and livestock farmer activities to degree necessary to become known and accepted.

3. Discover and work through local ranch and livestock farmer leadership and neighbor groups.

Successful application of the foregoing personal and social guides will result in your acceptance in the community. When you are accepted, then you will make friends -- not only for yourself, but for sound conservation, district, and the Service.

Walter B. Rumsey
State Range Conservationist