

Outcome-based Grazing Program

The Bureau of Land Management implements an initiative known as Outcome-based Grazing Authorizations. It is designed to offer a more collaborative approach between the BLM and its partners within the livestock grazing community when issuing grazing authorizations. The following is part of a series highlighting ranches in this pilot program.



Deep Creek Ranch

Hollister, Idaho

Q & A with Clay Pickard, Ranch Manager

How would you describe this ranch to someone who has never been there?

Deep Creek Ranch for us is typically a winter and spring allotment. We usually start sending cattle onto this ranch by the first of December and another bunch will go in the middle of January. By the first of June, we have completely moved our cows out of its pastures. We use certain fields, starting in one and then rotating into our spring fields. Usually by the middle of May, we start moving cattle off of the BLM land and onto some private land that we use in conjunction with the public land. We're there for about six months at the most, and it is empty for the rest of the year. We use about 22,000 acres of BLM land and about 6,000 acres of deeded land.

What is the philosophy that guides this ranch?

Some people use a hay stack to get their cows through the winter, but Deep Creek to us is our hay stack. We try to leave as much forage on the land as we can. There are years that it's very dry, so a lot of times, what we left there the year before is what carries us into the next year. We try to keep about two years of feed stocked up in front of us. Our goal is to stay prepared while we maintain and improve the land.

Why did this ranch enroll in the outcome-based grazing program?

Nancy Ady, our BLM contact, has been working on this concept for about 20 years, and it has turned into this Outcome-Based Grazing Program. The work that she had been doing with us and others fit the mold that the BLM wanted to achieve on their land. She told us they were coming up with this program and asked if we would be willing to be a pilot for it, and we agreed. A lot of the stuff that we had already been doing or trying to change was what they wanted with this program anyway, so it worked out well for us to be a part of it.

Why is some flexibility important in a grazing permit?

Previously for us, our permit was set up for us to go in on the 1st of November, and we would be out by the 30th of June. The way it was set up, we would have to be out of our winter fields and go into the spring fields on the 1st of March. Well, in our area, the 1st of March isn't spring and our grass isn't growing by then. So, a lot of the time, we were leaving our winter fields that still had a lot of old feed to go onto our spring fields that hadn't got the chance to grow back yet. Last year, we were able to go onto our spring fields toward the end of March. By that time, we had around 5 to 6 inches of green feed, plus whatever old feed we had left the year before. This program allows us to better utilize our fields according to what mother nature gives us, not just what the calendar says we need to. Some springs, we can move cow onto those pastures by the 1st of March, but most years that isn't the case.

Why should someone who isn't involved in agriculture care about how public lands are managed?

Because people use public lands whether they're involved in agriculture or not. They're called public because everybody has access to them. People use public lands for all kinds of different things like hunting, hiking or biking. As far as cattle work is concerned, a lot of the meat sold in the store is run on public lands. Fire is another thing that affects everybody. We're never going to be able to get rid of fire, but with good management of public lands, we can help to reduce the amount of fire and its impact.



Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands is a collaborative effort between the BLM and Intermountain West Joint Venture. Our purpose is to catalyze proactive, voluntary, and community-led sagebrush rangeland conservation – expanding success across private and public lands. This collaboration is supporting the Outcome-Based Grazing Authorizations efforts. Learn more at ***www.PartnersInTheSage.com***.