

The Environmental Bi-Weekly

High Country News

Vol. 6 No. 22 35¢

Lander, Wyoming

Friday, November 8, 1974

Nevada report may change the West BLM exposes own grazing abuses

by Bruce Hamilton

Severe overgrazing and other aspects of poor range management on public lands in Nevada have led to loss of wildlife habitat, destruction of cultural sites, and damaging erosion. These serious conditions are probably not isolated examples of poor husbandry of the land, but a condition of rangelands throughout the West, a government report indicates.

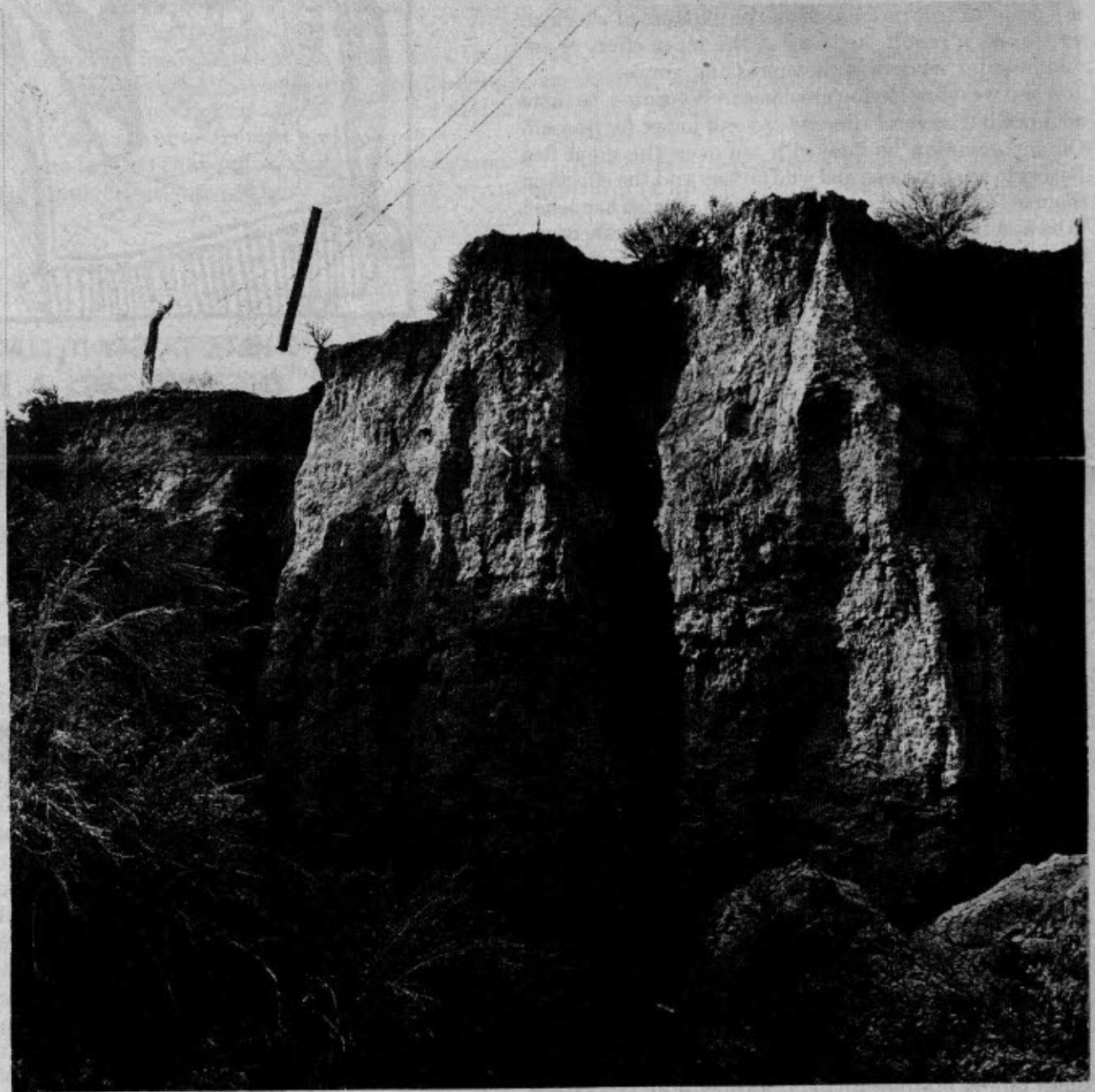
The condemnation of range management in Nevada and other Western states is not the wolf cry of a few preservationists, but rather the findings of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) — the federal agency entrusted with overseeing most of the public grazing lands and the officials primarily responsible for preventing such abuses.

This indictment of BLM by BLM is a special report on range conditions and BLM range management in Nevada. The Nevada Multipurpose Task Force to Evaluate Range Problems was made up of BLM resource managers with expertise in range, watersheds, wildlife, and recreation.

The team found that most management decisions were made with the idea of maximizing livestock use of the public lands, and that this usually meant other resource values suffered accordingly. So devoted were the BLM managers to increasing the number of sheep and cattle on the range that the task force notes: "Generally, the objectives were dominated by, and oriented toward, satisfying the wishes, even dreams, of the livestock operators."

BLM Director Curt Berklund said in a September 1974 press release that information from similar evaluation reports from other Western states indicates that findings in the Nevada report are not unique to that state. Other BLM investigations point to "similar or more serious conditions in other Western states, despite the progress the Bureau has made in cooperation with the livestock industry over the past 40 years under the Taylor Grazing Act."

The repercussions of this report go far beyond the state of Nevada. The BLM is being sued by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and other conservation organizations over their grazing program. The suit contends that the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires BLM to prepare, consider and circulate environmental impact statements which discuss in detail the specific, on-the-ground impacts of livestock grazing on particular areas of the public lands. The task force



Soil erosion is a naturally occurring process. Overgrazing of plant cover destroys the soil's natural protection and erosion is speeded up. When erosion reaches the extreme level depicted here topsoil is lost, streams are choked with silt after rains, and the land is taken out of production for livestock.

notes in their report that the BLM's "continual neglect" of needed management and "failure to recognize and deal realistically with problems such as these" has caused "justified criticism against the Bureau, such as the NRDC suit."

The Gannett News Service reported another spin-off of the Nevada report — it apparently nearly cost BLM Director Curt Berklund his job. When conservationists learned of the report, they tried to force its release under the Freedom of Information Act. Berklund, acting under the advice of department lawyers, made the document public. This action reportedly angered Berklund's immediate superior, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Jack Horton, and there was much talk about Berklund's

"Generally, the objectives were dominated by, and oriented toward, satisfying the wishes, even dreams, of the livestock operators."

(Continued on page 4)

2-High Country News
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

HIGH COUNTRY

By Tom Bell

It was a pleasant surprise to see Mike Frome gazing out of a page of *TIME* magazine as big as life (Nov. 4, 1974). But then I read the article and that was not so pleasant. Mike had been sacked again, this time by *Field and Stream* magazine.

It seems that Mike's deft dissection of so many environmental problems, and his rapier-like pen used against so many politicians and bureaucrats alike involved so much blood-letting that it frightened the hierarchy of *Field and Stream*. In that cloistered world of egocentrics and egomaniacs called government, Mike Frome is too much of a threat. He likes to name names and lay too many facts openly before the public. And that threatens special interests.

Mike is gentlemanly charming, keeping his cool and manners even when confronting hostile adversaries. He is intelligent, witty, and knowledgeable. And he makes it a point to inform himself on the matters of which he writes. As a result, he is one of the most effective environmental writers of these pressing times.

When we were having problems in Wyoming, he came not once but several times to see and judge for himself. On one occasion he flew with me over the great Red Desert to see antelope and wild horses and the effects on them of fencing and mining activities. It also happened to be at a time when AT&T was putting in a transcontinental telephone cable — and unknowingly bulldozing out the historic Oregon Trail as a right-of-way. We flew on to see the valley of the Upper Green River and the threats to it of big dams. (The threats today may be more imminent than they were then.) And we ended in Jackson Hole where Mike addressed a group on the threats of clearcutting on the national forests to the famed elk herds of the area.

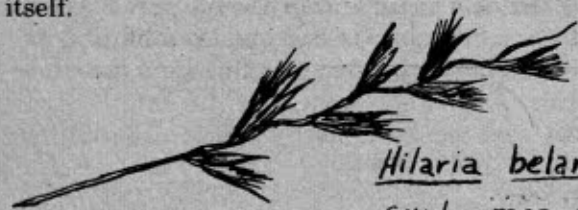
Along with Dave Brower, he generously lent his prestige to Wyoming's First Environmental Congress. And he just as generously gives of his time and interests to many other environmental efforts.

So it is that the hypocrisy of our system could never be better illustrated than in the case of Mike Frome. We tout our system as being one of freedom for the individual, and we particularly tout our freedom of speech and expression. His experience gives the lie to just how much freedom we really do have.

For years his lucid, penetrating columns appeared in *American Forests* magazine. But as the powerful special interests in the timber industry began to rape the national forests, his writings became more vehement against them. And he also turned his guns on the Forest Service, accusing it of being a willing accomplice. He was told that his columns must conform to "editorial policy." He refused and was told his columns would no longer be needed.

Now, it is *Field and Stream's* turn. When he signed on at *Field and Stream* as environmental editor, his writings were a refreshing change from the traditional "me & Joe" hunting and fishing tales. Mike, and sometimes fellow staffers Richard Starnes and Ted Trueblood, gave readers something more solid to consider than the mere taking or killing of nature's bounty. But, alas, if such mental sustenance was not too much for *Field and Stream's* readers, it was for the owners, Columbia Broadcasting System, and undoubtedly for many advertisers.

And so a powerful and compelling voice for urgent environmental matters has lost another forum. It would be different if Mike Frome preached destruction of the "system." But he does not — only the changes which are ultimately necessary if the system is not to destroy itself.



Hilaria belangieri
curly mesquite



Letters

Dear Editors,

The manuscript by David Sumner (HCN 10-25-74) was very informative and a bit pessimistic, lending credence to our fears that Colorful Colorado is in danger of being ravished and plundered for oil shale, radioactive natural gas, and other things that our acquisitive Industrialized Society covets and uses up.

In warning us of the gluttonous demands of our Industrial Society, John Burroughs correctly prophesied, "In a few centuries the earth will be a sucked orange . . ." (if not sooner??)

Daryl Glamann
Cheney, Kansas

Dear High Country News,

I was somewhat disappointed with the latest *High Country News* and the full-length article regarding subdivisions by David Sumner. It's an extremely important issue, with many ramifications, but Sumner's article discussed it from a very limited, albeit important point of view.

At a number of points there appeared to be a veiled criticism of ranching activities, as being one of the detrimental impacts on wildlife and on land. However, ranching, fundamental to the West, suffers equal or greater impacts from subdivisions and also from mining threats. Ranch interests are a likely ally in opposition to subdivision sprawl.

The extreme case of Vail is fortunately not yet typical of much of the Rockies, particularly Montana, although the Flathead Valley is getting there. However, the slow buying up of ranches and their

subdivision into 10 acre home-sites presents a much greater threat, both to wildlife and to productive ranching. This, along with strip mining and the loss of a significant amount of land directly, and a major diversion of water, produces an even greater threat.

Sumner's points are valid, but only a small part of the problem, and really shouldn't take an entire issue without reference to the other, more widespread associated problems.

Yours,
Francis J. Walcott
Absarokee, Mont.

Dear editors:

How do you do it?? Your newspaper is the best regional environmental publication around. It is invaluable to me, shut away in Washington, D.C., where most of us really aren't sure what is happening in the outside world.

Your intensive coverage of energy issues as they relate to the Plains states is thorough, accurate and poignant because your love of the land is so strongly felt on every page. Every issue brings me closer in touch with what is really happening in terms of the way federal decisions affect people and land and resources.

Again, I can't tell you how valuable your work is — keep publishing. We need you.

Sincerely,
Catherine Lerza, Editor
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION
Washington, D.C.

Guest Editorial

Losin' the slurry line blues

by Bart Koehler

Some friends of mine from southern Wyoming sing a song called the "Slurry Line Blues" which goes like this, "You put in the water, mix in the coal, then watch it rock and roll to Arkansas."

Seems like many people in Wyoming have the "Slurry Line Blues" these days. I, too, had the blues during the 1974 Legislative session in Cheyenne. My views are changing now.

As the slurry line bill was originally introduced, it was a good bill establishing state ownership of underground water. It was amended repeatedly so that there was a cloud of confusion hanging over it.

I was opposed to the bill back in those days. Energy Transportation Systems, Inc. (ETSI) should never have been written into the law, and the legislature should never have approved the bill prior to the state engineer's findings of fact.

Much has transpired since the passage of the law. We know more about the underground water systems, and the data indicates that this one project probably will not damage other water users. Geologists have located the wells east of the Powder River structural basin, and there are many safeguards written in the law.

I believe that the greatest fear of many Wyomingites is the impact from an influx of large numbers of people. Once that happens, Wyoming will never be the same. Secondary development, such as the processing of coal here, will bring in hordes of people,



suck up our water, fill our open space, and poison our air. Therefore, given two choices I would rather send the coal out of the state by rail and slurry line than process it here for someone else's benefit.

Slurry lines are more desirable than power plants or other mine-mouth conversion facilities because

they avoid disruption of open space and the influx of people is minimal. Furthermore, a slurry line could use less water than a power plant or other facility while utilizing an equal or greater amount of coal.

If we go ahead with slurry lines, then we must understand our underground water resource. The state engineer feels comfortable with the physical aspects of one line. We must now pursue a full study so we, the people, can understand what will happen to the water resource if we have two lines, or three, or more.

In any case the lines should be considered only a case-by-case basis and kept under control within safe constraints of recharge.

Editorial

Conservation is dirty word

One of those weeks of irony for "the movement": —After reading a Wyoming newspaper editorial which referred to "conservationists, or environmentalists as their opponents call them. . ."

—After finding a letter to the editor in a Utah paper which accuses a candidate of not admitting that he had been supported by labor and the Sierra Club "and other extremist groups. . ."

Then to learn that John C. Sawhill (a questionable conservation compatriot at best) has been re-

moved as head of the Federal Energy Administration, apparently because he **advocated mandatory energy conservation too strongly**, putting him at odds with Rogers C.B. Morton, Treasury Secretary William Simon, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who favor quick increases in production of energy resources and voluntary conservation efforts.

The final blow: he has been replaced by the former president of an oil transport company. —MjA

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

Published bi-weekly at 140 North Seventh Street, Lander, Wyoming 82520. Tele. 1-307-332-4877. Copyright 1974 by High Country News, Inc. 2nd class postage paid at Lander, Wyoming 82520.

Publisher Thomas A. Bell
 Managing Editor Joan Nice
 News Editor Bruce Hamilton
 Associate Editor Marjane Ambler
 Office Manager Mary Margaret Davis

Subscription rate \$10.00

Single copy rate 35c

Box K, Lander, Wyoming 82520

Material published in **High Country News** may be reprinted without permission. Proper credit will be appreciated. Contributions (manuscripts, photos, artwork) will be welcomed with the understanding that the editors cannot be held responsible for loss or damage. Articles will be published at the discretion of the editors.



Dear Editors,

The second great invasion of the West is now apparently underway. This may be a good time for those who love what wildness there is left in the Rocky Mountain area to stop, look back in time, and try to sympathize with how the Indians of this region must have felt with the coming of the white man.

The Indian knew the Rocky Mountain area in a truly wild state which we can now only imagine, and he had to watch as his beloved buffalo and other wild creatures were slaughtered, the grasslands fenced and overgrazed, his forests cut down, and on and on.

When one looks back at man's history on this planet, you can see that the continual degradation of the land has been a never-ending process. The process may be coming to a gradual end, however, as there is not much left to ruin.

Jay Lawson
 Casper, Wyo.

P.S. Am sorry about being so cynical, but I find it increasingly difficult to feel otherwise.

* * *

Dear Mr. Hamilton:

I have completed reading the latest issue (October 25, 1974) of **High Country News** and feel I must comment on a number of points made by David Sumner. I have read your paper for the good part of a year now, and have appreciated the generally intelligent and straightforward manner in which HCN has dealt with the myriad of environmental problems facing the Rocky Mountain region.

I have had broad-based biological training in both California and Colorado and received a Ph.D. in Plant Ecology from the University of Colorado. I am presently employed by a multi-disciplinary environmental consulting firm here in Denver, where I am one of the staff biologists. Obviously, I have come into considerable contact with many of the proposed energy developments here in Colorado. My work, however, has taken me into Wyoming, Utah, Montana, and Idaho, as well.

In general, I agree with the concern expressed by Sumner in his article concerning big game in the Rockies. I feel, however, that he would have been more on the topic if he had directed his attentions more to the packaged lifestyle and wasteful consumerism pushed by the various mountain condo developments. I believe there is no better example of a parasitic existence than the "planned" communities typified by Vail, Marble, Stagecoach, and Telluride, to mention a few. The potential impact on wildlife presented by these developments and the various energy projects is indeed real, but not the heart of the problem — rather a symptom.

I also must take issue with a number of his statements. He states, because of various conservation efforts, "these animals are at near peak population in many areas — and thereby deceptively abundant since their numbers stand at the beginning of a long downward curve."

I would be very curious where he came up with that statement. Here in Colorado, the elk population is at an all-time high and the herds are still increasing. According to State Division of Wildlife officials the elk harvest will approach 22,000 animals this year, or about 20% of the herd. I gather

that this is an established percentage to keep the herd healthy and is recovered every year. The deer population is indeed declining in Colorado, but for reasons more serious than a collection of mountain subdivisions. Bad management practices, a series of harsh winters, game management for elk instead of deer, range destruction by overgrazing, and a four-fold increase in coyote population have all acted to lower the deer herds.

I also take issue with the author's attack on environmental consulting. He states that in "more sophisticated privately funded instances, the project is legitimized and blessed by a pandering professional ecologist." Professional ecologists can hardly call themselves such if all they do is compromise their training. There may exist many people, and probably some biologists, who will sell out their ideals for heavy dollars (witness contemporary Washington), but the people I work with and most people I know in similar positions are quite dedicated to environmental quality and rational land use. This group should include those government agencies (USGS, BLM, USFS) who for the first time have a real say-so in proper land use.

I hope that HCN continues to publish information in a quality manner and can avoid much of the emotionalism normally associated with environmental problems. By allowing statements like the ones I have commented upon to become part of your publication, I believe you lower your credibility as a responsible spokesman for ecological land use.

Sincerely yours,
 W. Hugh Bollinger, Ph.D.
 Denver, Colo.



The area in the foreground has been ungrazed for about four years. The hillside in the background receives regular grazing pressure. Grass is a renewable resource that can withstand moderate grazing. But overgrazing can deplete this resource and reduce the land's carrying capacity. A balance must be struck for the benefit of the land and the livestock operator.

Grazing . . .

(Continued from page 1)

pending resignation. The affair has since quieted down and Berklund is still at the helm in BLM.

The facts are out, and BLM admits erring. Although the report is embarrassing to BLM, in the end it should be a boost to the agency since it will bring about a much-needed purge in grazing policy.

The Nevada report focuses on 11 principle problems. These are:

- (1.) Livestock grazing systems have not adequately considered other multiple uses (wildlife, recreation, etc.) in the planning stages.
- (2.) Land use planning should be completed on critical areas as soon as possible.
- (3.) Significant increases in livestock grazing use have been authorized which cannot be supported by existing forage.
- (4.) Forage was allotted for livestock use without due consideration for big game, wild horse, wild burro and other wildlife needs.
- (5.) There was excessive livestock grazing in some areas.
- (6.) Reservation of grazing privileges in excess of any reasonable forage production potentials was carried on the books for future livestock use.
- (7.) The BLM's intensive livestock grazing management program is not being effectively implemented.
- (8.) Range improvement projects (reseeding, chaining, etc.) have not been following proper management techniques.
- (9.) Overgrazing has led to an increase in the density of pinyon pine-juniper stands which has caused a loss of understory forage for all grazing animals including wildlife.
- (10.) Historical and archeological values have not been protected and have often been destroyed by grazing practices.

- (11.) BLM District offices have inadequate staffs to correct deficiencies in the grazing program. The details of these shortcomings follow.

WILD HORSES AND BURROS

The BLM districts surveyed by the Nevada task force did not consider or provide forage for the needs of wild horses and burros in the state. Because adequate forage is not being provided by BLM management, the horses and burros are forced to compete with domestic livestock and wildlife. This intense competition further depletes the productivity of the range. Under the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act the BLM was given the mandate to preserve and manage these animals for public interest values.

"In most areas where there are substantial concentrations of wild horses there are poor and declining range conditions resulting from the severe competition between cattle, sheep, other wildlife, etc.," states the report. "Poor range condition contributes to poor physical condition of animals which often results in loss of life due to disease, adverse climatic conditions etc., and a poor colt crop."

The districts are issuing the same number of licenses and leases for livestock grazing as were issued prior to the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, states the report. "There is an estimated population of 7,630 wild horses using Bureau administered lands in the three districts visited. This equates to an over-utilization of 91,560 AUMs." (An AUM or animal unit month is one cow's use of forage resources for one month.)

To correct this situation, the task force recommends that "proper allowance of wild horse and burro AUMs be allocated with appropriate reductions in livestock grazing AUMs. This item should be given immediate attention."

BIG GAME LEFT OUT

Within the state of Nevada, the BLM has set aside 97,376 AUMs for wildlife use — presumably just for big game. Yet the BLM lands hold about 2,200 antelope, 740 bighorn sheep, 109,400 deer and 230 elk. Just to maintain this population the BLM would need to set aside 271,440 AUMs of forage. This is why competition is so keen and the range is deteriorating so rapidly.

A further problem is that the BLM isn't sure where these 97,376 AUMs of forage for big game are. Much of it is probably on the steep rocky slopes that are unusable by livestock. But one thing is sure — the land set aside for wildlife has not been chosen on the basis of the animals' biological needs.

"Critical wildlife habitat requirements such as mating, nesting, birthing, rearing, or escape areas, need for cover, succulent vegetation, wet areas, etc., have not been recognized in allocation of forage or vegetation resources," states the report.

"Of the allotments reviewed, many were grazed in excess of their annual active use, or were excessively utilized by wild horses and burros. Therefore, it is apparent that wildlife habitat is being destroyed."

In several cases, critical winter range for big game was grazed to the ground in the fall leaving nothing for the wintering wildlife to feed on. In the case of the Lassen-Washoe interstate deer herd it was pointed out that the proposed management plan would mean all winter deer habitat would be consumed by livestock. Even with this prior knowledge, the deer were sacrificed and the area was given over to cattle.

Fencing has posed additional problems for Nevada's wildlife. Antelope, which cannot get through many types of sheep-tight fencing, have found their traditional migration routes blocked by fenced BLM allotments. "There was no evidence in any of the AMPs (Allotment Management Plans) reviewed that any consideration was given to antelope migration needs," states the task force.

Livestock overgrazing in Nevada has led to a gradual take over of grassy areas by sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and juniper. This change in species

"Stream riparian habitat where livestock grazing is occurring has been grazed out of existence or is in a severely deteriorated condition."

"These pastures will be utilized to the fullest extent possible. The limiting factor will be the condition of the livestock as determined by the range user."

composition has decreased the habitat available for both livestock and wildlife.

"Much of the juniper stands, in forests in Nevada, is considered closed stands where little if any other vegetative species exist. Other existing species are being decimated by livestock use," according to the report. "Juniper invasion, if allowed to continue, will eliminate much of the scarce wildlife habitat."

Meadow loss to sagebrush and rabbitbrush is equally serious. "This has decreased the amount of meadow habitat available for wildlife survival by at least 50%," states the report.

The task force found that within the state 9,529,000 acres of big game habitat; 5,717,500 acres of small game habitat; and 42,200 acres of water-fowl habitat are in "a declining or unsatisfactory" condition. "With proper livestock control, reduction, and supervision, the figures could be drastically reduced."

STOCK V. FISH

"Stream riparian habitat where livestock grazing is occurring has been grazed out of existence or is in a severely deteriorated condition," states the task force. Within the state BLM lands 883 miles of streams and 1,875 impoundment areas were identified as having deteriorated and declining riparian (streamside) habitat.

"Riparian habitat is a critical habitat component of numerous wildlife and fish species. Large populations of non-game birds and mammals are dependent upon riparian habitat to supply a major component in their life cycle," explains the task force. The report points out that heavy grazing along stream banks increases erosion, fills the streams with sediment and removes vegetation, which in turn causes water temperatures to rise to a level unhealthy for some fish life.

One of the most highly abused fishery streams is Mahogany Creek in the Winnemucca District. The task force describes the situation this way: "Mahogany Creek is one of the last two streams supporting a population of the endangered Lahontan cutthroat trout. Annually the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collects the eggs of this species on the national resource lands to be transferred to their hatchery on the headwaters of Summit Lake. Overgrazing by domestic livestock has deteriorated stream bank vegetation to the extent that large amounts of silt and pollutants are being deposited in an alluvial fan in Summit Lake. This alluvial fan, built up at the entrance to Summit Lake, blocks upstream migration at the point where Mahogany Creek enters Summit Lake. Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has to contract for the digging of a trench in this alluvial fan specifically to allow upstream migration of the endangered fish to its spawning beds on national resource lands. There also is a detrimental effect of stream siltation on spawning gravel.

"The gravel is covered over, rendering it useless for reproductive purposes. In many instances the silt covers the eggs after they have been deposited causing them to be cut off from their oxygen and, therefore, death results."

This situation has been known for years and to date no action has been taken to correct this problem. Rather than fence off the water or reduce the number of livestock to save this endangered fish, the fishery biologists are forced to transplant eggs and dig trenches in a losing battle.

The task force notes, "There are specific geographic areas within the fragile desert environment that do not lend themselves to grazing by domestic livestock on a continuous basis if they are to survive and provide needed components for the ecological

balance. Riparian vegetation, meadowed areas, and reservoirs fall within this category."

WILDERNESS LOST

"Range improvement work has had a devastating and widespread effect on the natural and primitive area values," states the report. Today the land is pocked and crisscrossed with fences, roads, stock ponds and other "improvements." "Were it not for range improvements and the maintenance of old mining roads, etc., for range purposes approximately 90% of the BLM lands in Nevada would probably be in a near natural condition."

Non-structural "improvements" have also taken their toll of the natural environment. For example, almost 800,000 acres of native range has been revegetated with an exotic monoculture — crested wheatgrass. Chaining and plowing have been equally damaging.

CHAIN GANG

The BLM has plowed or chained 3,975,850 acres of public lands in Nevada to improve the range for livestock. The chaining of pinyon pine and juniper stands "has had a catastrophic effect on the surrounding visual environment," states the task force. "These projects probably affect less than two or three per cent of the visual environment in the state, but unfortunately they occur in some of the

more scenic areas. The practice of leaving the uprooted trees in place and having straight lines or unnatural boundaries creates a visual eyesore which will take decades to restore."

The report notes that there is a "high probability" that the BLM chaining and plowing has also destroyed countless prehistoric archeological sites.

OVERGRAZING

Grazing, when it is properly regulated, is a sound renewable use of the public lands in Nevada. Grazing does not have to conflict with other resource values — but overgrazing does. Built into the grazing management system in Nevada are provisions that allow, and in some cases actually encourage, overgrazing. This is being corrected in new management plans, but the old abuses are still on the books.

One of the rules of proper range management is to leave sufficient litter (plant material) on the ground after the grazing period to protect watershed values. According to the task force report, most of the AMPs (allotment management plans) reviewed in Nevada seem to violate this basic rule. The following are quotes from some of the AMPs reviewed:

1. Pasture closing dates — "Livestock can remain in open pastures after seedripeness date as long as there is feed left."

2. "These pastures will be utilized to the fullest extent possible. The limiting factor will be the condition of the livestock as determined by the range user."

The task force notes that the result of this philosophy is that "little, if any, litter is left for soil protection and enrichment."

Another problem is that the BLM often ignores its (Continued on page 6)



When grazing is excessive, prickly pear cactus (pictured here), sagebrush, juniper and other less palatable plant species replace the indigenous grasses making the range less productive for livestock and many forms of wildlife.

6-High Country News
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

Grazing . . .

(Continued from page 5)
management responsibilities by allowing the livestock operators "flexibility" on grazing plans. "Problems which existed in at least 50% of the AMPs reviewed was the allowance of flexibility on use pastures at the discretion of the operator," states the report. "Allowing an operator to shift in the established grazing system at his discretion and to graze cattle in excess of his active use was contained in the flexibility statement. Under this type of uncontrolled management there can be no improvement of wildlife habitat. . ."

TRANSIENT, LIMITED STAFF

"In the districts visited the tenure and experience of area personnel averaged approximately two years. This creates a very unstable and untenable situation. It is felt that proper resource management of all resources cannot be adequately addressed or recognized within this short period of time," states the task force.

Another problem is the lack of staff and lack of expertise. In many cases one employee is responsible for the administration of multiple use programs on over one million acres of public lands.

"Some short-term benefits may be realized by delaying the difficult decisions and actions. However, on a long-term basis livestock grazing on public lands is being jeopardized by the present inadequate management."

The task force found that "district and area staffing can be looked upon as tokens rather than a real effort to manage the public lands on a multiple use basis. There is only one wildlife biologist assigned the duties of wildlife habitat management per district (in some cases this same wildlife biologist is assigned to oversee the district's recreation programs as well). An example of the tremendous workload placed on these few individuals is the wildlife habitat responsibilities for 365 different species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles identified in the Ely District, including 10 listed as endangered species.

LIVESTOCK BIAS

The bias toward livestock and the disregard for other resource values stems from the fact that livestock operators compose 90% of the district advisory boards and 50% of the state advisory boards. With this level of pressure group involvement, multiple use philosophy yielded to dominant use management.

As a consequence, the report notes that "uncontrolled, unregulated, or unplanned livestock use is occurring in approximately 85% of the state and damage to wildlife habitat can be expressed only as extreme destruction."

The task force found that topography was the "only criteria used" in limiting areas usable by livestock. "In other words," states the report, "if it was too steep and rocky for a cow or sheep to utilize, it was unusable."

There was no effort to tie all resource values in one geographical area to any one set of objectives, management practices or goals," states the report. Indeed, the only common goal found in all of the 23 allotment management plans reviewed was to meet Class I qualifications of the livestock operators. The Class I livestock qualifications would involve total livestock utilization of the entire range. "If all of the Class I livestock qualifications were licensed, there would be no wildlife, watershed, recreation or other resource values left to consider," states the task force.

The carrying capacity of Nevada's BLM range amounts to 1,836,912 AUMs for sheep and cattle, according to range surveys. Class I livestock qualifications total 2,938,621 AUMs statewide — an amount in excess of the carrying capacity by 1,101,709 AUMs. This is to say, Class I privileges exceed the established carrying capacity of the range by about 60%.

So far, BLM has not been able to accomplish this optimum misuse of the public lands. For instance, in 1972 the BLM allowed only 116,326 AUMs over the surveyed carrying capacity.

This blatant disregard for the sustained-yield potential of the land moved the task force to comment: "Generally, the objectives were dominated by, and oriented toward, satisfying the wishes, even dreams, of the livestock operators."

In conclusion the task force writes, "With public attitudes and actions as they are today, it should be noted we are not doing the livestock operator a favor by granting them grazing use privileges which result in adverse impacts on the varied resources of the national resource lands. Some short-term benefits may be realized by delaying the difficult decisions and actions. However, on a long-term basis livestock grazing on public lands is being jeopardized by present inadequate management."

A TIME FOR CHANGE

BLM Director Berklund says, "I am proceeding

immediately to take action to remedy this situation. I have been assured the support of Secretary Morton (Interior Department Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton). Much of what can be accomplished will depend upon the cooperation of Congress, the livestock industry, and concerned citizens and private groups."

"I am ordering immediate actions to intensify management efforts on a broad scale for all grazing lands." His orders will include: (1) increased supervision of range use, including compliance with grazing systems developed under allotment management plans and livestock trespass control; (2) the readjustment of grazing privileges to balance authorized grazing use with the capacity of the range to produce forage; (3) apportionment of the forage requirements of wildlife and wild horses and burros on a realistic basis; (4) adjustment and enforcement of seasonal livestock grazing use according to the needs of the vegetation; (5) classifying ranges for use by types of domestic livestock; (6) requiring Bureau employees to fully consider the environmental impacts of competing land uses.

According to Berklund, the Department of Interior will present a comprehensive report on the BLM's range management program and on range conditions to the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee on January 1, 1975. This report will reflect the existing situation and define what needs to be done on public lands.

"I am optimistic about future prospects for improving use and management of this land resource," says Berklund.



Hordeum murinum
foxtail barley

'Prairie Revival'

by Gary Nabhan

A prairie revival is taking place in our country's heartland.

"The fragrance! The juiciness! It's like being in salad up to your knees!" says Wisconsin's Loris Otto of her prairie garden.

"I thrill at seeing fat cattle, belly deep in the finest grass in the world. Whenever I cross a crystal brook I feel wealthy," says Kansan Larry Wagner, a founding director of Save the Tall-Grass Prairie, Inc.

A fertile field of land-and-life husbandry is rooting itself anew in the Central Grasslands of North America. Conservation-minded folks are using the productive native prairie plants for forage, erosion and noxious weed control, or for nutrient replenishing and landscaping. Through planting these grains and forbs, they are rebuilding the health and wealth of our most valuable rural region.

Off and on for 25 million years in the Middle West, virgin prairie engendered a plant and soil richness. Yet, in these states today, there are spots where over a foot of topsoil has eroded away, all within a century of settlement. In some counties, it's hard to find a third of the original vegetation composition. Ecologist Barry Commoner has noted that not a single rural land of Lincoln river remains unpolluted; feedlots and fallow field runoff overload them all. Since the Dust-Bowl-creation of the Soil Conservation Service, farmers and agronomists have been working to minimize the waste of soil resources. Even so, the naturally developed prairie soils and their cover have been degraded while people learned the depth of their value.

There is now an effort to help ranchers, farmers, and gardeners find plants fit for their soils, climate, and operations that yield the greatest sustained returns from low cost, indigenous stocks. While for crop-growers this can mean using old, hardy strains of New World cultivated varieties, for range and yard keepers it means locally adapted grass.

WIDE SKIES FARM

For two decades, Jim and Alice Wilson have been providing native seeds to farm, range, and parkland interests from their Wide Skies Farm in Polk, Neb. In the late '50s, the Wilsons began to investigate the value of native grasses in small cooperative projects with farmers in their region, carefully noting and solving problems in mixture choice, seeding, management, and harvesting techniques. Countless personal communications from customers show that native grasses are of incomparable worth in a variety of range and pasture situations. Since their first handful of insignificant looking sideplots, the Wilsons have helped dozens of nature centers, colleges, and corporations, plus scores of individuals, plant their own prairies.

Methods developed by the Wilsons in conjunction with biologists and curious agriculturalists assure the establishment of good grass stands. After deciding what kinds of seeds to sow — given soil type, climate, equipment, time, and money — the site is turned under or shaved off. Seeds can then be hand sown, machine drilled, or aerially "launched."

Pioneer invaders (often noxious, exotic weedy annuals) will dominate the plot at least its first season. Competition from early spring annual weeds can be discouraged by working over larger areas with a rotary shredder or with controlled fire while the seeded grasses are still small. If one seeded perennial grass clump is established on each square foot of the plot, within the next two years the stand will begin to appear and return benefits like a prairie grass field. For complete prairie reconstruction, however, many wildflowers and even animals have to be hand-planted and religiously nursed.

Generally, maintenance plans include periodic burning or mowing as a reinvigorating process; after their first taking hold, the perennial natives

bringing native grasses back to pastures, backyards⁷

need not be resown since they spread by runners. Thereafter, maintenance may be comparatively minimal for sustained yields.

ROADSIDE LANDSCAPING

A far cry from the ecologically vulnerable one-shot, one season monoculture crops, mixed native pastures can produce tasty and nutritious livestock feed in such a way that one species ripens after another, extending through many months. Cool season and warm season grasses set in by no-tillage planting techniques can combine for maximum efficiency and minimal erosion. Their properties make



One of the leaders of the prairie revival is Jim Wilson of Wilson Seed Farms in Polk, Neb. Here he is enjoying a crop of Indian grass. Photo courtesy of Wilson Seed Farms

them especially suitable for another use in rural regions — that of roadside landscaping.

In Linn County, Iowa, biologists David Lyon and Paul Christenson are experimenting with tall and mid-height mixtures along the sides of county highways. The prospects of having stable, moisture absorbing, handsome grasses along roadsides — rather than ragweed, cocklebur and foxtails — attract the highway department worker, the traveler, soil conservationist, and farmer alike. The perennials are less likely to invade and become pests in croplands than the common weedy vegetation of disturbed roadways. Aside from holding in water and soil, prairie waysides can hold picnickers and reintroduced wildlife such as the uncommon prairie chicken.

FOR FAMILIES, TOO

Landscaping with natives may also be a rewarding endeavor for families with small gardens and yards. Jim Wilson feels that people who plant buffalo grass for an ecological lawn are taking a wise step, for the plants don't need water, fertilizer, or chemicals. They are able to take root on tough slopes and in ornery nooks where bluegrass gives up. Drought-tolerant and capable of choking out crabgrass, buffalo grass stands need little of the elaborate, fervent rituals usually associated with manicured lawns.

Nestled up against the house, grasses can be used in landscaping instead of using ornamentals. The bluestems, switchgrass, Indian grass, and sandreed are a refreshing contrast to the gaudy flowers which seem to have a monopoly on beauty for some people. Their wind-danced elegance builds with the seasons.

FILLS THE SENSES

"While I know that the standard claim is that Yosemite, Niagra Falls, the upper Yellowstone and the like afford the greatest natural shows, I am no longer sure but the Prairies and Plains last longer, fill the esthetic senses fuller, precede all the rest

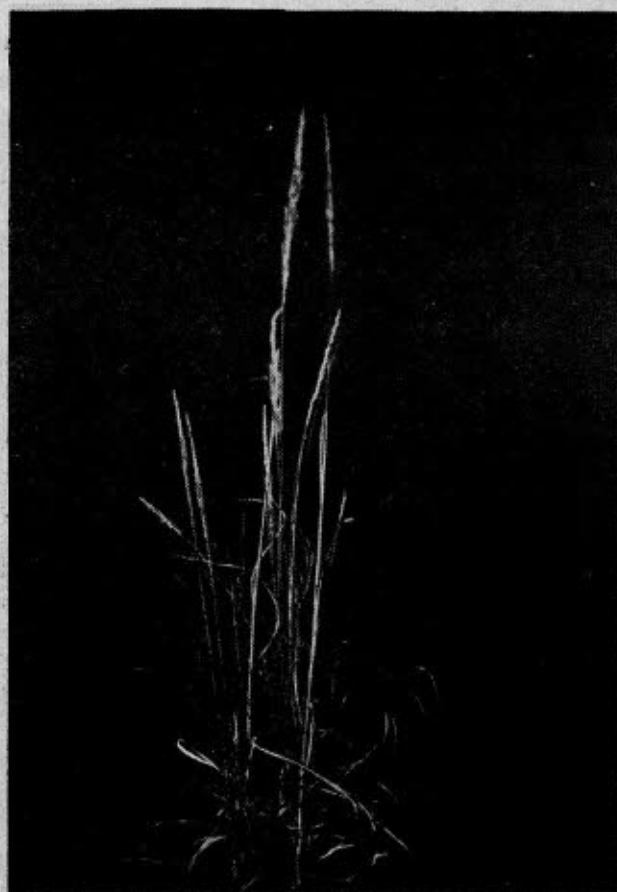
and make North America's characteristic landscape." Walt Whitman voiced this appreciation of Middle Western scenes last century. Yet there has not been an inclusion of a tall grass prairie park in our national system.

Nearly 40,000 square miles of prairie, which once included hundreds of plant species, 300 kinds of birds and some 80 mammals, have been transformed out of their "prairie-ness," fragmented, and degraded. This last spring, 6,000 more acres of virgin tall grass sod was plowed under in the Flint Hills of Kansas, to be seeded with exotics. For the last score of years, the Flint Hills have been the focal point of prairie conservation efforts, yet the only substantial tract so far preserved is a recently acquired 2,200 acre tract managed by the Nature Conservancy. The purchase was part of the conservancy's American Prairie Inventory — a national attempt to identify and preserve areas of virgin prairie.

The possibilities of a tall grass park are finally being considered by a study team from the National Park Service which is currently evaluating seven sites. Kansan conservationists have urged the establishment of a contiguous 6,000 acre tract as the park's core, in order to carry bison, antelope, and deer populations. It has also been suggested that a core area in the Flint Hills serve as the beginning of a prairie park chain to be extended throughout the Central Grasslands. Such a band of grassland sanctuaries and environmental education centers could include spots within the Nebraska Sandhills, the Sage Creek Basin of South Dakota, the Cherokee Strip, plus several of the smaller virgin prairies of North Dakota, Iowa, and Missouri.

BEYOND PRESERVATION

Yet the Prairie Revival is by no means a mere preservationist movement toward the safekeeping of relic prairies in semi-isolated sanctuaries. Its visions are more dynamic. It encourages the proliferation of prairie in the fields, yards, and daily experience of its region's inhabitants. It is out to bring a



Sandreed grass (*Calamovilfa longifolia*) is a robust species found in sandy soils. It is aggressive where it becomes established, spreading by long tough underground stems. In early spring it affords good forage. It becomes tough and fibrous in late summer, however. USDA Soil Conservation Service Photos

fitness back into the land, to reform the epochs-old bonds with natives. It is asking people, especially persons who care for plants, to have what a Kansas-born poet calls "a willingness to accept what is local."

In early autumn, I visited the Wide Skies Farm of the Wilsons. The golden seedheads of Indian grass were being harvested, sorted and bagged. The stalks rose above our heads, and filled everything within our vision. Grasses and wildflowers covered nearly all the space around the house and workshops Jim and Alice keep. A clever, outspoken 74-year-old, Jim had this to say:

"The native grasses are decorative, picturesque, superb for controlling erosion, rebuilding soil, cleaning water and air, and they're the best hot weather pasture for livestock in the world. We've known all this for many years, but Americans in general never get excited about it. Why this fresh, new tidal wave of interest, among urban as well as rural people?"

"The prairie grasses breathe of restorative, enduring qualities. They comfort us. A farmer said to me, 'Jim, when I read the paper or watch TV, I think the whole world's flyin' to pieces and we're all goin' crazy. Then I take my dog and go out in my beautiful grass and I know it ain't so!' That's why Americans almost everywhere are planting native grass."

PRAIRIE REVIVALISTS

For further information, contact:
Soil Conservation Society of America
7515 N.E. Ankeny Road
Ankeny, Iowa 50021
(Sources of native seeds and plants)

Save the Tall-Grass Prairie, Inc.
4101 West 54th Terrace
Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66205

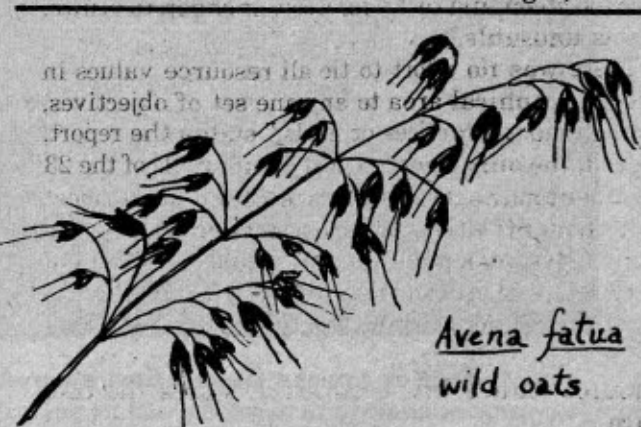
Jim and Alice Wilson
Wide Skies Farm
Route 1, Box 7
Polk, Neb. 68654
(Source of grass & wildflower seed, literature)

The American Prairie Inventory
(The Nature Conservancy)
37 States Street, Apt. 33
San Francisco, Calif. 94114
(Effort to find and conserve virgin prairies)

4th Midwest Prairie Conference
c/o Dr. Mohan Wali
Department of Biology
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, N.D. 58201
(August, 1974 symposium on prairies)

Johnny Apple Seeds
RFD 1, Box 74
N. Dixmont, Maine 04932
(Source of hardy North American crop strains and regionally adapted seeds)

Gary Nabhan is a maintenance staff member and researcher at the Research Ranch in Elgin, Ariz.



Avena fatua
wild oats

8-High Country News
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

SAGEBRUSH INVADES WEST

Sheep grazing on the west side of Wyoming's Wind River Mountains.

Photo by Larry Edwards



The following three photos illustrate a progression from nearly natural grass cover to a state of extreme disturbance. All four Wyoming hillsides were phot



Sage is present in the first stage, but it is small and inconspicuous.



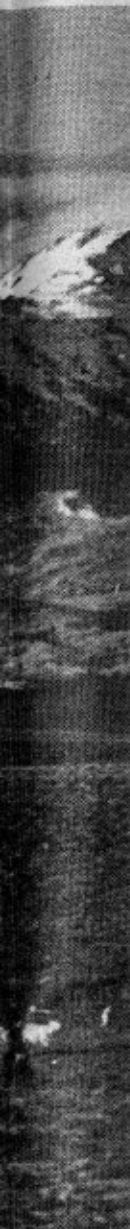
Here, sagebrush is doing better in the competition as the grass succumbs to heavy grazing pressure.



Here, t sagebrus

WESTERN GRASSLANDS

by Edwards



Sagebrush is the quintessential symbol of the Western range. Yet all indications in the literature lead to one conclusion — that the intermountain region was, before the advent of the white man, a great grassland.

In Stoddart & Smith's book *Range Management*, western Wyoming, western Colorado, southern Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Oregon, California, and Arizona are all described as the "Intermountain Shrub Region." The main characteristic of this area is that it is dominated by sagebrush.

Brief mention is made that this region might once have been dominated by the wheat grasses. The "almost universal" heavy overgrazing in the shrub region is also described, but the two concepts are not connected in any way.

Only much later in the book, in the chapter "Eradicating Undesirable Range Plants," is this sentence found: "If the land is climax grassland, as is much of the northern intermountain area, and sagebrush has invaded as a result of improper grazing, then proper grazing after burning could be expected to keep out the sagebrush."

According to a 1972 article in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* by Leslie Hood and James Morgan, early ecologists were misled by the almost universal prevalence of sagebrush into thinking that it was the natural dominant. In actuality it has achieved its present status only in the wake of long-term destructive grazing practices, the authors contend.

"Today it is impossible to tell accurately in many areas just what the original plant cover was because so many of the more valuable species have disappeared completely. Others, more resistant to grazing or less used by livestock or other animals

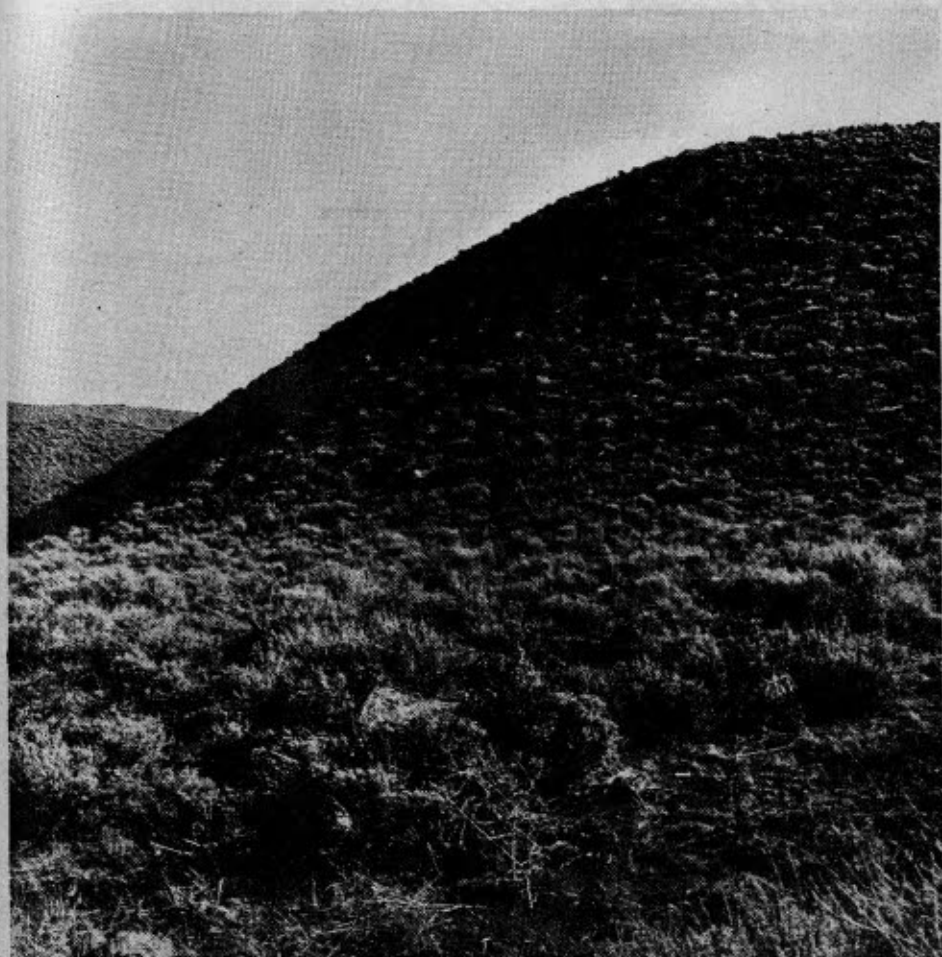
that like good grass, have increased, creating unpalatable plant communities. The relatively inedible big sagebrush, which commonly grows in association with wheatgrass and was present in moderate amounts, literally exploded on the rangeland as a result of overgrazing the grasses. Today over a third of the public range — 96 million acres — is primarily sagebrush," Morgan and Hood say.

This conclusion is corroborated when one considers the wildlife prevalent in this region when the white man arrived on the scene. Not only browsers like the pronghorn and mule deer roamed the hills and plains of western Wyoming, but herds of bison and elk. Even the bighorn evidently was once found in the foothills. All these species prefer grass, not sage. Some authorities believe that increased deer and antelope herds throughout the West are directly related to changes in plant composition caused by overgrazing. Indeed, if the range had looked in the 1860s the way it looks today, it is doubtful whether anyone would have risked importing herds of cattle to graze on it.

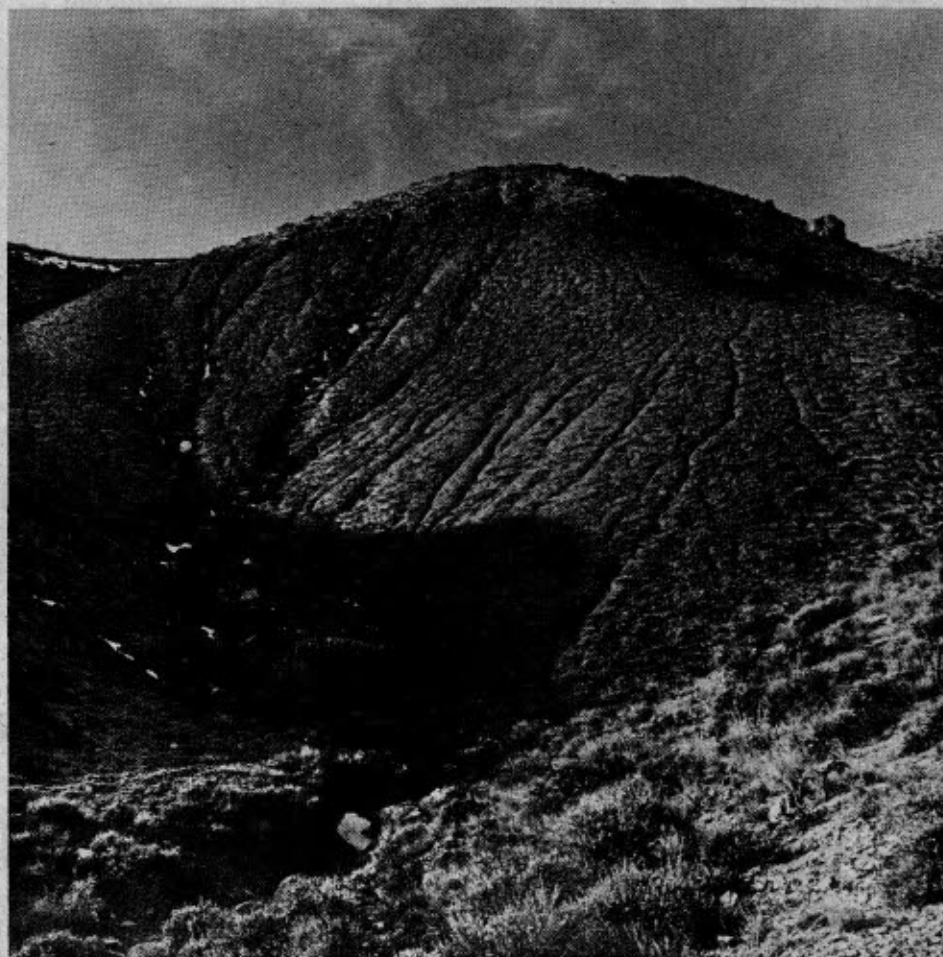
Sagebrush invasion and erosion seem to go hand in hand. The land does not have to be denuded of most vegetation for erosion to occur. A predominant cover of sagebrush, even with grass in the understory, does not seem to afford complete protection on the steep topography characteristic of this region.

Meanwhile, the degradation of a large part of the West continues almost unnoticed. Sagebrush is still perceived to be the natural vegetation. Perhaps this is because no living person can remember what the land once looked like, to compare it with what exists now. But as Mike Frome has said, "It is 'sick land,' failing to contribute its potential in terms of economics, esthetics, or environment."

es were photographed on the same day, during a winter thaw.



Here, the sage invasion is near complete forming a man-made sagebrush desert.



The end of the line. Sagebrush root structure is not sufficient to prevent erosion from overgrazing in the absence of grasses.

10-High Country News
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

Reckoning from Washington

by Lee Catterall

Amid all the excitement over the stripmining bill, Project Independence and the planned resumption of coal leasing, there may lie a sleeping giant that now shows signs, ever so faint, of coming to life and blocking all coal development in the Powder River Basin.

It's a lawsuit on the magnitude of the famous and controversial Trans-Alaska Pipeline case. It would stop all further federal actions that allow for expansion of coal development in Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas.

U.S. District Court Judge Barrington Parker ruled in February against the Sierra Club's attempt to block those actions. Parker had been regarded as a friend of environmentalists, and his decision stunned Sierra Club lawyers.

Now the court of appeals is taking a hard look at Parker's decision and firing some tough questions at him.

In June, Appeals Court Judge Harold Leventhal ruled against granting the Sierra Club a temporary halt to coal actions while the issue was in the courts, but in a way that encouraged the Sierra Club.

Leventhal wrote that Parker had been "ambiguous or silent" on certain points and that he couldn't decide anything from that information. While refusing to order a temporary halt to coal actions, Leventhal wrote that he "urges . . . substantial restraint" by the government.

Last week, Leventhal ordered Parker back to work on the case, to hold another session so he could get some answers to questions that remain.

Among them: What's the status of the current moratorium on coal leasing, and has it been strictly followed? Have any permits for coal mining or rights of way been granted? What's the status of certain environmental impact assessments; what do they say; and are others planned?

Environmentalists are encouraged mostly by Leventhal's tone and terminology.

Parker refused to accept the notion that the government planned any program for encouraging coal development in an area environmentalists called the "Northern Great Plains." That, he wrote, "is not an entity, region, or area" the government has pinpointed for any planned "program, project, or action" of coal development.

Parker contended the Northern Great Plains Resource Program is "not part of a plan or program to develop or encourage development but is an attempt to control development. . . ."

That program's draft report was published last month. It describes itself as an effort to satisfy people "concerned that the nation has an adequate supply of energy" in a way that "minimizes adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts."

While perhaps seeming to be a small point, that lies at the heart of the court case. A 1969 law requires that the government produce environmental impact assessments of "major federal actions" that "significantly affect the environment."

The Sierra Club contends the government has definite plans to encourage coal development in that entire, specific area, and shouldn't be allowed to get away with producing separate environmental assessments of projects within the area. By themselves, those projects appear less severe and can better stand the scrutiny of the assessments.



Federal strip mining bill action

The House-Senate conference committee on strip mining control has postponed final action on the compromise bill until Nov. 18. The conferees, who have completed all other major revisions, were unable to reach agreement on provisions for strip mining coal which is owned by the federal government, but lying under privately owned land.

The Mansfield amendment passed by the Senate a year ago would ban strip mining where there is split ownership. The Melcher amendment passed by the House in July would require written consent of the surface owner for strip mining where there is split ownership, thus giving him the power of veto.

The landowner provision is important since an estimated 80% of western coal is owned by the federal government and much of the surface has long since passed into private ownership.

Prior to the committee's adjournment for the election recess, a compromise was presented by Rep. John Melcher (D-Mont.). It would deny the landowner protection on current coal leases, but allow it on future ones. If the landowner decided to sell, an appraisal board would determine how much he should be paid for his land, relocation, and other costs, including loss of income prior to mining. The land would revert to the surface owner after it was released from reclamation bond.

In previous discussions of landowner consent — before the appraisal board was suggested — some members of the committee argued that the consent provision would make instant millionaires of ranchers who have consolidated original homestead lands, allowing them to sell the subsurface coal which, in fact, is owned by the federal government.

Sen. Cliff Hansen (R-Wyo.) has proposed dropping the consent provision. He has been quoted as saying that the provision could face constitutional challenges and that written consent could hurt reclamation plans because of the checkerboard pattern of federally and privately-owned lands in many areas.

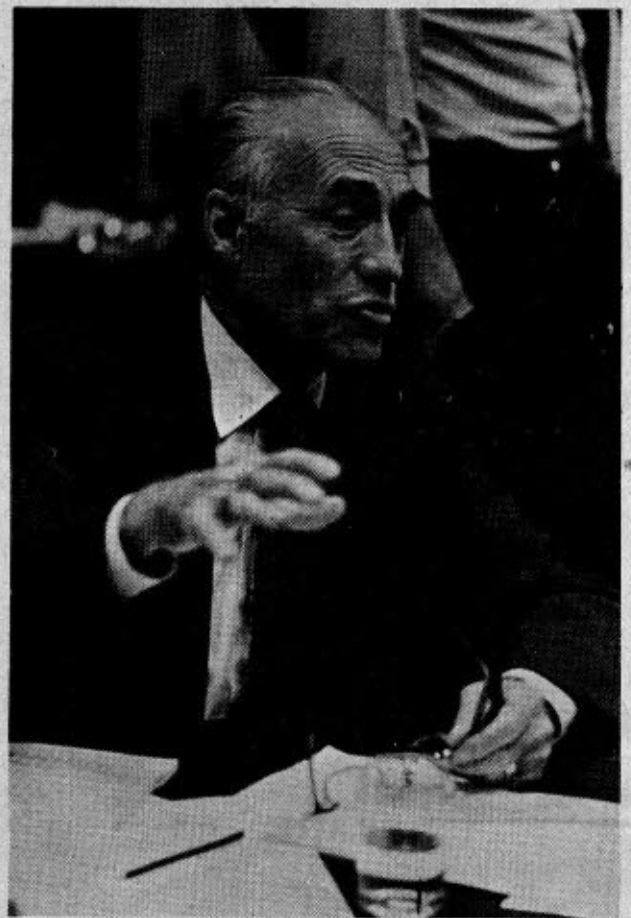
He has advocated paying one per cent royalties to the owners, in addition to actual damages to the property.

Sen. Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.) has supported Hansen's proposal to drop the consent provision.

Photos by James Benfield
Captions by Lee Catterall

with the understanding that Congress would take up the issue again in another bill. Since federal coal is under a moratorium on leasing, Metcalf reasons that Congress will have another year to work on the consent provision. Roncalio agreed to vote, if he had to, to strike the landowner protection part of the bill since further disagreement on the issue could endanger the chances of the bill becoming law this year.

When agreement is reached, the bill will go to President Gerald Ford for his signature. The threat



Sen. Clifford Hansen (R-Wyo.) believes that allowing a landowner to have a stop sign for draglines at the edge of his square on the board could foul up the whole mining operation. "One property owner here could be a far larger fly in the ointment than you can imagine," Hansen says.



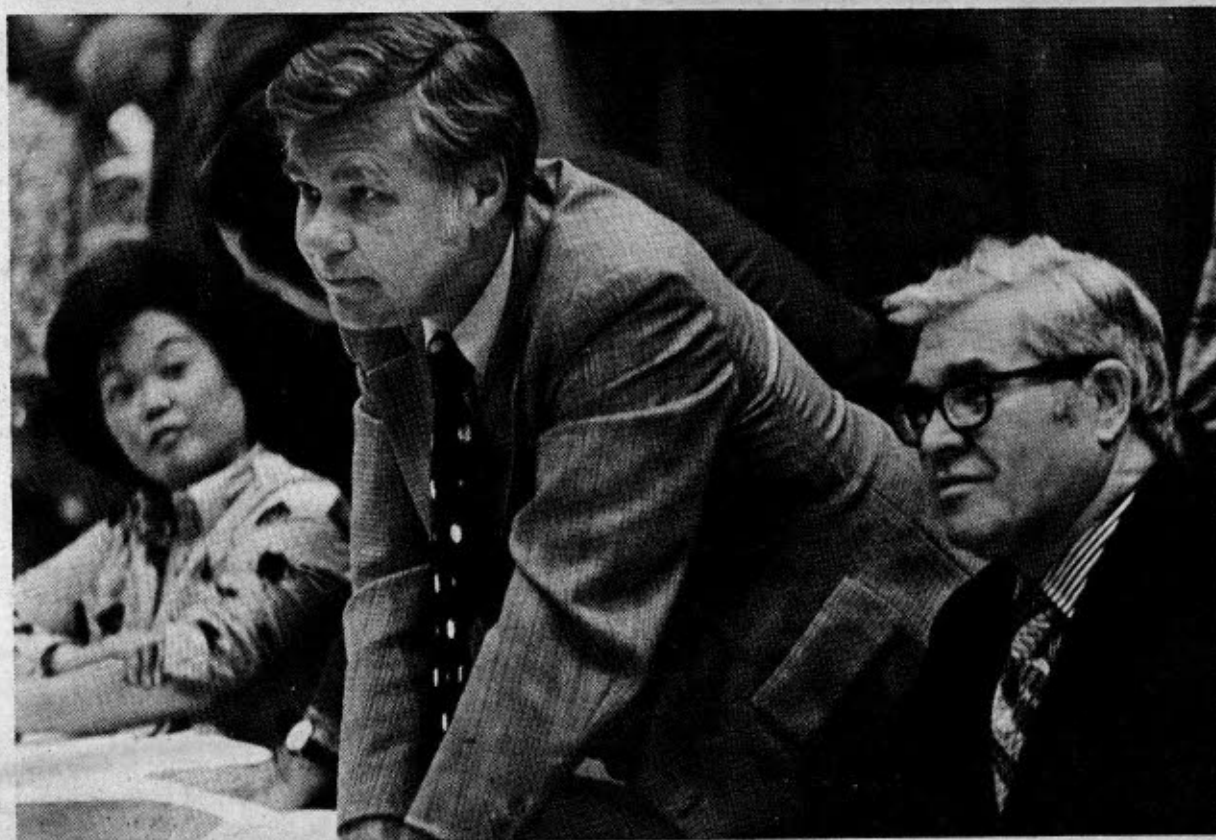
With his usual unorthodox aplomb, Rep. Teno Roncalio (D-Wyo.) rises to his feet in the otherwise informal meetings to give a ringing speech on why landowners shouldn't be forced off their land so federal coal beneath it can be strip mined. Meanwhile, (left to right) Rep. John Melcher (D-Mont.), Rep. Morris Udall (D-Ariz.), and Sen. Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.) ponder the issue.

expected next week

of a presidential veto has hung over the bill for some time. National Coal Association President Carl E. Bagge has warned that surface coal mining legislation will prevent America from attaining President Ford's goal of greater use of the nation's energy resources. "It will require many major electric generating stations to launch a frantic search for alternative fuels to replace the surface-mined coal upon which they had planned. It will also doom nearly all existing plans for coal gasification and liquefaction plants," Bagge says.

However, in his speech to Congress on energy and the economy, President Ford called for passage of surface mining legislation to ensure an adequate supply with "common sense environmental protection." This allayed the fears of some environmentalists, but others are waiting to see how "common sense" will be defined by the administration.

If passed, the bill will impose the first national environmental controls on strip mining for coal and would establish criteria for reclaiming mined areas.



Rep. John Melcher (D-Mont.) leans into the debate, flanked by Patsy Mink (D-Hawaii) and Sen. Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.). Melcher has proposed the latest compromise on land-owner consent which will be considered by the committee when it meets Nov. 18 to complete the bill.

High Country News-11
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

The Hot Line across the country

The president of the **International Association of Drilling Contractors**, Alden Laborde, has told his contractors to get political if they want to get their way. He said they must learn "a thing or two from the highly effective groups who have given us so much grief of late — the consumer advocates, the environmentalists, the gay liberators, women's libbers, draft dodgers and others."

California has passed a law creating a five-member **State Energy Conservation and Development Commission**. The commission is funded through a consumer tax of two-tenths of a mill per kilowatt hour of electricity used. Cost to the typical family will be about 50 cents a year. Energy gluttons will pay more.

"There are many problems with oil shale that either don't exist with coal or are minor with coal," says **Russell Peterson**, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. Peterson questions the need for a large oil shale industry saying it can't possibly compete with coal. On the other hand, Peterson advocates an "all out push" to develop solar, wind, tidal, and geothermal energy resources for "our grandchildren."

Shell Explorer Ltd., a unit of Shell Oil Co., is backing out of a proposed project to produce 100,000 barrels of oil daily from the Athabaska tar sands by 1980, and wants to sell its interests in the Canadian tar sands. Shell cited escalating costs and crude oil pricing uncertainties as two reasons for calling it quits. Shell Oil is also a member of the Colony Development Operation, which last month backed out of plans to begin construction of a 50,000 barrel per day oil shale plant in western Colorado.

Michigan may become the first state to adopt an **inverted rate structure** for utility billing if the State Public Service Commission accepts a recommendation from its professional staff. When Consumers Power Company asked for an across-the-board rate boost, the PSC staff recommended instead that customers who use more than 500 kilowatt hours per month be billed at the higher rate, with another jump for those using more than 1,000 kwh. The 500 kwh use level is just above average residential use, according to the utilities. Consumers Power Company is on record against the new rate structure.

The preliminary **Project Independence** report prepared by the Federal Energy Administration poses some serious trade-offs in this country's search for energy, according to Washington newspaper columnist Jack Anderson. Anderson quotes the secret report as saying: "Coal emerges as the dirtiest energy source of all the fuels considered.... Nuclear energy, while a clean energy source in terms of air quality, presents the greatest potential hazard to human health of all fuels. . . Solar energy emerges as the cleanest, safest energy source. . ."

ERDA (the newly formed Energy Research and Development Administration) is starting out overwhelmingly devoted to atomic power and coal. Atomic power and weapons research claims 90% of ERDA's budget and 84% of its manpower. When coal research and development is added on top of the nuclear bias, about 99% of the budget and manpower is allocated. Of ERDA's 7,124 employees only 49 are working on solar, geothermal, wind and other alternative energy sources.

Emphasis ENERGY

in the Northern Rockies and Great Plains



Northwest Resources Company, a subsidiary of Montana Power Company, is opening a small (700,000 tons per year) **strip mine** at Grass Creek near Meeteetse, Wyo. A mining permit has already been issued to the company by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. Production will start at 10,000 tons per year and peak in the fall of 1976.

Five per cent of Utah's and Colorado's **agricultural water supplies will be transferred to energy development** by the year 2000, estimates Bureau of Reclamation regional director David Crandall. Crandall says that in both states the surface waters of the Upper Colorado River Basin are already over-appropriated. Assigned water rights already "exceed not only the present water use, but also the long-term potential water supply," he said. Additional water users must obtain water rights by buying existing established rights.

The Washington Department of Ecology has proposed **minimum stream flows** for the Snake and Columbia Rivers. The Bonneville Power Administration's top official says the action is "irresponsible." BPA Administrator Donald Hodel said the plan would remove two million kilowatts of power capacity from the Lower Snake generating plants. "That's the equivalent of Grand Coulee Dam," he said.

The Atomic Energy Commission favors a **site near Arco, Idaho for permanent storage of atomic wastes**. The National Reactor Testing Center site near Arco is favored over other AEC facilities at Hanford, Wash. and the Nevada Test Station. Dr. Frank Pittman, director of waste management for the AEC said the commission has released a draft environmental impact statement on the handling of commercial radioactive wastes. Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus has assembled a blue-ribbon study panel to review the document for the state and make recommendations.

Officials of the **Idaho Power Company** say they have the **right to condemn state land** for their firm's proposed coal-fired power plant south of Boise near Gowen Field. IPC claims their right of eminent domain stems from a new law enacted by the 1974 state legislature which grants the right of condemnation of land to power companies for "production, generation, and manufacture of electric current for power, lighting, heating and other purposes."

Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus has asked **Atty. Gen. W. Anthony Park** to coordinate a study of the needs for **power plant siting legislation** in the state. Park says he is reviewing siting legislation from other states and hopes to have a bill ready for consideration by the 1975 session.

(Continued on page 12)

12-High Country News
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

Emphasis



ENERGY

Northern Rockies and Great Plains

(Continued from page 11)

Texaco still maintains it doesn't know what it plans to do with its coal lands around Lake DeSmet near Buffalo, Wyo. In the meantime, Texaco has hired Morrison-Knudson Co., Inc. of Boise, Idaho to do an engineering study to determine the best way to develop its coal, land and water holdings. In addition, Texaco has given the city of Buffalo \$25,000 to study waste treatment and plan for expected growth. Two \$1 million electric draglines have been ordered for strip mining in the area, but Texaco says they won't be ready to operate until 1980.

Washington Water Power Company (WWP) may build a coal-fired power plant on the Rathdrum Prairie north of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, according to Idaho Water Resource Board member Scott Reed. Reed says the utility has estimated it will need another 620 megawatts of generation potential in Northern Idaho by 1980. "WWP can be expected within the coming year to make disclosure of plans to construct a coal-fired plant," says Reed. WWP President Wendell Satre denied any such plans.

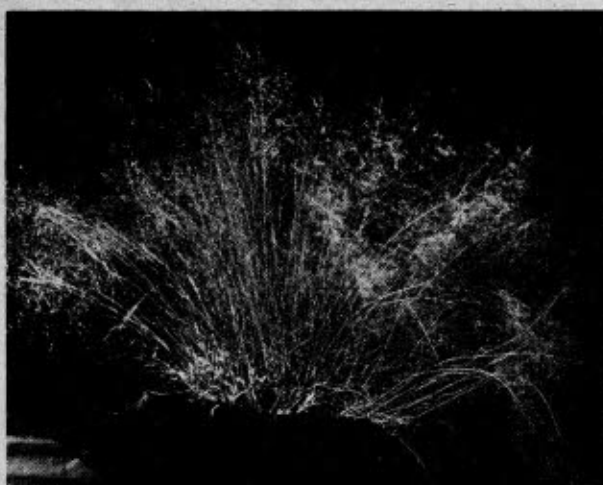
The Atomic Energy Commission's Lawrence Livermore Laboratory has been experimenting with underground "in situ" coal gasification at the Kemmerer Coal Co. mine near Kemmerer, Wyo. The lab has been testing the use of chemical high explosives on deposits too thin or too deep for mining by present technology. Tests will run through November.

Colorado Gov. John Vanderhoof has joined Montana Gov. Tom Judge and North Dakota Gov. Arthur Link in asking the Department of Interior to continue its moratorium on federal coal leasing. Vanderhoof's request comes in the wake of Interior's announced intentions to resume coal leasing in the near future. "The moratorium will not prevent continued coal production from existing leases but what it will do is assure time for passage of the federal strip mining act that is now pending and also give the states an opportunity to be assured that future leases will meet state standards." Vanderhoof noted that of the 112 federal leases covering more than 120,000 acres of coal lands in Colorado, only 17 are in production.

Four foreign countries have been looking at eastern Montana's coal for power generation. No serious negotiations for selling coal have resulted. Both the Decker Coal Company and Westmoreland Resources have shipped coal to Japanese firms. Western Energy, a subsidiary of Montana Power Company has shipped coal to France for a test burn. Decker officials said they have also received overtures to sell coal to Germany and the Soviet Union.

A decision to build a coal-powered power plant in southern Idaho should not be made without hearing from the people of the area, the Idaho Conservation League says.

The citizens organization said in its October newsletter that such a big power plant "could change the face of southern Idaho." The plant, planned by Idaho Power Company, may be the same size as the Four Corners plant in New Mexico, and the Jim Bridger plant in Wyoming — 2,000 megawatts.



Alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) grows in large tussocks on saline and alkaline soils. It produces large amounts of forage on the saline areas. Under heavy grazing it may be replaced with inland saltgrass or shrubby species such as black greasewood. Soil Conservation Photo

Program helps fund Prairie Revival

The "Prairie Revival" is being encouraged, to some extent, by the federal government through cost sharing on seed. The seeding program, part of the Rural Environmental Conservation Program (RECP), is designed to keep vegetative cover on ground that is eroding, whether it is crop land that never should have been cultivated or pasture or range land.

Through the years, man has plowed his way through the prairies. Later he has found that some areas, especially those with steep slopes, would be more productive for grazing. Now government conservationists are concerned that pulling this land back into production will again become a serious problem because of the high demand for wheat. Even though the steeply sloped land tends to erode when plowed, farmers might be encouraged by high wheat prices to make the gamble.

The Soil Conservation Service advises farmers and ranchers on the risks of this and other range practices. In addition, they give technical advice to highway departments for roadside planting and to industry for reclamation.

Native grasses are almost always recommended for dryland conditions, according to Roy Buchmeier, SCS district conservationist in Lander, Wyo. (The SCS offices across the country do the technical work for implementation of RECP.) Tame species are more likely recommendations in irrigated pastures. Seventy-five percent of the cost of eligible seed is paid by RECP.

The RECP also includes funding for irrigation practices to conserve water, for contouring, and for preserving wetlands for wildlife. Funds for the program have been in constant jeopardy since the end of 1972 when they were impounded by the Nixon administration. There were no funds in 1973 until a court suit determined that the funds should be released. Prior to his resignation, Nixon vetoed the farm bill with the RECP funds for 1975. A new farm bill is now being considered by Congress.

Sewer grants subsidize growth

A recently released federal study concluded that urban sprawl, degradation of the environment, and energy waste are encouraged by the current manner in which sewers are designed and that these adverse impacts are not considered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) before awarding construction grants.

This study, "Interceptor Sewers and Suburban Sprawl," was released by the Council on Environmental Quality.

The report states that in a typical case, more than half the land to be served by the sewer is currently

Audubon Society honors McCall

The National Audubon Society has given its highest award — the Audubon Medal — to Gov. Tom McCall of Oregon in recognition of his outstanding contributions to conservation.

McCall's pioneering policies on energy conservation, his state law banning non-returnable soft-drink and beer cans and bottles, and his land-use planning laws curbing excessive growth in his state have won him nationwide acclaim from environmentalists.

Under McCall, Oregon was the first state to adopt odd-and-even-day gasoline rationing last winter. As the result of his policies, the state has set aside one percent of its highway revenues for bicycle paths, and Oregon's Pacific Ocean coastline is barred to real estate developers.

McCall was first elected governor of his state in 1966, but he was responsible for major environmental achievements long before that. A former journalist and film-maker, McCall's 1961 television documentary "Pollution in Paradise" on the polluted 300-mile Willamette River launched a cleanup that has brought fish back to the Willamette and has made it safe for swimming.

Study recommends increasing density

In a study which could lead to major policy shifts, three federal agencies have urged that residential densities be increased to decrease energy consumption, reduce housing costs, and cut environmental degradation. The agencies are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Housing and Urban Development Department, and the Council on Environmental Quality.

The agencies' report, "The Costs of Sprawl", shows that single family, low density development imposes serious costs on communities which can be reduced through higher density planned land use. The results should provide local officials with a better information base about the impacts of different developments.

The report is the first comprehensive analysis of the economic, environmental, and social costs associated with various types of housing including single family houses, townhouses, walkup apartments, highrise apartments, as well as various types of community development patterns.

Social costs were assessed, with only limited success. While increased planning and density generally will reduce residents' travel times, crime as well as other costs may increase with higher densities.

"The Costs of Sprawl" is available with a companion Literature Review from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402 at \$2.90.

vacant. It claims the government subsidizes future land development since so much is being spent per capita to build capacity above that required for the existing population. While it is more economical to build a sewer for 25 years, with more capacity added when necessary, the median design lifetime of projects studied was more than 50 years.

To avoid these situations, the report recommends that the community be required to pay for excess capacity designed to accommodate future populations. Sewer design life should be set at 25 years using lower per capita flow rates.

Western Roundup

High Country News-13
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

Half million Montana acres platted

More than half a million acres of Montana land has been subdivided into parcels of 40 acres or less, according to the Helena-based Environmental Information Center (EIC). More than half of the subdivided land occurs in Flathead, Ravalli, Missoula, Musselshell, and Gallatin counties. EIC executive director Phil Tawney said the need for an inventory became evident during the 1974 legislative session when citizens realized no one — including state and county governments — had any idea of how much Montana land was subdivided. Because of this, Tawney added, no one has understood the effects of rapid, uncontrolled development on agriculture, wildlife habitat, watersheds, critical areas, taxation, and costs of county services. In early 1975, the results of the EIC inventory, with updates and articles by citizens throughout the state, will be published in a paperback book.

Boating boom threatens wilderness

Oregon is trying to determine carrying capacities for her wild rivers. A wild river boating boom threatens to destroy the wilderness atmosphere on the state's free-flowing rivers. Last month it was decided that a 33 mile stretch of the wild Rogue River would be restricted to no more than eight boating parties on one day. Similar controls for the Owyhee, Deschutes, Minam, Illinois and John Day rivers are expected within two or three years. Much of the increased pressure on Oregon's rivers is coming from river expedition outfitters that have been restricted on other prime rivers in the West. State Marine Board Director Jim Hadley says Grand Canyon outfitters have been scouting out the Deschutes this month.

Wyoming EQC nixes Story mine

For the first time, the Wyoming Environmental Quality Council has withdrawn an area of the state from mining. The EQC set aside 28 sections of land in and around Story, Wyo. including federal land where a limestone quarry was being considered. This action may be a test of the EQC's authority to ban mining on federal lands in Wyoming. The Story quarry was planned for a highly scenic area on the edge of town and was opposed by many area residents.

Dams, nets end steelhead fishing

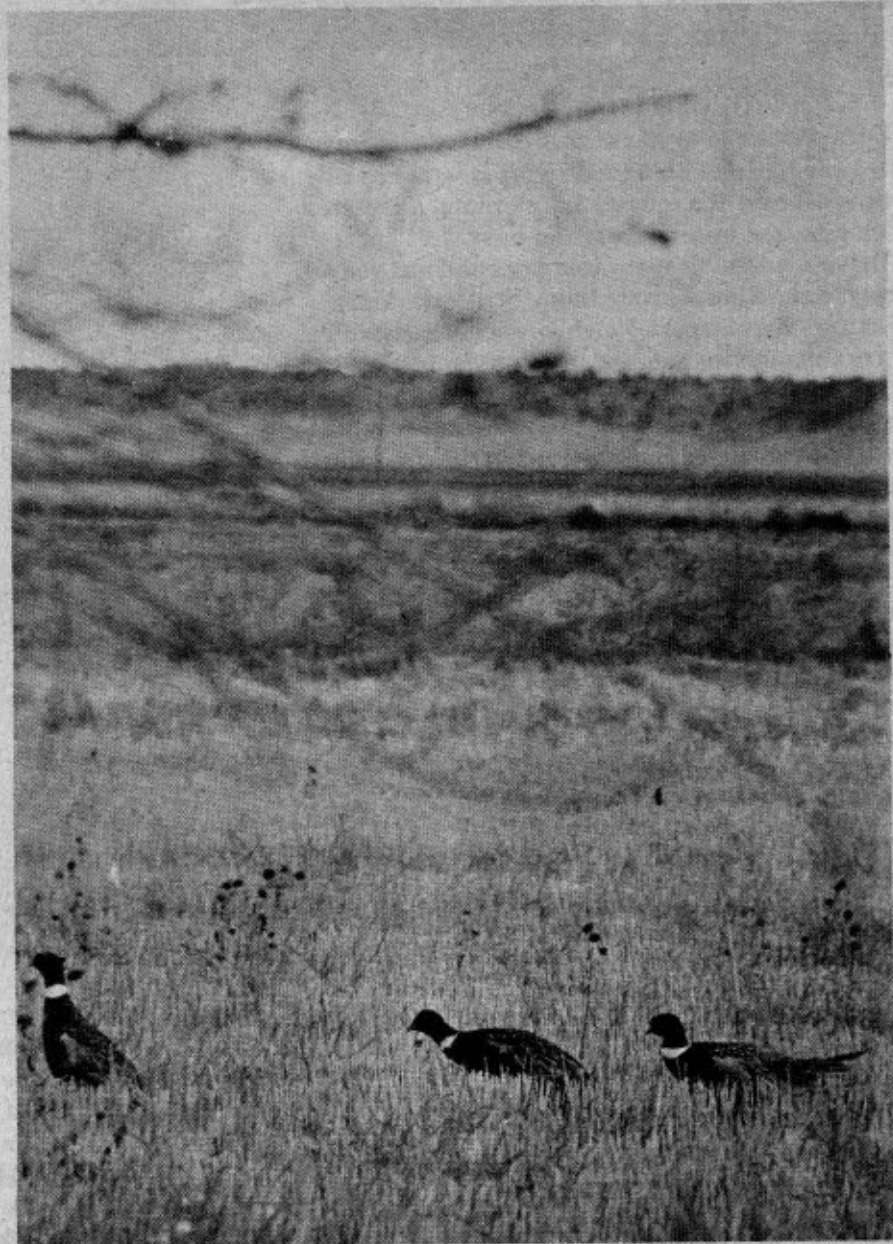
Dams and commercial gill netting on the Snake and Columbia Rivers have forced the Idaho Fish and Game Department to close all Idaho waters to steelhead fishing. "This is tough on our anglers and outfitters, but we must face our obligations to the resource," a department spokesman said. So far only 10,000 of the normal run of 50,000 to 80,000 fish have entered the Snake River. Catches of steelhead in the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers have totaled only 800 — down from the 2,600 caught by this time on the same rivers last year. "We testified before the Columbia River Compact in a last ditch appeal to save a few steelhead from the gill nets," said the department spokesman. "The compact ignored our appeal."

Solar energy fights snow mold

Farmers in Utah and other Western states may soon be using solar energy to combat snow mold. When snow reaches a depth of six inches or more on wheat fields, the temperature conditions are ripe for the production of snow mold and dwarf smut organisms. To solve this problem Utah State University researchers are experimentally spreading furnace ash on the fields to hasten snow melt. Bright snow normally reflects nearly 100% of the sun's radiant energy, but the dark ash flakes hold up to 60% of the radiation, say the researchers. The researchers say the effect is similar to that of polluted city air, which builds up on snow and hastens melting. The residue left by the treatment will not affect the crops, say the researchers.

Smelter can't meet sulfur regs

Kennecott Copper Corp. says it will have to close its Utah copper division if it is forced to meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sulfur emission standards. The EPA has proposed 95% recovery of sulfur from Kennecott's Magna Smelter. "The EPA strategy sets up emissions limitations that are impossible to meet without frequent and severe production curtailments," said Kennecott division manager B. B. Smith. Smith pointed out that the Utah division employs 7,400 persons. EPA regional administrator John Green says his agency has "no intention of closing down Kennecott."



Pheasants and subdivisions aren't compatible, says Idaho Game and Fish Department game biologist Chuck Jensen. He says the state's ringneck population index has been decreasing every year for the last 10 years. In addition to the pheasant habitat destroyed by subdivisions, the associated cats and dogs play havoc with pheasants, says Jensen. Freeways also take their toll. About 40 acres of wildlife habitat are lost to one mile of freeway, Jensen estimates. Another problem facing the pheasant is the removal of fence rows and the destruction of noxious weeds by farmers. The hedges and brush piles are excellent habitat and the weeds provide pheasant food. "You can't blame the farmer, they're trying to make it too. But it sure is tough on wildlife," he says. In simple terms, Jensen says, "More and more development means less and less pheasants."

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Photo

Briefly noted . . .

University of Wisconsin biologist Tim Clark says that Wyoming has a small population of the rare and endangered black-footed ferret. This ferret, a member of the weasel family, is the rarest mammal in America. It was believed to be found only in western South Dakota prairie dog towns, but since 1970 there have been 44 reports of ferret sightings in Wyoming. This past year, Clark has headed up Ferret Search — an attempt to verify sightings and determine the present population levels. For further information on black-footed ferrets, or to report a sighting, contact: Ferret Search, Box 1330, Jackson, Wyo. 83001.

A spokesman for the Wyoming Department of Economic Planning and Development says legislation has to be drafted to regulate mobile homes and mobile home parks in Wyoming. "Without regulations, Wyoming currently is a dumping ground for substandard mobile homes. All the surrounding states have mobile home standards," said Jerry Erstgaard. He said 30% to 40% of the mobile homes now in Wyoming are substandard.

Hunters in northern Idaho and the eastern portions of Oregon and Washington are being warned by the Forest Service that the game animal they bag may contain dangerous levels of DDT. DDT was used earlier this year in those areas to control the tussock moth. The chemical had been banned by the Environmental Protection Agency, but limited use was allowed to combat moth infestations of commercial timber.

Thoughts from the Distaff Corner

by Marge Higley

Perhaps the nearness of this country's bicentennial year has something to do with it — at any rate, people all over the country are showing an interest in things and events out of the past.

Drive along almost any country road and you are likely to see a hand-printed sign "Antiques for Sale" hanging on a gatepost. Neighbors and tourists alike hurry through the gate and up to the house, in hopes of finding an authentic piece of early-day memorabilia . . . An old lamp, maybe, or a brass bedstead, or even an old empty syrup bottle. (I wonder if the millions of plastic bottles produced today will ever become collectors' items?)

Many local communities have formed historical societies, whose sole purpose is the preservation of the history and artifacts of that particular area. In some cases, they renovate an old building of historical significance — a railroad depot, or a church, or a one-room schoolhouse. Or they build a museum and fill it with relics of the past.

An excellent example of such a museum may be found at Encampment, Wyoming. Located in a beautiful, fertile valley in southern Wyoming, Encampment was at one time the focal point of early-day timbering operations, and of fabulous copper mines in the nearby mountains.

Thanks to generous donations of time, money, and priceless old treasures, the museum is literally bursting with history. The museum building itself is flanked by old buildings once used by the early settlers. Unpaid volunteers have carefully moved them, and they have been restored to their original appearance. Some are peopled with mannequins, dressed in authentic costumes of an earlier day. Dedicated people have delved into the old records and newspapers in order to substantiate the truth of this picture of the past.

The modern museum building is so full of fascinating articles that it will take more than one visit to enjoy them all. I was especially intrigued by a large doll which looks exactly like one which I owned as a child, and which now belongs to my granddaughter.

We were there on a rainy afternoon in late September, and I was surprised at the number of visitors. As we left, I noted the license plates on the cars in the parking lot. Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, California, Nebraska, and others. Tourists in search of history?

There's another way to take a peek at the past, too. Most small-town newspapers have a column devoted to excerpts from their editions of years gone by. My favorite such column is "Ship's Log," in the Steamboat Springs (Colo.) *Pilot*. Their files go back at least 65 years, and this column is especially good because the editor has sense enough to retain the original wording, rather than change it into modern vernacular. For instance, the last issue contained the following paragraph, as it was printed 65 years ago:

"What Colorado needs now more than anything else is settlers. The towns and cities are thriving, and so is the country wherever it has been placed under cultivation, but there are thousands of acres still untouched by the plow, that placed under cultivation will furnish homes for many thousand people, and the great need of the state at this time is 'newcomers' who will drive their stakes and take off their coats to engage in the work of upbuilding the state."

What a change has taken place since then! The same issue of *The Pilot* carries a story under the headline, "Chamber books 3,376 Christmas skiers."

Maybe our interest in past history isn't triggered by the approach of the bicentennial year, after all. Perhaps we are becoming dizzied by the fast pace of today's life, and we need to hang on to the past in order to keep our bearings!



"Man cannot destroy nature without destroying himself."

This bronze portrayal of that idea was donated to the Wyoming Outdoor Council by Grant Hagen of Jackson, Wyo. The sculpture, entitled "The Thought," is on sale for \$1,500, with all proceeds to go to support the council's efforts to spread a land ethic in the state. Hagen, a lifetime resident of Jackson, has had his works appear in *WYOMING WILDLIFE* magazine and in an illustrated *FIELD GUIDE TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN FLOWERS*. If you are interested in purchasing the sculpture, contact the Wyoming Outdoor Council, Box 67, Laramie, Wyo. (307) 745-3411. This casting is the first in a series of 40 to be offered for sale.

The work can be viewed at the museum in the fine arts building at the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

BULLETIN BOARD

MONTANA LAND USE CONFERENCE

A conference has been scheduled for Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 21-23, in Great Falls, Mont., to discuss Montana's land and people, private rights and public choices. The conference is sponsored by several organizations including the Environmental Information Center, the League of Women Voters, and the Montana Wildlife Federation. It follows a series of public meetings held in October in communities throughout the state. For information, write Montana Land Use Conference, P.O. Box 2127, Great Falls, Mont. 59403.

WIND SOCIETY

Concerned scientists and individuals interested in the field of wind energy should contact Mr. James Ranch at Wind Energy Society of America, 1700 East Walnut, Pasadena, Calif. 91106. The non-profit California corporation, international in scope, is now forming.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT

A modest mimeographed newsletter publication has taken on the monumental task of linking as many people as possible throughout the world who are interested in problems of ecology, the environment, conservation, survival, over-population, pollution, famine, poverty, and the extinction of wildlife of all kinds. The *International Environmental News* includes the names of ecology "pen pals" who would like to correspond with other members, the names of organizations all over the world, opinions of readers, and suggestions for action. They ask that anyone interested in subscribing send a contribution with their name to D. W. Kerlogue, P.O. Box 10, Matlock, Derbyshire, England. The minimum for four issues is one dollar.

KERR-McGEE MINING PERMIT

A public hearing will be held by the Environmental Quality Council on Kerr-McGee Coal Corporation's application for a permit to mine. The hearing will be on Monday, Nov. 18, 1974, in the basement auditorium of the State Office Building-West in Cheyenne, Wyo., starting at 9:30 a.m.

WYOMING PLANNING CONFERENCE

A Wyoming Planning Conference will be held at the Ramada Inn in Casper on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 22-23. The conference is designed to consider solutions to the challenge of growth. It is sponsored by the Wyoming Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Wyoming Planning Association. To register write Casper Area Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 399, Casper, Wyo. 82601.

NEW TOWNS STUDY

The Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina has completed its New Community Development Project and has prepared profile reports on its findings in 15 American new towns. The profiles sell for \$2 each or \$25 the set. They include how residents rate their homes, neighborhoods, community facilities, and the developer. Other data: what the residents think about racial, income, and housing mixes, why they move to their present communities, and how they're better. Also, they attempt to evaluate the effect that moving to a new community has had on the quality of their lives, and what advice they would give to others contemplating a similar move.

For individual copies or the full set, write to New Towns Research Series, Center for Urban and Regional Studies, U. of N. Carolina, Evergreen House, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

Book Review

High Country News-15
Friday, Nov. 8, 1974

Challenge Your Local Electric Utility

by Richard Morgan and Sandra Jerabek, Environmental Action Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1974. \$1.50, paper.

Review by Peter Wild

If you're like me, you'd prefer to think of the friendly local electric utility across town as the outfit that produces the electricity you use, and let it go at that. However, despite our preferences, life is not so simple.

In fact the utility company in all probability is part of a complex — one that, though its public relations department would like you to believe otherwise, is affecting the quality of your life in profound ways. To start with the most immediate impact, it is likely that your monthly bill already has begun to soar. You can look forward to it going up and up and up over the next 10 years to levels undreamed of except in nightmares.

There is no comfort in knowing that you are paying at a disadvantageous rate as compared to industries. They are charged less the more they use, though this is a time of growing power shortage.

According to **How To Challenge Your Local Electric Utility**, it doesn't have to be this way in order for the public to enjoy a sufficient supply of power. Then how did the utilities become such heavies?

First of all because there is little incentive for them to regard the public good. Their concern is to make money.

Secondly, many of them are owned by the huge conglomerates that are gaining a stranglehold on American business and making a mockery of the free enterprise system that they publicly swear by. As this handy paperback describes the problem, the banks that often dominate utilities, "... also control oil companies, which, in turn, control large portions of our energy resources (including oil, gas, coal and uranium). A given utility may be striving to maximize profits for itself, Chase Manhattan Bank, General Electric, and Atlantic-Richfield all at the same time. Of course the public is in no way represented."

Given this situation, it comes as no surprise that the utilities are used to having their way. In 1972 Mississippi River & Light was frustrated in its ef-

forts to eliminate one of its competitors, a power cooperative, by absorbing it. The large utility finally hit upon a scheme to offer the officials of the company in question \$200 a month apiece to sit on an "advisory board" for 12 years; if they would agree to make the sale.

The first eight chapters of **How To Challenge Your Local Electric Utility**, then, present a dispassionate account of how the power companies operate. In ways that would make their public relations men blush, the pages detail such things as how research in energy conservation is deliberately stifled, why your rates continue to climb, and how, with their platoons of accountants, the companies are able to reap huge profits, while claiming they are going broke.

But there is hope. First of all, the general public is beginning to realize that there is no reason why the rip-off for the benefit of a few needs to continue. Part II, "What To Do About Your Power Company," takes off from this point to give specific information to enable the citizen David to offer the Ready Kilowatt Goliath a rather bad time.

Much can be done through changing present laws. For example, reflecting public awareness of abuses, California's Coastal Conservation Act of 1972 prevents the utilities from adorning the state's precious coastline with power plants. To take it a step further, the book gives the ins and outs of initiating legal appeals and challenges. It also notes how, by buying a few shares of a company's stock, citizens and groups can gain internal voices to influence company policy and elect environmentally sympathetic members to the board of directors.

How To Challenge Your Local Electric Utility is a battle book. In straightforward language it supplies the information and documentation needed to help people get started, and to avoid false starts. Environmental Action Foundation, needless to say a nonprofit organization, is eager to help local groups. Located at 720 Dupont Circle Building, Washington, D.C. 20036, the Foundation supplies the book at declining rates: 1-9 copies, \$1.50 each; 10-99 copies, \$1.00 each; 100 or more, 75 cents each.

Eavesdropper

LOONEY LIMERICKS

by Zane E. Cology

The ranchers were catching wild horses,
Saying they were eating food sources.
Now BLM agrees
The problem it sees,
But they don't say what the best course is.

The mass transit bill has suffered another setback. After being turned back twice in the House and facing opposition from both the Ford and the Nixon administrations, the House Rules Committee voted not to report it to the floor for a vote. Now, unless the Rules Committee can be prevailed upon to reverse its decision, this legislation will die with the 93rd Congress at the year's end. The Department of Transportation is not supporting the bill, saying "this stop-gap measure would lessen the pressure to deal with the long-term problems that must eventually be faced."

The national price of farm real estate increased by 25% from March 1973 to March 1974, according to a University of Maryland economist, Ray A. Murry, in a report prepared recently for the Department of Agriculture. While attributing the rise to higher farm prices and farm income, Murray said that at least some part of the increase in value is because of speculative or resale motive rather than continuation of farm production. North Dakota showed the greatest increase in farm real estate prices — a 36% rise.

The Minnesota Supreme Court has upheld the state's green acres law allowing farmland in urban areas to be assessed at a lower rate than its potential market value. The court noted the legislature is empowered to classify property for tax purposes and the state constitution requires only that taxes be uniform upon the same class of subjects.

Asserting that environmental pollution is simply a sign of economic inefficiency and waste, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator Russell E. Train recently called for a national commitment to conserve resources and save energy. Train endorsed tax incentives for recycling, appearing to signal EPA's willingness to go along with provisions of the tax reform measure now pending in the House Ways and Means Committee. The measure would provide a 7% credit to purchasers of post-consumer wastepaper, glass, textiles, and non-ferrous metal scrap. In a more tangible federal action, the Internal Revenue Service has decided to print some 2.5 million 1040 and 1040A tax forms on 100% recycled paper at an estimated cost savings of \$25,000.

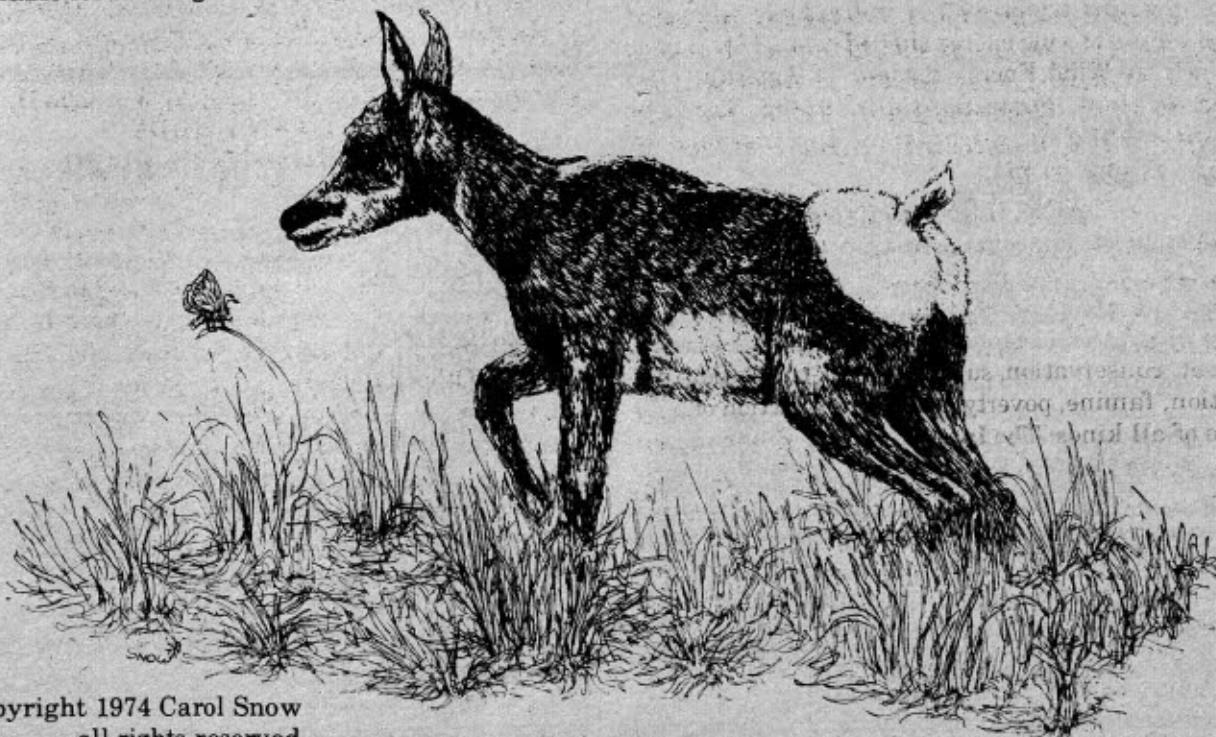
A Purdue University professor, Dr. Roy Whistler, has developed a male birth control pill for mice. The sugar-like drug blocks the production of sperm in mice only while it is taken, says Whistler, but he emphasizes that his work is very preliminary. He says much testing is needed before the glucose compound can be considered for testing in humans.

The plastics industry has filed lawsuits contesting new federal safety standards reducing worker exposure to vinyl-chloride, a gas that may cause cancer. One industry official called the federal rules "economically unrealistic, technically infeasible, politically motivated and medically ridiculous." Industry spokesmen say two million jobs are at stake.

Roundup - a reader Christmas special

Carol Snow, a noted regional wildlife artist, is helping **High Country News** by donating this original pen and ink drawing of a young pronghorn. We're offering these eight by ten inch drawings, suitable for framing free to anyone who can round

up two new subscribers to HCN. Carol Snow has signed each one personally. (By the way if you like Carol Snow's work, ask her to send you a free catalog of cards and prints: Carol Snow, Route 5, South Five Mile Road, Boise, Idaho 83705.)



copyright 1974 Carol Snow
all rights reserved

Navajos form first environmental agency

Like others working to protect the environment, Harold Tso is tackling unprecedented problems which require innovative remedies. But his territory is even more untracked than most environmental ground.

Tso is director of the Navajo Nation's Environmental Protection Commission (EPC).

"One of the things we sorely lack is precedent," Tso says. "As far as I know, there are no other Indian tribes in the U.S. who have an EPC — or anything like it."

Tso's other problem is "just bodies," he says. "Right now the EPC is just Gloria (Tso's secretary) and I."

As director, Tso will be responsible to a five-person board: two

members from the tribal council and three (Indian or non-Indian) from elsewhere. His own role is that of "investigator, instigator, office boy — whatever it takes to keep the commission supplied with information." Tso studied biology and chemistry at Calvin College in Michigan, worked as a nuclear chemist, and has only recently come home to the Navajo reservation.

"Being an urban Indian and coming home, you see things in a different light," Tso says. Instead of imposing his opinions upon the old-timers, he will dig up the facts. "Homegrown" Navajos will make policy, Tso says.

The commission has the power to issue regulations, with the approval of the tribal council, the governing body of the Navajo Nation. To enforce these rules, the commission may levy fines and, when necessary, shut down an operation.

The EPC will hold its first meeting this month. Although he can take no official positions until then, Tso has some urgent personal concerns. For one thing, the combined effect of all air pollutants on the human respiratory system, on vegetation, and on animals worries him.

"I may propose that we fly with the state of New Mexico's air quality regulations," he says. "I've heard from one source in industry that these regs are too strict. They cried all over my shoulder. But I said I'm sorry, we have to live with them."

"I hope the commission will address itself to this and say point blank — 'I want to be able to see Shiprock (N.M.) from the airplane 10,000 feet in the air when I'm hovering over Window Rock (Ariz.)' . . . I'd like to see the commission say, 'We're going to live with clean air.'"

Tso says he'd prefer not to live with whatever pollution the new federal regulations on air pollution will allow.

Tso is hopeful about reclamation of strip mined land in the Southwest. At Utah International's "Navajo" coal mine near the Four Corners power plant, environmental scientists hired this spring have taken the first steps toward restoring the land to its original productivity.

"I'm applauding in the closet," Tso says. "I say it's an effort, and I'll give that to them."

Hinting at where the commission and the tribal council may want to go on environmental matters, Tso describes a tribe with dual goals.

On the one hand, "these people really hold the land sacred. Any use of the land, other than the traditional use, meets with opposition." On the other hand, many progressive Navajos "don't want to herd sheep. They don't want to worry about horses and cattle.

They want hourly, rather than seasonal, wages."

He has no idea how the number of traditionalists weighs against the number of progressives, but "the commission has to address itself to these different thoughts."

Opposition to development on the reservation has sometimes been headed "by those on the outside trying to preserve us," Tso says. He tries to make clear that "it is the prerogative of the Navajo family or the Navajo individual to accept something as good or bad."

Navajos already have strip mining and large coal-fired power plants on their lands. They are now confronting the prospect of coal gasification plants.

When asked whether the tribe, the state, or the federal government will have ultimate jurisdiction over development on Navajo lands, Tso smiles and throws up his hands. The Navajos and the U.S. Environmental Protection agency staff are checking into it, he says.

"I think the best time to find out is when we have a problem. If anybody hollers, then we'll fight it one thing at a time."

But until a jurisdictional dispute flares up, Tso seems glad to have the country's other environmental regulators around. He says he'll be falling back on both the EPA and the state agencies for technical support.

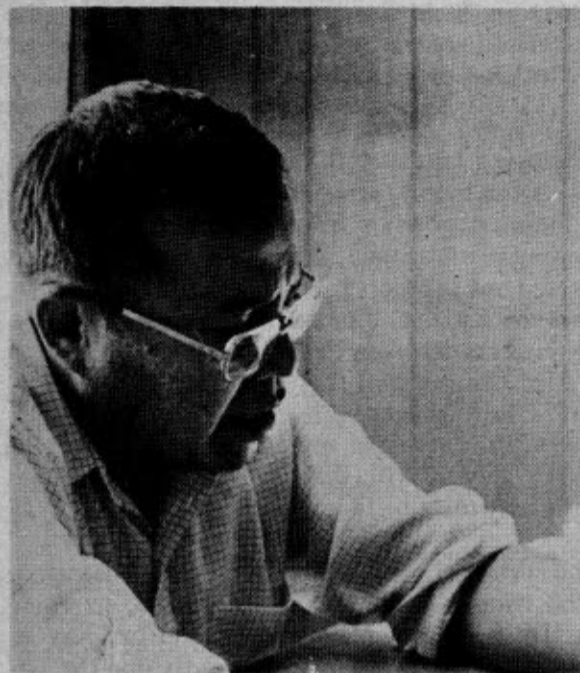
"In the Southwest up until seven or eight years ago, we didn't really know what pollution was. We just said 'Oh those poor suckers in the cities.' But now all of a sudden we have a real possibility. If we don't watch ourselves, we're going to pollute."

Tso is not only eager to pounce on polluters. He is anxious to educate his people as well.

"The Navajos have a terrible tendency to be unconcerned with the gathering of scientific data," Tso says. He describes a test reclamation plot where "mysteriously" the fence fell down, the plants disappeared, and they were replaced by four contented-looking sheep.

"Navajos are very practical. When they see a blade of green grass, it's for consumption. It's for that woolie. And they could care less whether that one sprig means joy and happiness to the scientist."

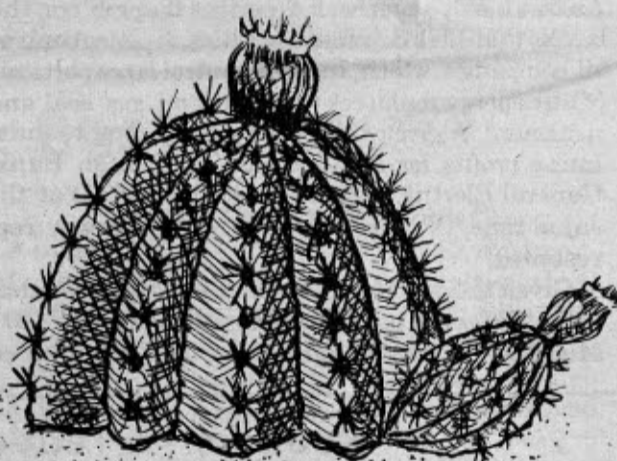
"That's going to be the hard part," Tso says. "First you have to get the companies to do reclamation. Then you have to explain to the people why they can't graze their flocks there."



Harold Tso, director of the Navajo Environmental Protection Commission.



Window Rock, Ariz. — the seat of Navajo tribal government and headquarters of the Navajo Environmental Protection Commission. The Navajos are the first Indian tribe in the country to set up their own environmental watchdog group.



Dear Friends of HCN

The Bureau of Land Management has long been the Department of Interior's forgotten child. Federal lands that were not spectacular enough to be included in the National Park System and didn't produce enough timber to be included in the National Forest System were handed over to the Bureau of Land Management. Public interest in these lands was low, so throughout most of their history they've been used by livestock grazers and miners exclusively. The BLM was never given an Organic Act by Congress, so that even today they have no clear mandate or enforcement authority. Lack of funds and staff has been a chronic problem for the agency.

With this history, it is easy to understand how the grazing abuses have come about that are detailed in this issue's cover story. We print this condemnation of BLM by BLM not as a finger pointing exercise, but in the hope that publicity will lead to reform. The BLM needs a purge in policy, and this Nevada report may serve as the catalyst. The BLM also needs more public support and input and a workable Organic Act as passed by the Senate earlier this year.

As the Nevada task force points out, mistreatment of the land is doing no one a favor. Most livestock operators today understand the principles of proper range management, try not to exceed the carrying capacity of the range, and are good stewards of the land. A few operators bent on abusing the public lands for private gain should not be spotlighted at the expense of all of the rest of this important industry. In the end the BLM, the livestock operators, and the public all suffer from overgrazing, erosion, and other manifestations of land abuse.

To add to our readers' understanding of grasslands and grasses, we've also included some shorter articles on native grasses, prairie restoration, and sagebrush invasion that combine natural history and the impact of man on the environment.

The editors.

P.S. This year's election produced some results that should have a major influence on the Rockies' environment. We'll try to detail our analysis of the election in the next issue.

In the High Country News

Grazing abuses

Nevada BLM reports excesses. 1

Sagebrush

did the Indians stumble over it as often as we do? 8

Stripping bill

a look at conference committee personalities and their feelings about landowner consent. 10

Harold Tso

a portrait of the director of the first Navajo Environmental Protection Commission. 16