



Phone (307) 347-2002  
Box 699  
Worland, Wyoming 82401

[1984, JUNE 29]

Dear Gus:

I thought that you might like to see the letter that I have sent to Washington.

I particularly would draw your attention to the last two pages containing my recommendations.

It would be great if you had a video tape of your ideas for the benefit of everyone. Also a booklet.

Hope to see you sometime.

Cathy's book came out in April and she has just finished another one which is sold.

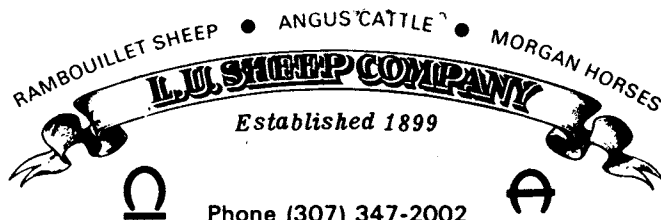
Best regards,  
Don. K... ..

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June 29, 1984

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VICE-PRES., RANCH MANAGER

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VICE-PRES., FARM-FEEDLOT MGR.

J. RICHARD BIHR  
TREASURER

Honorable Dick Cheney  
Congressman--State of Wyoming  
427 Cannon Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Federal Grazing Fee Formula

Dear Congressman Cheney:

As long as the Grazing Fee must remain a single price for every grazing situation, the present fee formula is the best that can be done, and the fairest to everyone concerned. There are three obvious reasons why some people object to the present formula:

1. The Federal fee may seem less than "fair market value" when compared to some fees charged on private lands.
2. Some wildlife people want only wildlife on Federal lands.
3. Some people think that the ranchers are destroying the land by overgrazing it.

These three objections will be addressed after this introduction.

Our L.U. ranch, which I managed and controlled for about 30 years, presently has rangelands which are about 18% L.U. deeded lands, and 82% leased lands. These 82% leased lands are 62% B.L.M., 10% U.S. Forest, and 10% State of Wyoming (which uses the Federal Grazing Fee as a guide for their fee). So, 82% of our rangelands are affected by the Federal Grazing Fee.

Ranching is the process of converting water and forage into products for human consumption. On the range, meat is only produced when the grass is green, during about four months of late spring and summer. For the rest of the year, the dry grass is suitable only for maintenance of the animal, and this does not produce meat.

Therefore, grass produces ranch income only for a short period of time when it is green and growing.

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The greatest amount of meat will be produced in areas having a dense stand of lush, tender, palatable, highly digestible grasses, with lots of convenient, good water, and pleasant temperatures. On the other hand, the least amount of meat will be produced in desert areas having very sparse, tough, unpalatable vegetation, a short growing season, high temperatures, and with distant water which is too often a stagnant reservoir or an alkali seep loaded with Epsom Salts.

During the green grass season, a rancher can expect yearling steers to gain 250 pounds or more on the best ranges, and make a little money. On the other hand, a rancher can expect the same yearling steers to gain only 60 pounds or less on our desert ranges, which makes such an enterprise a money-losing proposition with the expenses involved.

Therefor, there is a vast difference in the value of grazing leases between different areas and different seasons.

It is interesting to look at a land ownership map when you know the priorities of the livestock business and the history of the settlement of the lands. Water is of primary importance, so land that had water was homesteaded first. The most productive grazing lands, with easily developed water, were homesteaded next. Homesteads at first were only 160 acres but later, 640 acres were allowed. From the 1880's and on, private acquisition of the land was on a rampage, with a huge influx of new ranching settlers.

In the midst of all of this, the U.S. Forest Service was created and frantically began acquiring their lands in huge blocks of many millions of acres, which contained some areas of excellent grazing at the lower elevations. The States had been given two sections of 640 acres each in every township of 36 sections for school purposes, and the U.S. Forest Service wanted a solid block of land, so an arrangement was made to exchange State land within the Forest for land that the State would "select" outside of the Forest. Since the State politically was rancher oriented, the best grazing lands were immediately "selected" and exchanged.

So, the best grazing lands were acquired first, then the next best lands, and so on. The resulting land pattern is a patchwork quilt of ownership outside of the Forest. After many years, in 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act was passed, and the Grazing Service (which later became the B.L.M.) acquired the lands that were left. From an income producing standpoint, most of these left-over B.L.M. lands would rate at the bottom of the list.

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Again looking at a land ownership map of Wyoming, the large blocks of B.L.M. lands indicate a desert area. As the grazing improves, more and more deeded lands are evident. Intermingled B.L.M. lands here are distant from easily developed water, or are rocky outcrops or dense forest. The best grazing lands outside of the Forest are the solid areas of deeded lands and State "selected" lands. On the Forest, the open meadows of the lower elevations provide excellent grazing. The dense stands of timber provide no grazing. Above timberline, the alpine vegetation provides marginal grazing for sheep, but it is hazardous and not suitable to grazing by cattle. Cattle do not thrive on this type of vegetation. Being heavier bodied than sheep, cattle have more difficulty in climbing the steep hills. Also, this high elevation causes a heart condition in cattle known as "High Altitude Disease", forcing the sale of the cattle at a severe financial loss.

Our ranch used to have five sheep permits located in the Wilderness area of the Shoshone National Forest, with 5200 head of sheep permitted for six weeks on an extended upper limit. These sheep permits had been used for 50 years or more and we were surrounded by many other sheep permits. These sheep permits were marginal in that the access was only by a long, extremely difficult, five or six day trail. All supplies, including sheep salt, had to be packed in on pack horses. Control of the herders and the sheep in these extremely rough areas was difficult. The areas were mostly above timberline, having a lot of sparse, alpine vegetation, but with some small areas of good grazing.

Suddenly, the Forest stopped allowing effective predator control. The coyote population exploded. The coyotes killed so many ewes and lambs that almost every sheepman on the Shoshone National Forest has been put out of business and the sheep permits have gone out of existence due to non-use.

On three of our five permits we took non-use for eight years, during which time both the Forest Service and we tried to find sheep or cattle outfits to give these permits to, but all in vain. No outfit wanted them. So they went back to the Government. We are now about to lose the fourth permit for the same reason. We are able to use a small lower portion of the fifth permit for a few head of cattle for a short period of time.

If Federal Grazing Fees are so cheap and so far below "fair market value", why have almost all of these Shoshone Forest sheep permits been given back to the government?

So, from a ranch income standpoint, the best ranges are the deeded lands with adjoining State lands, and the low elevation Forest meadows. The poorest ranges are the alpine lands of the Forest, the rock and dense timber lands of the

Forest and the B.L.M., and the desert lands of the B.L.M. with adjoining State School sections. On the other hand, desert ranges can be helpful to a ranch because they save money on not having to feed expensive hay. At times they do require feeding a protein and Vitamin supplement, and sometimes also require a large expense in hauling water. They are useful also to wildlife.

1. "Fair Market Value". A person cannot compare grazing fees on private lands with fees on public lands unless he knows:

A. What is the income or meat producing potential of each grazing lease? When is the season of use? How close is the water, what is the quality of the water, and who owns the water? What is the quality of the forage for good livestock gains? Is there a potential for severe drouths which would cause severe weight loss to the livestock and livestock liquidation on a depressed market?

B. What about potential livestock losses? Is there adequate protection from spring blizzards? Are there many poisonous plants to kill or "loco" the livestock? Are there many predators killing the livestock? Is the water a severe, even deadly purgative, particularly to the very young livestock?

C. Who built and paid for the range improvements, such as the fences, the spring developments, the water wells, the reservoirs, and the water catchments? Who maintains them at who's expense?

D. Who cares for the livestock? Who "doctors" them when they are hurt or sick? Who looks after them, putting out salt, scattering bulls, moving them to better feed, putting them back into the proper pasture if they have gotten through a fence, who watches to see that the livestock are not stolen or poached, and so on? How many expensive men, machinery, and horses are involved in the livestock care?

E. What are the facilities for gathering, working, weighing, and loading the livestock on trucks for market, with the least amount of shrinkage of weight. How good are the roads to market and how far the distance to market?

F. If the grazing is in the winter, what is the shelter, the water, the access for and the availability of emergency feed? Will the forage be covered with crusted snow making it unavailable to the livestock? What is the quality of the forage? Is good water available? Who provides it and how? Who looks after the livestock? Are there excessive numbers of wildlife consuming the forage in competition with the livestock?

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G. How much will the livestock operation be harrassed by sightseers, fishermen, and hunters with loaded rifles. Are the government land managers sensible or are they arbitrary and capricious?

It is extremely difficult to compare private grazing fees with Federal Grazing fees unless all of the above economic factors are properly determined. Until this is done, I would suggest leaving the Federal fees the way that they are, or better yet, reducing them.

During the past year or two the ranching picture has become extremely precarious due to a severe drop in livestock prices and a correspondingly severe drop in ranch land valuation. I am certain that many ranchers now find themselves mortgaged up to or beyond the present value of their ranch and livestock, although no one will really talk about it. If something doesn't happen soon to greatly reduce interest rates and improve livestock prices, I fear a financial collapse of a lot of ranchers and their bankers.

2. Some wildlife interests want only wildlife on Federal lands. Most B.L.M. and Forest grazing personnel are wildlife oriented and educated. They know little about livestock, in contrast to the old-time personnel. Today it often seems that most of them will do anything to encourage wildlife and discourage the rancher, in contradiction to the Congressional law of multiple use.

The Federal record of managing wildlife ranges is very poor. In every case that I have heard about, the land and vegetation are being severely damaged or destroyed by overwhelming numbers of wildlife. This is happening on every wild horse range, on the wildlife range of Yellowstone Park, and on the wild burro range of Grand Canyon National Park. From a range management viewpoint, replacing livestock with wildlife, with Federal control, would devastate the range.

Actually, the land ownership pattern is so intermingled that if the private and State lands were fenced away from the public rangelands so that the public land would just be used for wildlife, the expense would be enormous, the livestock operations would be destroyed, and the wildlife would be eliminated because they would be fenced away from almost all of the water. (See the land ownership map of our L.U. ranch, other than the Forest permits, in a pocket on the back cover of the enclosed pamphlet intituled "Land Use and Environmental Analysis for the L. U. Sheep Company", which we privately accomplished for the benefit of ourselves and the public.) Such fencing would serve no useful purpose to anyone. Furthermore, nothing is more important to the stability and welfare of this nation than a sound and productive agriculture.

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3. Are the ranchers overgrazing the land and destroying it with their livestock?

I invite you to look at the enclosed booklet entitled, "RE-DISCOVERING THE BIG HORNS, a Pictorial Study of 75 Years of Ecological Change", published by Big Horn, Johnson, Sheridan & Washakie County Chapters of the Wyoming State Historical Society, in cooperation with the Bighorn National Forest, the U.S. Forest Service, in 1976. This booklet compares photographs taken in 1900 with pictures of the identical sites taken 75 years later, in 1975. These pictures reveal by and large, that a great deal of improvement to the land and vegetation has taken place in these 75 years, with credit due to the Forest Service and the ranchers involved. No doubt, more improvement can be made in certain areas (and all of this takes time), but all in all, this is a very encouraging booklet.

Broadly speaking, the B.L.M. range in this area is in much better condition than it was 30 years ago. During the 1950's and 1960's there was a lot of improvement to the range. By and large, the B.L.M. and the rancher, with the help of the District Grazing Advisory Board, were working together with harmony, frugality, and common-sense, and the rangelands were substantially improved.

All of this came to an abrupt halt in the 1970's. From 1975 to 1982, seven long years, the B.L.M. conducted an extravagant Environmental study, during which time no range improvements were allowed. The ranchers were not consulted. The erratic conclusions reached by the B.L.M. showed that three, and as high as five times too many livestock were being grazed, which is a physical impossibility. Ask any good range management authority. To the credit of the B.L.M., they threw this study into the trash, or as they would say, "archived" it. It is sad to squander such a huge amount of time and money, and accomplish nothing.

In 1977 I discovered that the U.S. Forest Service has no range guideline for the sparse and different vegetation on the alpine ranges. Instead, they use their lower range guideline on the alpine ranges, which makes the alpine ranges appear to be in terrible condition, even when they are not.

I have had enough experience with government range surveys that I have little faith in them. They are too easily manipulated to serve a purpose. They seem to be used politically, that is, to try to frighten Congress and the public into giving these agencies lavish appropriations to improve the public rangelands.

Of course all rangelands can be improved, just as anything else in the United States can be improved. Adequate money for such improvement, by and large, was wisely

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provided by Congress in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. However, most of this money is going into larger, inexperienced, B.L.M. staffs, to conduct wasteful, erratic, never-ending, inconclusive studies, rather than into the land itself. At the rate they are going, little will be accomplished in the next 100 years.

What is needed far more than money is direction, frugality, common-sense, knowledge, and understanding, as well as cooperation and enthusiasm by all parties concerned. I will address such problems and their solutions in the attached ADDENDUM.

Yours truly,

*Daniel S. Healy*  
Daniel S. Healy



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ADDENDUM to letter of June 28, 1984

RANGE IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS  
June 29, 1984

Public land managers, ecologists, and ranchers have a lot in common. Most of them are basically people of intelligence, honesty, and good will, who love the great outdoors, the pastoral scene, the wildlife, and the feeling of solitude when there. They would not knowingly or willingly abuse the land in any way. People with such similar interests have every reason to get along with each other. Each is dependent upon the other.

Differences arise because of attitudes, and a lack of understanding and tact. They all should read "How to Win Friends and Influence People", by Dale Carnegie.

Historically, ranching has been an occupation having an extremely low income. Most ranchers are either heavily in debt or have outside income to keep them going. They just do not have any money. They simply eke out a living at an occupation that they otherwise thoroughly enjoy.

Public land managers, ecologists, ranchers, and their colleagues in the University Extension Services and Soil Conservation Services, have a wealth of information on how to improve the rangelands. Unfortunately, much of the information is too scattered and is too scientifically presented to be of use to the average land manager, rancher, or person.

But even worse, very little of this information discusses how to improve the rangeland and at the same time improve the ranch livestock operation by decreasing expenses or increasing income. Unless it discusses both, it tends not to be acceptable to the rancher, because he simply can not afford it.

The frugal nature of the rancher makes him rebel at government extravagance. Many range improvement policies and procedures are far too expensive, too time-consuming, and lack common sense. Many times there seems to be an utter lack of direction and cooperation. Most public land managers know very little about a ranch operation, and most ranchers know too little about how to improve the vegetation and the watershed.

SUMMARY. The way to solve this problem is to combine all of the information and the talents of everyone involved.

1. The best presentation to any group is visual. Video tapes should be made by every group, directed to the average person, of the points they wish to make. These tapes should be conveniently available everywhere and presented to

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every interested person. They should illustrate how to improve the rangeland, the watershed, the habitat, and the livestock operation. Booklets, presented in a modern interesting way, should be available for review of the video tape.

2. The Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 very wisely provided that 50% of the grazing fees should go back to the rangelands for range improvement. Unfortunately, most of this money seems to go to pay B.L.M. staff wages, leaving very little to go to land itself. I think that it is just as improper to use this money to pay B.L.M. staff as it would be to pay the rancher for his time.

Let's put this money into the land rather than into someone's pocket. I suggest that four-fifths of this money should be "ear-marked" for the rangeland and rancher that paid it, and that it should be spent under joint direction of the rancher involved and the public land manager. If the rancher and the land manager could not agree and the money was not spent, this fact should be annually reviewed by a committee equally composed of members of the grazing board and the agency, with recommended action. Such would be subject to review by the State and National Directors and by the General Accounting Office of Congress.

If the funds were not necessary on any ranch, the rancher and the land manager involved should have the joint authority to release those funds for use elsewhere in the District.

The other one-fifth of the funds should be directed to the District for use on the worst rangelands, under the joint direction of the rancher involved, the District Manager, and the District Grazing Board.

It should be proper to also spend these funds on State and Private lands if such would directly improve the public rangelands. A.S.C. funds can be so expended. Perhaps the State would also return 50% of their grazing fees for such improvements. We know the rancher has no money but improvements must take place.

Let's use the frugality of the rancher to get the most out of the money. Let's use the information available to the land manager. Let's give direction to the program with the use of videotapes and modern booklets. Let's give the public a fair return, stabilize and improve the western livestock industry, and improve the condition of the rangelands.

Yours truly,

*Daniel S. Healy*  
Daniel S. Healy