**Spreading the Message of the Importance of Rangelands to a Global Community**

International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists North American Communications Team

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The purpose of this proposed Campfire Conversation is to engage Society for Range Management members in a discussion about spreading the message of the importance of rangelands to a global community that has no reference for what rangelands are. We seek the expertise of rangeland management professionals, educators, researchers, students, ranchers and policy makers in marketing rangelands to the world. The goals of the of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) align with those of the Society for Range Management. Specifically, the IYRP aims to increase a worldwide understanding of the importance of rangelands for global food security, conservation, and environmental services. It will call attention to the need for sustainable management and enlightened policies that protect and support rangelands and those that make their living from them. It would enhance the perceived natural and cultural values of rangelands and pastoral systems, strengthen pastoralists’ rights and pride in their own cultural systems and traditions, and foster innovation toward sustainability and overcoming poverty. It seeks the increased capacities of local and national scientists and researchers to monitor and predict future trends in rangelands and to provide high-quality information to the people living in and managing them. The achievement of obtaining an IYRP and enlightening the world of the importance of rangelands and pastoralists will be the responsibility of rangeland professionals around the globe. **Our burning question is: How do we spread the message of the importance of rangelands to a global community that has no reference of what rangelands are?**

**Campfire Conversation “Sales Pitch”:**

Almost half the world is comprised of rangelands. Yet, as the global human population becomes more modernized, people in urban centers are often disconnected from rangelands and their importance to food security, conservation, and environmental services. IYRP’s mission is to promote an understanding and appreciation of rangelands around the world and the people who use them. The North American Communications Team seeks perspectives from range management professionals, educators, scientists, ranchers, students, indigenous peoples, and policy makers to help diversify our message.  What is the importance of rangelands to you? How do we convey these messages to those without a background in rangeland science or management?

**Summary of Campfire Conversation**

The campfire conversation was productive with four separate groups rotating through to discuss our topic. Our goal was to determine what rangelands meant to each participant of the campfire conversation and then to discover ways that we can convey those values to a global population that largely has no reference for what rangelands are. Discussions ranged from the value of rangelands that included human health and the many ecosystem services derived from rangelands to their intrinsic value for people far removed from them. It was stressed that while we need to tailor our message to different audiences, that include those closest to rangelands and those “average New Yorkers” who are disconnected physically and emotionally, we need to always convey that rangeland science is at the core, as professionals working in rangelands, of who we are and what we do. We discussed the misconceptions that many believe about rangelands; that rangelands are marginal lands, only classified as rangeland because they are not good for other things, or that they are degraded lands that would otherwise support other agricultural enterprises, among a multitude of other fictions. Another point that was stressed across discussion groups was that rangeland is a land type, and not a land use. Instead, it was agreed, that we need to express that rangeland, as a global land type, has an inherent beauty, an ecologic and social history, and possesses critical importance to the earth and humanity all its own that rivals other land types such as forests, deserts, and wetlands. As one participant put it, “rangelands are where humanity began” linking back to our hunter-gather forbearers, to indigenous groups and others who continue derive a living from rangelands across the globe.

Coupled to the importance of defining what our message about rangelands should be and who our audiences are, we discussed how to best deliver our message. There was a strong emphasis from the group that storytelling – one that connected the audience to the rangeland professional through their passion and knowledge – would be the most effective. These stories could be told through a number of social media channels (YouTube video, Facebook, twitter, etc.) and in various formats including newsletters, advertisements, documentaries, short videos and podcasts. It was acknowledged that currently the public, particularly in the United States, has a distrust of government and science in general. As such, it can be difficult to relay important information to the audience without first establishing some relationship and/or level of trust. One thought was to engage “social media influencers” to share the “Rangeland Message” through their audiences, as the public is more apt to trust a voice that they are familiar with. As another participant put it, “we borrow their trusted audiences to spread our message”.

Below is an outline of topic areas discussed organized across three critical areas: What is the message about rangelands, who are we messaging about rangelands, and how do we get the message out.

What is the message:

1. Counter misconceptions about rangelands –
   1. Focus on what rangelands are and not on what they are not
      1. Rangelands often referred to land that is too hot, too cold, too dry, too rocky, or too steep to be any other land type
      2. Instead, need to focus on what rangelands are and what they provide to humanity/global ecology
   2. Rangelands have inherent value all their own that rival other land types (ecosystem services):
      1. Ecological importance - clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat
      2. Social/cultural history and importance
      3. Economic importance -food/fiber/energy/other resources and uses
2. What are rangelands (how do we define it for others)
   * 1. Land type vs use of land
     2. Stress the importance/value of multiple uses/users of rangelands: While we as professionals work to balance uses instead of trading one for another, others sometimes view them as competing interests for example:
        1. Nomadic pastoralist vs game preserves
        2. Ranchers vs. wildlife preservation
        3. Energy production vs. watershed/wildlife conservation
        4. Recreation vs. livestock production
     3. Rangelands have value beyond livestock production
        1. Wildlife habitat/fisheries
        2. Clean air/water
        3. Energy resources
        4. Aesthetics/recreation/hunting
        5. Food/fiber production
        6. Home/subsistence/rural community economics
     4. Rangelands are also often functional lands
        1. While national parks and wilderness areas are set aside for preservation, but people can live on rangelands
        2. Many people directly rely on products produced on rangeland (livestock, game meat, fiber, etc.) especially in other areas of the world
     5. Messaging should focus on the values of rangelands
     6. Rangeland management is research based – infused with multiple scientific disciplines:
        1. Botany
        2. Plant Physiology
        3. Soil Sciences
        4. Ecology
        5. Animal Sciences
     7. Rangeland management can also involve traditional and indigenous knowledge
     8. Rangelands are “where humanity began”; although range science is technically a “newer” science field, humans have been “studying” it for years as they learned to live from the land

Who do we message (message needs to be adapted to each group accordingly):

1. General public:
   1. Those living in proximity to rangelands
      1. May know/understand the value of rangelands, but from a particular perspective (hunting/recreation, grazing livestock, open space, etc.)
      2. May use rangelands personally or work in an industry that uses rangeland: livestock production, recreation, energy production/natural resources etc.
   2. Those not living in proximity to rangelands
      1. “The average New Yorker” not familiar or without experience with rangelands: Show how rangelands are relevant to these audiences too, for example, grazing in suburban/urban areas in California for fire control or understanding food choices and where food comes from
      2. Others that may have some awareness or experience with rangelands
2. Policy makers
   1. May (i.e. eastern U.S Legislators) or may not (western states) be disconnected from or aware of rangelands.
   2. Most policy makers have little time to devote to any one issue (messaging needs to be brief and on point).
3. Stakeholders
   1. North American Rangelands
      1. Ranchers
      2. Land Managers
      3. Federal/State/Provence and County Agency personnel (BLM, NRCS, US Forest Service, and relevant Canada and Mexico agencies)
      4. University Range programs (Faculty, students, etc.)
      5. Native American/First Nations (Canada) Tribal entities involved in rangeland utilization/management
      6. Non-governmental organizations (Nature Conservancy, wildlife organizations, etc.)
      7. Energy Companies (coal, oil, gas, wind, and solar)
      8. Others that directly utilize and manage rangelands
   2. International Rangelands
      1. Pastoral groups
      2. Government agencies
      3. Universities
      4. Others involved in the utilization and management of rangelands

How do we message:

1. Story telling
   1. Allows for the “human factor” and why podcasts work: people want a personal perspective
   2. Personal – builds trust and relationships: Work with “influencers” that already have these relationships with the audiences we want to target
   3. Ways to deliver our rangeland stories:
      1. Podcasts (i.e., Art of Range, influencer podcast, etc.)
      2. Videos – short, personal, or longer documentary
      3. Websites
      4. Other social media (twitter feeds, Instagram, facebook, etc.)