

A Comparison of Game and Cattle Ranching on
Bureau of Land Management Land

by

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Abstract

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is administrator of over 470 million acres of public land. More than 170 acres of this land in the western states is leased to private ranchers for grazing cattle. Because it is stocked above its carrying capacity, much of the BLM land is not as productive as it could be. The 1987 BLM statistics show that over 50% of its grazing land is in poor or bad condition.

Over the course of its 44 year history, the Bureau has matured as an agency, from being directed by its narrow constituency of ranchers to taking a much more active stance in dictating its own policy. In the same short time, the demands on the land have increased as various other interests have taken a claim to the land.

Game ranching, the harvesting of game animals for profit, offers an alternative land use to cattle ranching that would better satisfy the Bureaus goals of land management spelled out in the various legislative mandates. Moreover, it would better fulfill the criteria - sustainability, productivity, efficiency, and equitability - established herein as necessary for allocating alternative land uses

In order to implement the ranching of native game the Bureau would have to promote it actively, Congress and the individual state legislatures would have to amend several laws, and the ranchers would have to be willing to try it. Its merits - improved land condition, more profit for the ranchers, increased enjoyment by public land users, and a more nutritious meat - warrant a careful consideration of implementing game ranching on BLM land.