Natural Resources and Environmental Issues

Volume 0 Wilderness Areas: Their Impact

Article 9

1-1-1990

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Recommended Citation

Magagna, Jim (1990) "Does wilderness designation achieve society's objectives? A livestock industry perspective," *Natural Resources and Environmental Issues*: Vol. 0, Article 9.

Available at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol0/iss1/9

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DOES WILDERNESS DESIGNATION ACHIEVE SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES? A LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

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In addressing this question posed to the panel today, I find that the real challenge is to define the terminology. What are "society's objectives"? How do we determine them? Does society even have a consistent and compatible set of objectives? Are those objectives rigid? Have they evolved, perhaps even changed since the original passage of the Wilderness Act?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 is the logical place to turn for the answers to these questions. Section 2 of the Act declares it to be the policy of Congress "to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." The Act goes on to address "protection of these areas," and the "preservation of their wilderness character." Section 2 (c) then defines "wilderness" with considerable detail. All of this language focuses on maintaining a certain natural condition of the land unaffected by a permanent human impact. It is clearly a resource based objective.

On the other hand, the purpose statement is replete with the use of such terms as "benefit," "enjoyment" and "use." Clearly, it was not the intent of Congress to isolate these lands from use by the American people. The objective of Congress was to insure that these lands were used in a manner that did not alter their natural condition. Management of these lands was left in the hands of the multiple use land management agencies. This is further evidence of Congress' intent to mandate the condition to be preserved, not the purpose for which the wilderness lands are to be used.

Contrast this with the objectives of many segments of society today who demonstrate a special interest in wilderness. These objectives are often based on social policy and are narrowly defined to coincide with the broader objectives of a particular organization. They are laden with emotional appeal but often lacking in resource based objectivity. Society's objectives today range from prohibition of all human use in wilderness to promotion of unlimited use to be made only by a very narrowly defined segment of society.

The answers to the question posed today should lie in measuring the achievements of wilderness designation against the original objectives established by Congress - protection of the resource in a natural state for the benefit and use of this and future generations. My scorecard gives wilderness a very mixed review when so measured. The objective of preservation and protection has generally been achieved through wilderness designation. The use of wilderness has tended to be restricted to a narrowing population segment. Restraints on access are partially responsible. "Social policy" plays an increasing role in narrowing the range of acceptable uses and users. The benefits of wilderness are denied to many, most notably to those whose lives and livelihoods are tied to the areas surrounding the designated wilderness.

The challenge of the Wilderness Act is not to maximize the number of acres of designated wilderness. It is not to take lands away from the American people. The challenge is twofold: First, to selectively designate areas of land where the resource will be allowed to evolve in a natural state not directed by the activities of man; Second, to maximize the use of the resource for human benefit in all manners that are not inconsistent with the first challenge. An area in which the first challenge cannot be met without denying all human benefit truly does not meet the criteria for wilderness designation. Clearly benefits come in many sizes and colors. Economic benefits are not per se inconsistent with the Act and economic impacts are a factor to be considered in measuring benefits.

I would like to examine closely the livestock industry's relationship with wilderness. To be properly understood, this relationship must be viewed in a historical relationship. Several perspectives are critical: Philosophical, legal, public perceptions and agency policy.

Certain specific areas of conflict surface most often in current livestock grazing in wilderness areas. These include herd management practices, people impacts on livestock, access, maintenance of preexisting improvements and predator control.

The impacts of wilderness designation go beyond the wilderness boundary. In addition to the broader socio-economic impacts on local communities, there are impacts peculiar to adjacent ranches and livestock operations. The impact from wilderness use is often much greater than that anticipated from wilderness designation. Wilderness impacts cannot be isolated. There are numerous examples of devastating impacts from the cumulative effects of a series of special use designations which include some wilderness. One of the single greatest threats to private property rights today is posed by the designation of federal reserved water rights in wilderness areas.

We are now facing the advent of a new era in wilderness designation — BLM Wilderness. The impacts on livestock management are potentially much greater here because the existing intensity of livestock management is often greater in these desert type areas. Proposed

wilderness has been carved from the middle of grazing allotments leaving them looking like a sheet of paper with large illogical ink blotches. The need for vehicle access and for man made range improvements for both wildlife and livestock is greater in these deserts. The potential impact of reserved water rights could be devastating to ranches, indeed, to total local communities.

I perceive a very alarming trend away from multiple use by the multiple use land management agencies. Increasing acreages are being given special use designations. Many wilderness areas are being managed under a more restrictive philosophy that is fast approaching that of the National Park Service. This clearly goes beyond the expressed intent of Congress in the Wilderness Act.

Before concluding I feel compelled to address the perennial question: How much wilderness? Let's not spend time with the usual philosophical debate. There are two very practical questions. First, how much land can we practically manage in wilderness designation if we fully accept the challenges which I earlier outlined? Second, given that Congress has not provided a process for retrieval of these lands from wilderness designation, how much of the critical natural resource base of this country's economic wealth and productivity should we arbitrarily make permanently unavailable?

We as American people must have a long term commitment to the sound management of all of the abundant natural resources under public stewardship to achieve the greatest current and future benefit to the people of this nation. We must permit and demand that our federal land management agency personnel act first and foremost as resource managers, not as the implementers of social policy. With this as our commitment, we do not need to lock up our lands to assure that they continue to meet the broad needs of ours and future generations.