

A SUMMARY OF THE MEADOW CREEK STUDY PUBLICATIONS IS AS FOLLOWS:

In the March 1995 issue of *Fly Rod & Reel*, the Supervisor of the Toiyabe National Forest, R.M. "Jim" Nelson, was quoted as follows:

"We could have another Waco out here," says Nelson "Some of these guys are talking about killing us. If the counties did have this land, they'd hammer the hell out of it, and the public wouldn't have access, much less, anything else. Riparian areas are the arteries of the planet and they're getting destroyed all over the West. *We're just not going to let that keep happening.* We've had an ecology team working on riparian for the last five field seasons, and we're getting the science behind us to really support what we're trying to do."

For Mr. Nelson to say these things publicly is terribly wrong for two reasons. First of all, a man in his position should be striving to tone down controversy. He should not be creating it. And second, he should not be making allegations that are destructive of people's character and detrimental to livelihoods when he has no data to support what he is saying. The reason that I know that Mr. Nelson does not have scientific support for his actions and allegations is because I have copies of studies completed by the Forest Service itself that show that grazing is not destructive to riparian areas.

Beginning in the mid 1970's there was a series of studies completed on the Starkey Experimental Station in Eastern Oregon.

Over a period of about 12 years, graduate students and scientists measured the effects of cattle grazing on every riparian value imaginable. They applied rest rotation grazing, season long grazing, short duration grazing, deferred rotation, and non use. They monitored and determined effects on soil compaction, infiltration rates, streambank erosion, sediment loads, streambank cutting, biological content of the water itself, numbers of steelhead trout redds per mile, impacts on streamside vegetation, and total production. And when it was all said and done, they found very little, if any, adverse effects from grazing.

In fact, there was much indication of the importance of livestock grazing. On page 34 of the document it is stated:

"With the exception of short-duration, high-intensity grazing, all other grazing systems produced almost twice as much herbage as the ungrazed plots. With vegetation responding this dramatically to grazing treatment and the

objective being improvement of biomass production in the riparian area, it appeared that this can best be accelerated with grazing instead of protection."

"In this study, productivity of riparian zone and floodplain vegetation was rapidly enhanced when no more than 70 percent of the herbage was removed annually. And in the floodplain, vegetative production was accelerated with grazing."

The 70 percent utilization figure used in the above discussion provides opportunity for me to call attention to the fact that while Forest personnel in Nevada are demanding removal of livestock from riparian areas whenever 45 to 55 percent of the feed has been utilized, their own studies completed on the Starkey Experimental Station indicate that riparian area values improve rapidly at 70 percent utilization.

Forest personnel may argue that there is other data available than that which was compiled at the Starkey Experimental Station, but such is not born out in their own discussions. On pages 24, 41 and 57 of the Study Publication itself, it is stated, that (1) "The literature of range management is essentially devoid of information specific to the management of riparian zones." That, (2) "Unfortunately, there is little direct scientific information available on the relationship between livestock management and watershed science." and (3) that, "The eastern Oregon study is the most comprehensive of its kind in the United States."

Other information favorable to livestock grazing, found within the document is as follows:

On page 56 it is stated:

"...degradation during Spring discharge along ungrazed streambanks was significantly greater than degradation occurring along grazed streambanks."

On page 58 it is stated:

"None of the grazing systems affected the quality of Meadow Creek's water as defined by the water quality standards of the Environmental Protection Agency."

On page 112, comment is made to the fact that in that instance:

"Forage utilization was 75% on meadows but only 10% on uplands."

These figures, indicating that 75% of the forage was utilized on the meadows while only 10% occurred on the uplands also supports the argument we have been making - that whenever Forest personnel demand that permittees remove their livestock from an allotment

when only 45 to 55 percent of the feed has been taken on the riparian areas, they are, in effect, excluding the permittee from using 80 to 90 percent of the available feed within his allotment.

On pages 158 and 159 of the Starkey Experimental Station Study Publication there is a copy of an article written by Gale Chambers. In relating the experience of the two men most involved in the study, it is stated:

"Both Bryant and Bunkhouse shudder at the thought of fencing mile after mile of streambank. They shudder because they have fenced mile after mile only to see snow, ice and elements tear those fences out - and they have some sort of idea concerning cost and maintenance. Moreover, they didn't get enough results to justify costs."

This statement is also revealing; for over the last several years the agencies have gone all out in some areas to fence mile after mile of creekbottom, forcing the respective permittees into maintaining the extra fence and developing new water sources, which is one more example of adverse action destructive to livestock interests.

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