The Old West

- One and a half centuries ago, the Homestead Act drew ranchers to the beckoning rangelands of the West.
- Homestead parcels were often too small to support grazing, and ranchers were often dependent upon adjacent public lands.
- Eastern grazing practices were not suited to arid western rangelands, and grazing took a toll on the land.
- Grazing was unregulated until 1934, when the Taylor Grazing Act inspired fencing, water, and management projects that reduced soil erosion and increased the land's productivity and forage potential.
- Many homestead ranches have been passed down through the generations and are still in operation today.

This is our life—this is what we depend upon for a living.

Mac Donaldson
Sonoita Valley, Arizona

The New West

- Despite improvements in livestock management, the health of public rangelands and watersheds has continued to decline, and over the last 50 years, the number of livestock grazing these lands has been reduced by half.

Rangelands are our common good and everybody has a stake in the resources that come off of rangelands . . .

Karen Launchbaugh
University of Idaho

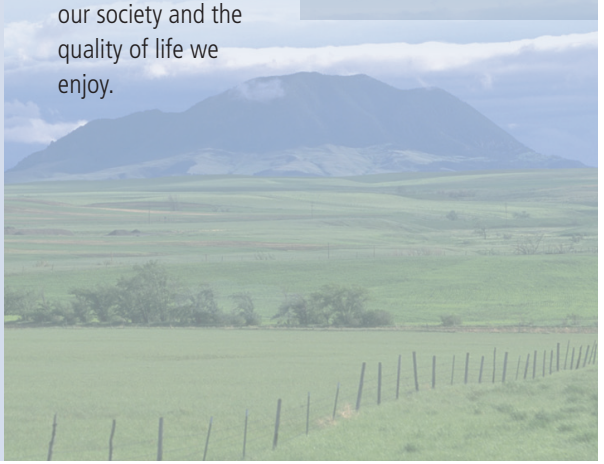
- Rangeland health has also been affected by invasive plant species, which contribute to wildfires and the deterioration of habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species.
- The population of the West continues to grow at a rapid pace and natural open spaces are being lost to residential and commercial development.
- More people are looking to western rangelands for recreational opportunities and many local economies are dependent upon the resulting tourism.
- By law—the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976—public lands must be managed to support multiple uses and activities.

The Best West

- Ranching is critical to preserving the open space that is needed to sustain rangeland ecosystems and to promote clean air, clean water, healthy habitat for fish and wildlife, and space to recreate.
- Collaborations and partnerships have resulted in creative solutions that reach across the boundaries of private rangelands and public rangelands, nearly two-thirds of which are managed by the BLM.
- Targeted grazing has proven to be a successful tool for controlling invasive plant species and has reduced weed infestations by an impressive 70 percent where sheep are used as weed-eaters.
- Innovative grazing practices are helping to restore precious ecosystems, preserve a way of life that is part of America's heritage, and sustain a diversity of public interests and values that enrich our society and the quality of life we enjoy.

We've come a long way in how we've been able to use grazing and manage it properly so that we can actually deal with the multiple uses and desires we have as a society.

Dr. G. Allen Rasmussen
Texas A&M University–Kingsville



Overview

More than half of the western United States consists of public and private rangelands that provide livelihoods for families, support local economies, and make critical contributions to a wide variety of public interests and values. However, the health of these rangelands is threatened by population growth and development, wildfires, invasive species, and other pressures.

Through case studies and interviews, this documentary examines the livestock grazing traditions and beliefs of the "Old West," the expectations for rangeland health and additional rangeland uses of the "New West," and the collaborative efforts and partnerships that are resulting in ecologically sound strategies leading to the "Best West."

The program embraces the hope of ranching families to preserve a traditional way of life, the hope of communities to preserve their social fabric and existence, and the hope of many that rangelands can be managed sustainably and preserved as our legacy to future generations.

Availability

This program was produced by the Society for Range Management (SRM) in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Division of Rangeland Resources. It been shown by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and now through the support of the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA), is available to national PBS stations for a period of 3 years effective June 18, 2011.

DVD copies of this program are available for educational purposes. Inquiries can be directed to SRM Headquarters at 303-986-3309 or info@rangelands.org. Closed–captioned versions of the production are also available.

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November 2011

Hope on the Range—

A Frontier Legacy Finds Its Place in the New West

SRM

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Society for Range Management

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT