



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

PROCEEDINGS

of the

WESTERN FARM ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION

Fourteenth Annual Meeting

June 25, 26 and 27, 1941

Hotel Utah  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## ECONOMICS OF RANGE LAND CONSERVATION

Howard G. Mason

Only a few of the many aspects of range land conservation can be treated in the space allotted to this topic. Those which will be taken chiefly are: varying standards of range conservation; the effect of the location of conservation upon the ranch business; the significance of seasonal ranges; the distribution of conservation costs; and, the difficulties arising out of a complex ownership pattern.

There are two rather divergent schools of thought regarding range conservation objectives. At one extreme are those who aim at restoration to the highest type of vegetation which the principal governing factors of climate and soil will permit. At the other extreme are those who would attempt to harvest the greatest possible amount of forage on a sustained basis. The first of these objectives would require extremely light domestic livestock and greatly restricted use by wild life. The second runs great risk of failure to truly conserve the resources under variable climatic conditions.

While most conservation plans promise increased forage production at some time in the future, this can only be developed by present reduction of use. This reduction may sometimes be spread over the year-round ranch, but is more likely to fall on some particular seasonal range and to throw the existing ranch organization out of balance. Some superficial investigations seem to indicate that good seasonal range balance is quite easily begun with, particularly on cattle ranches. The movement toward conservation on a broad front promises to put considerable stress on ranch businesses.

This introduces the problem of distributing the strain of reshaping range livestock economics. Because of the relatively large scale of livestock operations and their financial structure, management is sharply linked with rather small equities. If the cost of conservation is applied mainly upon livestock operators, there is likely to be considerable distress. Since much of the gain, as usually conceived, is to be spread over a long period of time and many individuals besides those usually engaged in ranching, it seems only fair to place the cost upon a broader base than that of operators and their creditors.

Range lands commonly are found in a rather complex ownership pattern involving a diversity of attitudes toward management and in actual ability to achieve any effective management. Many range areas are a hodge-podge of various federal lands, railroad grants, state and county lands, and private lands held for various purposes. The composing of this sort of ownership pattern into any sort of coordinated conservation management is a small job. Possibly one of the chief contributions of range surveys is the basis they offer for negotiating toward unified management of these complex ownership situations.