

Federal Grazing Permit Retirement



The federal public lands grazing program is an ecologically damaging, fiscal boondoggle that not only bilks taxpayers and degrades millions of acres of public lands and resources, but also fails to provide security for ranchers dependent on public lands for grazing. Voluntary grazing permit retirement is an environmentally imperative, economically rational, fiscally prudent, socially just and politically pragmatic solution to public lands grazing conflicts.

Environmental Problems with Federal Public Lands Grazing

- Grazing damages entire ecosystems and is a major source of non-point water pollution.
- Domestic livestock displace native species and grazing is listed as a contributing factor in the decline of 22% of all species listed on the federal threatened and endangered species list.

Fiscal Problems with Federal Public Lands Grazing

- The federal government spends at least \$144 million each year managing private livestock grazing on federal public lands, but collects only \$21 million in grazing fees—for a net loss of at least \$123 million per year.

Problems for Federal Public Lands Ranchers

- Public lands ranching is at best a marginal economic pursuit. Most public lands ranches have a negative to 3% nominal return on investment, which fails even to keep pace with inflation.
- Frequent drought has intensified problems for ranchers, forcing many to reduce or eliminate their herds.
- Many permittees are approaching retirement age and do not have children who are able or willing to take over the family ranch.
- Conflicts with other legitimate uses of federal public lands (endangered species recovery, wildlife habitat, protection of water quality/quantity, recreation and others) have rendered public lands grazing untenable in many places.

Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement: A Mutually Beneficial Solution to Federal Public Lands Grazing Problems

- Legislated grazing permit retirement allows federal grazing permittees to waive their grazing permit back to the managing federal agency in exchange for compensation, usually paid by a third party. The associated grazing allotments are then permanently retired from grazing use.
- Grazing permit retirement is a voluntary, non-regulatory, market-based solution to public lands grazing conflicts.
- Grazing permit retirement is mutually beneficial to the interests of ranchers, conservationists and taxpayers:
 - Ranchers who retire their permits can cut their losses and use their permit compensation to restructure their operations on private lands (without federal oversight), retire or start a new business.
 - Retiring grazing permits eliminates grazing impacts on native flora and fauna, water resources and other public values on the associated grazing allotments, and diffuses the political and legal discord that frequently arises from grazing conflicts.
 - Retiring grazing permits saves tax dollars by reducing the cost of federal public lands management.

Complete information on voluntary grazing permit retirement is available at www.publiclandsranching.org and www.permitbuyout.net.