

## Oral Presentation Problem Statement

### Western Rangeland Management

Controversy has been growing between Livestock Producers, Environmental Non-profits and Government land managers over how federally owned land in Idaho is managed and for what purpose.

- Livestock producers have been grazing their sheep and cattle on public land since the 1800's. Livestock production is the basis for the economy of many of the communities in rangeland regions and without the grazing of public land many livestock producers will not be able to stay in business.
- Environmental groups see the livestock grazing as detrimental to the natural ecosystems and want all livestock off the public land.
- Private landowners adjacent to publicly owned rangelands want better wildfire management especially after the recent wildfires in California
- Backpackers, hunters and anglers view livestock grazing as competition and an annoyance to their activities and want more say in the multiuse management plan.
- The US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management need to balance the needs of all these groups while properly managing the large expanse of public land over the long term.

The task of the Oral Presentation Problem is to develop a 10-year Multiuse Resource Management Plan for public land in Idaho for the Governor to present to the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. The Governor expects consideration of the economic impact to the state for each of the following components of the plan:

- 1) Overview of Rangeland: Many people do not fully understand what rangeland is, the different types of rangeland both within North America and around the world. Include an overview of the various types of ecosystems that are present in Idaho's rangeland; how management uses Ecological Sites, Steady State and Transition Models to determine rangeland trend; and the economic importance of rangeland.
- 2) Livestock used as a management tool: Many environmental organizations and special interest groups believe that removal of livestock from public land will result in major improvement to the rangeland. Overgrazing in the past has left the rangeland in a deteriorated state. Rangeland managers understand how livestock grazing can be a tool to improve the condition of the rangeland. The plan needs to explain how various grazing management systems can improve rangelands' ecological site towards the climax state, affect plant species composition, and increase the carrying capacity of the rangeland resulting in increased livestock stocking rates.
- 3) Fire as a natural ecological process: In the past when rangelands were sparsely populated, uncontrolled wildfires would burn without damage to private property; this is no longer the case. Describe how prescribed controlled burns can improve ecosystems without the risk of these fires spreading onto private property. Explain how livestock grazing can be used to replace burning and reduce the fine fuel load in preventing wildfires.
- 4) Noxious weed control: Landowners adjacent to public lands have complained to the Governor's office about the lack of noxious weed control although Idaho Noxious Weed Laws states that noxious weeds must be controlled. Describe methods of noxious weed control on public rangeland.
- 5) Wildlife Management: –Sagebrush Steppes of Idaho are home to the Sage Grouse. Their numbers has been decreasing over the years. Rangeland managers have been fencing livestock out of their leks only to find that sage grouse prefer areas where livestock graze. These same ecosystems are also the winter grounds for mule deer. Wildlife habitat requirements for multiple species needs to incorporate into the overall management plan.