

NCA March Roundup

By Martin Paris, Executive Director

Happy March everyone! March is one of my favorite times of year with lots of good college basketball and of course, the beginning of calving season for most. It's been a bit of an unpredictable winter thus far, but my fingers are crossed for decent calving weather.

NCA leadership recently attended the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Convention in Orlando, Florida. As always, there were plenty of issues discussed and a lot of good takeaways. Please check out the *President's Perspective* article for more information on the discussion surrounding electronic identification devices and CattleFax's market/weather predictions.

On the public lands front there is certainly no lack of activity. In 2021, President Biden signed an executive order calling for 100% "carbon pollution-free electricity sector" by 2035. In an effort to meet that goal, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently undergoing the agency's Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. The proposal is an update of BLM's 2012 Western Solar Plan, which identified areas in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah with high solar potential and low resource conflicts.

The updated roadmap refines the analysis in the original six states and expands it to include Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. All things considered, the BLM and Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory have determined that approximately 700,000 acres of public lands would be needed to meet those goals. However, BLM's preferred alternative in the updated Western Solar Plan would provide approximately 22 million acres of land open for solar application, just shy of 7 million of those acres would be located in Nevada. Under BLM's preferred alternative, solar application areas would consist

of "lands within 10 miles of existing and/or planned transmission lines greater than or equal to 100kV." Exclusions included areas that have a slope greater than 10% or areas designated as wilderness, national conservation lands, etc...

NCA is in the middle of reviewing the proposal in its entirety. Of course, the biggest concern is that solar facilities are placed on prime grazing ground, as opposed to already-degraded landscapes, leading to AUM decreases on grazing allotments. For those interested, the full Environmental Impact Statement can be viewed and comments can be made at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>. The comment period closes April 18th.

Also, just a quick note on BLM's Public Lands Rule/Conservation Leasing Rule. The rule is currently being reviewed at the Office of Management and Budget (White House) and is expected to be published at any time now. It's anyone's guess what the final version of the rule may look like but whatever it looks like will be the final version with no other comment/engagement opportunities.

Lastly, we are also awaiting the draft of the new Sage Grouse Land Use Plans. Much like the Public Lands Rule, the draft Sage Grouse plans could be released at any time and what the plans could contain is unknown at the moment. In the interim, NCA will be promoting the consideration and inclusion of the recently completed University of Idaho study led by Dr. Karen Launchbaugh. The 10-year study shows that cattle sharing nesting habitat with grouse on federal lands had no influence on grouse nest success. Further, grazed pastures had a greater abundance of insects, especially in the spring when chicks rely on bugs for food. While the study has yet to be peer-reviewed, it will be a major resource as we continue to navigate federal lands grazing in sage grouse habitat.

Until next time.

NCA Announces Third Scholarship Opportunity —the Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship

The Nevada Cattlemen's Association (NCA) is pleased to announce a third 2024 scholarship opportunity in memory of Walt Leberski. The Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to graduating high school seniors planning to attend a community college or four-year university or students currently enrolled in college. The amount of this scholarship for 2024 will be \$5,000!

Eligibility & application requirements for the Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship include:

- Applicant must be born in Nevada and has or will be graduating from a Nevada High School.
- Applicant must plan to attend or be currently

attending a Community College, University, or Trade School.

- Applicant must be pursuing a degree or certificate in agricultural related field.
- Applicant must have at least a 2.8 GPA. A copy of the student's transcripts is required.
- Students that were previous recipients of the NCA Scholarship or Marvel-Andrae Scholarship will be eligible to apply for the Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship.
- Applicant must submit a cover letter describing themselves, background, goals, future plans, and how this scholarship may benefit them, etc...

Students and educators interested in the Walt Leberski Memorial Scholarship, NCA Scholarship, or the Marvel-Andrae Scholarship are encouraged to contact the Nevada Cattlemen's Association. Scholarship application forms can be downloaded from the Nevada Cattlemen's website at www.nevadacattlemen.org. Applicants can call the NCA office at 775-738-9214 or send a request to nca@nevadabeef.org for a copy as well. Completed applications need to be postmarked by **April 3rd, 2024**, and can be mailed to: Attn: Research & Education Committee, c/o Nevada Cattlemen's Association, P.O. Box 310, Elko, NV 89803; or submitted by email to nca@nevadabeef.org.

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Hanes Homan, President, Nevada Cattlemen's Association

NCBA and NCA

Yesterday, (as you read this, yesterday will be a few weeks in the past) I arrived home from the NCBA Convention in Orlando, Florida. Since it was NCA membership money that paid for my rooms and plane ticket I feel compelled to give everyone an update on the convention, relationship with NCBA, and why we attend. There were lots of good updates, information, and votes on policy. Cattle-Fax general session projects that we are going to have good prices forecasted for the foreseeable future with the market topping in 2026 as the industry is in the herd expansion phase. The in-depth weather forecast projected that we are moving back into a La Nina by summer and drought may begin to return (don't kill the messenger).

The major resolution that was the "talk of the town" was brought forward by several states and feeder groups that basically mandated Electronic Identification Tags in all cattle by 2026. It is important to understand that with any grass roots member led group anyone can bring a resolution forward for the larger group to review, discuss and vote on, to be adopted into policy. NCBA doesn't bring forward their own policy or agenda. They are directed by membership to set policy at the

grass roots level. They work for us as the industry and we set their policy. As NCA, we engaged with NCBA leadership and voiced our concerns. NCA's major concern was that it was going to be an unfunded federal mandate that burdened one sector of our industry and we all know how Nevadan's feel about government mandates.

The risk of a major disease outbreak and food safety and security is not to be taken lightly. This has the potential to be catastrophic to our industry and we need to do our part and be as prepared as we possibly can. Anyone in the cattle business should be thinking about traceability and how to prepare their operations. The aforementioned resolution did pass, but it was greatly watered down and NOT mandated. NCA did vote against the resolution for now, but if federal funding gets secured, our questions get answered, and the outreach & education get done, we as producers are going to need to support traceability for our own risk management.

We need to stay engaged so we have a seat at the table to shape the policy that guides our future.

Lastly, I want to talk about DC update that the team at NCBA gave. It is mindboggling the amount of issues that they deal with on our behalf every day. The complexity of issues and thought required to deal with these issues is impressive to say the least (it's chess not checkers). Colin, Ethan, Sigrid, Tanner, and the rest of the team may not be able to gather and preg-check 1,000 cows in one day, but they would have a lot better chance of getting it done than I would trying to navigate my way around DC to get 377 votes in our favor to kill a bad bill! I'm glad they're there doing what they're really good at so I can be here at the ranch doing what I like to do. They work hard on our behalf.

Many Presidents before me have worked really hard on forwarding the relationship with NCBA making sure we have a strong voice and a seat at the table. NCA doesn't always align with NCBA, but as long as we maintain the relationship we will have a voice and seat at the table to help shape our own future.

I'll close by saying your President's Perspective- Given the political climate and leadership in DC, we need all the friends we can get!

NCA MEMBERSHIP

We would like to thank the following people for joining or renewing their membership with Nevada Cattlemen's Association between January 26 and February 25, 2024.

(New members are in bold.)

- R R Bass & Son, Richard Bass
- Robert E. Bennett
- Bently Ranch, Matt McKinney, Tod Radelfinger
- Diamond M Ranch, Manny & Ramona Oros
- Ellison Ranching Company, Ira T. Wines
- Eureka Livestock Company, Jim Etcheverry
- **Gerten Ranch, John Gerten**
- Integrated Grazing Management LLC, Dave Voth
- JHC Land & Cattle LLC, Ray Callahan
- Tim Lawson
- Nat & Karen Lommori
- Marys River Ranch, Inc., Preston Wright, Victoria Wright Biley
- Maverick Ranch, Jack & Maria Martin
- Nine S Brangus, Connie Simkins
- Paine Livestock, LLC, Ernest, Robin, & Russell D. Paine
- Pine Forest Land & Stock Co., Mike Montero
- Sarman Ranch, Ed Sarman
- Simplot Western Stockmen's, Ramona Ridley, Kyle Marino
- **Watershed Ranch, Nicholas Colonna**

UPCOMING EVENTS

NV Cattlewomen Beef Ambassador Applications Due

— April 1, 2024 —
(See page 4)

NCA Scholarship Applications Due

— April 3, 2024 —
NCA Office / Elko, Nevada
www.nevadacattlemen.org/scholarships

NCBA/PLC Legislative Conference

— April 17-19, 2024 —
Washington, DC
JW Marriott
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

NCA Teacher of the Year Nominations Due

— May 1, 2024 —
NCA Office / Elko, Nevada
www.nevadacattlemen.org

NCBA Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting

— July 8-10, 2024 —
San Diego, California
Hilton San Diego Bayfront



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Nevada Cattlewomen Moving Forward in Beef Education & Promotion

By Keri Pommerening, Nevada Cattlewomen President

Nevada Cattlewomen have been busy on several projects to promote the beef industry. We are currently designing a website that will make it easier for members and interested followers to stay up to date on our activities.

A couple of our executive board members have been trained through NDA on facilitating BQA (Beef Quality Assurance) workshops. We are organizing a possible BQA workshop to be held in the summer. We are also interested in offering an AI training in conjunction with the BQA workshop, however we still need to do some planning on the logistics. If you know of anyone interested in attending BQA for certification or re-certification, please let us know. Also, if anyone might be interested in an AI training, the more interest, the more incentive we can gather to make it happen.

Beef Ambassador applications will be out on Feb. 15 and will be due on April 1. Please help us spread the word to our 18-24-year-old beef enthusiasts so we can select a team of ambassadors to help us promote the beef industry.

Our first Beef & Wine Pairing will be held at the Park Ranch in Minden in April or May (an actual date is still to be determined). What is a Beef & Wine Pairing? The intent is for the attendee to learn about a few different cuts of meat, how to best prepare those cuts, do a taste test and sample the appropriate wine that pairs best with each cut. A beef producer will be present to answer questions and

sell the same cuts of beef. Bottles of the sampled wines will also be for sale. A recipe card for each sampling will be given out with the beef cuts. The attendee will leave prepared to cook the meal that night. Bringing producers and consumers together to enjoy the tasty benefits of beef in a fun and interactive workshop, beef and wine, what else do you need? Stay tuned for the Park Ranch Beef & Wine Pairing. We also plan to host pairings in Elko in the summer and Southern Nevada in the late fall or winter.

As I mentioned in my last article, I will share a monthly highlight on one of our members so you can get to know some of the hard-working crew behind the scenes of Nevada Cattlewomen. This month's spotlight is on Rosealee Rieman, our vice president. Here is what Rosealee had to share...

I am a 5th generation cattle rancher from Gardnerville, Nevada. I am also in my third year of teaching agriculture at our local high school. My love for cattle, beef promotion, and agriculture started at a young age. I attended my first Cattlewomen's meeting at three months old. I grew up working side by side with my dad, Grandpa, and Uncle, learning every possible skill, I could and enjoying every second of it. I was always the first one to beg the vet to let me try preg checking or peering over his shoulder as he fixed a prolapse. I love being able to share my passion for agriculture and the cattle industry while helping others understand the beauty and importance of our industry.

Thank you, Rosealee, for your commitment to Nevada Cattlewomen and the beef industry. Until next month, whether you are feeding cows, calving, or enjoying the sunshine, stay safe and warm.

Cattlewomen – a voice from the past with a vision for the future.



Rosealee Rieman

Submitted Photo



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2nd Annual Great Basin Bull Sale Report

By Charlie Hone

The 2nd annual Great Basin Bull Sale was by all accounts a resounding success. A great weekend that included dog trials, ranch branding, and a fantastic dinner and dance featuring music by Chad Bushnell, preceded the sale.

168 all breeds bulls were sold on Saturday, February 17th in rapid fashion. Breeders from Nevada, California, Idaho, Utah, Oregon and Georgia consigned some of their very best bulls which contributed to the sale's success.

We would like to thank our consignors, and sponsors and especially the crew at the Rafter 3C arena. Without them this event wouldn't be possible. The sale hosts Charlie Hone, Dave Holden, and Kris Gudel would also like to thank the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, the City of Fallon, The Fallon Visitors and Tourism Authority and Churchill County Manager Jim Barbee for their assistance in making this event possible.



168 all breeds bulls averaged \$5,325.

140 Angus averaged \$5,493.

28 all breeds bulls averaged \$4,308.

Top Sellers

Lot 70

Consigned by Dixie Valley Angus
\$25,000

Sired by Connealy Craftsman
Triangle S Ranch, Interior SD.

Lot 40

Consigned by West Wind Angus
\$15,000

Sired by T/D Doc Ryan
Current Creek Angus, Roundup MT.

Lot 77

Consigned by Hone Ranch
\$12,000

Sired by MCD Effective 921
Jeff Lommori, Smith NV.

Lot 72

Consigned by Hone Ranch
\$9,500

Sired by MCD Effective 921
Jeff Lommori, Smith NV

Lot 81

Consigned by Hone Ranch
\$9,250

Sired by Granger Black Eagle 005
Kurt Dreyer, Gardnerville NV

Lot 32

Consigned by Popovits Family Ranch
\$9,000

Sired by Hoffman Thedford
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 CE BW WW YW MILK MCE SC STAY AFC RFI REA MARB \$T \$M \$FE
 4.5 0.5 42 62 6.0 4.8 1.3 4.4 0.4 -0.03 0.28 0.24 \$111 \$27 \$17



Owned by Jose Rodriguez

L BAR GRAN LEGADO

Sire: L Bar Momentum Reg. #: C1153590 Dam: L Bar 3404
 CE BW WW YW MILK MCE SC STAY AFC RFI REA MARB \$T \$M \$FE
 3.1 0.4 37 55 7.5 4.2 1.3 0.5 1.2 0.14 0.74 0.33 \$100 \$27 \$11

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Cooperative Effort Seeds over 26,000 acres in Eastern Nevada

Ely, Nevada — Federal and state agencies, and a nonprofit conservation organization over the weekend finished aerially seeding 26,000-plus acres of eastern Nevada’s fire-scarred public lands.

Neil Frakes, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation program manager for the Bureau of Land Management’s Ely District, said the seedings will enhance natural recovery and curtail invasive weed spread. “Increasing desirable perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs decreases invasive annual grasses and other weed species’ ability to establish,” said Frakes.

The BLM, Nevada Department of Wildlife and Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition seeded nearly all of the acreage burned in four wildfires, the Becky Peak and Kinsley fires in White Pine County and Miller and Stewart Canyon fires in Lincoln County.

The Becky Peak Fire in 2022 burned 5,989 acres of the public lands, about 50 miles north of Ely. The same year, the Kinsley Fire charred 3,209 acres of BLM-managed lands, about 60 miles northeast of Ely. The Miller and Stewart Canyon fires, 30 miles northeast of Pioche and 14 miles east of Alamo, respec-



Submitted Photo

A barely visible mix of native and non-native seed fans out behind an Air Tractor 802. The aircraft is capable of carrying up to 800 gallons of seed.

tively, blackened a combined 17,232 acres in 2020.

The Miller and Stewart Canyon fires were seeded the following year, but field assessments determined additional treatment would support habitat restoration, said Lara Derasary, ENLC wildland fire rehabilitation specialist. “Given the highly variable annual and inter-annual climatic conditions within the region, we determined the sites could benefit from seedings over multiple years,” Derasary said.

Moira Kolada, NDOW wildlife habitat biologist, said seed mixes varied with only native species used inside wilderness and a combination of native and non-native species used outside. She said other factors determining the mixes included soil type, elevation, slope, annual precipitation, and pre-existing vegetation. “We also considered which wildlife species are the primary users and when use occurs, for example if we’re seeding mule deer winter range we’ll focus on shrubs and other species suitable for browsing,” said Kolada.

The seeded acreage will be monitored for five years.



Submitted Photo

Crop Jet Aviation, LLC, staff transfer seed from a semi-trailer for loading into the Air Tractor’s hopper. The company is headquartered in Gooding, Idaho.



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Seed mixes varied. Determining factors included wilderness vs non-wilderness, soil type, elevation, slope, annual precipitation, pre-existing vegetation, primary users (wildlife) and season of use

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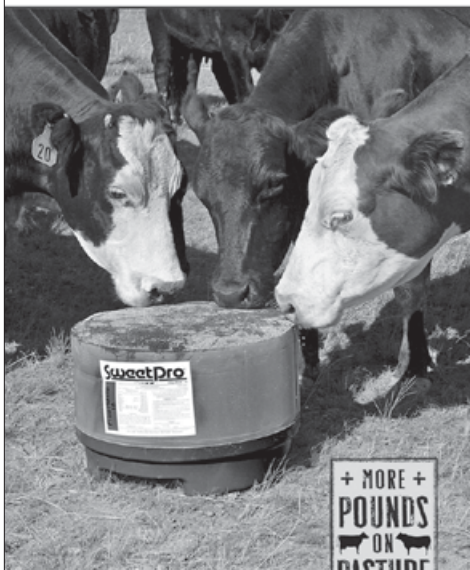
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BLM Announces Meeting of the Sierra Front-Northern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Carson City, Nevada — The Bureau of Land Management announced that the Sierra Front-Northern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) will host a public meeting on April 11, and a field tour on April 12, 2024. The 15-member BLM Sierra Front-Northern Great Basin RAC serves in an advisory capacity concerning issues relating to land use planning and the management of the public land resources located within the BLM's Winnemucca, Elko, and Carson City Districts. The meeting and the field tour are open to the public.

“Resource Advisory Council meetings are very important opportunities for us to hear public input,” said Carson City District Manager Kim Dow. “We look forward to a productive meeting about current issues on public lands in northern Nevada.”

The April 11 meeting will be held in-person at the Carson City BLM District Office, 5665 Morgan Mill Road, Carson City, Nevada 89701, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PDT. A virtual participation option will also be available. Agenda items include district updates, Sage Grouse effort, Sand Mountain Recreation Area, Mining Law, Tribal Consultation process, and Solar Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement. A half hour public comment period will be held near the end of the meeting. The amount of time for individual oral comments may be limited depending on the number of people wishing to comment. The meeting agenda and meeting access information for individuals that prefer to participate virtually will be posted two weeks in advance of the meet-

ing at <https://www.blm.gov/get-involved/resource-advisory-council/near-me/nevada>.

Individuals participating in the April field tour will meet at 8 a.m. PDT at the Carson City District Office (5665 Morgan Mill Road) and travel to Fallon Navy Base land located east of Fallon, NV for discussion concerning possible resource issues and mitigation with the expansion of Navy land. Then the group will travel to Sand Mountain Recreation Area to view improvements and have discussion of the area.

The field tour will conclude at approximately 1 p.m. PDT. Members of the public are welcome on field tours but must provide their own transportation and meals. Individuals who plan to attend or need special assistance, such as sign language interpretation and other reasonable accommodations, must RSVP to the Carson City Public Affairs Specialist Lisa Ross at (775) 885-6107 or lross@blm.gov at least two weeks prior to the meeting and field tour.

The RAC is critical in assisting the BLM in continuing to be a good neighbor in communities served by the Bureau, providing advice and recommendations on issues including land use planning, fire management, off-highway vehicle use, recreation, oil and gas exploration, noxious weed management, grazing issues, and wild horse and burro herd management issues.

For more information on the Sierra Front-Northern Great Basin RAC, please visit the RAC's webpage at <https://www.blm.gov/get-involved/resource-advisory-council/near-me/nevada>.

Meghan Brown named new NDA Division of Plant Health and Compliance Administrator

(SPARKS, Nev.) – The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) has named Meghan Brown as the new Division of Plant Health and Compliance Administrator. Administrator Brown will be leading the Division of Plant Health and Compliance after previously serving as Deputy Administrator for the past eight years.

“Administrator Brown is a natural fit for this position,” said NDA Director J.J. Goicoechea. “Her dedication to agriculture and the Department offers tremendous experience and knowledge. I look forward to working with her in this new

capacity.”

Administrator Brown is a graduate of Utah State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Rural Development. Prior to coming to the NDA, she was the Executive Director for the Nevada Cattlemen's Association and worked as a Rural Representative for U.S. Congressman Mark Amodei. Her personal goal is to leave a legacy that has created opportunities and enhanced the sustainable productivity of agricultural communities both within the Silver State and at the national level.



Meghan Brown

Submitted Photo



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— Graham Armstrong, Tutunup

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— Cam Scott, South Canterbury

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Strategic Grazing Could Boost Conservation of ‘Near-Threatened’ Sage-Grouse

University of Nevada, Reno researchers link strategic grazing to increased food supply for the species

RENO, Nev. – A multi-agency study, spearheaded by researchers from the University of Nevada, Reno’s College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, underscores the impacts of strategic cattle grazing, particularly on restoring the declining population of the greater sage-grouse bird, a keystone species in the Great Basin region.

Amidst ongoing decline, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acted by listing the sage-grouse for protection under the Endangered Species Act in 2011. This move prompted the Bureau of Land Management to develop a federal conservation plan for the species in 2015. Simultaneously, the World Wildlife Fund classified the sage-grouse as “near-threatened” in 2014, signifying its concern about the species’ potential future extinction.

According to the study, the intensity and timing of grazing throughout the year has a significant impact on the availability of certain insects and plants that serve as vital food sources for the species, particularly during their reproductive phase. The insects, including beetles, moths, ants, grasshoppers and butterflies, are a key source of food for the species’ hatchlings in their first three weeks of life, while the flowering plants, known as forbs, provide nutritional benefits, especially for nesting birds.

“While many studies have explored various methods to restore greater sage-grouse populations, including restricting petroleum drilling in their habitats, our research specifically focused on enhancing the food supply within mountain meadow systems, which are key habitat for wildlife,” said William Richardson, the study’s lead researcher and a postdoctoral scholar in the College’s Department of Agriculture, Veterinary & Rangeland Science. “Protecting these birds, however, requires a holistic approach that ultimately extends to fostering the growth of insects, which serve as crucial food sources, pollination agents and more.”

The sagebrush desert and shrubland are the predominant plant species in much of the Great Basin. However, a U.S. Geological Survey report indicates that nearly half of the region’s rangelands have been lost due to widespread habitat destruction, primarily from wildland fire. Native species such as the sage-grouse rely on this ecosystem for food and nesting and can survive nowhere else.

The study’s findings were first published in October 2021 in the *Journal of Remote Sensing* and later in December 2023 in the *Journal of Environmental Management*. The study, conducted between 2019 and 2021, assessed the impact of three grazing intensities on seven Great Basin meadows with varying vegeta-

tion cover in central Nevada. To monitor the proliferation of insects and plants on pastured meadows on a larger scale, the study employed the use of high-resolution digital cameras designed to capture time-lapse images of foliage over longer duration.

They are commonly referred to as phenocams. “These cameras allowed us to make real-time observations and collect data simultaneously over the study’s two-year period,” Richardson said. “They typically track plant lifecycles with high accuracy and offer a more practical way to make longitudinal observations in ecological research.”

At the end of the two-year observation period, data showed that an increase in grazing during the spring and summer had a significant impact on the vegetation communities in the meadow systems, with higher grazing intensities affecting the length of the growing season. This timing coincided with the breeding season of sage-grouse, during which the nesting birds depend on the flowering plants for food.

“This is an important finding as it emphasizes the sage-grouse’s high sensitivity to disturbance, especially when they are hatching and caring for their young ones,” Richardson said.

The study also found that grazing intensity was not ultimately detrimental to insect abundance, and even permitted some insects to thrive. Specifically, beetles were found in higher numbers when grazing occurred in both wet and relatively drier seasons, while the moths and butterflies showed an increase in population during the wetter seasons.

“Our results show that strategic grazing has the potential to have a positive impact on the biodiversity of meadow habitat, which not only benefits other species, but more so the sage-grouse, which is high up in the sagebrush food chain,” he said.

Other members of the research team include Professor Tamzen K. Stringham and Associate Professor Andrew Nuss from the College’s Department of Agriculture, Veterinary & Rangeland Sciences, Postdoctoral Scholar Brian Morra from the College’s Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Science and Keirith A. Snyder from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Great Basin Rangeland Research Unit. Stringham, Nuss and Morra also conduct research as part of the College’s Experiment Station. The team received funding and technical support from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management.



A male greater sage-grouse in courtship displays at a breeding spot in central Nevada. Photo by Kerry Hargrove

The shifting protection policies for the sage-grouse species

With sagebrush ecosystems as their only home, environmental experts have long considered the well-being of sage-grouse as a barometer for the overall health of the sagebrush ecosystems. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, a healthy sage-grouse population, restored through the restoration of its habitat, also supports 350 other sagebrush-dependent species, such as elk, deer, mule, pygmy rabbit and pronghorn, and nearly 200 migratory and resident bird species. Any decline in the species' population, therefore, acts as a natural alarm for an imbalanced sagebrush ecosystem.

"The entire sage-grouse habitat is in the Western United States, and much of that land is publicly owned and managed by the federal government for purposes of conservation and development of natural resources, grazing and recreation," said Brian Morra, a soil ecology postdoctoral scholar in the University's Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Science, and a member of the research team. "Given this extensive federal involvement, research findings from publicly funded scientists, such as those presented in this study, play a crucial role in informing and supporting the habitat's conservation policies."

Despite numerous scientific appeals for the preservation of sagebrush-dependent species such as the sage-grouse and repeated warnings of their declining population from conservationists, federal support that mainly focuses on sage-grouse populations rather than the ecosystem health at large is an inconsistency that Morra cites as potentially detrimental to the long-term health of sage-grouse and the sagebrush ecosystems.

"It's disheartening to witness the challenges we face in achieving long-term sus-


tainability for these ecosystems," said Morra, whose research focuses on grazing management and soil health. "Regulatory support that considers ecosystem-level effects is crucial for advancing efforts towards preservation and ensuring a healthy future for generations to come."

The bi-state sage-grouse, a variety of the greater sage-grouse that is exclusive to Nevada and California, has had its own share of conservation drama. It is undergoing its third assessment in a decade for potential protection under the Endangered Species Act. With a dwindling population of approximately 3,300 birds, only half of its count 150 years ago, the bi-state sage-grouse continues to confront the same challenges, notably pinyon-juniper encroachment and decreasing viable habitat.

"The plight of the bi-state sage-grouse demonstrates the urgent need for comprehensive conservation action for the species," said Morra. "Scientific findings like this one must be amplified, and regulations need to be aligned with such findings to strike a balance between the needs of ecosystems and those of humans who use them."

Funding for the project came from the Bureau of Land Management Carson City Nevada District; the Bureau of Land Management Nevada State Office; and the University of Nevada, Reno Great Basin Sagebrush Restoration Fund. Additional support was provided by the Bureau of Land Management through the Soil, Water and Riparian Monitoring and Research in Nevada, as well as the Nevada Forest and Rangeland Research Project: Desatoya Meadows sage-grouse habitat under the Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit. The Nevada Department of Wildlife provided fencing installation for the study, and the U.S. Geological Survey helped in collecting sage-grouse data.

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How Western Policy Impacts the Entire Cattle Industry

By Mark Eisele, NCBA President

As I begin my term as NCBA president, first and foremost I want to say thank you. It is an honor to advocate for the industry I have worked in my whole life, and I look forward to serving this association and protecting a bright future for the next generation.

I started my career as a hired hand on a ranch just north of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and over the years I bought into the ranch until I eventually became its sole owner. Today, my ranch is a family operation, and nothing brings me more joy than to work alongside my wife, children and grandchildren. When I was starting out in the cattle industry, all I wanted to do was raise cattle and raise a family in the rural community that shaped me, but I quickly found out this business is much more complicated. Getting involved with my county and state cattle associations was imperative. Before long, I faced the same environmental activist litigation and government red tape threatening many ranchers today, and I turned to NCBA for help. Seeing NCBA go to the ring to fight for an individual cow-calf producer like me showed me the value of banding together to defend our common interests as farmers and ranchers.

I graze my cattle on a mix of public and private lands, which is a common practice in much of the West but may sound very different to the rest of the country. In



Mark Eisele

NCBA Photo

my part of the world, many ranchers hold either a lease or a permit to graze on public lands owned by the federal government. The agencies — either the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service — charge us a grazing fee per Animal Unit Months (AUM) and set specific regulations for when we can graze, how many head we have on the land, and how long we can be there. Access to the forage on these federally owned grazing lands is crucial in the summertime, and it is one of the key components keeping the ranching industry alive in the West.

Ranching is inseparable from our U.S. history, and cattle have been grazing these landscapes since the earliest days of Western settlement. In 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act set up the grazing districts and permit system we still use today, and also enshrined in law the role of livestock grazing as a tool for managing and maintaining vast Western landscapes. Additional legislation in the 1970s further solidified this concept by requiring the federal government to balance multiple uses of public lands, such as grazing, timber, mining and recreation.

Why does any of this matter for the producers living in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Nebraska, or Texas? Public lands ranchers are often the first target of

— NCBA - Western Policy continues on next page —

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federal government regulation because we depend on access to public lands and, in many cases, cannot survive operating solely on our private property. We are also the first targets for environmental activists and their deep pockets for litigation. We are a testing ground to see if their strategies can succeed in harming folks on private lands as well. We are often the first to shoulder new government rules and regulations that make it harder to stay in business, with the government testing how far it can push its reach into your backyard. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a perfect example of a federal law that has been weaponized, both inside the administration and outside, to restrict cattle producers. ESA listings and the habitat designations can tie a producer's hands behind their back, barring them from grazing — or doing other management activities — on the land. They can also block producers from taking action to protect their cattle from predators like the gray wolf. In the last three years alone, the Biden administration not only failed to delist the fully recovered gray wolf, they've actually proposed adding more predators to the equation in some areas. Their proposal to airdrop grizzly bears into Washington state is one example of a choice made far away in Washington, D.C., where bureaucrats don't have to deal with an apex predator around their children and their cattle herd.

If you need proof of the administration's ability to squash the industry through the ESA, even on private lands, look no further than the designation of the northern long-eared bat. Even a species that is declining due entirely to natural causes can be weaponized to slow grazing, fence construction, and other human activities — whether they happen on public land or private. As NCBA president, this is one issue I am committed to working on so we can get back to our job of raising

cattle without worrying about more red tape from Washington, D.C.

No matter where you raise cattle or what policy issue is most urgent to you, I encourage you to make your voice heard. A great opportunity to get involved is coming this spring when NCBA hosts the annual Legislative Conference. This event will occur from April 17-19, 2024, in Washington, D.C., where you will have a chance to meet with policymakers face-to-face to discuss the issues impacting our way of life. I hope to see you there!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve, and thank you for putting your trust in NCBA.



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