

Mike Hudak's¹ Remarks²
At
Speak for Wolves: Yellowstone 2014
Arch Park, Gardiner, Montana USA
28 June 2014

Annotations completed 14 August 2014

Brett Haverstick, the primary organizer of this event, has stated five keys to reforming wildlife management in America. Among those keys is removal of livestock grazing from all federal public lands.

This action would certainly end conflicts between public lands ranchers and wolves. And it would end similar direct conflicts with coyotes, prairie dogs, wild horses, and many other species. But the scale of these direct conflicts pales in comparison to the vastly larger number of indirect conflicts with wildlife that would cease if public lands were cattle free.

More than 150 wildlife species federally listed as threatened or endangered, or which are candidates for such listing, or which have been proposed for such listing are harmed, at least in part, by ranching on public lands.

An additional 167 wildlife species are similarly harmed by such ranching, although not so severely that extinction is an imminent concern.

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1. Mike Hudak: BA (mathematics), MS/PhD (computer science); founder/director, Public Lands Without Livestock/Vibrant Public Lands (1999–2013); principal figure in effort to strengthen the Sierra Club's grazing policy (1998–2000); public speaker in support of grazing retirement legislation (2000–2012), author *Western Turf Wars: The Politics of Public Lands Ranching* and numerous articles about public lands ranching; chair, Sierra Club's National Grazing Committee (2008–2013); producer of forty-seven web-based videos about public lands ranching ([YouTube/Vimeo](#)); volunteer lobbyist for introduction and support of voluntary grazing retirement legislation (2007–2012). By mid-2013, the increasingly bleak national political landscape had convinced me that there was nothing more of significance I could contribute in the foreseeable future to advancing legislation that would protect public lands from ranching. As this activity had been central to my full-time activism, I resigned from the Sierra Club's Grazing Team and even closed my environmental nonprofit organization. When, in February 2014, Brett Haverstick asked me to speak at this event about the federal grazing program, I hesitated to accept. The topic belonged to my past, not my future, and I was eager to move on to activities that could more greatly benefit from my efforts. But after some thought, I chose to accept Brett's offer. Although I knew that my remarks about ending the federal grazing program would not gladden the hearts of my audience, nor would my advice likely be acted upon, nor would my reputation as a conservation activist likely be enhanced, I did feel a responsibility to provide my honest assessment for achieving that goal. And secondly, I accepted because it provided a welcome opportunity to more fully lay out the recent political factors that had led me to abandon my full-time advocacy on behalf of public lands, and to thereby, hopefully, dispel misperceptions that had arisen about the reasons underlying that decision.
 2. I was asked to speak at this event about the federal grazing program, perhaps with the expectation that I'd inform an audience largely consisting of wolf advocates about that program's widespread harms to wildlife other than wolves. But as ending that program is one of the event organizer's keys to reforming wildlife management, I thought it important to place the greater emphasis on history and politics rather than on ecology.

These 317 wildlife species³ are victims of degraded habitat. For example:

- as cattle-trampled streams widen they become shallow. Sun-exposed, shallow water rises to temperatures that are unhealthy for native fish.⁴
- Second example: cattle overgrazing weakens soil-stabilizing vegetation, thereby facilitating soil erosion. Soil washed into streams degrades water quality. Less-fertile soil that remains is less capable of supporting perennial vegetation on which wildlife depend for nesting, cover, and forage.⁵
- Third example: when cattle in upland forests consume fire-prone grasses, cool fires that remove small trees become less frequent, even nonexistent. Forests become more dense and their trees more prone to disease and death during drought. Fires, when they do occur, are of greater intensity.⁶

In addition to these indirect harms of grazing on the environment, there are also indirect harms inflicted by ranchers or by the government. Among these harms we find

- an estimated 300,000 miles of barbed-wire fencing⁷ that thwarts wildlife migrations and can impale birds,
- an estimated 240,000 miles of roads⁸ that facilitate the spread of weeds and facilitate human activities that degrade wildlife habitat such as off-road vehicle riding (noise/air pollution) and wood cutting (habitat removal), and
- wells that supply cattle with water, but that lower water tables, and thereby dewater streams and springs. Fish, amphibians and other aquatic inhabitants subsequently perish.

You can learn much more about these and additional threats to wildlife from books like Lynn Jacobs's *Waste of the West* or Wuerthner and Matteson's *Welfare Ranching*.⁹

3. George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson, eds., *Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002), 252–53.

4. A. J. Belsky, A. Matzke, and S. Uselman, "Survey of Livestock Influences on Stream and Riparian Ecosystems in the Western United States," *J. Soil and Water Conservation* 54, no. 1 (1999): 419–31.

5. A. Joy Belsky and Jonathan L. Gelbard, *Livestock Grazing and Weed Invasions in the Arid West* (Bend, OR: Oregon Natural Desert Association, April 2000).

6. A. Joy Belsky and Dana M. Blumenthal, "Effects of Livestock Grazing on Stand Dynamics and Soils in Upland Forests of the Interior West," *Conservation Biology* 11, no. 2 (April 1997): 315–27.

7. Lynn Jacobs, *Waste of the West: Public Lands Ranching* (Tucson: Lynn Jacobs, 1991), 203.

8. *Ibid.*, 221.

9. Much of the text (although few of the photographs) of *Welfare Ranching* can be viewed at <http://www.publiclandsranching.org/book.htm>.

But [BLM](#) and [U.S. Forest Service](#) grazing programs are not only environmentally destructive. They also drain about \$115 million annually from taxpayers.¹⁰ Indirect costs resulting from other government programs impacted by grazing bring the annual taxpayer subsidy to more than \$430 million.¹¹

Now, if you want to abolish the federal grazing program, you ought to understand what others having that objective have already tried. Don't become victims of philosopher [George Santayana's](#) prediction that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

And so in the remainder of my remarks, I'll highlight for you some important events in the history of opposition to federal grazing.

I'd trace public sentiment for ending the federal grazing program back to 1983 when Denzel and Nancy Ferguson published *Sacred Cows at the Public Trough*,¹² a book that examines public lands ranching's history, politics, and environmental harms. The book was also a call to action and it offered some reasons for hope.

For example, the Fergusons predicted that a growing number of vegetarians, a more environmentally-attuned land-agency work force, and taxpayers increasingly disgruntled over government subsidies would eventually diminish the ranching industry's political influence.¹³

Well, here we are more than thirty years later, with the number of vegetarians in the U.S. more than tripled to 15.6 million.¹⁴

10. Government Accountability Office, *Federal Expenditures and Receipts Vary, Depending on the Agency and the Purpose of the Fee Charged*, GAO-05-869 (Washington, 2005), 147, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05869.pdf>.

11. Karyn Moskowicz and Chuck Romaniello, *Assessing the Full Cost of the Federal Grazing Program* (Tucson: Center for Biological Diversity, 2002), http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/publications/papers/assessing_the_full_cost.pdf.

12. Denzel Ferguson and Nancy Ferguson, *Sacred Cows at the Public Trough* (Bend, OR: Maverick Publications, 1983).

13. *Ibid.*, 229–35.

14. [In 1980, the U.S. population was 226.5 million](#). Polling conducted by the U.S. Economic Research Service in 1980 estimated that 2 percent of the U.S. population identified as "vegetarian" (Donna Mauer, *Vegetarianism: Movement or Moment: Promoting a Lifestyle for Cult Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 17. Combining the 1980 population value with the percentage estimate of vegetarians yields approximately 4.53 million vegetarians in 1980. A 2012 [Gallup Poll](#) estimated that 5 percent of the U.S. population (of [312.8 million](#)) identified as vegetarian. Taken together these figures provide an estimate of U.S. vegetarians in 2012 of 15.6 million, almost three-and-a-half times the number in 1980. Yet the Gallup Poll also found that the percentage of U.S. vegetarians had remained essentially constant at that 5 percent figure since 1999. One might argue that focusing on the number of U.S. vegetarians is missing the point (I only did so because the Fergusons had raised the issue.) And that the more relevant statistic is the amount of beef consumed in the U.S. in 2012 compared to 1980. [While per capita consumption has declined over that period, the total weight of beef consumed has slightly increased: from 10.9 million pounds \(1980\) to 11.7 million pounds \(2012\)](#). Thus lessened beef demand due to vegetarian recruitment during that period has been more than offset by increased demand resulting from growth of the non-vegetarian population.

Yet the current price of beef is at record highs.^{15, 16}

And ranchers' political clout appears undiminished.

When the Fergusons wrote their book in the early years of the [Reagan administration](#), [James Watt](#) was the pro-ranching, pro-logging, pro-mining Interior secretary. The [Sagebrush Rebels](#) and members of the subsequent [Wise-Use Movement](#) clamored for returning control of federal lands to the states as do some Westerners today.¹⁷

And the 1980s weren't the first time that politicians partial to extractive industries had tried to privatize federal lands. An attempt in the 1940s might have succeeded but for the investigative reporting of *Harper's* columnist Bernard DeVoto.¹⁸

But through the Reagan and Bush administrations of the 1980s and early 1990s, the politics were so much against public land conservation that activists could hardly do more than write articles and organize for the day when Washington's political climate would become more favorable. Even the only major grazing-related litigation of the period: *Natural Resources Defense Council v. Hodel* turned out badly for the plaintiff and for the environment.¹⁹

With the election of Democrat [Bill Clinton](#) in 1992, conservationists hoped that finally ranching on public lands would be significantly curtailed if not abolished. So great was the anticipation that the bumper sticker slogan of the day was "Cattle Free in '93."

Ranchers, knowing from experience that politics was on their side regardless of party affiliation, countered with the slogan: "Cattle galore in '94."

The Clinton administration did have a promising start. After intense lobbying by environmental organizations, former Arizona governor and former League of Conservation Voters president [Bruce Babbitt](#) was appointed Interior secretary.

[Jim Baca](#), New Mexico's former land commissioner noted for raising grazing fees on state lands, was subsequently appointed BLM Director under Babbitt.

Throughout 1993, Babbitt and Baca developed a three-part reform proposal called Rangeland Reform '94, which legal scholar Scott Nicoll has called a "common-sense

15. "The consumer price index (CPI) for U.S. beef and veal is up almost 10 percent so far in 2014 [as of 23 May], reflecting the fastest increase in retail beef prices since the end of 2003. Prices, even after adjusting for inflation, are at record highs."

16. Yet today some animal advocates still recommend meat abstinence as a primary way to diminish public lands ranching. See, for example, Priscilla Feral, "Reclaiming Western Lands From Cattle Barons," *Action Line* (Darien, CT: Friends of Animals) (Summer 2010): 3–4. While there are many good reasons to abstain from the consumption of meat, I find no evidence that vegetarian/vegan advocacy has in thirty years done anything to diminish the geographical presence or political influence of public lands ranchers. And for reasons stemming from global free-trade agreements (discussed later in this presentation), I think it unlikely that calls for meat abstinence in the U.S. will negatively impact public lands ranchers in the foreseeable future.

17. See, for example, Kristen Moulton, "Western Lawmakers Gather in Utah to Talk Federal Land Takeover," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 April 2014, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/politics/57836973-90/utah-federal-lands-states.html.csp>.

18. Bernard DeVoto, "The West Against Itself," *Harper's Magazine* (January 1947): 1–13, <http://home.comcast.net/~mdevoto/AGAINST.htm>.

19. *Environmental Law Reporter*, 16 ELR 20508, <https://elr.info/sites/default/files/litigation/16.20508.htm>.

approach to addressing the dismal state of federal rangelands.”²⁰

The proposal’s first part consisted of several amendments to regulations and policies that govern grazing on federal land.

The second part would have added national standards and guidelines establishing minimum acceptable ecological conditions for federal rangeland.

And the third reform was to bring the federal grazing fee closer to that charged on private lands.

This was not a radical proposal. And even if fully enacted would have disappointed the people who called for cattle-free public lands.

Rangeland Reform ’94 was offered as an amendment to the 1994 appropriations bill. But although Democrats held a majority in the Senate, Western senators filibustered and prevented the Senate from considering the proposals attached to the bill.

Babbitt then vowed to pursue the reform program through regulatory changes, but first he fired Jim Baca. Aides to Babbitt stated that Baca was ousted because his “outspokenness on reform issues was alienating powerful Western politicians so much that it would be easier to push reforms through if [he] were gone.”²¹

I’d say it’s as likely, if not more so, that Western politicians told Clinton that if he wanted support for other administration initiatives that Baca had to go.²²

In any case, environmentalists were outraged.

Jay Hair, then president of the National Wildlife Federation, stated bluntly, “It doesn’t matter if James Watt or Bruce Babbitt is secretary.”²³

Through the first half of 1994, public hearings were held across the West to present Babbitt’s revised version of the program. Final grazing-administration rules released in February 1995 were subjected to court and legislative challenges from ranchers. Then administrative rollbacks during the subsequent Bush administration sparked a successful court challenge by conservationists.²⁴

Now, more than nineteen years after its rollout, what *is* the legacy of Rangeland Reform ’94?

For Western lands managed by BLM or U.S. Forest Service, the grazing fee in 2014 is 31 percent lower than in 1994.²⁵ In inflation-adjusted dollars it’s more like 58 percent lower.

20. Scott Nicoll, “The Death of Rangeland Reform,” *Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation* 21, no. 47 (2007): 63, <https://law.uoregon.edu/org/jell/docs/211/OEL102.pdf>.

21. Tony Davis, “BLM Chief Jim Baca Leaves Amidst Cheers and Boos,” *High Country News* (21 February 1994), <http://www.hcn.org/issues/4/100>.

22. *Ibid.*: Jim Baca is quoted as stating “I have been offered up to Western senators and governors and the extractive industries as appeasement. I came here adept at politics, but I wasn’t expecting politics as usual. I thought this was a different kind of administration.”

23. *Ibid.*

24. Environment News Service, “U.S. Supreme Court Ends Bush-Era Grazing Regulations,” 3 October 2011, <http://ens-newswire.com/2011/10/03/u-s-supreme-court-ends-bush-era-grazing-regulations/>.

25. Animal Unit Month (AUM): the amount of forage consumed by a cow and her calf in one month. In 2014 the grazing fee was \$1.35 per AUM. In 1994 it was \$1.98 per AUM.

What about the standards and guidelines proposed by the Clinton administration at the start of the Rangeland Reform process?

They emerged in 1995 named “Fundamentals of Rangeland Health.” And instead of requiring the terms and conditions of all grazing permits to guarantee ecological health, the final rule required *only* that the “authorized officer shall take appropriate action” when ecological conditions are not being met. In reality, enforcement of “appropriate action” has been nearly nonexistent.

The remainder of Rangeland Reform ’94 consisted of provisions that strengthened, streamlined, or simplified the BLM’s administration of grazing permits and allotments, but didn’t necessarily improve rangeland health.

We might wonder what happened to the participants of that early 1990s grassroots movement that advocated for public lands to be “cattle free in ’93?”²⁶

No one really knows. Perhaps today they financially support regional environmental organizations that confront government land management in the courts.²⁷ But there’s been no evidence of their existence from political organizing at the level of congressional district. And there’s similarly been few public demonstrations²⁸ to raise public awareness of the sort that animal advocates carry out against factory farms or food providers such as [McDonald’s](#)²⁹ or more recently, [Chipotle](#).³⁰

In addition to Rangeland Reform ’94, the Clinton administration undertook (or approved) other broad initiatives that impact federal grazing to the present day.

One such initiative is the voluntary retirement of individual grazing allotments with permittees compensated primarily with private funds. Examples include allotments in California’s [Mojave National Preserve](#) and Utah’s [Great Basin National Park](#).

26. One indicator of this movement’s collapse is the vastly diminished number of copies of my book [Western Turf Wars](#) sold during 2007–2014 relative to the number of copies of *Waste of the West* sold during 1991–1995. In personal communication, *Waste of the West* author Lynn Jacobs estimated that approximately 4,000 copies of his book were sold during that period. And those sales were achieved despite the non-existence and subsequent nonuse of the World Wide Web, lack of promotion by Western regional environmental organizations, lack of promotion by the [Sierra Club](#) (nor by any other, large national environmental organization), lack of radio interviews by Jacobs, and nonuse of the Internet. Consider that during an even longer sales period beginning in 2007 that fewer than 200 copies of *Western Turf Wars* were sold despite the utilization of all those resources unavailable to or unused by Jacobs. Each book was self published by its respective author.

27. [Western Watersheds Project](#) is perhaps the best current example of this sort of organization. But others include the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), [WildEarth Guardians](#), and [Oregon Natural Desert Association](#).

28. One of the few such public demonstrations was carried out by [Patrick Diehl](#) and associates at the visitor center of the [Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#) in southern Utah in 2000 as described in my book *Western Turf Wars*, 218–20.

29. The first nation-wide action in the U.S. against [McDonald’s](#) was the “[Adopt-A-McDonald’s Campaign](#)” organized by Beyond Beef in 1993. I was the regional coordinator for actions centered in Binghamton, NY.

30. Since October 2013, [Chipotle Mexican Grill](#) restaurants have been targeted by the organization [Direct Action Everywhere](#) to challenge the claim of “humanely produced meat.” View [additional images](#) of a typical protest.

But the administration's other initiative comprised actions that were downright weird and ultimately detrimental to the health of grazed Western landscapes. These actions involved the establishment of several national monuments, which unlike national parks don't require congressional action. They're established by the president under authority of the [Antiquities Act of 1906](#).

Consider now the history of national monument designation prior to the Clinton administration. Of seventy-two national monuments, all but four had been placed under the control of the National Park Service (NPS), an agency whose management ethic is more strongly focused on conservation than is the "sustainable multiple use" management of the BLM and Forest Service. Of the four non-NPS-managed monuments, two are in Alaska where there's no livestock grazing anyway, and although the remaining two Forest Service-managed monuments are in Oregon and Washington state, there's no livestock grazing there either.

Then came the Clinton administration.³¹ Of sixteen monuments it established that are located in the West, fifteen retained management by an agency other than the National Park Service, typically BLM or Forest Service. On thirteen of those monuments, livestock grazing was allowed to continue, and on eleven of them, continues to this day.³²

And it has not gone well for the environment within those eleven Clinton-era national monuments that still allow livestock grazing. While lawsuits have been brought against the government by conservation organizations over the management of these monuments, court ordered management improvements have been few and slow in coming. The process has been especially slowed by delays in producing grazing management plans by government personnel. Case in point: even eighteen years after the designation of [Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument](#), the government has failed to update the grazing management plan that was in effect when the monument was established.

And then there's California's [Carrizo Plain National Monument](#), the story of which I will recount for the insight it provides about BLM's systemic pro-ranching bias.

Established in the last days of the Clinton administration from the Carrizo Plain Natural Area, the quarter-million-acre region had long experienced environmentally damaging cattle grazing. What's more, the new monument inherited a complex management history involving the [Nature Conservancy](#) and the California Department of Fish and Game.³³ But even before the monument's designation, BLM, as the federal government's

31. The presidential administration of Bill Clinton spanned the period from 20 January 1993 to 20 January 2001.

32. The eleven Clinton-designated Western national monuments on which livestock grazing currently continues are (alphabetically) [Agua Fria](#) (AZ), [Canyons of the Ancients](#) (CO), [Carrizo Plain](#) (CA), [Giant Sequoia](#) (CA), [Grand Canyon-Parashant](#) (AZ), [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) (UT), [Ironwood Forest](#) (AZ), [Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains](#) (CA), [Sonoran Desert](#) (AZ), [Upper Missouri River Breaks](#) (MT), and [Vermilion Cliffs](#) (AZ). As for the two remaining monuments: the small amount of livestock grazing that occurred on the region designated as [Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument](#) (NM) was retired in the proclamation. And when grazing in [Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument](#) (OR) was found to be harming protected plant species, a buyout of the grazing permits and closure of the allotments was brokered in 2007.

33. Subsequently renamed [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#).

management agent in agreement with the Nature Conservancy, was *supposed* to give native species precedence over cattle.

In 2001, Marlene Braun, a ten-year BLM employee who'd held assignments in Nevada and Alaska, became the monument's manager. Of Braun's efforts in that capacity, a Sierra Club newsletter remarked that she'd "fought long and hard to ensure that the monument's resource management plan ... would not be rooted in BLM's traditional paradigm of managing public lands, first and foremost, for economic return rather than for conservation."³⁴

According to the *Los Angeles Times*,³⁵ Braun did not advocate banning cattle from the monument. But she did believe that more regulation was necessary. Her preference was to survey the condition of the grass each spring before deciding how many cows could forage.

The rancher permittees on the monument didn't like this kind of management.

When Ron Huntsinger became the BLM's Bakersfield manager, and Braun's boss, he didn't like it either. He made it clear to Braun that ranchers should be allowed to graze under all but the most exceptional circumstances.

Over fourteen months, Marlene Braun chronicled in her journal the day by day bullying she experienced from Huntsinger. Early in his tenure, Huntsinger stripped Braun of almost all her influence on the monument, handing over authority for the crucial resource management plan to two others she described as "more pro-grazing." Braun's journal entries include allegations of

- Huntsinger screaming at her in his office.
- Huntsinger unexpectedly giving her a five-day unpaid suspension for failure to copy him on an email she sent to management partners stating that Huntsinger had been incorrect on several technical issues related to federal grazing law—the first black mark she'd had in a thirteen-year career of government service.
- And of Huntsinger blocking her with his truck on a narrow road in the middle of nowhere, where she alleged he physically threatened her.³⁶

Finally, on May 2nd 2005, Marlene Braun could take it no longer. She put a .38 caliber revolver to her head and ended her life.

34. "Let That Be Her Monument," *Santa Lucian* 42, no. 6 (June/July 2005), 1, http://santalucia.sierraclub.org/lucian/santalucian_june05.pdf.

35. Julie Cart and Maria L. La Ganga, "A Conservationist's Suicide," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 August 2005, <http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/impact/braun/latimes/>.

36. Connecticut Assembly's Labor and Public Employees Committee, The Healthy Workplace Bill: Marlene's Law?, testimony by Katherine Hermes, 26 February 2008, <http://carrisa.wordpress.com/2009/01/05/the-healthy-workplace-bill-marlenes-law/>.

Huntsinger was subsequently promoted to the position of BLM's National Science Coordinator in Washington, DC.³⁷ And the Department of Interior Office of Inspector General exonerated Huntsinger for any role in Braun's death.³⁸

Today, more than nine years after the suicide of Marlene Braun, what has become of grazing management at Carrizo Plain?

I'm told by a knowledgeable acquaintance that because a federally-listed threatened moth³⁹ has been found living on part of the monument that one of the allotments is grazed less heavily. But that across the monument, the grazing has potentially become even more environmentally destructive.

So much for the legacy of the Clinton administration on grazing.

But a couple other tactics dating from the Clinton era *have*, or *could*, reduce grazing on public lands.

One approach, effectively carried on by organizations like [Western Watersheds Project](#), is to litigate over the failure of federally prepared management plans to comply with environmental protection laws.

The second tactic is to pursue legislation that would facilitate the voluntary retirement of grazing permits and the permanent closure of the associated grazing allotments. One thread of this effort stems from my work as a Sierra Club volunteer beginning in 1998. At that time, the Club's policy on public lands ranching could have been written by the ranching industry.⁴⁰

Yet only a couple years earlier, Club members had successfully concluded a four-year campaign that saw the Club opposing commercial logging on federal lands. It seemed to me that the Club should have a similarly strong grazing policy.

And so, in September 1998, I gave a presentation about ranching at the Club's national board meeting in San Francisco. That led to the board establishing a task force to consider a policy revision.

Independently of that task force, I lobbied Club members on the environmental benefits of ranching-free public lands. This being before the advent of social media and online petitions, I resorted to face-to-face meetings, phone conversations, newsletter articles, and email. Central to my activities were the giving of forty-five live presentations at Club groups, chapters, and committees across twenty states.⁴¹

I launched a petition drive to qualify an initiative opposing federal ranching for the Club's board of directors election. Then through direct mail solicitation and participation in Club-sponsored hikes across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and downstate New York, I

37. For more information about Ron Huntsinger's promotion, see Workplace Bullying Institute, "Ron Huntsinger: Anti-Science Bully for Bush Gov't 'Science' Directorate," <http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/impact/braun/huntsinger2/>.

38. View the [Office of Inspector General's report \(redacted\) of 19 April 2006](#).

39. The species in question is the [Kern Primrose Sphinx Moth \(*Euproserpinus euterpe*\)](#).

40. See my [critique of the Sierra Club's 1992 grazing policy](#).

41. I actually began these presentations in February 1998, seven months prior to my presentation at the Sierra Club's national board meeting in San Francisco. View the [full list](#) of presentations extending to April 2000.

obtained roughly half the 1,300 signatures needed to qualify the petition. Todd Shuman⁴² got another 300. Dozens of people collected the rest.

Arriving at the Club's San Francisco September 2000 board meeting with resolutions opposing public lands ranching from Club leaders representing 37 percent of the membership, *and* the threat of a ballot initiative with the same intent looming over the next year's board election, we concluded a [negotiated settlement](#) that I deemed sufficient to bring the Club into support of the only sort of federal grazing legislation I envisioned could be introduced and enacted—some form of permit retirement with taxpayer-funded compensation. Not a new concept. President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 had proposed taxpayer-funded compensation in return for emancipating slaves.⁴³ And since the 1980s there have been numerous federally-funded buyouts for commodities such as [peanuts, tobacco, dairy products](#), and [commercial fishing licenses](#).

Grazing buyout legislation materialized in October 2003 through the efforts of the Foundation for Deep Ecology-backed [National Public Lands Grazing Campaign](#) (known by its acronym NPLGC).

Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by moderate Connecticut Republican [Christopher Shays](#) and Arizona Democrat [Raul Grijalva](#), the [Voluntary Grazing Permit Buyout Act](#) would have facilitated the voluntary retirement of federal grazing permits, permanently closed the associated allotments, and provided taxpayer funding to generously compensate permittees who voluntarily relinquished their permits and allotments.

Largely due to the changes we'd secured in the [Sierra Club's grazing policy](#) three years earlier, the Club became the *only* large, national, environmental organization to support this legislation.⁴⁴

But environmental support wasn't the primary objective of NPLGC.⁴⁵ Instead they strongly sought the support of ranchers and ultimately the support of politicians beholden to the ranching industry. One lesson learned from these efforts is that a major rift exists between large⁴⁶ and small ranchers in their support of such legislation, with many small

42. Prior to gathering signatures on the Sierra Club petition, Todd Shuman was involved with [efforts to remove ranching from part of California's Golden Trout Wilderness](#).

43. Although President Lincoln proposed [compensated emancipation during his presidency](#), his support for the concept can be [traced](#) to the 1840s.

44. View the [full list of organizations that endorsed the concept of voluntary grazing permit buyout](#). My claim that the Sierra Club was the "only" large, national, environmental organization might be challenged on the grounds of support by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). But in contrast to the Sierra Club (organized as a California-based corporation), which acts on a large variety of issues throughout the United States, the WWF is an international organization that focuses on only a few geographically-limited issues in the U.S.

45. Numerous non-ranching organizations did endorse NPLGC's proposal though. And I devoted considerable effort to the task. Between 2001 and 2004 I gave presentations at a variety of environmental, vegetarian, and animal advocacy organizations with the intent of obtaining their endorsement of providing federal compensation to ranchers who voluntarily relinquished their federal grazing permits on condition of permanently closing the associated grazing allotments. Thirty-nine such organizations, including the Humane Society of the United States and EarthSave International, endorsed the proposal based on my efforts. View the [full list](#) of organizations at which I presented during this period.

46. Large rancher: by my definition a ranch owner with at least 500 head of livestock.

ranchers supporting it, and large ranchers generally opposing.

Why is that?

Small ranchers, having been squeezed by economies of scale since the 1960s, find it increasingly difficult to sell their ranches to someone like themselves. Fifty years ago, a small rancher could live solely off his ranching, but now a livable income requires at least a few part-time jobs.

So today, buyers of small ranches are typically either a “hobby rancher”⁴⁷ who already has a lucrative non-ranching income, or a large rancher who wants to become larger.

In contrast to small ranchers, many large ranchers are financially well-off. And they know their financial well being would improve if their ranching operations became larger. One way to become larger would be to buy, preferably at low cost, small ranches that have federal grazing permits. Large ranchers don’t want to compete against a government program to buy out those permits.

And it’s the large ranchers, rather than the small ones, who control the cattleman’s associations which influence the policies of Western politicians.

By mid-2006, NPLGC had made little headway building rancher support for their legislation.⁴⁸ When their foundation backers pulled out, NPLGC collapsed.⁴⁹ Congressman [Shays](#) had already been bullied off the bill by then Resources Committee Chair, Congressman [Richard Pombo](#),⁵⁰ a California Republican rancher.⁵¹ And by 2007, even Congressman Grijalva had walked away from the legislation to work instead on designating a wilderness area in his own district.⁵²

But despite the absence of a funded campaign, I saw value in getting grazing retirement legislation back into the Congress. First of all, it would provide a concrete goal for the conservation community, and would provide the basis for popularizing the concept of permit buyout to the public.

Over the next two years I worked sometimes alone, sometimes with other people, such as retired Sierra Club and Audubon Society lobbyist [Brock Evans](#), to secure a new House sponsor for the legislation. In late 2009 we found such a person in Congressman [Jim Moran](#), a Democrat representing a district in northern Virginia. Although Moran was initially willing to take the bill through normal legislative channels, when he became chair of

47. Hobby rancher: by my definition a ranch owner whose lifestyle is not dependent on income derived from ranching.

48. Voluntary grazing permit buyout legislation was introduced in the 109th Congress as the [Multiple-Use Conflict Resolution Act \(H.R. 3166\)](#) by Congressman [Raul Grijalva](#). By mid-2006 the legislation had garnered only eleven cosponsors, all of them Democrats in a Republican-controlled Congress.

49. Despite the demise of NPLGC its [website remains online](#).

50. Congressman [Richard Pombo](#) (CA-11) chaired the House Natural Resources Committee on which Congressman Shays served. I’ve heard that Pombo told Shays that if he didn’t disassociate himself from the voluntary grazing retirement legislation that he could forget about future funding of any Resource Committee projects in his district.

51. Congressman [Pombo](#) was defeated for re-election in 2008, in part through the efforts of environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club and Defenders of Wildlife.

52. Congressman [Grijalva](#) introduced the [Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act \(H.R. 3287\)](#) on 1 August 2007.

the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee in early 2010,⁵³ he proposed attaching a version of the buyout legislation to the next year's Interior appropriations bill.

Everything seemed to be going well with Moran's plan until late July when everything went wrong. I learned of the disaster not from Moran's office but from a press release issued by Idaho Republican Congressman [Mike Simpson](#), ranking member of Moran's subcommittee. Simpson's statement⁵⁴ reads in part

Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson yesterday successfully defended grazing on public lands in the West during the subcommittee markup on the Interior and Environment Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2011. Simpson ... offered an amendment to strike language from the bill that would have created a voluntary grazing buyout. Simpson's amendment was accepted by a vote of 13-1.

"In the West, we know that if you don't graze on public lands, you don't graze at all," Simpson said. "Creating a federal buyout program is a dangerous step toward ending grazing on public lands, which would have a devastating impact on local economies throughout the West and would have unintended consequences on the environment."

But Moran's subcommittee was controlled by Democrats. Why did all but one of those Democrats (presumably) vote for Simpson's amendment?⁵⁵

It took me a few months to discover what had happened. Here's what I learned.

Congressman Moran's office, as a matter of protocol, informed BLM that the buyout amendment would be added to the appropriations bill.

Subsequently, BLM informed Interior Secretary [Ken Salazar](#)⁵⁶ (a Colorado rancher) of this development.

Salazar then notified the Democratic chair of the House Agriculture Committee.

Agriculture Committee Democrats responded by telling Moran's office that if the appropriations bill came to the House floor with the buyout amendment, they would vote against the entire bill.

Fearing that opposition from Democrats combined with Republican opposition would sink the appropriations bill, subcommittee Democrats welcomed Simpson's motion to remove the buyout amendment, thus letting Simpson be the livestock industry's hero, while themselves saying nothing.

After the subsequent 2010 congressional elections, with control of the U.S. House

53. On 9 March 2010, Moran was named to succeed [Norm Dicks](#) as chairman of the House Interior and Environment Subcommittee.

54. View Congressman Mike Simpson's complete press release of 22 July 2010 titled "[Simpson Protects Grazing on Public Land](#)."

55. I was told that the vote on Simpson's amendment was by voice vote, hence no record of how individual members voted. In any event, I think it more likely that the dissenting vote came from a Democrat rather than a Republican.

56. Ken Salazar was the subject of at least two recall petitions by conservationists, both of which I signed.

shifted to Republicans, Jim Moran lost his subcommittee chairmanship.⁵⁷ Having had his nose bloodied by fellow Democrats, Moran lost interest in sponsoring voluntary buyout legislation, putting us back to square one in our search for a bill sponsor.

In my then capacity as chair of the Sierra Club's National Grazing Team, I obtained from the Club sufficient funding to bring fourteen volunteers to Washington, DC, in June 2011 in search of a new bill sponsor.

From ninety-one House offices visited, only one member of Congress offered to introduce the legislation. After four additional months of working with this member's office, on November 15th 2011, the legislation known as the Rural Economic Vitalization Act⁵⁸ was introduced by Washington state Congressman [Adam Smith](#).

Throughout 2012, we worked to increase the number of the bill's cosponsors. But then came the 2012 congressional elections.

Although I'd have been surprised had Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives, I was even more surprised by the margin of seats won by Republicans, particularly in light of victory margins for Senate candidates and President Obama.

Consider that although House Democrats received a nation-wide plurality of more than 1.4 million votes, the Republican Party won a 33-seat advantage in the apportioned totals. Additionally, consider this Republican House seat advantage against President Obama's 3.4 million vote winning margin. Based on these statistics and the large size of many House Republican victory margins, I concluded that it's highly unlikely that Democrats will regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives prior to the next congressional redistricting in 2022.⁵⁹

In light of this bleak political situation and forecast, and the lack of progress from public lands advocacy over the last thirty years, here's what I suggest for those of you who would still like to end the federal grazing program.

Support Congressman Smith's bill, the Rural Economic Vitalization Act (H.R. 2201, 113th Congress),⁶⁰ for the same reasons I began working in 2007 to get such legislation introduced. It's something concrete to which you can point as a way to protect federal lands and reduce federal subsidies. There are plenty of environmental and economic studies you can quote to counter the false claims of people like [Congressman Simpson](#).⁶¹ The more we

57. Congressman Moran subsequently remained on the subcommittee as ranking member.

58. The initial introduction of the Rural Economic Vitalization Act (REVA—pronounced “REE’va”) occurred as [H.R. 3432, 112th Congress](#).

59. Of course, Democrats may not regain control even after the redistricting in 2022. Doing so will depend upon several factors, including the political party demographics of the 2020 census and the number of state legislatures in which Democrats are in the majority. Typically, the controlling party biases the redistricting to favor election of its candidates.

60. By “support this legislation” I mean through actions such as writing letters to the editor of newspapers, lobbying members of Congress, liking (and otherwise promoting) the [Facebook page that I established for the legislation](#), and phoning Congressman Smith's DC office to thank him for sponsoring the bill: (202) 225-8901. Additional public demonstrations in support of this legislation I leave to the imagination of fellow activists.

61. I specifically refer to countering Congressman Simpson's claims in his press release of 22 July 2010 (“[Simpson Protects Grazing on Public Land](#)”). To rebut his claim that removing ranching from public

talk about the bill the better chance we have to inform and move public opinion in favor of reducing ranching on public lands.

Oppose free-trade agreements that will facilitate the sale of American beef in international markets.⁶² Public lands beef is already sold in Asia.⁶³ The proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership may further facilitate beef sales to Pacific-Rim countries.⁶⁴ China, with the exception of Hong Kong, is currently closed to the sale of U.S. beef, but if it ever becomes open, public lands ranchers could easily thrive even if every U.S. citizen became a vegetarian.⁶⁵

Also, you should be open to working with individual ranchers who want to retire their grazing permits. Such a process is cumbersome, time consuming, and requires the support of the rancher's congressional representative and perhaps, U.S. senators. Do-it-yourself

lands would have “a devastating impact on local economies,” I would cite the economic analysis in Thomas M. Power, “[Taking Stock of Public Lands Grazing: An Economic Analysis](#),” in *Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West*, eds. George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson (Washington: Island Press, 2002), 263–69. Additionally, any claim that Western public lands would be ecologically harmed by the removal of ranching is laughable considering the massive evidence to the contrary found in such books as Denzel and Nancy Ferguson's *Sacred Cows at the Public Trough*, Debra Donahue's *The Western Range Revisited*, Lynn Jacobs's *Waste of the West*, and George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson's *Welfare Ranching*. And for a concise overview of the negative impacts of ranching on Western landscapes, one need look no further than [Thomas L. Fleischner, “The Ecological Costs of Livestock Grazing in Western North America,” *Conservation Biology* 8 \(1994\): 629–44.](#)

62. The [North American Free Trade Agreement \(NAFTA\)](#) of 1994 increased exports of American beef to Mexico. The [Free Trade Agreement with Central America and the Dominican Republic \(CAFTA-DR\)](#) of 2005 “immediately eliminate[d] tariffs on imports of U.S. prime and choice cuts of beef—something that the U.S. beef industry has wanted for some time. Where U.S. beef is concerned, the six CAFTA countries [prior to CAFTA] enjoy[ed] duty-free access to the U.S. market, but U.S. beef exporters ... face[d] prohibitive tariffs as high as 40 percent. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association says those prohibitive tariffs ... limit[ed] beef exports to these countries.” The [United States–Colombian Free Trade Agreement](#) (implemented in 2012) “immediately eliminate[d] duties on ... high-quality beef.” The [Panama Free Trade Agreement](#) (implemented in 2012) was projected by the U.S. Meat Export Federation to “help boost beef exports to Panama to about \$8.5 million in 2013, which is a sizeable increase. Exports to Panama totaled \$5.2 million in 2011.”
63. Public lands ranchers were participating in direct-marketing co-operative agreements with Japanese companies as early as 1992. For details, see Ed Marston, “Ranching's Charismatic Reformers,” *High Country News* (23 March 1992), 8–11. “[Exports of beef were up 21% last year \[2011\], mostly bound for Asian consumers; 10% of U.S. beef is now consumed elsewhere.](#)”
64. The [Trans-Pacific Partnership \(TPP\)](#) is a proposed free-trade agreement among twelve countries throughout the Asia–Pacific region. View a [summary](#) of current U.S. beef sales in Asia and the TPP's potential for increasing them.
65. In 2013, [China](#) was the world's fastest-growing beef market and the fifth-largest importer of beef by volume. In the face of current and pending free-trade agreements, suggestion that public lands ranchers can within the foreseeable future be driven to economic ruin by American's boycotting of beef is at best, naïve. As further justification for this claim, consider that public-lands-produced beef has the capability, beyond that of non-Western-produced U.S. beef, of being marketed on the back of the “Western mystique” created by the entertainment industry since the late 19th century. Coupling that reality with the fact that public-lands-produced beef comprises such a small percentage (about 2 percent by weight) of U.S. production (George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson, eds., *Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002), 5.) leads me to conclude that continued expansion of international markets could keep public lands ranchers in business despite the absence of domestic demand.

retirement documents, co-written by Sierra Club Grazing Team member Mark Salvo and myself might prove useful. Access them on the web with a browser search on the phrase “How to waive a grazing permit for cash.”⁶⁶

But enacting legislation that would reduce public lands ranching, either by raising the grazing fee, or by ending permit renewal riders, or through broad-based voluntary retirement legislation such as REVA, I believe will, at the least, require that two conditions be met.

First, that Democrats regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives.⁶⁷

BUT as we saw in 2010, House control by Democrats did not prevent Western Democrats from bullying members of Congressman Moran’s subcommittee into removing the voluntary retirement amendment from the Interior appropriations bill.

AND in 2011, Senate control by Democrats did not prevent Senator [Jon Tester](#) from adding his budget bill amendment that delisted wolves in the Northern Rockies.⁶⁸

All other political considerations aside, Tester not having faced a pro-wolf candidate in the 2012 election, in response to his amendment, reinforced in him and in the Democratic party the message that they can sell out our interests with impunity.⁶⁹

And so, my second criteria for meaningful legislative progress IS that a sufficient number

66. View Salvo and Hudak’s grazing permit retirement [documents](#).

67. I doubt there’s currently even one Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives who would cosponsor (or vote for) the Rural Economic Vitalization Act or anything like it. Given the current ideological trend of the Republican Party I do not foresee the time when that situation will change for the better. And so, in regard to gaining legislative support, Democrats are the only hope, barring some sort of dreadful compromise, perhaps involving term-lengthened grazing permits or reducing the involvement of the non-ranching public in the permit-renewal process. And as I’ve stated earlier in this presentation, I do not foresee Democrats retaking control of the House until at least the next congressional redistricting in 2022.

68. For details and implications of the April 2011 wolf delisting riders introduced by Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson and Montana Senator Jon Tester, see Phil Taylor, “Budget’s Wolf Delisting Opens Pandora’s Box of Species Attacks, Enviro Groups Warn,” *The New York Times*, 13 April 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2011/04/13/13greenwire-budgets-wolf-delisting-opens-pandoras-box-of-s-99159.html>.

69. The basic message of my address at Speak for Wolves is that on the issue of the federal grazing program, advocates have been sold out again, and again, and again BY Democrats. Democrats generally want environmentalists in their core constituency, and they occasionally throw them a few “crumbs.” But repeatedly, Democrats have sold out environmentalists for issues they’ve deemed more important, or which are perhaps more threatening to the party’s financial well being. After Senator Tester’s wolf delisting amendment passed in April 2011, there was considerable anger expressed on social media and the web, along with calls to oust Tester in the 2012 election. Rather than expecting disgruntled wolf advocates to either vote for Republican Denny Rehberg or to sit out the election, a more pro-active approach would have been to run a third-party challenger, as did the Libertarians with Dan Cox. In fact, it’s likely that Tester won the election ONLY because Cox drew more votes from Rehberg than from Tester. Specifically, [Tester’s victory margin was 3.72 percent, while Cox drew 6.56 percent of the vote](#). I recognize that environmentalists are reluctant to risk turning Senate control over to Republicans. (Although in hindsight, the Senate would have remained in control of Democrats even had Tester lost to Rehberg.) But I predict that unless environmentalists are willing to take such risks that thirty years hence (2044) there will be no more progress in legislated protection of public lands from ranching than there’s been in the last thirty years—which is to say, hardly any at all.

of Western House Democrats be extricated from the clutches of the ranching industry THAT a repeat of the 2010 drama played out in Congressman Moran's subcommittee will not occur. If people are not willing or able to invest the years of hard organizing in those Western congressional districts (and I'd devote particular attention to districts represented by Western and Midwestern Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee) history tells us that the conservation interests of public lands will not prevail in the U.S. Congress.⁷⁰

70. That the reader may better appreciate the extent to which my final advice departs from the direction taken in my activism during the last 17 years, I offer the following insight into how that direction became established. In September 1997 I met, for the first and only time, Denzel Ferguson co-author of *Sacred Cows at the Public Trough* and the person generally regarded as the father of the "movement" to oust ranching from public lands. I spent an entire day with Denzel at his home on a small inholding within the John Day National Forest of northeastern Oregon. I told Denzel that I was traveling throughout the West to learn about public lands ranching so that I could give presentations about the topic to people in the eastern United States. Denzel replied that such educational outreach would be the key to transforming what was then regarded as only a regional issue into a national one. Among the topics and events of that day, two stand out in my memory. First, Denzel told me that he had not much longer to live. Indeed, he died the following year. Then in the late afternoon when I was about to depart for the day, Denzel told me that he'd had a bunch of anti-ranching t-shirts manufactured, and that if I wished I could have one to wear at my presentations. I was grateful for the offer. And so, after inquiring as to my shirt size (medium), Denzel asked his wife Nancy to bring me a shirt from their stash in another room. She soon returned to report that no more medium-sized t-shirts remained. Denzel replied, "My t-shirt is a medium. Give him mine." And so over the following years, I often wore Denzel's shirt at my presentations, even at Sierra Club national board meetings. Those presentations, and related activities, contributed to some notable achievements as I've recounted in this address at Speak for Wolves. But because of changes in national politics that neither Denzel nor I envisioned in 1997, the value of continuing that "Eastern Strategy" is today virtually nil and will remain so in the foreseeable future. Now it's time for people in the West, if they really want to end ranching on public lands, to politically organize like never before, at least with regard to their elected federal officials from the Democratic Party who haven't yet "gotten with the program," as have, for example, Congressmen Adam Smith and Raul Grijalva. There are two basic actions that public-lands-advocating constituents can take to potentially gain the respect of their pro-ranching congressional Democrats. Either put forward a candidate to challenge the incumbent in a Democratic primary. Or run a third-party candidate under the Green Party or a party of similar ideology. Either approach would be labor intensive and, particularly in the latter case, must be undertaken with the understanding that one's actions may send the Democrat down to defeat in place of the Republican. Advocates for public lands must consider whether the risk of such short-term "pain" would justify the potential long-term gain of greater fear and respect not just from local Democrats, but from the party as a whole. I view the assuming of such risk as essential to making legislative progress on the ranching issue.