

The background image shows a wide, open landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through a grassy field, with a fence line visible. In the middle ground, a herd of horses is grazing in a field. The background features rolling hills and mountains, with the sky showing a warm, golden light, suggesting either sunrise or sunset.

# Public Lands Management

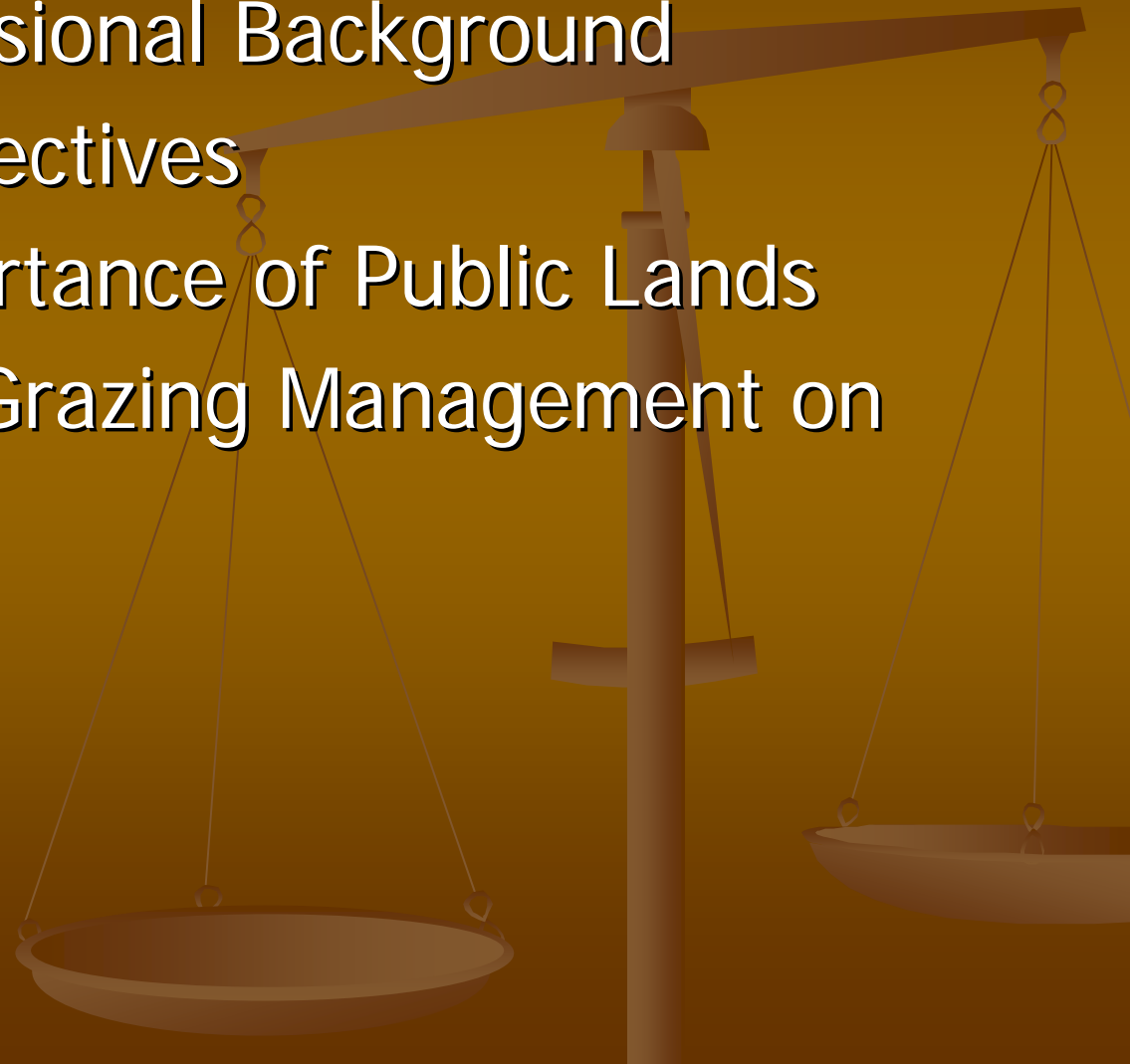
## A Local Perspective on Public Lands Grazing

Presented by  
Dan Macon

High Sierra Resource Conservation  
& Development Council  
November 8, 2005

# Introduction/Overview

- Personal/Professional Background
- Historical Perspectives
- The Local Importance of Public Lands
- Innovations in Grazing Management on Public Lands
- Questions



# Background

## ■ Personal

- Lifelong Sierra Nevada resident
- Graduate of UC Davis (1990)
- Currently live in Auburn
- Part-time farmer/rancher
- Past President – Calif.-Pacific Section, Society for Range Management

## ■ Professional

- Macon Brothers Auctioneers
- California Cattlemen's Association
- California Farm Water Coalition
- AgResource Solutions
- California Rangeland Trust
- High Sierra RC&D Council

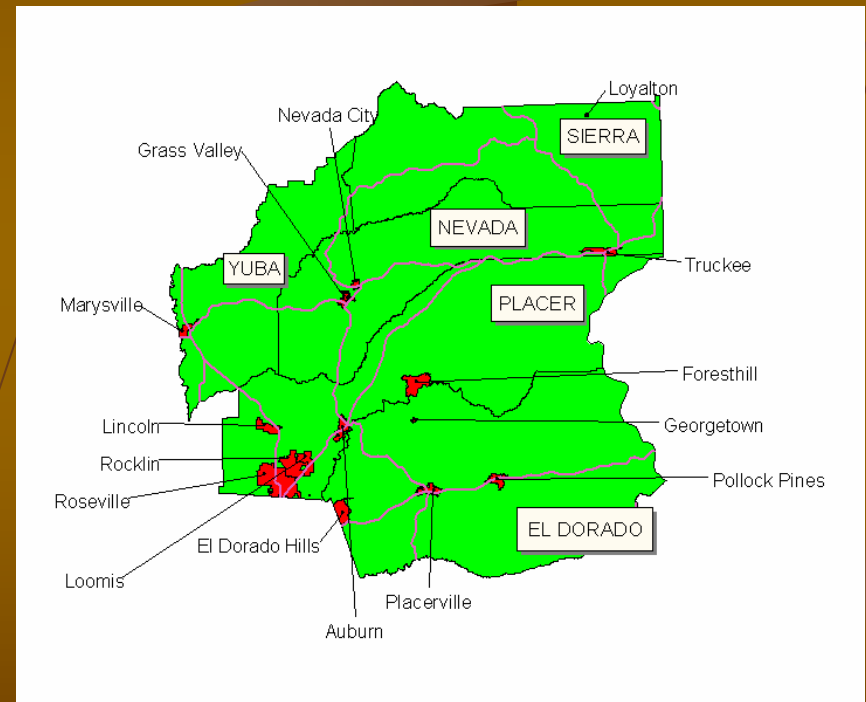


# Does common ground exist?



# High Sierra RC&D

- Nonprofit council dedicated to sustainable resource-based economic development and natural resource conservation efforts



# Rangelands Defined



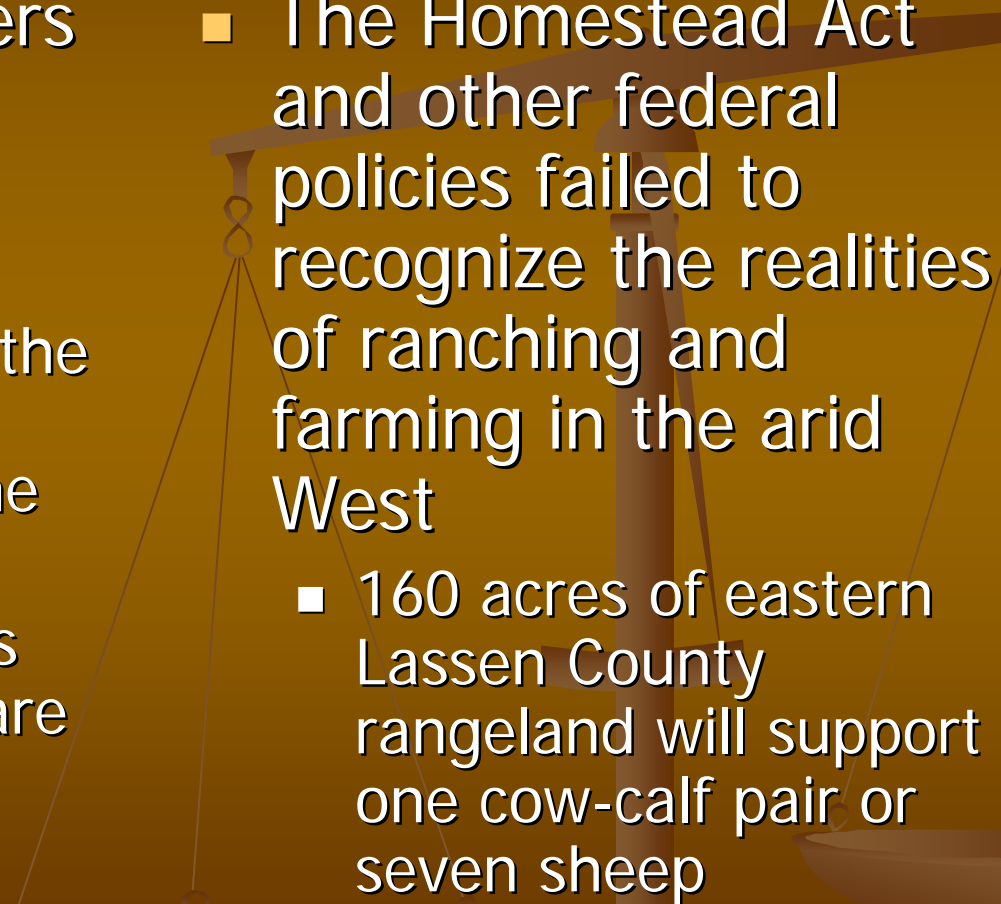
- **NRCS:** Land on which the historic climax plant community is predominantly grasses, grass like plants, forbs, or shrubs. Includes land re-vegetated naturally or artificially when routine management of that vegetation is accomplished mainly through manipulation of grazing. Rangeland includes native or naturalized grasslands, savanna, shrub lands, most deserts, tundra, alpine communities, coastal marshes and wet meadows.
- **Cowboy:** Land that is too cold, too high, too dry or too steep to grow anything else!
- **Approximately 40 million acres in California (half of which is public land)**





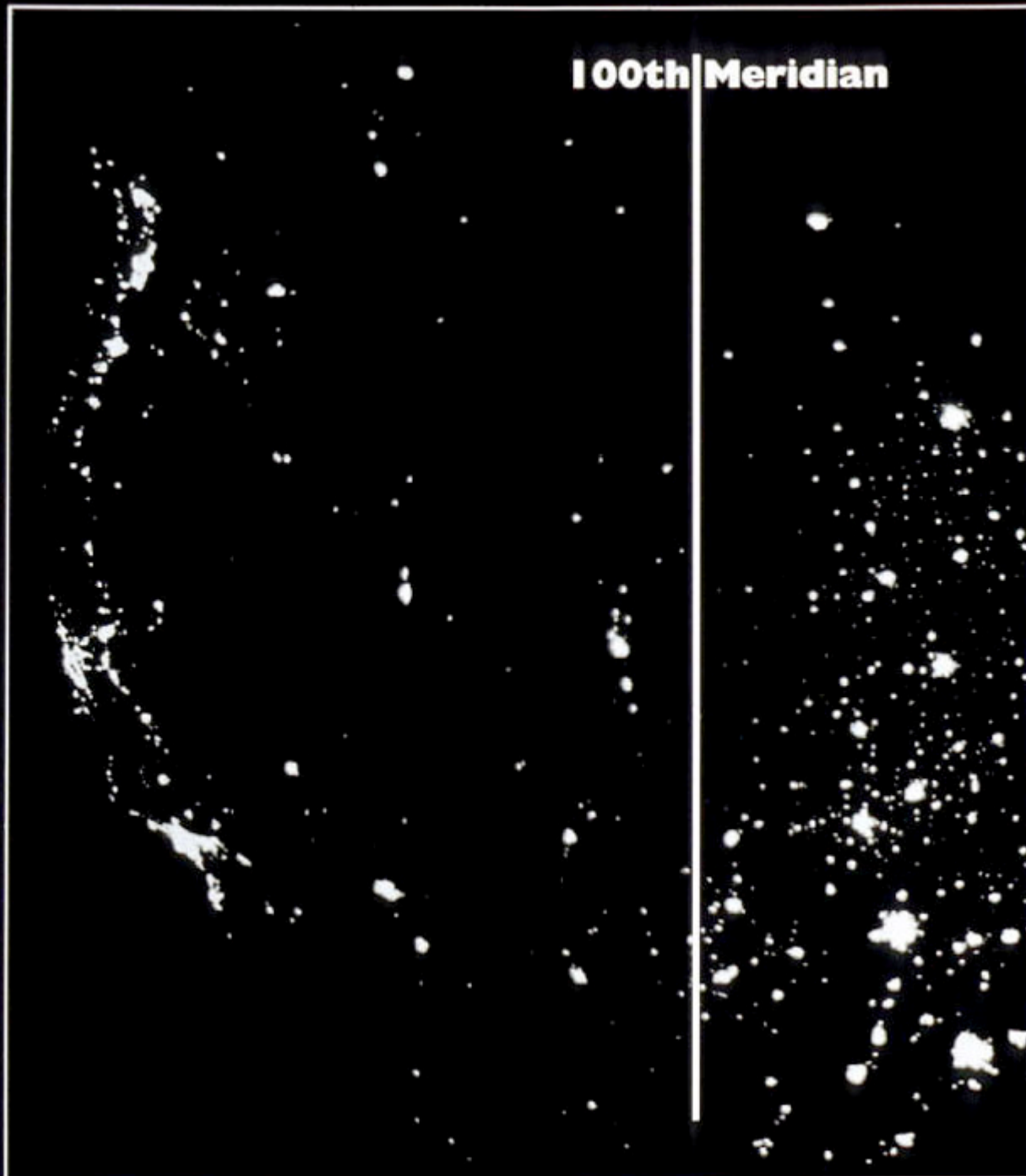
Photo: Paul Starrs

# Historical Perspectives

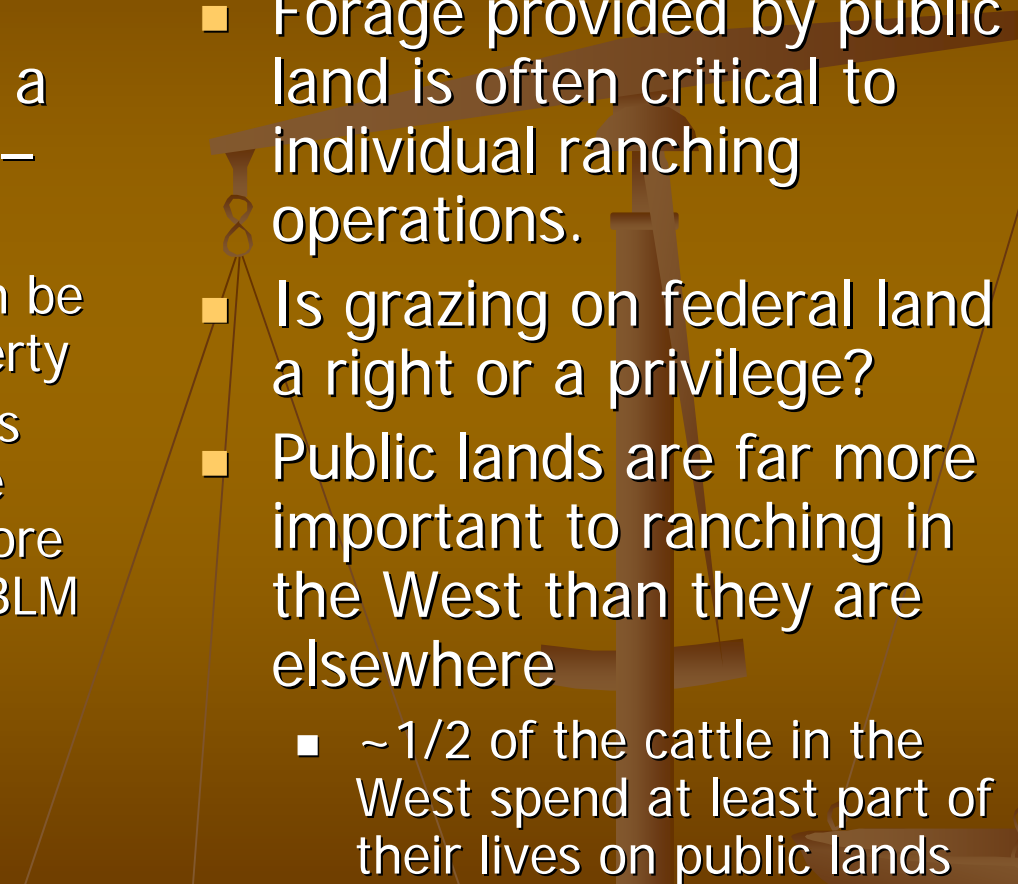
- Historically, ranchers and livestock have followed the high quality feed
    - Livestock graze in the valley and foothills (private land) in the winter and spring
    - As lower elevations dry out, livestock are moved to the mountains
  - The Homestead Act and other federal policies failed to recognize the realities of ranching and farming in the arid West
    - 160 acres of eastern Lassen County rangeland will support one cow-calf pair or seven sheep
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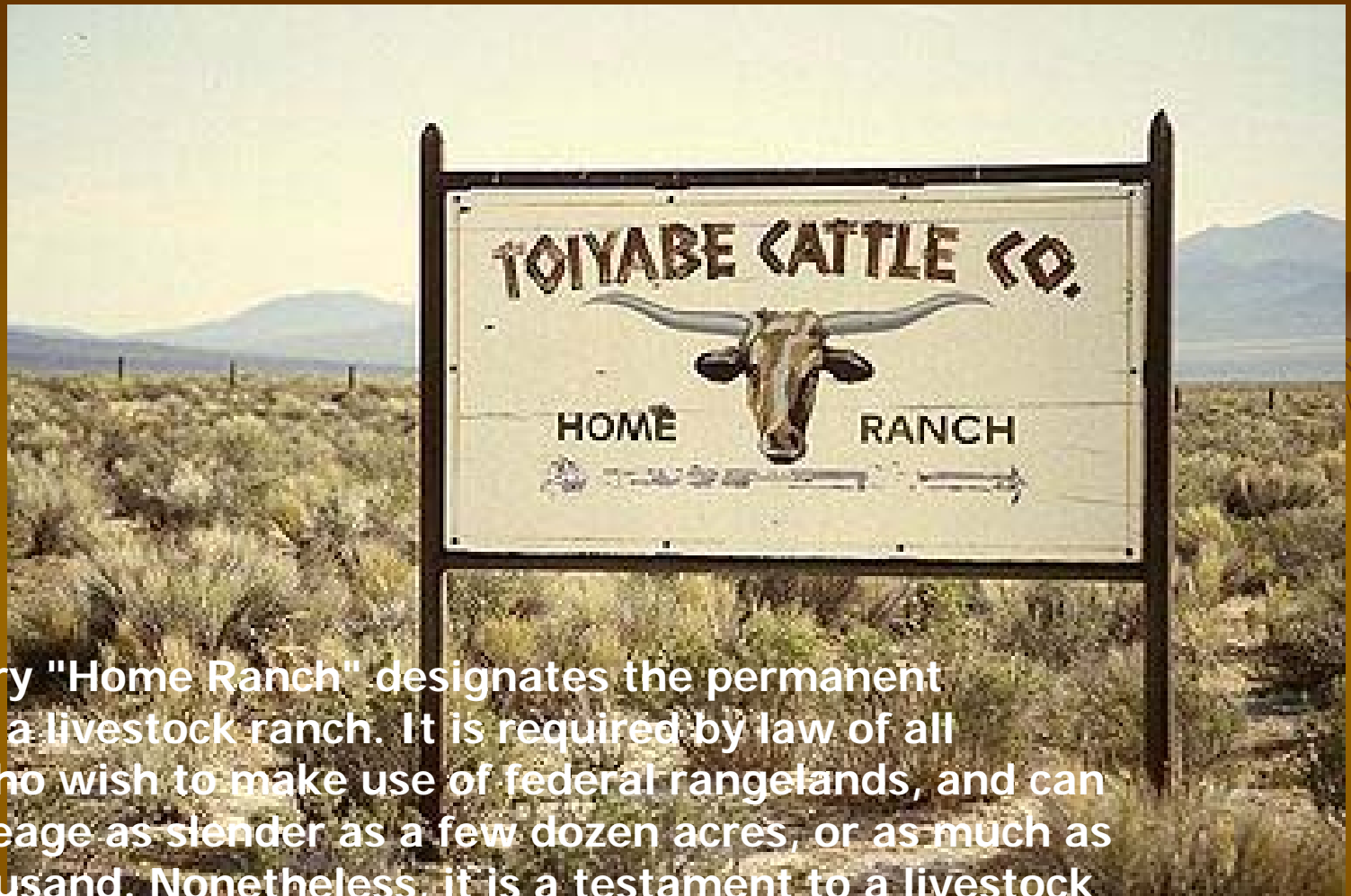


**100th Meridian**



# Historical Perspectives

- Public Land grazing allotments are tied to a “home ranch” (a.k.a. – base property)
    - Land and/or water can be considered base property
    - Some ranching families have been using these “allotments” since before the Forest Service or BLM existed
  - Forage provided by public land is often critical to individual ranching operations.
  - Is grazing on federal land a right or a privilege?
  - Public lands are far more important to ranching in the West than they are elsewhere
    - ~1/2 of the cattle in the West spend at least part of their lives on public lands
- 



The category "Home Ranch" designates the permanent property of a livestock ranch. It is required by law of all ranchers who wish to make use of federal rangelands, and can include acreage as slender as a few dozen acres, or as much as several thousand. Nonetheless, it is a testament to a livestock owner's commitment to the local area, and is supposed to guard against despoiling the range. The success of this thinking is not certain.

Paul Starrs  
University of Nevada, Reno



# Historical Perspectives Grazing Fees

## ■ Private Land Lease

- Generally higher quality feed
- Exclusive use
- Better facilities (fences, corrals, etc.)
- Closer to transportation
- Lower death loss



## ■ Public Land Grazing Fee

- Generally lower quality feed
- More extensive operation (greater acreage)
- Multiple use
- Utilization restrictions
- Some facilities must be "reconstructed" every year
- Further from the "home ranch" – higher transportation costs
- Higher death loss

# The Local Importance of Public Lands



- Economic
  - Timber
  - Ranching
  - Recreation
- Ecological
  - Watershed
  - Habitat
- Quality of Life
  - View
  - Open Space
  - Fire Protection



# What values do ranches produce?

- Local economic contributions (including multipliers)
- Social/cultural contributions
- Habitat improvement
- Watershed protection
- Fuels management
- Viewshed
- Open space





What's at risk if we lose  
local resource-based  
businesses?

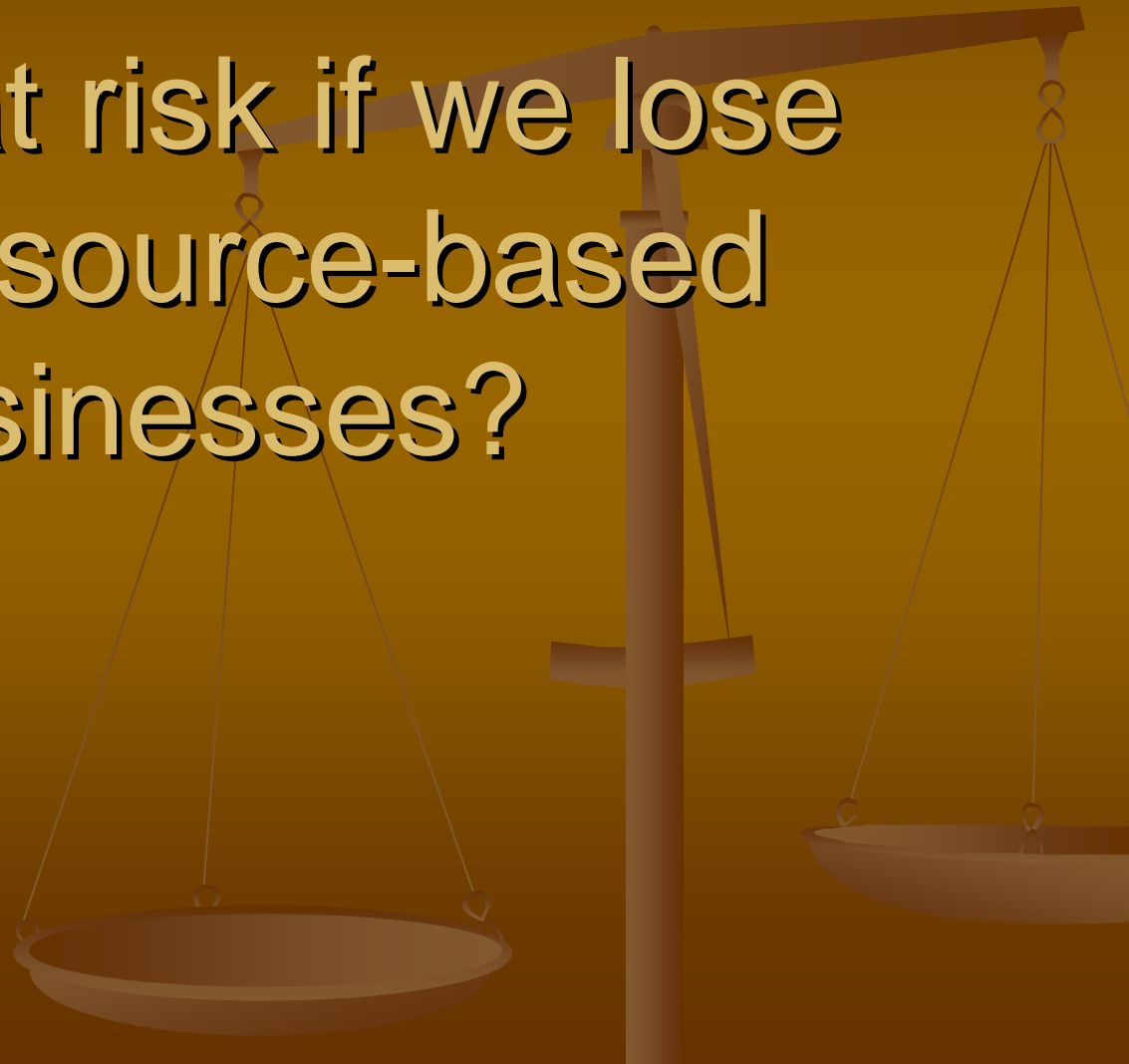




Photo: Luanna Dowling



# FLANAGAN RANCH



**15  
5+ ACRE  
ESTATE  
SITES**

**LOU PLUMMER**

**BETTER HOMES  
REALTY**

**837-0571**





Sprawl and fragmentation impact the environment by disrupting wildlife migratory routes, damaging watershed function, and converting vegetative communities.

Photo: Sonoran Institute

**Sprawl impacts  
local  
infrastructure and  
the tax base by:**

Increasing the need  
for services (fire,  
police, ambulance,  
etc.)

Impacting roads,  
sewer system,  
water system, etc.

*Local  
governments  
rarely examine the  
costs of servicing  
new development*



Photo: Paul Starrs

# Innovations

- Management Planning and Monitoring
- Managed Grazing
- Off-Stream Water Development
- Controlling Brush and Woody Vegetation
- Riparian Restoration and Enhancement
- Controlled Burning and Prescribed Fire
- Native Grass Restoration
- Multi-Species Grazing
- Conservation Easements





# Why do ranchers care about stewardship?

- Ranches are both homes and businesses
  - We all want to live and work in places that are aesthetically pleasing and environmentally safe
- Ranchers are in the business because they care about the land and their animals

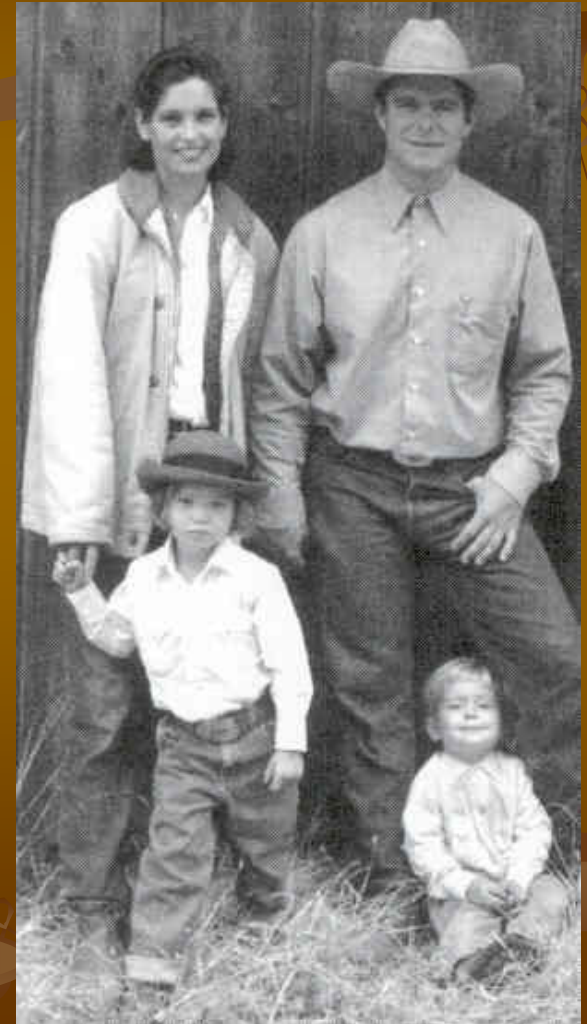


Photo: Kent Reeves

# Grazing Management and Monitoring Tools



- Management Planning
  - Rangeland Water Quality Management Plan
  - Holistic Management
  - NRCS Conservation Plan
  - Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plan
  - Other planning processes
- Monitoring
  - Utilization versus Trend

# Grazing Management Tools

- Rotational Grazing
  - Vary the timing, duration and intensity of use on a particular plant
  - Improve plant vigor and composition
  - Mimic wildlife use
- Distribution Techniques





# Grazing Management Tools

- Off-stream water development
  - Keep livestock away from riparian areas and springs (to protect vegetation and water quality)
  - Aid in livestock distribution (especially when used with minerals)
  - Provide additional water for wildlife
  - UCCE research



# Grazing Management Tools

- Brush and woody vegetation control/removal
  - Reduce threat of wildfire (which protects water quality)
  - Increase forage production
  - Blodgett Forest research
  - Goat research project





# Grazing Management Tools



- Riparian restoration
  - Improve wildlife habitat
  - Protect/enhance water quality
  - Increase forage quality/quantity
  - Examples



# Grazing Management Tools

- Controlled burning programs
  - Control invasive weeds (starthistle, medusahead, blackberries, etc.)
  - Encourage establishment of native grasses
  - TNC programs



# Grazing Management Tools

- Native perennial grass restoration
  - Improve wildlife habitat
  - Protect water quality (depending on what is being replaced)
  - Increase forage production (depending on what is being replaced)
  - Three Creeks Ranch



Photo: Kent Reeves

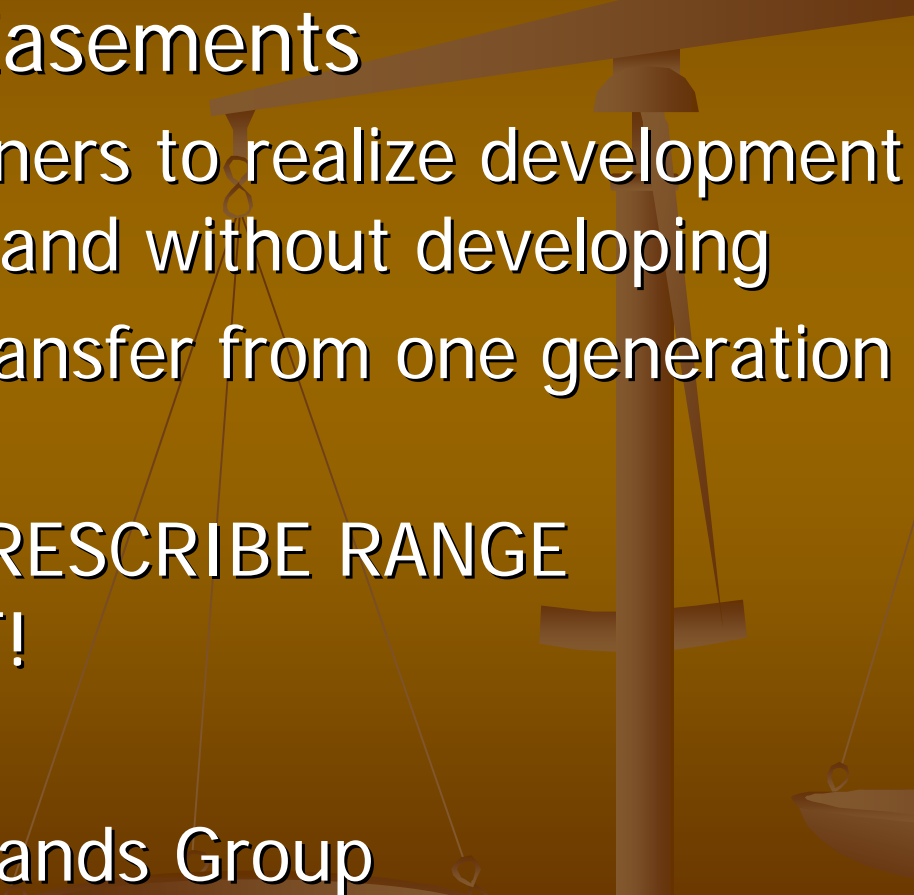
# Grazing Management Tools

- Multi-species grazing
  - different species use rangelands differently
  - multiple species can help control invasive plants, manage brush, etc.
  - increased risk management opportunities through diversification





# Grazing Management Tools

- Conservation Easements
    - Allows landowners to realize development value of their land without developing
    - Provides for transfer from one generation to the next
    - SHOULDN'T PRESCRIBE RANGE MANAGEMENT!
    - CRT programs
    - Malpai Borderlands Group
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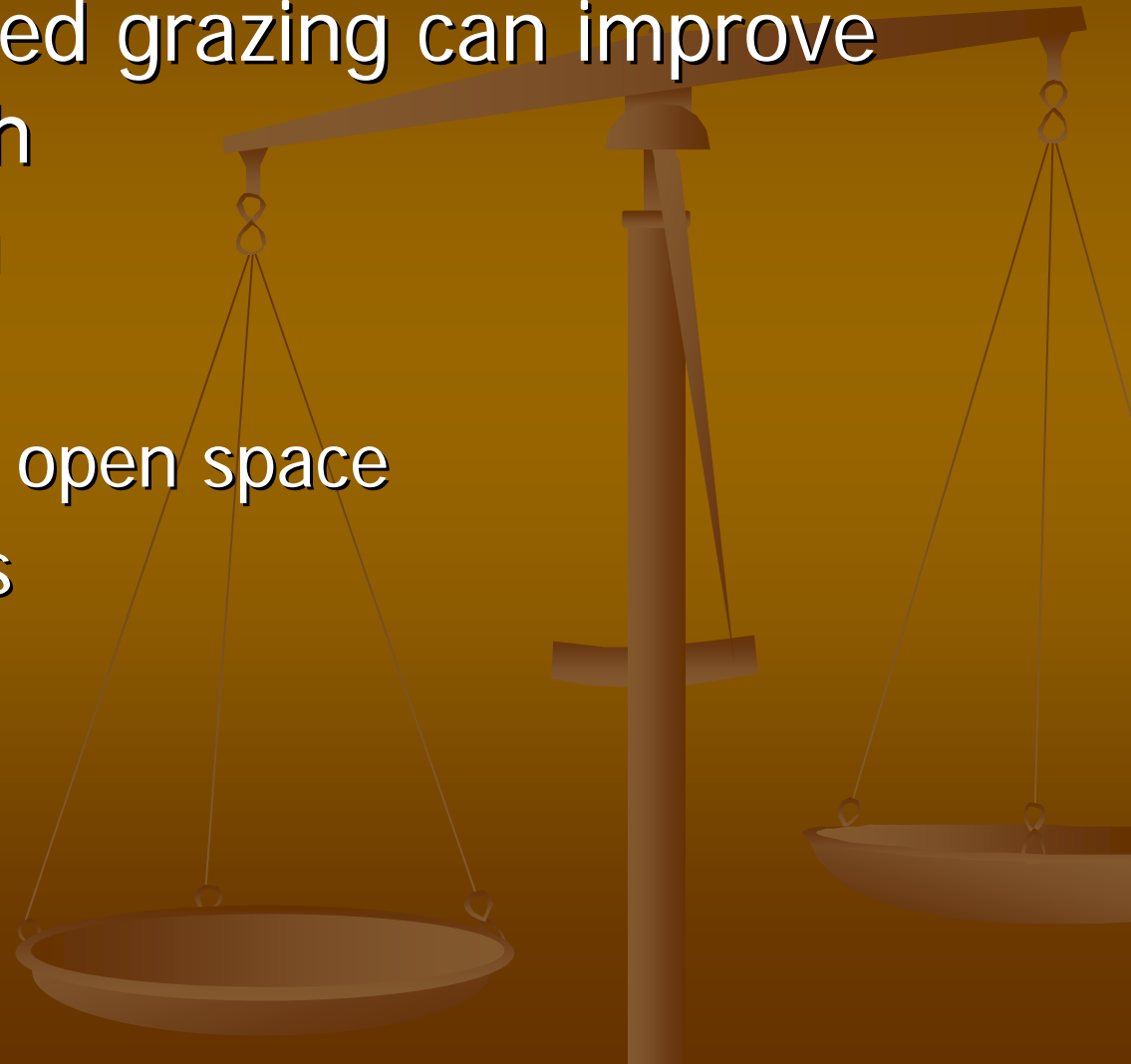
# Grazing Management Tools

- Predator Management
  - Use of fencing and/or guard animals can reduce predator losses
  - “Predator Friendly” marketing may be a niche for some producers.



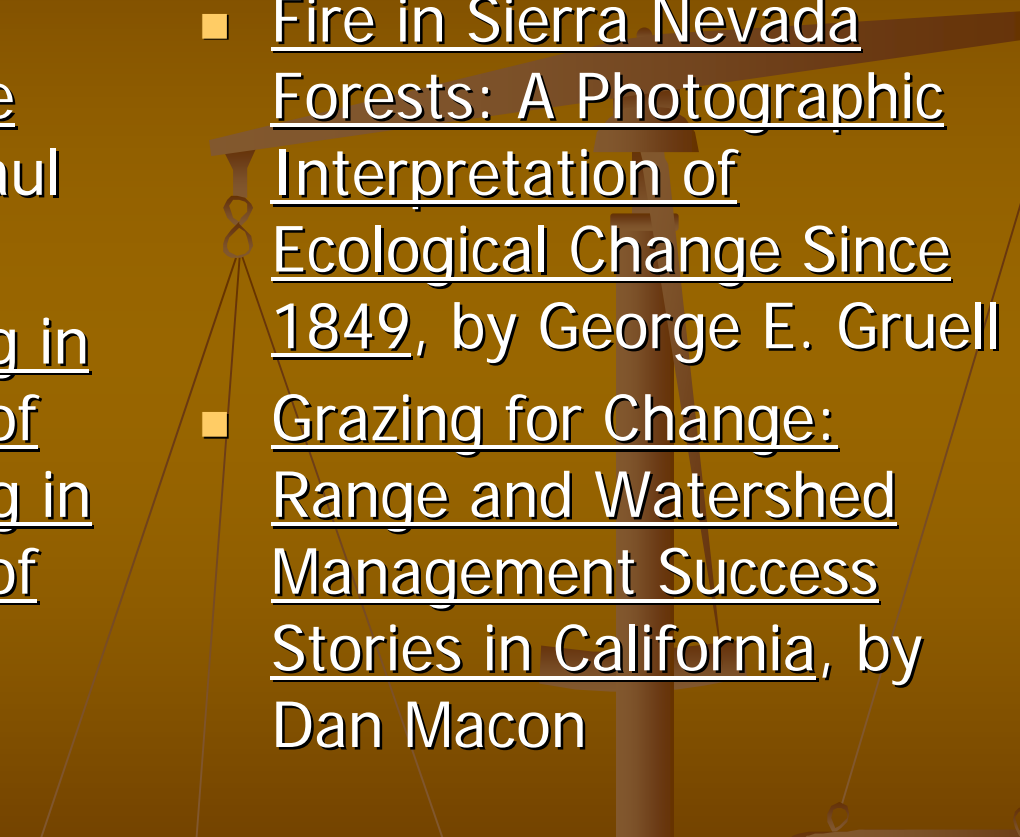
# Grazing and Ecological Health

- Properly managed grazing can improve ecological health
  - Nutrient cycling
  - Disturbance
  - Maintenance of open space
  - Wildlife benefits





# Bibliography

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  - Grazing for Change: Range and Watershed Management Success Stories in California, by Dan Macon
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- California Cattlemen's Association ([www.calcattlemen.org](http://www.calcattlemen.org))
- California Rangeland Trust ([www.rangelandtrust.org](http://www.rangelandtrust.org))
- Malpai Borderlands Group ([www.malpaiborderlandsgroup.org](http://www.malpaiborderlandsgroup.org))
- California Wool Growers Association ([www.woolgrowers.org](http://www.woolgrowers.org))
- American Sheep Industry Association ([www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org))
- Society for Range Management ([www.rangelands.org](http://www.rangelands.org))
- California – Pacific Section – Society for Range Management ([www.casrm.org](http://www.casrm.org))
- California Rangelands Research and Information Center (<http://californiarangeland.ucdavis.edu/>)
- The Savory Center ([www.holisticmanagement.org](http://www.holisticmanagement.org))

# Questions?

