

Rangeland Health

Informative flier: no.3- Rangeland health

Did you ever hear someone say "this range is really in bad shape" or something similar? Maybe you have even said it yourself a time or two. What is meant by "bad shape"? Well, I will assume it is a statement about the health of the rangeland. However, after listening to many range managers, ranchers, environmental scientists, and biologists over the years I have come to the conclusion that rangeland health is in the eye of the beholder.

It is the purpose of this informative flier to try to lay some common grounds for the phrase "rangeland health" and open a dialog for future discussion.

Let's begin with a few of the definitions I have encountered:

Definition #1: *"The degree to which the integrity of the soil and the ecological processes of rangeland ecosystems are sustained"*.

National Research Council, 1994
(<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/2212.html>).

Definition #2: Rangeland health can be determined *"by evaluating an ecological site's potential to conserve soil resources and by a series of indicators for ecosystem processes and site stability"*.

Pyke et al. 2002.
(<http://uvalde.tamu.edu/jrm/nov02/pyke.htm>).

Definition #3: *"Imagine healthy rangelands, rich in biological diversity, healthy wildlife populations, and clear running streams alive with fish. Soils would be covered with living plants and between them a layer of mulch and litter acting as a sponge for precipitation. Water that formerly flowed off in flood would now percolate down to replenish aquifers and nourish perennial rivers"*.

Allan Savory 2002.
Re-Creating the West: One Decision at a Time in Knight, R. L. et al (eds), Ranching West of the 100th Meridian: Culture, Ecology, and Economics.

Definition #4: In a sentence or brief paragraph, provide your definition of rangeland health:

What similarities exist between these definitions?

The next time you are out walking the rangelands of the west, recall these definitions and evaluate the rangelands you are visiting against this yardstick.