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September, 2009

**President's Message**

[Http://azrangelands.org](http://azrangelands.org)



Hi all,

In today's age of spin, double speak, and bureaucratic stalling, I found the 2009 AZ Section, SRM Summer Meeting particularly refreshing for candor and openness. I am sure that you all had favorite moments at the Summer Meeting. My personal favorite was the discussion on soils the final day that George Robertson of the Tonto National Forest led. I felt that George set an example for us all in delivering knowledge without prejudice. Some of the answers he provided based upon his knowledge of soils and a career of observation contradicted commonly held beliefs. For example, some vegetation types upon certain soils may predispose plant communities within the inter-spaces to a degree of "natural" plant pedestaling. George also reiterated the concept that a management prescription that works at one location does not automatically make it a likely candidate at another location. In answer to Dave Stewart's question as to "Why would you want to burn here (at a location with low organic matter in the soil)?", George responded, "Why would you want to burn here?" His point was that although burning can be effective in some locales, it is counterproductive at a location lacking in organic matter and would in fact help remove the very thing the soil is lacking. The soil pit at this location revealed a vertic soils profile dominated by annuals. In response to a question as to whether he thought it had always been that way, George hypothesized that when a juniper push was undertaken many years ago it could have "mixed" a shallow A horizon into the heavy clay soils. I interpret this to mean that the push could have removed some resiliency of the soils and help transition it to a different ecological state when it was already marginal to begin with. Sometimes, we really don't know what is best for a particular piece of country and need to try different things. In these circumstances, our ability to make the right choice is enhanced by having a more complete inventory of the nature and character of that which we are attempting to influence. To enlarge our understanding of all facets of a decision, we should solicit opinions from several sources, including those that make us feel uncomfortable. Although we will not agree with some opinions, acknowledgment of alternate viewpoints may help prevent overlooking hidden rocks in the stream that can wreck the boat.

See ya,





NARCWAY Campers



**Cooperative Endangered Species Management on the Payson Ranger District**

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“We’ve found an endangered species on your grazing allotment”. These words can strike fear in the most grizzled cowhand, and cause a range con to shudder with anxiety. These words were uttered back in June 2006 when several Chiricahua leopard frogs were found on the Little Green Valley Complex (LGVC) grazing allotments in the vicinity of Ellison Creek. The small, greenish-brown frog is a native of Arizona, western New Mexico and northern Mexico that was listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act back in 2002. The frog was once abundant in creeks and ponds, but populations have declined steadily since the 1970’s due to such factors as recurrent drought, presence of non-native predators, and disease. In Arizona, there are small scattered populations found in southern Arizona and also above 4,800’ in proximity of the Mogollon Rim.

The frogs found in June 2006 were in a pasture that was being grazed by 107 adult cattle. Chiricahua leopard frogs had not been seen in the area since the 1990’s, and we had thought they would be found farther west in Ellison Creek proper. Since this was a new, unanticipated location for the occurrence of frogs, we had to remove cattle from the pasture a few weeks early, and begin dialog with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about how to manage grazing in occupied habitat. Previous consultation with USFWS had resulted in a plan to exclude from grazing about 1/3 of an adjacent pasture that contained Ellison Creek in order to protect frog habitat. The LGVC grazing allotments were acquired by Ray Tanner in late 2005. He was aware of the existing plans to fence the pasture, but the new frog location caught us all by surprise. We knew we had to start talking amongst the rancher, Forest Service, Arizona Game and Fish, and US Fish and Wildlife Service to avoid being “blind-sided” again.

We met in January 2007 for the first time. There were several options we wanted to discuss including of course, more fencing, or possibly only fencing those areas containing the best habitat. The rancher wanted to retain as much usable grazing acreage as possible, but was also concerned with doing what was best to help recover the species. So much is unknown about this frog and the reasons for its decline. But what we did know is that the LGVC allotments were not grazed from 2001 through 2005, and the frog populations were still in decline. Frogs and cows do not compete directly for habitat, but there is a concern that cows can trample egg masses, remove protective emergent vegetation, or deplete water sources. Our initial meetings resulted in a work plan for the Ellison Creek Recovery Area. The first order of business was to extensively survey the Ellison Creek watershed for the presence of frogs and stock tanks that are not fenced from cattle. At this time there are no plans to fence cattle out of any additional areas. Ray Tanner has been present at both frog releases, and has been a valuable partner in helping to identify additional locations that may be suitable for future frog releases. It’s taken over three years to get where we are, while building relationships based on openness and trust between all parties. Not an easy solution, but surely a worthwhile one has been reached suitable breeding habitat. Throughout spring and summer of 2007 surveys were conducted by the various agencies. Ray Tanner often came along so he could learn more about the frogs. We ended up identifying two areas that offered the best breeding locations because they had reliable water, slow-moving water, and deep pools.

Cooperatively we developed a plan to exclude from grazing just those breeding areas. Instead of nearly 2 miles of fence construction and over 1,300 acres of land excluded from grazing, the cooperative plan advocated two

small fenced enclosures that exclude grazing from less than 5 acres. The first enclosure fence was built by the rancher in 2008 using funds secured from Arizona Game and Fish Department and cattle were allowed to use the pasture that summer. This year the second enclosure was built that keeps both cattle and elk from the prime frog habitat. There are about 300 adult cattle using that pasture now.

In July of this year, a total of 208 captivity-reared Chiricahua leopard frogs and 164 tadpoles were released into the two enclosures. In September, we released an additional frogs and tadpoles into two stock tanks that are not fenced from cattle. At this time there are no plans to fence cattle out of any additional areas. Ray Tanner has been present at both frog releases, and has been a valuable partner in helping to identify additional locations that may be suitable for future frog releases. It’s taken over three years to get where we are, while building relationships based on openness and trust between all parties.

Not an easy solution, but surely a worthwhile one has been reached.

*Chris Thiel*, Director North

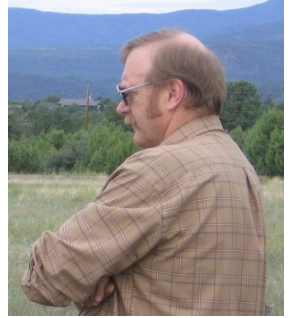




Chiricahua Leopard Frog Recovery Partners: Rancher, Ray Tanner (far left), USFWS Jeff Servoss (front, right), USFWS Jim Rorabaugh (4<sup>th</sup> from left), USFS biologists John Wilcox (far right) and Fred Wong (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) along with Phoenix Zoo captive-rearing program personnel (in purple)

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINTER MEETING

“**Livestock-Wildlife-Native Fish Interactions – *What Do We Think We Know***” is the theme of the AZ-SRM Section winter meeting on January 19-20, 2010 at the Prescott Resort. The workshop seeks to promote dialogue about critical issues of grazing effects on various wildlife and native fish, with emphasis on the state of our knowledge about habitat relationships. Three sessions are planned to focus wildlife, native fish, management, and success examples as well as to stress key issues and management recommendations. In addition to keynote speakers, various conservation groups will be invited to present poster papers to highlight species or habitats of special interest. The registration and program will be sent out in a special announcement this month. For questions – contact Al Medina (928)-853-1391 email: [almedi-na777@hotmail.com](mailto:almedi-na777@hotmail.com) Reference: AZ-SRM 2010.



# 2009 Arizona Section of the Society for Range Management Awards

It's time again to start submitting nominations for our section. This is an excellent opportunity to recognize all the hard work and great stewardship through out our diverse state.

The four award categories are:

**RANGE MANAGER OF THE YEAR:** May be selected by the Awards Committee from owner-operators and ranch managers who have been nominated by the County Committees. The recipient shall be honored at the Annual Meeting and shall receive a plaque commemorating the award.

- The recipient need not be a member of the Society for Range Management
- must be owner-operator or manager of a working ranch unit
- must not have received this award within the previous six years
- cannot be a member of the State or County Awards committee or the Board of Directors.

Primary criteria used for selection of the recipient shall include progress in the planning, application, maintenance, and improvement of range condition through the use of grazing management practices for proper use and distribution of grazing, installation of range improvements, control of undesirable plants, seeding of rangeland, control of erosion, and husbandry and breeding of livestock. Participation in community and State citizenship activities and cooperation with State and Federal agencies in management of the land for grazing and other uses must be evaluated.

**2. AWARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL GUIDANCE:** A person or persons with range management or range conservation expertise and education, but not ranch owners or operators, may be selected and honored for their contribution to excellence in grazing management. Such persons may be employees of Federal or State agencies or universities, other government agencies, or individuals operating independently or as members of agricultural firms.

**3. OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS:** A person not limited to Society membership, and not limited to residence in Arizona may be nominated for an Outstanding Service Award by any member of the Arizona Section of the Society for Range Management. Such nominations will be made to the board of Directors prior to the end of the Calendar year.

**4. OUTSTANDING YOUNG RANGE PROFESSIONAL AWARD:** This award requires SRM membership and recognizes superior performance and leadership potential in any range-related area. Nominee must be less than 40 years old on January 1, 2010. If you are aware of a young range professional who you feel deserves this award please send in your nomination!! This is an excellent opportunity to give a hard-working individual some great recognition.

The awards categories focus on the high levels of progress made in various land management practices. For an individual to be nominated for an award gives that person much deserved recognition as well as positive publicity for the Society and the ranching industry overall.

Please take the time to review Article VII of the Arizona Section SRM bylaws for more specific information pertaining to the qualifications for the various awards.

The deadline for the awards nominations is November 7, 2009. Please contact me if you need additional time to prepare your nomination. Please send your nominations to:

Katie Cline, Awards Committee Chairperson  
3241 N. Romero Rd.  
Tucson, Arizona 85705  
520-292-2999 ext. 109

Or email to:

[katie.cline@az.usda.gov](mailto:katie.cline@az.usda.gov)

**ANNOUNCING**

Research Insights in Semiarid Ecosystems (RISE) Symposium

Saturday, 11 October 2008, 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

University of Arizona Marley Auditorium (Room 230), Tucson, Arizona

**Registration:** \$10 for students; \$20 for all others (lunch included)

The deadline for registration is 30 September 2008, but earlier registration will assist event planning.

Submission deadline for poster presentation is 15 September 2008. We have space for only 20 posters, and poster abstracts will be accepted in order of submission.

The fifth annual Research Insights in Semiarid Ecosystems (RISE) Symposium will feature invited speakers presenting recent research on the USDA-ARS Walnut Gulch Experimental Watershed, University of Arizona Santa Rita Experimental Range and other outdoor laboratories. There will also be a poster session where students and researchers are encouraged to report on completed or in-progress studies. Time will be available for questions from the audience.

Please use the web site <http://www.tucson.ars.ag.gov/rise/> to view the RISE program, to register for the symposium, and to submit poster titles.

Attending this symposium will earn 5 Continuing Education Units for Certified Professionals in Rangeland Management.

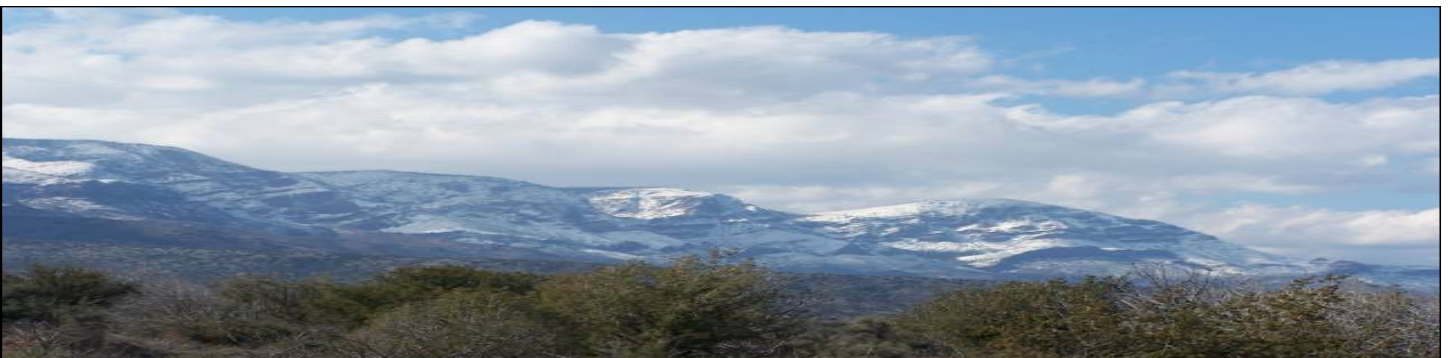
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**REMINDER ABOUT:**

This summer's meeting on "*Lessons Learned To Mitigate Future Catastrophic Fire Impacts on Arizona Rangelands*" resulted in many responses for personal perspectives. There is still time left to submit your comments. Comments will be summarized to develop a synthesis, which will post online in November. Submit comments to Al Medina.

**SPONSORSHIPS**

AZ-SRM is seeking sponsorships to host the Annual Winter Meeting. Contact Al Medina for details.



The Editor, News Staff, Interns, Print Technicians, and Newsletter Committee members would like to thank the following people for making this issue become a reality: Jim Sprinkle, Chris Thiel, Al Medina, Kent Ellet.

All input, articles, pictures, graphics, etc. will be considered for inclusion.

## Saving for a Rainy Day.



When I would ask if I could buy something as a kid my mother would often advise me to save my money for a “rainy day”. My inclination was to spend it on things I could enjoy during the sunny days of summer. But later when it was needed it was nice to have it.

I recall this as I look back on this year’s monsoon season or lack thereof. I find it interesting that when it’s dry people often say, “It’s the driest it’s ever been” and when it pours, “It’s the wettest it’s ever been”. It’s also interesting how many 500 year events I’ve lived through during my short life.

Well this summer was dry. At one point I read it was the second driest on record. Later after some rains came I believe it still made it in the Top 10 for one of the driest.

In some areas we actually received a fair amount: 10 inches since June. But the way it came made for limited grass growth. It would rain a little and the grass would start to grow then there would be no rain for a long enough period that the grass would become dormant. By the time the next storms came the grass would have to start over again. This cycle of just getting started and stopping and just getting started again made for limited production.

It reconfirms the importance of being able to set aside reserves of forage for a “rainy day” or perhaps I should say to set it aside for when we look and hope for rainy days. Some livestock operations rely on being able to use each area or pasture at least once every 12 months. As long as the rains come regularly and fires don’t this may work fine but eventually that operator finds himself short of forage and has to cull and cull deep. Then by the time he gets his numbers back up he has to sell again.

During dry times I’ve heard operators and agency employees state they may have to use the forage and the land a little harder than they would like just to get through the year. Others nod their heads in understanding and life goes on. However, during dry times when plants are already stressed we should be softer on the land.

So, may I advise we do our best to build operations around an 18+ month rotation schedule so when it’s dry or an untimely fire occurs we have the flexibility to be adaptive and alter the timing, intensity, season or duration of use sufficient to maintain a viable operation without having to be hard on the land. With reserve forage set aside we’ll be better positioned to make it through the non-rainy days.

*Ken t Ellet*, Director South







Summer Meeting 2009 was held on the Payson Ranger District. Camp was at the FS Horse Camp on the north side of Payson. The first day was a road trip with three stops to look at sites within the Dude Fire of 1990. Stops included discussion of private landowner rehabilitation efforts, stream monitoring, and a forage utilization study. Al Medina led the group Thursday, provoking discussion, inviting questions, and encouraging participation. Day two was a look into soil pits and discussion about vegetation based on soil properties and vegetation treatment practices.. Chris Thiel facilitated Fridays discussion.

~MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION~

Membership in the Society for Range Management is open to anyone engaged in or interested in any aspect of the study, management, or use of rangelands. Membership rights and privileges include: voting, committee service, nomination and election to offices, subscription to Rangelands journal and the SRM News. Arizona Section newsletter (for AZ Section members), discounted prices for publications, meeting registration fees, page charges and certification fees. For more information on membership in SRM or to request a Membership application, please contact Shai Schendel at the following e-mail: [Shai.Schendel@az.usda.gov](mailto:Shai.Schendel@az.usda.gov).

**\*\* MEMBERSHIP SPONSORSHIP \*\***

The Board of Directors opted to sponsor a one-year regular membership to the Society for Range Management. Section members are encouraged to submit nominations of an individual who is not a SRM member, would benefit from participation and likely to retain membership. Deadline for submissions is November 30. A final selection will be made by the Board of Directors and announced at the winter meeting. Submit nominations to Al Medina ([almedina777@hotmail.com](mailto:almedina777@hotmail.com)) along with a brief description of merit.

Arizona Section-Society For Range Management

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