

A Summary of the "Barrier Report"

In 1986 a group of fifteen Forest Service GS-9, 11, and 12 personnel convened for the purpose of, as they termed it "to identify "existing barriers to effective range management". During the meeting there were 28 "barriers" identified and recommended solutions developed.

The resulting document came to be known as the "Barrier Report", and for myself, it spelled out the future direction and the intent of the leadership within the Forest Service.

Although the language of the "Barrier Report" is somewhat camouflaged, the intent is clear enough. In listing the various "barriers to effective range management", it is stated on page 4:

BARRIER 5: ADVERSE ACTIONS ON PERMITS ARE PERCEIVED TO BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN NECESSARY DUE TO LOCAL POLITICS INFLUENCING RESOURCE DECISIONS (AT SO AND DISTRICT LEVEL); MANAGEMENT REQUIRES "OVERKILL" ON DATA TO SUPPORT ACTION (SO & RO); FEAR OF LACK OF SUPPORT AT HIGHER LEVELS (SO, RO, WO); AND THE NEGATIVE CONNOTATION OF APPEALS AND LITIGATION AT ALL LEVELS.

Solution: a. Conduct outreach efforts to all interests in a decision (orchestrate decisions); during preliminary project planning, identify politically sensitive issues, and plan actions to create or take advantage of politically sensitive issues, and plan actions to create or take advantage of opportunities to constructively resolve the issues. (DISTRICT, SO)

b. Data and documentation (quantity and quality) should be dictated by the level of risk and sensitivity of each action and need to be assessed and agreed upon at the earliest point by all levels involved. (DISTRICT, SO, RO.)

c. Management needs to more readily accept the professional judgment of the resource managers. (RO)

d. Have more information gathering tours for RO and WO staff, to "look at" problems, not "look for" problems.

e. Management should encourage taking reasonable risks, by adding the requirement as a performance element, and through further delegation of authority. (DISTRICT, SO, RO.)

f. Increase information about the results of appeals and the reasons for the appeal decision made.

(BY LEVEL WHERE DECISION MADE. WO ESTABLISH DIRECTION FOR THE INFORMATION FLOW PROCESS)

g. Recognition at all levels that changes in management emphasis, LMP's etc., will result in appeals, litigation, and congressionals and that these are a natural, appropriate refinement process for our decisions. (WO should reinforce this)

h. Increase information and education activities to Congress, user groups, and other agencies on the impacts of current laws and emerging issues. (ALL LEVELS)

BARRIER 6: TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE OF CONGRESS, ADVISORY BOARDS, PERMITTEES, AND OURSELVES THAT ADDITIONAL RANGE IMPROVEMENTS WILL AVOID ADVERSE ACTIONS.

BARRIER 6, explains why the Forest Service discontinued putting in range improvements back in the 1980's. It also explains why the Forest Service people did not follow through with their agreement with the Parsons, Testolins and Youngs to complete range improvements. Obviously their goal was to encourage adverse actions, not to relieve conflict through range improvements. They even go so far as to indicate that the attitude of Congress is wrong in looking to range improvements as a means of relieving conflict.

BARRIER 7: CURRENT GRAZING FEES ARE BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE RANGE MANAGEMENT DUE TO RESTRICTING THE AMOUNT OF RBF AND CP FUNDS; CREATE CONTROVERSY WITH OTHER USER GROUPS AND AGENCIES; PROMOTE MISCONCEPTION BY CONGRESS AND LIVESTOCK ORGANIZATIONS THAT CURRENT (LOW) FEES ARE THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED RANGE CONDITION, ENCOURAGE PRIVATE INVESTMENT, AND DISCOURAGE OVERGRAZING AND TRESPASSING; APPEAL TO LIVESTOCK USERS, OTHER USERS, AND OURSELVES, THAT ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT IS NOT THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS AND DIRECTION AND, PROMOTE MISCONCEPTION OF CONGRESS AND OURSELVES THAT THEY ARE FUNDING A DEFICIT PROGRAM DECREASING IN PRIORITY RATHER THAN ONE THAT IS ACTUALLY DOING INTEGRATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

Solution: a. Bring the grazing fee in line with the new emphasis and direction by setting it at fair market value. (WO. CONGRESS)

The thing that is so wrong with this process is that it's Forest personnel that are developing law, not Congress or the people as is intended under our system of government. Not once in the entire document is there reference made to interpreting the intent of Congressional legislation. And yet they blatantly advocate increased "adverse action" and encourage "orchestrating

decisions"; and suggest "encouraging taking risk, by adding it as a performance element, through further delegation of authority"; and state there "be recognition...that changes in management... will result in appeals, litigation, and congressionals and that these are natural, appropriate..."

I ask, how could agency personnel be more arrogant? They are actually advocating that actions be taken that will lead to increased confrontation and litigation. And the way they mention again and again of the need to "Bring the grazing fee in line... by setting it at fair market value." They know as well as we permittees do that it is already costing ranchers more to run on the public lands than it costs people to run on private pasture. There can only be one motive for these kinds of actions, and that is to make it so expensive for we permittees to operate on public lands that we can not survive. (For solid data confirming the fact that it does cost ranchers more to operate on public lands than it would if they were purchasing private pasture see Documents 79, 80, 81, 82 & 83)

Other suggested policy found within the "Barrier Report" that caught my attention is as follows:

On page 8:

"PUTTING AND/OR LEAVING "STAGNANT", INEXPERIENCED, POORLY TRAINED, AND/OR UNQUALIFIED PERSONNEL IN SENSITIVE RANGE POSITIONS."

They certainly have accomplished this goal - for over the last nine years it seems that every position has been filled by the most aggressive people available within the agencies.

And on page 9:

"providing training in litigation process..."

And on page 13:

"REQUIREMENTS FOR BASE PROPERTY, ESCROW MORTGAGE WAIVER, LIVESTOCK OWNERSHIP, AND NON-USE FOR PERSONAL PREFERENCE ARE BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT."

Solution: f. Require that grazing permits revert back to the FS when a permittee no longer desires to operate on NFS lands. DO NOT ALLOW TRANSFERS.

"WE LACK THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT ALTERNATIVE GRAZING PROGRAMS WHEN THE PERMITS TRANSFER (I.E., BID SYSTEMS)."

(See Document 32, a copy of the Barrier Report itself)