



President's Message

Ken Crane

It looks like we may be in for another roller-coaster year in regards to climatic variability. Snowpacks and water supply predictions are not encouraging for irrigators, rafters, and other interests relying on stream-flows. Currently, stream-flows are similar to what we had in 2001, but NRCS predicts late season flows will dwindle sharply with many irrigators being shut-down in mid-August. However, future predictions being what they are, we will have to wait and see what the summer really has to offer.

Recent precipitation has improved the outlook for forage development, but here on the lower Snake River Plain, many of the early season species have already headed out. Sandberg's bluegrass is already in the soft dough and cheatgrass in the boot in some areas. The troubling part is these grasses are only 3-4 inches tall. Many of the annual forbs

are flowering, but other than a few south slopes I have not seen too many perennials. This early phenology is not only concerning for livestock forage, but may spell trouble for young sage grouse needing high quality forage in May and June. Hopefully, more precipitation and consistent temperatures will bring of these species along at a more normal rate.

I think these conditions are fairly localized and you do not have to gain much elevation to witness different conditions. Unseasonably warm weather earlier this spring initiated growth followed by frost that nearly shut the growth down.

The Idaho Department of Agriculture in cooperation with producers and other agencies have held a number of meetings to discuss range and grazing issues including drought. (see page 3 for related article) However, recent precipita-

tion resulted in poor attendance for most of the meetings. For those meetings that were better attended, most producers were more interested in other issues affecting them on rangelands. Sage grouse, pygmy rabbits, and stubble heights were of highest interest. With this in mind, most of the remaining meetings have been postponed until late spring or early summer and will focus more on these issues. By that time we will have a clearer idea of what the state sage grouse management plan will look like, and perhaps have more information regarding pygmy rabbits.

Even if we continue to get good moisture, I fear we will still experience water supply shortages later in the season. The BLM, Forest Service, and Idaho Department of Lands will be allowing water hauling to existing watering sites. Temporary watering sites may be developed depending on site specific circumstances. Where

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Joint Section Meeting with The Wildlife Society

Ken Crane

During our business meeting in January, it was suggested we investigate the potential of a joint meeting with the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society. I participated in a discussion at the TWS business meeting in Boise last month and their membership was very much in favor of the idea. We discussed timing and location of a potential meeting, and a bit about how it might be organized.

One of the main issues will be timing of the meeting. In the past, our section meetings have been held prior to the national meeting, either late fall, or in the case of this year in January. The TWS meetings are generally held in late February or March. A joint meeting will require a compromise of traditional meeting times by one or both organizations to make it work.

Another consideration is that the Idaho Wildlife Society is hosting their three-state section meeting in 2006. Their section includes Idaho, Washington and Oregon. If a joint meeting is to occur, we will be working not only with Idaho, but the other chapters as well. Planning for logistics and meeting content will be more involved than what we have typically experienced with the SRM section meeting and members will be asked to assist.

We will be holding a Board of Directors meeting in the near future and I request that members contact their respective directors to provide some feedback to as to what they would like. Specifically I would like to hear whether members would like to have a meeting this year with TWS considering they will be hosting their NW Section, or should we wait a year and host a joint meeting with just the Idaho Chapter? If we decide to join TWS for a meeting next year, we will also be soliciting ideas for symposia and poster presentations.

I think the opportunity to jointly meet with TWS is overdue and that if we do not elect to join them this year, we should definitely commit to do so for 2007. Contact your director, myself or Paul Butler and let us know what you would prefer.

President's Message (cont.)

possible, the agencies will also provide the opportunity to adjust grazing periods to better meet developing range conditions or needs of the permittee. Permittees as well as agencies will need to continue to observe how conditions are developing and work closely with each other to ensure that early entry/exit of allotments is not going to leave a hole in the permittee's rotation. This has not been uncommon in the past. Agencies have improved communication with each other but there are still lapses.

Several programs are available through the USDA Farm Services Agency that have been designed to assist producers in emergency situations. Producers need to contact their local FSA office in order to determine program availability. Many of the emergency programs are only available after the county has been officially designated as being in an emergency drought situation. If you feel your county fits, or will fit, into this description contact your county commissions. There have been three counties declared so far this year; Lemhi, Custer, and Canyon. These counties definitely have poor outlooks but many others are just as bad.

The University of Idaho provides a clearinghouse on their website for pasture rental where landowners can advertise the availability or need for pasture. If you have or need pasture go to the following website: <http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/pasture/>

There are a number of links to great information on managing livestock and range resources during and after drought periods as well as to the most up-to-date NRCS water supply outlook and weather forecasting on the ISDA Rangeland website: <http://www.agri.idaho.gov/animal/rangeTOC.htm>

Ken

U of I Range Club Update

The U of I Range Club has just finished their spring highway cleanup near Deary and is looking forward to new members and activities for fall. Also this fall we are going to be mounting and selling plant specimens for Idaho sections of FFA and local high schools. This will be part of our fundraising for our trip to the SRM annual meeting in February 2006. If any members would like to contribute plants, Below is a list of species that we need help collecting and the number of specimens we currently have. Those with lower numbers are the ones we need most. We would be very grateful for your help collecting a few specimens.

Katie Johnson is graduating in May and is the outgoing Range Club President. New officers have been elected. They are:

Co-Presidents: **Joshua Hyde** and **Tess Wipfli**

Vice-President: **Holly Myers**

Plant Specimens Needed			
Grasses/grasslikes	Number of Specimens	Forbs	Number of Specimens
Bluebunch wheatgrass	8	Arrowleaf balsamroot	24
Bottlebrush squirreltail	28	Curlycup gumweed	7
Cheatgrass	58	Indian paintbrush	6
Columbia needlegrass	44	Low larkspur	0
Crested wheatgrass	11	Mules ear	8
Great Basin wildrye	17	Tailcup lupine	13
Idaho fescue	32	Tall larkspur	0
Indian ricegrass	21	Taper-tip hawksbeard	5
Mountain brome	11	Western yarrow	12
Nebraska sedge	15	Wild geranium	14
Red threeawn	24	Woody Plants	
Sandberg bluegrass	16	Antelope bitterbrush	0
Smooth brome	9	Big sagebrush	14
Western wheatgrass	26	Chokecherry	24
Noxious Weeds		Coyote willow	5
Dyers woad	14	Juniper	13
Hoary cress	7	Quaking aspen	23
Leafy spurge	3	Rabbitbrush	3
Rush skeletonweed	1	Shadscale saltbush	1
Spotted knapweed	4	Snowberry	0
Yellow starthistle	0	Winterfat	6

Rangeland and Grazing Meeting in Twin Falls

Kevin Wright

In March, the Idaho Drought Task Group, a conglomeration of land management agency representatives, met to discuss this year's drought situation in the state and the concerns over low forage productivity and water availability for livestock this upcoming grazing season. In order to facilitate better communication between agency personnel and ranchers, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) has been organizing meetings around the state to not only address drought concerns but also discuss other topics effecting livestock grazing and Idaho's rangelands.

One such meeting was held in Twin Falls on April 5. Of the 30 people in attendance, half were government agency representatives and the other half were livestock producers. Six presenters' briefed livestock producers on what each of their respective agencies can do to aid ranchers and their year-round operations. Those presenting included the following: Jim McLaughlin -- Twin Falls County Executive Director, Farm Services Agency (FSA); Patti Hurley – Soil Conservation Resource Technician, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Chuck Pentzer – Water Quality Resource Conservationist, Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (SCC); Meribeth Lomkin – Lands Resource Manager, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL); Jeff Steele – Field Office Manager, Jarbidge Field Office, BLM; Scott Nennenga – Minidoka District Ranger, Sawtooth National Forest.

FSA, NRCS, and the SCC all have low interest loan and cost share programs for drought related projects. Ranchers are encouraged to contact their local FSA, NRCS, or SCC offices. IDL, BLM, and the Forest Service all assured ranchers that there would be no mandatory reductions in permits because of the drought. They were also willing and ready to work with grazing permittees in being flexible with their permits on a case by case basis. The Jarbidge Field Office will be holding allotment tours at the end of April or beginning of May to inspect forage production.

Another issue that was brought up at the meeting is the implementation of the 2004 University of Idaho Stubble Height Report. BLM just released a Technical Bulletin (available at http://www.id.blm.gov/techbul/05_02/index.htm) addressing this issue, outlining a methodology on riparian monitoring. The Forest Service and BLM will be holding training sessions around the state on how this methodology should be carried out.

Endangered Species Act concerns were also brought to the attention of those in attendance. Ken Crane updated the group on the Sage-Grouse state plan. Since the finding by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that listing Sage-Grouse is not warranted at this time, the state planning team is in discussions as to what direction the state plan should go. Before the listing decision by FWS, the plan was going to be geared towards Sage-Grouse recovery; the plan now may change directions. However, Ken warned that people still shouldn't let their guard down. Sage-Grouse could be petitioned for listing again in the future and the pygmy rabbit, another sagebrush obligate species, has been petitioned to be listed as an endangered species. Heather Tiel, from Senator Mike Crapo's office, informed the group of reforms the Senator is working on to the Endangered Species Act.

Wind Power

Meribeth Lomkin

Southern Idaho farmers and ranchers are facing a tough summer from many angles this year. Production costs keep going up, water supply is short, and while no one knows for sure, forage production may be less than average.

On March 3, I attended a Wind Power Workshop in Burley sponsored by Idaho Energy Division and Idaho Electric Cooperatives. It was obvious from the attendance at the workshop (an estimated 150 people in the morning session) that this was a topic of great local interest. Presentations were made ranging from the suitability of Idaho's open spaces for wind power generation to developing and funding power generating windmill projects varying in size from one windmill to commercial wind power farms. A variety of financing options for wind power projects ranging from tax incentives to grants were discussed. Presentations also included information on the Fossil Gulch wind farm installed this winter near Hagerman.

The net metering concept captured my attention and I think many in the room felt the same. This is a process where a small windmill can be tied into an existing power system between the power meter and

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Name That Drainage

Do you recognize this Idaho watershed? If so, a fabulous prize could be yours! Send your answers to Maribeth Lomkin at MLomkin@idl.state.id.us. There were no winners from the last newsletter. (*Apparently, we are all spending too much time in the office and not enough in the field! - eds.*)



Wind Power (cont.)

the energy consumption (home, irrigation pump, etc.). Through a contract with the local power authority the electricity generated that exceeds the electricity used is fed into the power grid. When electrical production exceeds consumption a credit is given by the power authority towards future consumption on that account. This concept held great appeal for the irrigators in the room who have watched water pumping bills and other farming expenses continue to climb. If they have water, they would sure like to reduce their cost to get it to the field.

What does all this have to do with rangelands? Net metering may be applicable for reducing costs of live-stock water pumping, but mostly, here is another potential use on Idaho's rangelands that is being considered. As with any use, there are benefits and drawbacks. Consideration of local conditions and good planning and management are going to be key. More information on wind power in Idaho can be found on the Idaho Wind Power website at <http://www.idahowind.org>.

Summer Field Tour at Idaho National Laboratory

June 11, 2005

The Idaho SRM Summer Field Tour for 2005 will be at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) on Saturday June 11. The INL covers 890 square miles of the upper Snake River Plain. The vegetation is predominately sagebrush steppe with about twenty different vegetation community types. About 25% of the INL has burned since 1994, and has fire scars known to be as old as 95 years. On the tour we will be discussing results from several research projects conducted on those fire scars. We will visit several fires of differing age to discuss short-term recovery processes and long-term re-establishment of sagebrush dominance. We will also visit some research plots where we are testing several designs for landfill covers. You are probably asking yourself at this point what landfill covers have to do with rangeland. You may be surprised to learn how understanding basic ecological processes of arid rangelands is changing how landfills are constructed. We will also visit some of the plots from the Long-Term Vegetation Transects. These plots were established in 1950 and have been monitored every few years since then.

We will meet in the parking lot of Experimental Breeder Reactor #1 (EBR 1) on the INL. EBR 1 was the first reactor to produce electricity and is now a National Historic Landmark open to the public. To get to EBR 1, take Highway 20 west from Idaho Falls (49 mi), Highway 26 west from Blackfoot (40 mi) or Highway 20/26 east from Arco (18 mi) to the intersection of Highway 20/26 and Van Buren Blvd. Look for the signs for EBR 1. Turn south on Van Buren Blvd. and go about 2 miles to EBR 1. We will depart EBR 1 for the tour at 9am sharp. I have chartered a school bus as transportation on the tour. No private or government vehicles will be allowed beyond the public areas at EBR 1. Everyone must ride the bus. Therefore, it is essential that you be on time. Once the bus leaves EBR 1, you must remain with the tour until we return to EBR 1 at about 5 pm.

The INL is a secure facility and there are certain requirements to which we must adhere for this tour once we board the bus. Some of the more important requirements include:

- No children under the age of 12.
- No weapons, alcohol or other contraband.
- No pets.
- If you are not a US citizen, please register before May 1.
- You must have a photo ID (driver's license) with you at all times while on the tour.
- You will be asked to sign a visitor log with your full name, social security number and citizenship.

You may bring cameras, binoculars, etc. We will provide lunch and drinks while on the tour. We have reserved the Group Campground at Craters of the Moon National Monument (19 mi west of Arco) for the night of June 11. Following the tour, we will meet there for a steak BBQ, homemade potato chips and fries, "the beverage wagon," entertainment, and camping. We will also provide a breakfast the following morning of pepperoni-scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and hash browns. If you have special dietary requests, please indicate on the registration form and we will contact you.

The Group Campground has limited space for vehicles and is designed primarily for tent campers. The Group Campground located on the north side of the highway and is a little over a mile from the regular campground at Craters of the Moon. If you plan to use a pickup camper or trailer, please use the regular campground (\$5.00 entrance fee and \$10.00 per night camping). We will try to provide a shuttle service between the two campgrounds if there is a demand. We would also like tent campers to carpool to further reduce the number of vehicles in the Group Campground. Extra vehicle parking is available at the Visitor Center. We recognize this may be somewhat of an inconvenience, but there are very few suitable facilities for camping in this area.

If you have any questions call Roger Blew at 208-525-9358.

Summer Field Tour Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please reserve _____ spots on the tour for me.

I have enclosed a check made out to Idaho Section SRM for \$_____ (at \$40/person, or \$50/person if after May 15) for my registration for this event.

So that we can get an accurate count, PLEASE REGISTER BEFORE JUNE 1.

If any registrants are not US Citizens, PLEASE REGISTER BEFORE MAY 1.

Yes No (please check Yes or No for each item)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is everyone covered under this registration form a US Citizen?

Is everyone covered under this registration at least twelve (12) years old?

Would you like to volunteer to help with cooking or other camp chores?

Does anyone covered under this registration have special dietary requests?

Return by May 15, 2005 to:

Roger Blew

S.M. Stoller Corp.

1780 First Avenue

Idaho Falls, ID 83401

(208) 525-9358

Next Newsletter Deadline is
July 15, 2005



Send your articles and pictures (.jpg format) to:
Juley Hankins
juley_hankins@blm.gov
or Roger Blew
rblew@stoller.com

**SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT
IDAHO SECTION OFFICERS**

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Lyman Richwine Director, Shannon Williams 756-3020
UI Range Club Pres., Katie Johnson 885-6536

**Newsletters on the Web
www.stoller-eser.com/idahosrm/**

There are lots of opportunities for you to become involved in the section activities. Give Ken Crane, Paul Butler, Bruce Hanson, a Director, or a committee chair a call and find out how you can get involved.

**Idaho Section
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