Social and Economic Characteristics of Public Land Ranchers Nationally and in Wyoming

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Project Participation

Public Lands Council

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Forest Service Department of Agriculture

Wyoming State Grazing Board

Wyoming Wool Growers Association

Wyoming County Commissioners Association

Wyoming Public Lands Council
Why?

- Public land agencies need justifiable socio-economic information to use in policy documents (e.g. EIS, EA) and management decisions.

- Understanding the diversity of ranchers will emphasize that a one-size-fits-all solution is not feasible.
Gentner and Tanaka (2002) Survey

- Determined 8 different rancher groups in western states
- Looked at reactions to potential changes in public land policy
- Followed similar survey methods in this study
Research Question

What are the different types of public land ranchers nationally and in Wyoming; how do these rancher groups compare to one another?
Objectives

To obtain statistically valid information at a national and Wyoming scale on the economic and social attributes of public lands ranchers

To understand how involved ranchers are in their local communities both economically and socially

To understand ranchers’ responses to policy changes
Survey Questions

• Questions were developed using three focus groups
  – PLC Rancher Focus Group
  – University Focus Group
  – Agency Focus Group

• Permittee lists were provided by BLM and Forest Service

• Followed methods established in Dillman et al. 2009

• IRB approval
Sample Size

– National:
  • Population 19,735
  • 37.2% response rate

– Wyoming:
  • Population 2,319
  • 47.5% response rate
Cluster Attributes

• Values
  – TRADITION
  – FAMILY
  – ECONOMY
  – STEWARDSHIP
  – FRIENDS
  – PROFIT
  – FOOD
  – PASS

• Debt-asset
• Labor (months)
  – Family
  – Hired

• Business Organization
  – Sole Proprietorship
  – General Partnership
  – Limited Partnership
  – S-corporation
  – C-corporation
  – LLC
Cluster Attributes

• Ranch Income
  – Ranching
  – Ag Commodities
  – Custom Work
  – Forestry
  – Off-Ranch Employment
  – Retirement Income
  – Stock Market
  – On-Ranch Recreation
  – Energy Development
  – Other

• Livestock Numbers
  – Cow-Calf
  – Yearling
  – Stocker
  – Sheep
  – Horses
  – Other

• Education Level

• Community Membership and Leadership
Hobby Rancher

- **Value**: Tradition
- **Livestock**: Cattle < 100 head
- **Income**:
  - 43% Ranch
  - 19% Off-ranch
  - 11% Retirement
- **Community Membership**: 3
  - Community Leadership: 1
Sheep Rancher

- **Value**: Tradition and Stewardship
- **Livestock**: Large sheep numbers
- **Income**:
  - 55% Ranch
  - 7% Ag Commodities
  - 9% Off-ranch
  - 6% Investments
- **Community Membership**: 4
- **Community Leader**: 2
Family Cattle Rancher

• **Value:** Tradition and Raising a family
• **Livestock:** Large cattle numbers
• **Income:**
  – 69% Ranch
  – 7% Off-ranch
• **Community Membership:** 4
• **Community Leadership:** 2
Corporate Rancher

- **Value:** Stewardship
- **Livestock:** Large cattle numbers
- **Income:**
  - 64% Ranch
  - 8% Ag commodities
  - 8% Other income
- **Community Membership:** 4
- **Community Leadership:** 1
Diversified Agriculture Rancher

- **Value**: Stewardship
- **Livestock**: <500 head of cattle
- **Income**:
  - 62% Ranch
  - 15% Off-ranch
  - 4% Retirement
  - 3% Ag commodities
  - 2% Forestry
- **Community Membership**: 3
- **Community Leadership**: 2
Cattle and Sheep Rancher

- **Value:** Tradition
- **Livestock:** Large numbers of cattle and sheep
- **Income:**
  - 98% Ranch
- **Community Membership:** 3
  **Community Leadership:** 1
Social Organizations

1-3 Social Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rancher Group</th>
<th>Rancher</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>n=443</td>
<td>n=367</td>
<td>n=11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>n=299</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Cattle</td>
<td>n=36</td>
<td>n=31</td>
<td>n=31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>n=7</td>
<td>n=7</td>
<td>n=4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversified Ag</td>
<td>n=147</td>
<td>n=135</td>
<td>n=4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cattle and Sheep</td>
<td>n=107</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Livestock Sales

- Cattle and Sheep
- Diversified Ag
- Corporate
- Family Cattle
- Sheep
- Hobby

Percent Response

- Less than $5,000
- $5,000-$9,999
- $10,000-$24,999
- $25,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$249,999
- $250,000+
Threat

Federal Regulation/Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rancher Groups</th>
<th>Percent Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>n=434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>n=18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Cattle</td>
<td>n=36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>n=7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversified Ag</td>
<td>n=143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle and Sheep</td>
<td>n=2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Impacts

Higher Livestock Prices

Rancher Group

Percent Responses %

- Hobby: n=454
- Sheep: n=18
- Family Cattle: n=37
- Corporate: n=7
- Diversified Ag: n=149
- Cattle and Sheep: n=2
Policy Questions

**Strategies**
1. Pass the operation on to family members
2. Continue what you are currently doing because you don’t have the resources to change
3. Intensify use of private grazing land
4. Diversify on the ranch
5. Increase herd size
6. Current operation will work in the future
7. Sell or lease land
8. Diversify off-ranch
9. Buy or lease more private grazing land to expand operation
10. Cut back on livestock production or decrease herd size
11. Other
100% AUM Reduction

Rancher Groups

- Hobby: n=402
- Sheep: n=17
- Family Cattle: n=36
- Corporate: n=5
- Diversified Ag: n=137
- Cattle and Sheep: n=2

Percent Response %

- Pass operation
- Intensify
- Increase herd size
- Sell or lease land
- Buy or lease private
- Other

- Continue current operation
- Diversify on ranch
- Current operation works in future
- Diversify off-ranch
- Cut back

Raw Text:

- 100% AUM Reduction
- Hobby Sheeps Family Cattle Corporate Diversified Ag Cattle and Sheep
- Pass operation Continue current operation Intensify Diversify on ranch Increase herd size Current operation works in future Buy or lease private Diversify off-ranch Sell or lease land Cut back Other

- Rancher Groups n=402 n=17 n=36 n=5 n=137 n=2

Graph showing the percent response for different rancher groups with various options.
Spring Grazing Season

Hobby: n=384
Sheep: n=17
Family Cattle: n=35
Corporate: n=5
Diversified Ag: n=131
Cattle and Sheep: n=2

Rancher Groups

Percent Response %

- Pass operation
- Intensify
- Increase herd size
- Sell or lease land
- Buy or lease private
- Other
- Continue current operation
- Diversify on ranch
- Current operation works in future
- Diversify off-ranch
- Cut back

n=384
n=17
n=35
n=5
n=131
n=2
$8+ Grazing Fee

Rancher Groups

- Hobby (n=384)
- Sheep (n=18)
- Family Cattle (n=36)
- Corporate (n=6)
- Diversified Ag (n=136)
- Cattle and Sheep (n=2)

- Pass operation
- Intensify
- Increase herd size
- Sell or lease land
- Buy or lease private
- Other
- Continue current operation
- Diversify on ranch
- Current operation works in future
- Diversify off-ranch
- Cut back

Percent Response %
Wyoming Results
Wyoming Rancher Groups

- Four rancher groups in Wyoming
  - Small Cow-Calf Rancher
  - Sheep Rancher
  - Yearling Rancher
  - Large Cow-Calf Rancher

- All value tradition
- <40% of income from ranch
- Bachelor’s Degree
Western Custom and Culture

Public Hunting and Fishing Occasional Culture Erosion

Livestock Wyoming Neighbors Income Family

Traditional Ways Cattle Future Generations

Ranch Western Way of Life Horses Birds Land

Annual Open Space Modern Local Produce Contribute Recreation Providing Food Remain
Economic Vitality

Family  Returned  Shop  Million  Land  Raise  Food  Contribute
Open  Spaces  Wyoming  Local  Charities  Community  Produce
Buy  Local  Resources  Taxes  Quality  Ranch  Purchase  Our
Supplies  Business  Public  Money  Energy  Income  Mineral
Employment  School  District  Labor
Ranch Viability

Percent Response

Rancher Group

Small Cow-Calf  Sheep  Yearling  Large Cow-Calf

No  Yes

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%
Conclusion

• Public land ranchers across the nation are diverse.

• Economics of rancher operations are diverse.

• Ranchers are involved in their local communities and hold leadership roles.

• Responses to public land policy change are diverse showing the heterogeneity of public land ranchers.
Thank you!

- Public Lands Council
- Bureau of Land Management
- USDA Forest Service
Questions??