

Report of the Applied Science Task Force to the Society for Range Management Advisory Council at the 2013 Annual Meeting

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Executive Summary

This report further defines the concerns of land managers—an important constituent of the Society for Range Management—that their needs and interests in practical applications of science relevant to their rangeland management are not being fully addressed, and develops recommendations for specific actionable items.

We generally concur with the conclusion to the November 2012 issue of *Rangeland Ecology & Management* on “Big Questions Emerging from a Century of Rangeland Science and Management” that among the “grand challenges for resilience-based management” is building the organizations to promote it, especially “the creation of stronger partnerships between ecosystem managers, science organizations, management agencies, and policymakers at local, regional, and national to international levels to create learning communities or ‘social learning institutions’” (Bestelmeyer and Briske 2012: p. 659). The SRM is such a multi-scaled social learning institution. We submit that practical applied-science content in SRM publications, workshops, and outreach efforts strengthens those partnerships, and that *Rangelands* should play a leading role in facilitating those partnerships and knowledge systems.

Effective social learning institutions require that top-down flow of knowledge (from science to management agencies to end users) be balanced with collaborative, bottom-up flow including management experience and traditional ecological knowledge (Brunson 2012; Bestelmeyer and Briske 2012). This is the applied-science content that many land managers have expressed they want to be included in *Rangelands* as well as other SRM publications and functions.

The ASTF was formed by a resolution of the SRM Advisory Council (AC), “Applied Science for Land Managers” (AC 2011). We sought the input of SRM members, and target non-members, especially land managers, regarding applied science content. The concerns defined and recommendations developed were initially submitted in the Report of the ASTF to the SRM AC at the 2012 Annual Meeting (ASTF 2012). That report was presented to the Board of Directors and sent to the appropriate SRM committees and sections for further input, which was

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summarized by the Advisory Council Chairman in a comment matrix (Appendix A). These comments and our responses to them are now a part of this report (ASTF 2013). This report fulfills the advisory role of the ASTF as resolved by the AC (2011). Implementation of these recommendations is up to the Board of Directors and the appropriate committees.

Purpose and Need

The Applied Science Task Force (ASTF) was created at the 2011 Society for Range Management (SRM) Advisory Council (AC) meeting in Billings, Montana, following a discussion exploring the overall subject of communicating the significant body of science-based practical rangeland management knowledge that exists in SRM, and addressing constructive criticism of *Rangelands*, specifically working towards more reader-friendly applied science and management content.

The following resolution was approved during the 2011 AC meeting:

Applied Science for Land Managers

Whereas a significant component of the membership of the Society for Range Management are land managers; and

Whereas successful land managers greatly benefit from practical applied science in the art of range management; and

Whereas many SRM-member land managers have stated to Advisory Council representatives that their needs and interests in practical applications of science relevant to their rangeland management are not being fully addressed; and

Whereas such concerns are leading some of these SRM-member land managers to question the value of their continued membership; and

Whereas SRM continues to be uniquely positioned to promote, provide and facilitate practical applications of science for the use of rangeland managers.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Directors (BOD) of The Society for Range Management redouble its efforts to effectively promote and facilitate practical applications of science to land managers consistent with the mission of SRM; and

Be it further resolved that the BOD create a task force to further define the relevant issues raised by the aforementioned members and develop recommendations for specific actionable items to satisfactorily address stated concerns that could include:

- engaging the appropriate committees to assist in facilitating the solicitation of practical applied science content in *Rangelands* and other SRM publications, workshops, and outreach efforts, and
- engaging with SRM sections to promote practical and applied science to existing and potential members, and

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- creating relationships with other groups (i.e., GLCI, extension, etc.) that promote practical and applied science.

The task force recommended to the board includes the following members:

Lisa Van Amburg, CO - Chair
Doug Tolleson AZ
Summer Schulz WY

Jeff Goodwin TX
Jim Thorpe NM
Matt Barnes CO

Approach

To “further define the relevant issues raised by the aforementioned members and develop recommendations for specific actionable items to satisfactorily address stated concerns,” members of the ASTF spent the 2011-12 year soliciting comments from SRM members and non-members (sometimes former members) to learn what their concerns and suggestions are about the ability of SRM to provide timely, useful, applied science information to its members and the public, in general and specifically in *Rangelands*.

The ASTF concentrated on identifying opportunities that might address the issues and concerns brought forward. The ASTF efforts have resulted in a number of recommendations for specific actionable items. However, it is apparent that any effort to implement the recommendations will require the involvement of existing committees, other organizations, and continued SRM leadership.

At the 2012 annual meeting, the SRM BOD voted to continue the work of the ASTF through 2013. This report has been revised to reflect the work conducted by the ASTF in the year since the 2012 annual meeting. It now includes a comment matrix outlining responses to comments from the ASTF 2012 report (Appendix A). Changes and additions to the original report in the following Results and Discussion are indicated in italics.

Results and Discussion

The ASTF heard many comments, which resulted in some reoccurring issues being identified:

1. The *Rangelands* publication was identified as one of the most critical applied science communication tools available within the SRM,
2. a general lack of awareness of currently available resources provided by SRM, and
3. underutilization of contemporary digital media platforms electronic media.

Other issues were expressed by individuals and have been included for informational purposes, but were not expressed as frequently.

1. **The *Rangelands* journal**

Statement of need

Membership in SRM is as diverse as the lands we love and manage. SRM currently has two peer-reviewed journals, *Rangeland Ecology and Management (REM)* and *Rangelands*. *REM* is the scientific journal of the society. *Rangelands* is technical, but not a scientific journal; it is described on the SRM website as:

“...the membership journal of the Society for Range Management. The readers come from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, training, and occupations. There is a common interest in Rangelands and all its living and non-living aspects. Content of articles, therefore, could reflect this wide array of interests. Articles could convey technical information, profile an individual, recount history, share a success story, or comment on a "hot topic." Authors should support their articles with evidence and the knowledge base of rangelands science, management, and practice.”

Writing style for *Rangelands* is described on the SRM website as:

“Manuscripts for Rangelands should be written accurately, clearly, and concisely. Articles can convey technical information, but should be written in a non-technical style. The writing style for Rangelands articles is not the writing style used in scientific journals like Rangeland Ecology & Management.”

The website further describes *Rangelands* as:

“The [Rangelands] journal provides readers relevant information founded in the current rangeland science and management knowledge base in a user friendly, non-technical format. Rangelands is intended for a wide range of individuals including educators, students, rangeland owners and managers, researchers, and policy leaders.”

Although this seems straightforward, there has been an ongoing debate within SRM as to what *Rangelands* should be and how “scientific” or “technical” it is. The central issue with *Rangelands* is the lack of clarity in the vision of what kind of publication it is supposed to be. This needs to be addressed before delving into the details of the publication.

Many rangeland professionals who work in applied science professions (including government agencies, consultants, university extension specialists and producers) have expressed that it has become “*REM* lite” and is too technical for the non-scientific reader to understand and apply. This often limits the usefulness in applying the information from *Rangelands* on the ground or sharing it with other non-scientific stakeholders (permittees, producers, clients). Others from academic professions (professors, researchers, and a few consultants) have expressed that it is not scientific enough, and that SRM may lose scientific credibility by publishing articles on, for example, the history of a grazing allotment or a new and improved fence design.

Rangeland management has long been described as *an art and a science*. That, and the fact that our profession is comprised of both scientists and practitioners, is why we have two journals. We have *REM* to highlight scientific research and its implications for management, and *Rangelands* to highlight the *art* of management (science applications to management).

This seems to flow naturally from the official description of *Rangelands*. Nevertheless the current format is essentially the academic model of peer review and page charges to authors—rather than the popular-press model of authors being paid for their work, with publication costs supported by subscriptions, advertising, and charitable contributions. Not surprisingly, then, a typical spread of *Rangelands* looks a lot more like *REM* than it does a magazine like *Range* or *Working Ranch* or *High Country News*. Our SRM publication of course is a professional journal – and *not* a general or niche interest magazine – and as such strives to serve the needs and address the interests of its somewhat diverse community of subscribers in the context of a dynamic and ever-evolving (and increasingly challenged) profession.

The bulk of the comments gathered from SRM members and other rangeland professionals (i.e., ranchers, consultants, academics) dealt with accessibility, timeliness, and applicability, rather than the technical quality or scientific accuracy of articles. They fell into two related categories:

There are not enough articles that a producer or manager can easily interpret or apply to their daily work. Specifically, some of the articles in some of the themed issues were too much like scientific papers and were too dense or esoteric. This is a significant departure from the 2006 survey (Frasier 2006) which found that 89% of respondents rated article relevance “good” or “excellent.”

The process to publish an article in Rangelands is too difficult and/or complicated for a non-academic person to undertake. These complications include time to respond to reviewers’ comments, access to software and resources, and page charges. Specifically, one individual said that they had written an article for *Rangelands*, but the reviewers wanted so much documentation that the published article had three times as many references as the style guidelines indicate is appropriate (a maximum of 15), and that it took a week of full-time work to do the additional research. This author felt that they should have published elsewhere for a lot less effort, and gotten paid for their work. Finding a balance between quality control and accessibility for the more “practical” potential authors may increase persons willing/able to submit publications.

We recognize the work that everyone associated with Rangelands has put forth in the last year. The comments received from members have been increasingly positive with many of the 2012 articles. We would like to congratulate the editorial staff for earning the 2012 Gold Excel Award for general journal excellence. We hope to continue the current trend and continue to pursue authorship from a varied audience.

Recommendations

- The publication and webpage should state in bold print right up front that the opinions of the authors are not the opinions of the SRM, so that publication does not imply endorsement.
 - *The current publication has 1.4 pages dedicated to the description of SRM and Rangelands. This statement is currently included in that documentation. It has been suggested to redesign these pages and possibly compress to one page.*
- The peer review process should be much less cumbersome than it is in a scientific journal (e.g., *REM*).

- *The editorial board should continue to pursue the appropriate level of review process relative to the scientific or technical content of the contributed article.*
- Pair scientific and practitioner authors when authoring papers with each co-author bringing their expertise, experience and perspective to the topic at hand.
 - *The Colorado Section is currently piloting this approach in the upcoming sponsored issue on strategic grazing management.*
- Discrete sections. These could be marked with different-colored tabs on the page edge.
- Publish summaries of SRM symposia.
- *Rangelands* should be where we go for serious philosophical discussions related to rangelands.
- This section could include a series of 1-page “Profiles” and “Conversations”
- A sponsored series "Practitioner's Forum" that would highlight on-the-ground work by innovative producers, agencies, and the like
 - *Rangelands is currently exploring the opportunity or usefulness to utilize these recommendations.*
- A "How-to" section, or at least an article, in every issue. This was also identified as the most desired article type in the 2006 survey (Frasier 2006).
- The masthead currently includes a "Youth Editor", but there are no youth articles.
 - *Evaluate the necessity of the current youth editor and encourage current range students to submit articles. This task could be taken up by active sitting educators on the editorial board.*
- Set up a feedback loop whereby readers can "vote" on and score specific articles.
 - *This could be done on the existing Facebook page by posting article titles and asking users to “like”.*
- Provide more “sidebars” or similar features that explain technical terms and concepts.
 - *This could be utilized in the more technical articles to keep the content adequately scientific while still making the subject more understandable to the non-scientific readership.*
- Use English and metric units side by side, and common species names along side the scientific
 - *This has become standard practice.*
- Encourage those who have a unique and useful story to tell it through a publication in *Rangelands* and encourage SRM Sections to develop articles.
 - *Conduct a “Writing for Rangelands” Workshop at the 2015 annual SRM meeting to encourage members to tell a success or lessons learned story. This may remove some of the mis-information regarding the difficulty of getting published in the journal.*
 - *Rangelands will begin including an “On the Ground” summary*

2. **Lack of awareness of currently available resources provided by SRM**

Statement of need

While soliciting comments from members and non-members it became obvious that many non-active members, former members, and non-members were unaware of the many SRM resources available to them. The SRM has undergone significant efforts to improve accessibility to resources; yet information regarding these resources appears to not be reaching many federal agency employees (about 36% of the SRM membership, the largest demographic) or other non-active members or non-members.

Recommendations

- Initiate outreach campaigns
- Create a non-member survey
- Create and utilize agency liaisons
- Plan a “re-launching” of SRM
- Fill the vacant Outreach Coordinator position

The ASTF feels as though each of these actions could be easily taken and should be initiated by the appropriate committee. The current member survey was outreached to non-member agency personnel (USFS, BLM, and NRCS) in an effort to receive feedback from non-members. This effort could be focused and expanded if desired.

3. **Underutilization of “modern” media**

Statement of need

This may link to the lack of awareness presented above, however many members have expressed that the utilization of some “modern” modes of media (i.e., internet video [e.g., You Tube], social networking media, blogs, archive of posters or presentations, webinars) may be underutilized. Younger members of the society do not see these things as “modern” media, but rather just media. Expanding the use of these media may be a way to reach a wider audience and provide a forum for non-scientific case studies. The SRM Outreach blog has featured some interesting material, but it is decoupled from the SRM website.

Recommendations

- Create a place on the SRM website for an indexed and searchable archive of posters and/or presentations from annual meetings, so that other members could reference the poster for future use.

- Create a place on the SRM website for an indexed and searchable archive of syntheses of SRM symposia.
- An online forum where ideas or scientifically (or experientially) based “white papers” composed by members, science papers from other journals, or popular press articles, questions from practitioners, etc. could be posted and discussed.
 - *ASTF agrees that using an existing source is preferable to creating new site and should explore the opportunity to create this relationship. An appointment should be made to identify a person (possibly in the existing outreach committee) to focus specifically on exploring and developing this opportunity.*
- Record and archive the producer forums and similar events at the annual meetings.
 - *The ASTF recommends further exploring the potential of new digital media and identifying opportunities to economically utilize the sources and identify possible clearinghouses and relationships.*

4. Other comments

- Include science application considerations in any upcoming SRM surveys.
 - *The current survey may provide some insight into this issue.*
- Increase common speakers/workshops where everyone hears the same speaker and can discuss later.
 - *The format of the Annual Meetings will surely be an issue in the future and this option could be further explored. Again, asking the members for feedback would be useful. This could be done at the meetings in paper format.*
- Develop a program such as a HPP (Habitat Partnership Program)
 - *The function of the SRM and lack of available funds limits this option*
- Have sections nominate the best presentation dealing with applied science issues from their section meetings, and reward the presenter with a scholarship to the SRM annual meeting.
- Section meetings and tours are usually focused on practical applied science topics. These events could be written up and shared through *Rangelands* or on the website.
 - *This could be one of the tabbed sections of Rangelands proposed above.*
- Develop a mentoring program that could target new members
 - *These suggestions may be most useful at the Section level, but could be supported and initiated at the National level.*
- Have a “bookstore” room at the annual meeting for rangeland literature.
 - *Create a “virtual” bookstore location at the annual meeting (board or table) where members can share new reading materials with other members.*

Conclusion

This report further defines the concerns of land managers—an important constituent of the SRM—that their needs and interests in practical applications of science relevant to their rangeland management are not being fully addressed, and develops recommendations for specific actionable items.

The SRM is a multi-scaled social learning institution, and will be more relevant and effective in promoting resilience-based rangeland management as “bottom-up” collaborative learning is incorporated in its publications, workshops, and outreach functions. This includes the experiential knowledge of land managers, who should be major contributors to the SRM’s overall knowledge system, especially *Rangelands* and electronic media.

The format of *Rangelands*, and its peer review and publication processes, should reflect a publication that highlights the art of management as informed by science and is primarily by and for land managers, rather than an outlet to disseminate information from science to managers. The SRM should also continue to develop the use of electronic media, including social networking, the website, informational websites hosted by partner organizations, internet video, and online publishing. These media should be freely available to the public and actively promoted to both members and target non-members.

By defining the concerns of land managers in SRM and recommending action items relative to applied science content, this report (including comments from the appropriate committees and SRM sections, and our responses [Appendix A]) fulfills the advisory role of the ASTF as resolved by the AC (2011). Thus we recommend disbanding the task force. Implementation of these recommendations is up to the Board of Directors and the appropriate committees.

Literature Cited

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Appendix A. Comment response matrix from the ASTF 2012 report

| Comment Resolution Matrix | | | |
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| Society for Range Management – Advisory Council | | | |
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| Authors: Lisa VanAmburg , Jim Thorpe , Matt Barnes , Jeff Goodwin , and Doug Tolleson | | | |
| Reviewers: Various | | | |
| No. | Line No. | Comment | Resolution (by Authors) |
| 1 | General | I believe your committee is right on the money. There is a great need for information about rangeland programs and the people who manage and live on them that is not being developed and distributed. I appreciate and support the work of your committee. | Thank you for your comment. |
| 2 | General | I do think that most of the ideas are good ones. Unfortunately they take either volunteer time or money. Someone has to be out there fund-raising for many of these good ideas and SRM has to have the capacity to manage contracts, budgets, volunteers, and projects. | Agreed that there is a need for increased participation to initiate ASTF suggestions. |
| 3 | General | I see a lot of good ideas here. More importantly, I see a lot of hard work and thought went into this, and I'm grateful for the work of the task force. This has been a valuable exchange of ideas. | The ASTF appreciates your comment |
| 4 | Rangelands General | The fact that it takes you 9 pages to ask “should we include articles in “Rangelands” that are readable, understandable and useful to the managers of rangelands” indicates a significant lack of understanding of applied science as it relates to private range lands. One paragraph would have covered it nicely. | The ASTF has noted your comment. |
| 5 | Rangelands General | I rarely read Rangelands. I used to, but there are two issues. One is that most of the articles do not apply to the Nebraska Sandhills where I live and work. I don't know if you could direct articles, or a small periodical within Rangelands to regions or not, but would suggest that you consider doing so. | There is opportunity to work with <i>Rangelands</i> to dedicate an issue to regions. Typically this requires substantial |

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| | | | <p>funding from that region. It is suggested to work with your local SRM section.</p> |
| 6 | Rangelands General | <p>The second is that sorting through the technical jargon is time consuming and frustrating. Those of you on Government salary seldom realize the volume of work a self employed individual involved in production agriculture is required to complete to survive. I do have a bachelors in ag and two advanced degrees. I can usually decipher what you are saying, but choose to direct my time toward information that is stated clearly and directly gets to the point. An executive summary at the beginning of an article would be appreciated.</p> | <p>ASTF recommended minimizing the use of technical jargon in <i>Rangelands</i>, and the use of English with metric units and the use of common names with scientific names. <i>Rangelands</i> will have an "On The Ground" summary.</p> |
| 7 | SRM General | <p>Yes, you do have both the Journal and Rangelands magazine. Yes, if you want to be considered relevant to private rangeland managers, you do need to include articles directed at reality, not another researcher.</p> | <p>Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| 8 | SRM General | <p>Have you analyzed what % of your organization is involved in production ag? I suspect a very small percentage, and there are ample reasons most ranchers feel that you are irrelevant to their ranching operations and choose not to be part of the Society.</p> | <p>SRM conducted a member survey in the late 1990's that indicated that there was a very small component of the membership comprised of individuals involved in production agriculture.</p> <p>The current member survey being conducted should be used to assess the current membership component linked to production agriculture.</p> <p>ASTF agrees that there are ample reasons for ranchers to choose not to be part of the Society, but also feels that it is important to</p> |

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| | | | continue to outreach to them as they do manage large areas of rangelands. |
| 9 | 90-92 | the report states, "The central issue with Rangelands is the lack of clarity in the vision of what kind of publication it is supposed to be. This needs to be addressed before delving into the details of the publication." I don't necessarily disagree with the statement, but would ask that you specify where the lack of clarity lies. Is it on the part of those responsible for publishing Rangelands: the editorial staff or the Steering Committee or the official statements by the Society? Or is it a lack of clarity of understanding on the part of the membership? It seems to me a lot of the discussion hasn't been a disagreement about the purpose of Rangelands, but rather differing visions about what constitutes "too technical" or "too scientific" for an audience of informed non-scientists. | Based on the comments received by the ASTF, many <i>Rangeland</i> subscribers indicate that the articles have steadily become more scientific over the last 5 years. Many feel that <i>Rangelands</i> has become the place that authors go to publish when they are rejected from other "scientific" journals, such as REM. It is difficult to determine the source of the lack of clarity, however it would be important to the success of <i>Rangelands</i> to note the types of articles that were being published when subscriptions were highest. It seems the clarity needs to be determined among all mentioned. |
| 10 | 99-100 | This is not accurate. The concern about scientific credibility is driven by the publication of articles in Rangelands that are not supported by the existing scientific literature. That is, the articles published are not accurate or do not reflect the technical knowledge that our scientists have documented. See lines 80 – 82. This was lacking from the old Rangelands. | The ASTF acknowledges that there is a difference between scientific credibility based on defensible literature referenced, methods and statistics applied, etc... and credibility that might result from a reader feeling that a scientific publication (basic or applied) is not an appropriate venue for (just for instance) articles |

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| | | | <p>on fence design or ranch history. We support a review process that upholds this level of integrity and understand that when appropriate, this takes time to do right. We do, however, propose that labeling sections of Rangelands as (just for instance) science, history, youth, mgmt case study, etc... would help address this issue. See item 26.</p> |
| 11 | 101 | <p>I like the approach on the art and science of range management. However, I don't think we want either of journals to be one or the other. It is after all "art and science", not "art or science." Both should blend the two concepts even though the emphasis may differ. REM is science but attempts to get authors to consider the art (management implications section). Rangelands is art but based on science. Otherwise we become those niche publications mentioned throughout.</p> | <p>ASTF feels that there can be a balance between the science and the art. Additionally it should be recognized that sometimes the art precedes the science and it needs some time to "catch up" to the art or that the scale of the art does not easily lend itself to the science directly.</p> |
| 12 | 103-104 | <p>I have seen no documentation from SRM that this describes the mission of these two publications you describe here. Is that really the difference in these two periodicals?</p> | <p>The following are excerpts from the SRM website:</p> <p>"The [REM] journal's mission is to inform academics, ecosystem managers and policy makers of science-based information to promote sound rangeland stewardship."</p> <p>"The [<i>Rangelands</i>] journal provides readers relevant information founded in the current rangeland science and management knowledge base</p> |

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| | | | in a user friendly, non-technical format. <i>Rangelands</i> is intended for a wide range of individuals including educators, students, rangeland owners and managers, researchers, and policy leaders.” |
| 13 | 105-108 | This is the business model Rangelands has been directed to operate under by the BOD. If SRM members wish to pay for a commercial publication, then they must be willing to pay for it. | Thank you for your comment. |
| 14 | 117-120 | Content is driven by articles submitted. The editor can only publish the articles that are submitted. Who do you propose will write these articles? | Producers and land managers. |
| 15 | 127-128 | I whole heartedly agree with lines 127 & 128 that practitioners working outside of the academic community find it difficult to pass through the peer review process in order to be published in Rangelands. A balance must be struck between providing timely technical information while being careful to maintain quality science and fact based articles to the readers of Rangelands. Focusing on the practitioners and producers through the Rangelands publication not only appeals to a broader audience and membership of SRM, but it gives these folks a voice as well. The feeling that academic standards have taken control of Rangelands, and at times the audience being targeted is strictly academic is valid. | ASTF appreciates your comments and encourages you to voice your thoughts further to the <i>Rangeland</i> Steering committee. |
| 16 | 127-128 | I don't believe we should apologize for having complicated articles. To paraphrase Joel (I think), if this were rocket science, rangeland management would be easy. Of course, writing in a manner that gets complex points across in a less complex manner is something we all strive to do (I think). | The ASTF agrees that rangeland ecology is complex. It should be recognized that there may be articles that are not best suited to be published in Rangelands and would be better suited to a more technical publication. “The [<i>Rangelands</i>] journal provides readers relevant information founded in the current rangeland science and |

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| | | | management knowledge base in a user friendly, non-technical format. <i>Rangelands</i> is intended for a wide range of individuals including educators, students, rangeland owners and managers, researchers, and policy leaders.” |
| 17 | 127-135 | the paragraph that begins on line 127: another commenter suggests we shouldn't apologize for having articles that are too complicated. I would expand that to suggest we shouldn't apologize for having a <u>publication process</u> that protects the Society and its members from the adverse impacts of statements made in one of our flagship publications that can't be backed up by evidence. If authors don't have time to respond to reviewers' comments, then they fundamentally don't want to stand behind their words. That's fine in a blog post or comments to an online article, but we're talking about an official organ of the Society for Range Management and there simply has to be some accountability. | ASTF recommends simplifying the publication process without sacrificing credibility where appropriate and continue to look for opportunities to encourage members to submit articles. |
| 18 | 129-133 | This is likely because of the requirement that information published in <i>Rangelands</i> accurately reflect the status of our scientific knowledge of the topic (see lines 80-81). If the reviewers are asking for more references, it is likely because the author is not accurately reflecting the science that necessarily underlies our profession. | Your comment is noted. |
| 19 | 137-139 | I strongly disagree with this suggestion. A statement that the contents of <i>Rangelands</i> are authors' opinions and not necessarily those of SRM does protect the society, but it also implies that whatever's published in <i>Rangelands</i> is merely opinion, and not backed by evidence. As someone who's job calls for me to provide scientifically credible information to stakeholders (managers, scientists, etc.) I would not want to publish in an outlet that trumpets such a disclaimer. | This statement already exists. Embedded in the inside cover under <i>Rangelands</i> heading reads: “...all material published herein is signed and reflects the individual views of the authors and is not necessarily and official position for the Society.” |
| 20 | 140-146 | The peer review process was implemented as a result of Board action as a previous editor was allowing pretty much anything in whether it was scientifically valid/supported or | The ASTF feels as though there is opportunity to simplify this process for |

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| | | not. I believe that Joel, Dave, and I were in the middle of all that. The review process is much easier than what would be expected in REM, but it is still a review process. As with any peer review process, having reviewers that are cognizant of the journal for which they are reviewing is very important. If someone has only done articles for REM (or similar publications), it is somewhat difficult to “tone it down.” Along those lines, the submission process through PeerTrack should be revised for Rangelands specific articles. It appears to be for REM and was just ported over. | articles that are not scientific, but based on science. |
| 21 | 141 | 141: "Fact-checking" isn't as straightforward as it sounds. We have lots of disagreements among our members about what constitutes a "fact" (to give just one example, that there's such a thing as evolution). I'm not sure how this would limit de facto censorship. | Clarification on the comment needed. |
| 22 | 142-144 | None of these questions address the issue of accurately reflecting our scientific understanding of the topic. | The ASTF agrees. They address whether the article has broad appeal and general interest, and whether it is accessible, relevant and practical to a broad audience. These all seem important factors to consider to have a large subscriber base. |
| 23 | 147-153 208-210 | Pairing authors is a tricky business. I know I encourage my Extension faculty to work with producers to tell stories, especially those that they nominate for the Excellence in Rangeland Management award and other similar recognitions. | True. This approach is being piloted in the upcoming sponsored issue on strategic grazing management. |
| 24 | 152 | Putting in or requiring a Management Implication section will make it more REM-like rather than less. I think something like a section that summarizes Blending Art and Science would be better. This would likely only be relevant for some of the articles. | The ASTF recommendation attempted to highlight the link between the science and the application of the science. It is recognized that this would not always |

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| | | | be appropriate. |
| 25 | 154-155 | I don't believe we should have different editorial standards for different writings. Different writing has different purposes, but still has to meet editorial standards. | The report states: "clearly labeled they can have different editors, different standards of peer review, etc. There is no mention of "editorial standards". |
| 26 | 154-155 | "...different standards of peer review..." There should be only one standard of peer review: accurately reflect the scientific underpinnings of our profession. | To continue with response from item 10, we agree that there should be one standard of excellence for our publications and our profession. There can however be different, appropriate paths of peer review based on content and the type of article that could encourage submission and readership from the more management oriented membership. |
| 27 | 154-161 | The discrete sections would be good, but I think we already have them. Color coding should be easy given we already do full color. It would just take grouping the stories together. | Similar to items 10 and 26, color coding/labeling would identify the type of article for the reader and facilitate their judging the usefulness of the information to them on an article by article basis. |
| 28 | 158-161 | Comparison to commercial publications is irrelevant. HCN has a very different purpose and business model than Rangelands. Alternatively, SRM should develop a business model that would allow Rangelands to compete with HCN. | The ASTF report does not compare publications; it merely mentions other types of articles in other media. |
| 29 | 162-165 | Summaries of symposia are good, again if they are written | A good suggestion for |

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| | | well. Better yet would be for symposia organizers to sponsor issues. | sponsorship. |
| 30 | 166-169 | I think this is already possible under the present mission for Rangelands. Someone needs to submit the articles. Who do you propose to write them? | ASTF suggests SRM put out a call for authors that may be interested in this type of writing. |
| 31 | 166-170 | The place to go for serious philosophical discussions? I'm not sure about that. I think those discussions occur at our various section and international meetings, at drinking holes, and out on the rangeland. The types of articles described can help that, but the journal is not the place to have discussions unless it means that if I write an opinion piece one month, someone else can write a rebuttal 2 months later and then I can respond two months after that. | ASTF recognized that "discussions" may not have been the correct language. Maybe a word such as "considerations" would have been more appropriate. |
| 32 | 171-178 | Although "Susan McGuire" has written pretty much any of the person profiles that have appeared in Rangelands in recent years, I'm not sure there's any prohibition against other authors proposing to submit an article about a range person in the style of HCN's "Uncommon Westerners" series. It's just that no one has. | ASTF suggests SRM put out a call for authors that may be interested in this type of writing. |
| 33 | 171-178 | I think this is already possible under the present mission for Rangelands. Someone needs to submit the articles. Who do you propose to write them? | ASTF suggests SRM put out a call for authors that may be interested in this type of writing. |
| 34 | 179 | Line 179: Related to the previous comment, I'd be very happy to read articles about innovative producers, agencies, etc. But I'm not sure I like the distinction between "practitioners" and regular authors or subjects of Rangelands articles. Could it not imply that the articles not in a Practitioner's Forum are submitted by persons who don't know firsthand what they're talking about. Sometimes I'm sure that's true, but in other cases it's clearly not. | The ASTF agrees with your comment and did not intend to imply the suggested distinction. |
| 35 | 179-186 | I think a sponsored series at \$300/article is not thinking large enough. I think if someone was serious about this, there is the opportunity to raise funds for a sponsored issue-type approach and the big funders mentioned (as well as sections and maybe even SRM) would support it. | Thank you for your comment. The Colorado section is currently working with others to do this and piloting this |

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| | | | approach. |
| 36 | 187-188 | What is meant by “practical”? Some members would suggest that the articles in <i>Rangelands</i> now are “practical.” This needs to be focused at what the “range profession” includes. | As the report states: “The ASTF and the Editorial Board could supply articles for the first year, and probably many more would come in from the field once people see that <i>Rangelands</i> is the outlet for such information.” |
| 37 | 193-195 | Are youth articles being published in <i>Rangelands</i> ? Was the Youth Editor contacted by the ASTF? | The ASTF did not find recent youth articles in <i>Rangelands</i> . The ASTF did not feel it appropriate to contact the editor directly. |
| 38 | 196 | I'm intrigued by the rating option, but remember that it would have to be an online feature, and not everyone reads the publication online. Also, it would be important to protect authors from abuse of this feature (e.g., if someone who doesn't like the message loads the system with "Not relevant" ratings, as that would reflect back on the author at some point). | The feature could be accessible on-line separate from the on-line publication. Agreed. There could be protections for example, were only SRM members could vote and you would need to be logged in to vote for example. |
| 39 | 179-202 | Please remember, too, that any time we suggest that each issue should carry articles of a particular kind, we greatly complicate Lori's job. She has very strict deadlines to which she must adhere. She can't delay because one half of a paired-article series isn't ready yet, or there isn't a good "How-To" or "Practitioner's Forum" piece. | Agreed. ASTF recognizes the difficult job what Lori has and her hard work. |
| 40 | 203-205 | Again good idea, someone just has to write them or identify the concepts that need more explanation. The authors probably think everyone should know what they are talking about. | ASTF would recommend assigning a member of the editorial board for this task. |
| 41 | 211-212 | Good idea. If sections would buy in and encourage articles, especially from the Excellence nominees, that would seem to | ASTF recommends presenting this formally to |

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| | | <p>go at least part way in addressing the apparent issue. Most sections are sitting on a large pool of investments or cash and this would seem to be a way they could further their mission. Maybe the AC should ask every section to donate \$1,000 or whatever to a Rangelands fund that the editor can use to get papers done. That would be something like \$21,000. I'm guessing some could afford more and some less. If this is a high priority to the sections, hopefully they would support it.</p> | <p>section presidents for feedback from the sections.</p> |
| 42 | 213-215 | <p>We confuse ourselves on this one. If you look in the glossary of terms, "range" is defined as grazing lands while "rangeland" is defined as a type of land. Yet we use the terms interchangeably (also note the name of the society). Good luck finding a subtitle that members will be happy with!</p> | <p>You are correct. Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| 43 | 222-225 | <p>What is SRM doing that results in a failure of specifically federal employees from being reached regarding SRM resources?</p> | <p>It is difficult to identify what SRM is doing that is resulting in a failure to engage Federal employees. However, the decline in attendance of annual meetings by federal employees is an indicator that SRM is less relevant in the federal membership. The comments that the ASTF received indicate that this is directly related to the lack of applied science presented and applicability of research being presented.</p> |
| 44 | 233-234 | <p>As one who has done a lot of survey research, I can tell you that it would be dang near impossible to do a survey of non-members who are potential members with any sort of reliability. Obtaining a representative sample would be very difficult, if not impossible, and people rarely respond to surveys anymore unless it's about something that's especially salient to them. (And if SRM were especially salient to them, they'd already be members, right?) We can do surveys of former members, and I think we could put more effort there.</p> | <p>ASTF thanks you for your insight and your recommendation. We would also recommend students and recent graduates.</p> |

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| 45 | 240-248 | <p>“underutilization of ‘modern’ electronic media” – I find this whole discussion fascinating. I’ve been told over the years that students entering college these days are so much more technologically advanced than previous generations. While I generally agree with that, the real issue is how they use that technology. I would guess that very few of our students enter being very proficient in Microsoft Office products, very few blog or read blogs, fewer and fewer are using email unless we force them to, most text, and very few tweet. If you read the news, it appears the fastest growing demographic on Facebook is middle aged women so they can see grandchildren (I’ve read that, don’t know if it is true).</p> | <p>SRM does have a facebook page. The ASTF recommends further exploring the potential of new digital media and identifying opportunities to economically utilize the sources and identify possible clearinghouses and relationships.</p> |
| 46 | 242-248 | <p>SRM has Facebook and LinkedIn presence that is not mentioned here.</p> | <p>Again, as mentioned in #2 of the report: “Lack of awareness of currently available resources provided by SRM.”</p> <p>This was included specifically because as the ASTF gathered information it was apparent that SRM has many resources that many members are unaware of and do not participate in them.</p> |
| 47 | 250-262 | <p>This is a place that SRM could partner with the University of Arizona and RangelandsWest/GlobalRangelands. UA already hosts archival copies of JRM/REM/Rangeman’s Journal/Rangelands in searchable pdf format. If a process can be established for getting posters/presentations/syntheses could be developed, I’m guessing it would not be hard to get them added. Note the RangelandsWest also has its standards of peer acceptance for material to go up.</p> | <p>ASTF agrees that using an existing source is preferable to creating new site and should explore the opportunity to create this relationship.</p> |
| 48 | 250-262 | <p>Since RangelandsWest.org is brought up, additional resources such as eXtension rangelands, GlobalRangelands.org, and the Range Science Information System should also be included. Each of these websites has a different purpose. The eXtension rangelands website is close to going live, and is designed more for the general public and maybe practitioner.</p> | <p>ASTF agrees that these sources each serve a different purpose. However, providing links to these on the SRM web-site and periodically</p> |

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| | | It seeks to synthesize and condense things like Extension bulletins into short articles. It is important to note that SRM has nothing to do with any of these other than some of us that do them are members. I know RangelandsWest tried to get SRM involved but there does not seem to be much interest in content these days. I hope SRM doesn't just try to replicate what is already out there but can find some way to add value. SRM is listed as a partner, but that is mostly through them allowing RangelandsWest to have access to the older than 3 year issues of the journals. | highlighting articles and sending out links to members might be informative or a good reminder to members. |
| 49 | 250-256 | This would take a lot of sever storage space and funding to support that. Abstracts are available to attendees. | Agreed, this could be avoided by partnering with another source such as suggested in comment 47. |
| 50 | 257-262 | First we need for someone to write the syntheses. Who are you proposing to do that? | ASTF suggests SRM put out a call for authors that may be interested in this type of writing. |
| 51 | 266-273 | These archival recordings are huge and will quickly exceed YouTube limits. We used to have other options on the SRM website to show streaming video and play audio (see the past presidents page). Having done those, they take a huge amount of time (taking the video and converting it to flash/mpg or extracting the audio). We also recorded the presentations at the Invasive Plants and Wildfire conference, but nothing ever happened to those (I ran out of time and energy). SRM does own a very nice digital voice recorder because of that effort. | ASTF recognizes the limitations and time constraints involved with these types of media, however it is important to keep up with available technologies and utilize them where appropriate. |
| 52 | 274-292 | While this sounds good in the abstract, SRM has tried this various times throughout recent history. Very few of our members used it and someone has to moderate and manage the site. Posting science papers from other journals is going to require copyright permission, especially if you are planning on charging for access. | ASTF agrees that there may be limitations involved with this idea, however possibly working with the SRM education and outreach committee a hybrid of this idea may be possible and legal. |
| 53 | 277-280 | Without a peer-review or fact-checking process, this has the strong potential to lead us back to the problem of lack of | ASTF believes that this could be possible without |

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| | | scientific credibility. Examples of this are present on the LinkedIn site already. | threatening the scientific integrity of the profession. |
| 54 | 282-284 | It is this sort of thing that made SRM lack scientific credibility. If you need something on your CV publish it in a reputable journal like REM. | ASTF recognizes that all subject material that may be of interest to members is not appropriate to publish in a “reputable” journal or science based journal, but could be published in the appropriate publication created for non-technical formats, such as <i>Rangelands</i> . |
| 55 | 284-295 | As I mentioned, RangelandsWest is going to have its own standards. We seek to be the go-to source for vetted, scientific material on western rangelands. | ASTF agrees that each source serves a different purpose and audience. |
| 56 | 301-305 | Good idea as long as you can balance that with the need for some people to present to be able to attend the meetings. Other societies I am familiar with require submitted hard-copy papers before the presentation is accepted. The selection committee can also be given direction from the Board to not accept anything, that you only have X number of concurrent sessions at any one time, there are no sacrosanct times (plenary, business, awards meetings), or a variety of other criteria to limit the number of papers presented. | Thank you for your additional constructive ideas on this matter. The ASTF will forward this comment to the annual meeting planning committee. |
| 57 | 301-305 | If you are having trouble with Rangelands being too technical, why would you want to sit through technical presentations that do not interest you? | ASTF believes that being educated means listening to ideas and concepts that may be counter to your interests or beliefs. |
| 58 | 314-315 | The last time we did this was to get rid of inventory when the decision was made that SRM was no longer in the publishing/book business. We have no inventory to sell. Perhaps publishers could be enticed to exhibit and sell at the trade show? My guess is they would only bring samples and take orders given the cost of shipping and moving. | Thank you for your insight into this issue. |

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| 59 | 321-338 | <p>This relates to the previous comment. I think sponsors could potentially be found (or grants) to do this, but doubt if SRM is going to do it. For reference, the recent CEAP book on rangelands cost about \$250,000 to have written (author stipends, travel, meetings) and produced (editing, layout, publishing). While you may be able to get authors to donate their time (maybe Rod would do it in retirement), the editing, layout, and publishing is costly. Even if you only do on-line versions, the actual print copies are one of the lower expenses.</p> | <p>ASTF retracts this section of the report. This issue will be pursued individually by one of the members of the task force as a separate project.</p> |
| 60 | 321-328 | <p>One of the more active discussions among academics these days is whether textbooks are going the way of the dinosaur. Increasingly the answer is yes. They're absurdly expensive to produce anymore, which means students don't want to buy them and are increasingly likely to sell them back as soon as the course is completed, which reduces their utility for reference when they get to be actual range managers. At my university, the students just passed a resolution demanding that faculty members be required to put many more copies of textbooks on reserve so that students who choose not to purchase the book can still have access to its content. This goes back to your comments about "modern" media – textbooks just aren't that. Maybe Rod would be interested in developing some apps?</p> | <p>ASTF retracts this section of the report. This issue will be pursued individually by one of the members of the task force as a separate project.</p> |