

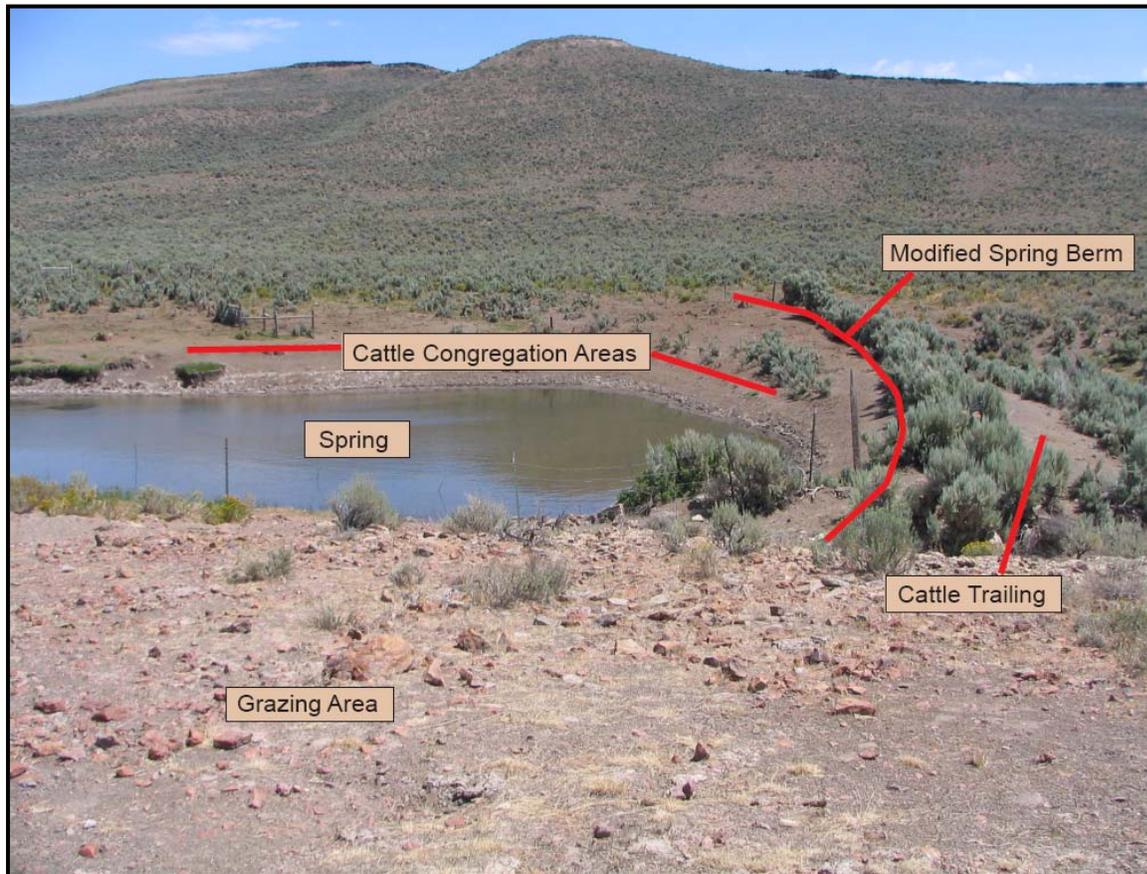
## **Chapter 4**

### **Ranchers, Rangers, and Range Ecologists; Discussions with Stakeholders**

As an archaeologist it is rare to get the opportunity to interact with stakeholders on certain projects. During my internship with the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest I was fortunate to interact with several people who were concerned with the grazing impacts on cultural resources. The first and most elusive group of people was the cattle ranchers that held grazing permits on Forest Service land. I tried to keep an open mind about ranchers and give them the benefit of the doubt. Since I am from western Wyoming I knew many ranchers in my life and many of them were barely scraping by financially. Typically the rancher's attitude toward conservation and preservation was skewed by their need to make ends meet. Most were fine with conservation provided that it did not interfere with their ability to make money. My first encounter with a rancher in the Ely District solidified my position on this.

While conducting a pipeline clearance of the Little Tom Plains Spring site I realized that a white four-wheel drive pickup was driving toward me. A heavy-set man wearing an orange hunter's cap rolled down his window and asked what I was doing on his grazing allotment. I explained that I was conducting a survey for a water pipeline that would divert water away from the spring to a stock tank a mile away. He insisted that I survey the area he thought was best suited for the pipeline, but I explained that there was a significant archaeological site in the path of his desired area. I told him where the range ecologist and I thought would be best and he grumbled something about how the Forest was making it hard for ranchers to make money with all of the regulations. He then rolled up his window of his pickup truck and headed off. Upon completion of the survey, I returned to the Ranger Station and described the encounter to the range ecologist. It turned out that this grazing permit holder had been somewhat of a thorn in the

Forest Service's side and had already received a few suspensions of grazing permits, as well as having paid a \$5,000 fine for ARPA violations a few years earlier. The following week I returned to his allotments to assess the ARPA site at Big Tom Plains Spring. The spring



**Figure 4.1.** Modified Spring Site in Eastern Great Basin.

at this site had been bermed up and a bulldozer was used to clear a path from the grazing area to the stock tank that was near the spring. The bulldozed path dissected the archaeological site where I located several diagnostic projectile points in the immediate vicinity. Apparently, the well-beaten path was used to filter cattle down to the stock tank. A hasty fence line made of fiberglass poles and nylon webbing was supposed to keep the cattle away from the bulk of the site. I found several breaches in the fence line and conclusive evidence that cattle grazed within the site boundary for quite some time. Extensive trailing, trampling, and wallowing were noted in numerous places within the site, as well as moderate soil compaction around the stock tank

and spring. The damage at the Big Tom Plains Spring site renders this site ineligible for the National Register for Historic Place based on the extent of damage and the loss of provenience to the artifacts located on the site. I later found out that the rancher owned an additional business and used the grazing permits as supplemental income and tax write offs for his primary business. According to the Ely range ecologist, the rancher owned a large prosperous road construction company out of Las Vegas and his grazing permits were managed by a board of directors who had no idea how to manage a ranch.

The following day I returned to the Ranger Station and pulled the allotment file for Big Tom Plains Spring. The file indicated that over \$16,000 in damages occurred when the permit holder bulldozed the site in 2002. The permit holder was fined \$5,000 and the Forest Service paid the rest. The file stated that the site would be restored and a fence would be constructed to prevent further grazing impacts. Receipts for supplies and contract labor were also in the file, but the site did not have a proper fence to keep cattle out and no evidence of restoration was apparent at the time of my assessment. I tried to contact the range ecologist about the discrepancies, but he was in the field on an extended forest fire assignment. The remaining range ecologists were not employed by the Forest at the time of the violation and could not comment on the site's condition or the status of fencing or rehabilitation work. My impression of the rancher was that he believed the Forest owed him a right to make money since he was paying for the grazing permits and I felt that he was not especially concerned with archaeological preservation if it prohibited the making of money. On the other hand, the district range ecologists apparently were unaware that the site was in such a state of disarray. It is the responsibility of the Forest to ensure that federal regulations are being obeyed and that the cultural resources are protected. Budget cutbacks and Forest personnel attitudes have

unfortunately left the Ely district without an archaeologist on staff to enforce violation of this nature through assessment and monitoring.

A few weeks later I came across another rancher rotating cattle in the Ely District. I expected a similar experience to my first encounter, but was mistaken. This rancher had worked his allotments along with another family for several decades and was interested in every aspect of his grazing areas. He was very inquisitive about the work I was doing and wanted to know what he could do to stay in compliance with conservation regulations. He said that he had hired, out of his pocket, a consulting firm to assess his grazing allotments and make suggestions on ways to better his grazing allotments and be more productive without damaging the land his cattle relied on. It was a refreshing and unexpected difference of attitude that inspired my belief that conservation was beneficial to everyone. Before he left, the rancher pointed out several hilltops where he had spotted projectile points while riding the range. To my surprise several points were still in place and had not been looted. When I asked the district range ecologist about this rancher, I was told that he was the most cooperative of the entire grazing permit holders in the district. His readiness to help was evident in the condition of his spring sites and lack of damage to archaeological sites on his allotments.

My third and final encounter with a rancher came while I was working in the Jarbidge Ranger District. I was out conducting assessments with the district's range ecologist Tom Stefani when we were approached by a large four-wheel drive pickup filled with two women and an elderly man. The women were the permit holder's middle aged daughters and the man, who turned out to be 90 years old, was the permit holder. They were very friendly and asked several questions about the project that I was working on. Apparently they knew about the Forest Service mandate to assess cattle grazing impacts and were very active in supporting the Forest's

endeavor. I spoke at great length with all three of them and they expressed their concern for both the cultural and natural resources on their grazing allotments. The elderly gentleman told me that it was imperative that he protect his allotments for the future use of his family owned ranch. He anticipated that his grandchildren and great grandchildren would one day work the same allotments as he, his father, and his grandfather had before him.

It was a refreshing attitude toward conservation that I had waited to hear all summer. He also explained that it was becoming difficult to compete with the larger corporate owned ranches that could easily pay the annual permit fees and readily pay fines for violation. He continued to express that he was willing to insure that his grazing allotments were in compliance with all Forest Service regulations to avoid such fines and preserve his family's way of life. His daughters agreed with their father's approach and indicated that their sons would manage the land similarly to their grandfathers. After an hour or so of discussion the family got back into their pickup and said that they had to get some work done. Before they left the elderly man handed a piece of paper out the window with his address on it and asked if he could have a copy of my internship paper so he could better understand his role in the assessment project. Of course I agreed.

After they left, the range ecologist stated that he had a great deal of respect for the family and that they made his job easy. I must admit that this was one of the better days I had spent in the field and this encounter reassured some hope for cultural preservation of federal land.

In addition to positive interaction with stakeholders, the Forest Service needs to offer stakeholders educational information pertaining to the benefits of conserving archaeological sites within the grazing allotments. I believe this process will help build stronger relationships with stakeholders and provide clear benefits that will prevent future ARPA violations, thus saving the

Forest and the stakeholders from costly repairs and unnecessary problems. Proactive stakeholders will save money in the long run, and the Forest can successfully protect archaeological sites.

In addition to the ranchers, I was fortunate to work with range ecologists from both the Ely and Jarbidge District. My experience with the Ely ecologist was tarnished by the poor condition of archaeological sites, a general lack of concern for site conservation, and the failure to rectify existing discrepancies. The majority of the sites on the Ely district indicated decline and neglect on the part of the ranchers and the Forest personnel. I realize that budget constraints play a large role in this. The Ely district has not had an archaeologist on staff for the past few years, nor is there a push to get one in the immediate future. I feel the lack of archaeologist in the HTNF reflects on the Forest's attitude toward archaeology as a whole. During my orientation for new employees at the Ely District, no mention of the importance of cultural resources was ever made. In fact there were several times when I was told by district and Forest level people not to hinder the project by finding artifacts. Often this was done in jest, but with some underlying seriousness. The conditions of the archaeological sites on the Ely District speak for themselves. Numerous years of neglect and oversight have led to a rapid decline of cultural resource value for future study and preservation.

My experience in the Jarbidge District was quite the opposite. The range ecologist, Tom Stefani took four days out of his schedule to drive 200 miles to meet with and show me sites that were of some concern to the Forest. Of the 22 sites that I assessed in the Jarbidge District, only one site was rated as poor based on the evident overgrazing, trampling, and numerous incidents of wallowing due to cattle congregation. This spring site had been modified by a rancher by berming up the spring which led to cattle congregation and extensive damage.



**Figure 4.2.** Heavily Impacted Spring Site in the Ely Ranger District.

At this site I dug four test holes to determine the extent of soil compaction by cattle congregation. I found that the soil contained lithic debris to depths of up to 30cm which is extremely uncommon for an open air lithic scatter in the Great Basin. The range ecologist indicated that he wanted to do whatever was necessary to prevent any further damage to the site regardless of cost and effort. I told him that fencing off the site and piping water from the spring to an off site stock tank would reduce future damage. In all, I found that the range ecologist was genuinely concerned with cultural resource preservation and that he was sincere in his efforts to comply with cultural resource regulations.



**Figure 4.3.** Healthy Spring Site in the Jarbidge Ranger District.

My dealings with the Forest's supervisors and District personnel differed within each district. The Supervisors Office (SO) in Sparks, Nevada seemed to have a relatively unconcerned approach toward cultural resource conservation. Many of the high ranking personnel in the SO are range management and forestry specialists and are more concerned with those areas of land management. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) is the largest National Forest in the lower 48 states and consists of 6.3 million acres and 10 Ranger Districts, yet it employs only six year-around archaeologists. Many of the District archaeologists are being asked to manage two districts at the same time. This creates delays in archaeological clearance for federal undertakings and puts a great deal of pressure on the archaeology staff.

Of the 6.3 million acres in the HTNF, only about 5% of the Forest's lands have been surveyed. Due to a lack of funding the HTNF will only conduct archaeological surveys to satisfy the requirements of archaeological protection legislation. The site density of surveyed areas is impressive and site probability models suggest that many sites remain on unsurveyed plots within the Forest's boundaries.

In order to properly conserve archaeological sites, a revamping of Forest Service cultural resource conservation policies must be prioritized. The long-term damage by cattle grazing impacts forced the Forest to address the issue of damage to archaeological sites being created by cattle grazing, but it is my opinion that this assessment project is seen as a distraction and a nuisance by many Forest Service supervisors and will therefore receive minimal attention in the attempt to comply. This is based on the lack of assessments conducted since the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in 1995, and that the first assessments were not initiated until 2004. The original MOU expired in June of 2005 and had to be extended in order for the HTNF to receive funding for archaeologists to be employed for this project. To properly and accurately assess cattle grazing impacts, several years of field work is required in conjunction with numerous reports and education for Forest Service personnel on the importance of cultural resource management.

### **From Thesis Conclusion Section**

Based on the assessment results, I feel that the improved site conditions in the Jarbidge Ranger District can be attributed to the proactive attitudes of the grazing permit holders and the range management policies of the district's personnel. The Jarbidge District, who shares an archaeologist with the Mountain City District, contains vastly improved site conditions. This can

be directly attributed to the district's attitude toward preservation of cultural resource management. The districts archaeologist, range ecologist, and stakeholders showed a genuine concern for the site conditions and have taken measures to comply with federal legislation to prevent future damage to archaeological sites. Additionally, I feel that the declining condition of the sites in the Ely Ranger District are a result of irresponsible ranching practices, lack of a district archaeologist, and the short comings of the rangeland managers. Regardless of funding, the HTNF must comply with federal legislation. The attitudes of the personnel and conditions of archaeological sites reflect poorly on the districts ability to conserve and protect the nonrenewable cultural resources entrusted to them by the federal government and the public.

Through federal legislation enforcement, education, and stakeholder inclusion and compliance the federal government can improve management policies pertaining to cattle grazing impacts on archaeological sites. Although cattle grazing impacts are prevalent on Forest Service lands, the cattle are not the problem. The impacts from cattle grazing impacts stem from how the land is managed and the attitudes of the land managers and stakeholders when it comes to cultural resource management. The lack of archaeologists within the HTNF's districts is an indicator of the lack of concern for cultural resource protection. This problem must be addressed whether internally or through outside sources or lawsuits.