

Española/Canjilon Pilot Study: Economic, Social, and Cultural Aspects of Public Land Grazing on the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests

Carol Raish

Abstract—Many of the livestock grazing permittees on the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests in northern New Mexico are descendants of Hispanic settlers who have farmed and ranched in the region for 400 years. Much of the permitted land was formerly owned or used by local communities under Spanish and Mexican land grants. Cultural differences and historical issues of landownership and use contribute to disagreements between permittees and federal land managers. This study will examine current economic, social, and cultural aspects of livestock ownership by these permittees to help agency managers administer the lands with increased effectiveness by promoting greater cultural understanding.

Much of the current debate surrounding federal lands occurs because land managing agencies have failed to emphasize and monitor sociocultural values and changing attitudes toward land use and management. A comprehensive, nationally focused research project titled “Sustaining Rural Communities: Measuring Social and Cultural Diversity in Land Use” addresses the need to emphasize and monitor values and attitudes. A section of this project focuses on traditional livestock raising on public lands in northern New Mexico. The Española/Canjilon pilot study tests the northern New Mexico research design and implementation methods on the Española and Canjilon Ranger Districts of the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests.

Historical Background

To understand the complex issues surrounding livestock grazing on federal lands in northern New Mexico, it is necessary to understand the historical background of land use and ownership in this area. Many of the small livestock operations in northern New Mexico are owned by Hispano families, regional residents since well before the U.S. conquest in 1848. (Small ranches are defined here as those with less than 100 animal units yearlong—AUY. An AUY is the forage required to support a cow and a calf for 1 year; Fowler and others 1994: 2.) The Hispano ranching tradition began with Spanish colonization in 1598 but did not become fully

developed until after the reconquest of 1692 through 1696 (Earls 1985:179-181, Simmons 1979:182, Wozniak 1995). During the Spanish Colonial (1598-1821) and Mexican (1821-1848) periods, landownership and use were legalized or confirmed by land grants from the Spanish Crown or Mexican government.

There were several types of land grants. Community grants, used by a group of settlers in common (Eastman and others 1971:4, Harper and others 1943:18-19), are of particular interest because they are a primary landownership issue in the region. Within community grants, settlers received individually owned building sites in the village and plots of irrigated agricultural land. The irrigated plots, often averaging only 5-10 acres (Van Ness 1987:172), grew smaller when divided for inheritance. The villagers used the community grazing and timber lands and pastures in common (Eastman and others 1971:4). Since groups of kinsmen often tilled their fields cooperatively and herded their animals together on large tracts of communally owned land, they were able to survive on the small, scattered agricultural plots.

Conquest of the region by the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846 through 1848 changed landownership and patterns of range use. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States was supposed to recognize and respect the property rights of former Mexican citizens. To obtain valid land titles according to U.S. law, however, land grantees had to petition for title confirmation. Although 128 land-grant claims and 19 Indian Pueblo grants were confirmed in the state, many claims were rejected (Eastman and others 1971:5, Eastman and Gray 1987:24). Often, house lands and small irrigated plots were confirmed, but the community pasture and woodlands, also part of the grant and essential to the survival of small farmers and herders, were not. Lands from unconfirmed claims reverted to the public domain (Eastman and others 1971:5, Eastman and Gray 1987:24). In addition, villagers lost significant amounts of confirmed land because they were unable to pay property taxes under the American system of monetary tax payment, which differed substantially from prior systems of payment based in animals and produce. Unscrupulous land speculation also occurred, which took advantage of Hispanic farmers who neither spoke English nor understood the American legal system (de Buys 1985: 171, 178-179). After passing through the hands of various owners, a large portion of the lost grant lands ended up in federal control. Currently, in north-central New Mexico, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manage much of this land (de Buys 1985:171, 178-179, Eastman and others 1971:5).

In: Finch, Deborah M.; Whitney, Jeffrey C.; Kelly, Jeffrey F.; Loftin, Samuel R. 1999. Rio Grande ecosystems: linking land, water, and people. Toward a sustainable future for the Middle Rio Grande Basin. 1998 June 2-5; Albuquerque, NM. Proc. RMRS-P-7. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Carol Raish is Research Social Scientist, Rocky Mountain Research Station, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Albuquerque, NM.

Relevance of Research on North New Mexican Grazing Issues

Many of the former grant lands came into federal control in degraded condition, often resulting from large-scale timber harvesting and large, commercial ranching operations that occurred after the land had been alienated from its Hispanic owners (Rothman 1989). The methods used to rehabilitate degraded land were sometimes thought harsh and poorly explained by local ranchers who graze their livestock on federal lands under permit (de Buys 1985:248-249). Since many of the northern grazing permittees are the descendants of grantees, many resent government restrictions and fees to use land they consider to be rightfully theirs.

Discontent over federal grazing policies, protest over lost grant lands, and general economic decline in the region led to violence in the 1960s. Protests by the *Alianza Federal de Mercedes*, led by Reies López Tijerina, culminated in the now-famous raid on the Tierra Amarilla courthouse in 1967. Two of the main goals of the group's actions were to bring the problem of massive land grant loss to world attention and to address a series of grievances concerning management of grazing on the national forests (deBuys 1985).

The violence of these protests led to reexamination of Forest Service policies in northern New Mexico. The Forest Service produced *The People of Northern New Mexico and the National Forests*, commonly known as the Hassell Report (Hassell 1968). The report recommended 99 measures, 26 related to grazing, to improve the situation of the Hispanic villagers. Some measures were implemented, additional money was brought into the region, and some progress was made. In addition, the Forest Service developed a special policy for managing the forests of northern New Mexico.

The Southwestern Policy on Managing National Forest Lands in the Northern Part of New Mexico, or the Northern New Mexico Policy, stressed the importance of valuing the Hispanic and Indian cultures of the Southwest (Hurst 1972). Policy implementation was based on the recommendations of the Hassell Report (1968). The Forest Service periodically reviewed implementation of the report recommendations. After the last review in 1981, the agency decided that a separate policy statement was no longer needed and that further implementation would be through regional and forest mission statements and plans (Hassell 1981).

Problems remain in the area and many of the conditions highlighted in the Hassell Report (1968) have not improved. Severe poverty, disappearance of traditional lifeways, and environmental degradation are still major concerns. Unfortunately, many Forest Service employees are unaware of the Hassell Report (1968) and the situations that led to its development. They receive no special training in the cultural traditions and social values of northern New Mexico. Significant misunderstandings persist, and the potential for conflict still exists. This likelihood is demonstrated by protest responses to an injunction against logging and fuel-wood harvesting to protect spotted owl habitat in 1995, hanging of two Santa Fe environmentalists in effigy at a protest rally in November of that year (McClellan 1995), and a bomb explosion at the Española Ranger District office in 1996. No one was injured by the blast, which did minor external damage, and no one has been arrested. This discussion does not imply

that Hispanic groups are responsible for the blast but indicates continued unrest in the area. Investigation of the incident is focused on recent controversies involving the Forest Service including environmental issues and disputes over fuel-wood gathering and grazing rights (Korte 1996, Ragan 1996).

Research Problem and Goals

This research project focuses on contemporary issues among the forest users of northern New Mexico to provide information and guidance to land managers. Understanding the role of small livestock operations in northern New Mexico communities is crucial to comprehending and resolving disputes over federal land and resource use. Thus, this research will examine the economic, social, and cultural contributions of livestock operations on the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests to rural Hispanic communities of the area. Local attitudes toward land management policy and sustainable resource use will also be examined, as will attitudes of Forest Service managers toward local issues. The outcomes of this study will include an inventory of contemporary community conditions that the Forest Service should monitor into the future, and development of reliable monitoring methods in a culturally diverse environment. These methods can ultimately be used to monitor conditions on other public lands with diverse user groups.

Elements to be inventoried and monitored include the following:

- a. Economic contribution of domestic stock to family and community income.
- b. Extent that public land use for grazing and other purposes allows communities to maintain social cohesion and traditional culture.
- c. Local perceptions of public land use and land management policy.
- d. Federal land managers' perceptions of local issues.
- e. Presence or absence of cultural differences in perceptions of sustainability and how to achieve it, and changes in these perceptions in response to agency programs.

The Española/Canjilon pilot study will evaluate and refine the research design and the proposed implementation methods on a portion of the study area.

Research Setting

The Española Ranger District was selected first for the pilot project because it is a good example of livestock operations on the Carson and Santa Fe forests. There are 9 active grazing allotments on the district ranging from ca. 7000 acres to ca. 73,000 acres. Excluding 4 small allotments, allotments range from ca. 4000 acres to ca. 100,000 acres on the Santa Fe Forest. All the Española allotments have more than 1 permittee per allotment, ranging from 2 through 16. Seventy percent of the 77 active allotments on the Santa Fe have more than 1 permittee, ranging from 2 through 20. Forty percent of the 71 allotments on the Carson have more than 1 permittee, ranging from 2 through 25. Multiple-permittee allotments, small herd sizes per permittee, and grazing associations of permittees demonstrate the continuing communal range use in northern New Mexico. Of the 17

listed grazing associations on the Santa Fe, 6 occur on the Española District. There are 24 associations on the Carson.

Herd sizes are generally small on the district and on the 2 forests. Of the approximately 55 people with Forest Service permits on the district, 30 have permitted head numbers from 1 to 25, 11 have 26 to 50, and 14 have 51 to 100 (of these, only 5 have over 70 permitted head). There are no operations with over 100 permitted head on the district. Española demonstrates the allotment pattern common to the north New Mexican forests, that of multiple permittees, grazing associations, and small herd sizes. (Information on range statistics from the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests was obtained from range data tables provided by Jerry Elson, Range and Wildlife Staff on the Santa Fe National Forest; Sylvia Valdez, Resource Assistant on the Santa Fe National Forest; Don Case, Range, Wildlife, Fish, Soil, Air, and Water Staff on the Carson National Forest; and Lorraine Montoya, Resource Assistant on the Carson National Forest.)

After discussions with range staff from both forests and with representatives of local user groups, I decided to broaden the pilot study by including a district from the Carson National Forest along with Española. The Canjilon Ranger District, with ca. 57 permittees, was recommended as a good example of livestock operations on the Carson (Don Case, pers. comm. 1997). Canjilon has 12 active grazing allotments ranging from ca. 300 acres to ca. 43,000 acres. Four of the allotments have more than 1 permittee (ranging from 3 through 25), while 8 have 1 permittee. The district's 4 grazing associations occur on the allotments with the largest numbers of permittees. The majority of herd sizes are from 4 to 250, with 7 operations having 100+ head. The largest herds per permittee occur on the single-permittee allotments. Canjilon provides some contrast with Española, having more single-permittee allotments with larger herd sizes, while still having many of the relatively small-sized livestock operations typical of northern New Mexico.

Española/Canjilon Pilot Study _____

The Española/Canjilon pilot study will develop baseline data describing economic, social, and cultural contributions of livestock operations to rural Hispanos in the late 1990s. This information will be useful for monitoring the role of livestock operations in the future. Some comparisons to previously collected information will also be made. Perceptions of public land use and land management policy, as well as federal land managers' perceptions of local issues, will be examined in the larger study conducted on the 2 forests. Future studies will also explore the possibility of cultural differences in perceptions of sustainable resource use and how to achieve it.

The pilot study assesses research questions that will guide the larger study, and the methods and techniques that will be used to collect information. Results of the pilot study will be used to evaluate and refine the research questions by developing new topics and questions, and by deleting inappropriate topics. Prior research indicates that livestock operations contribute economically, socially, and culturally to the owners' lives. Pilot study results will be examined to determine if new contributions should be added or if prior contributions have shifted in emphasis.

Contributions of Livestock Operations

Research on small-scale cattle operations in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated that, although domesticated animals were important components of household economy, most of the small operators did not depend on their crops and animals for all their support. They generally had outside jobs or were retired. The livestock made many contributions to the household in addition to purely economic ones. The animals added to family security by providing meat, and sometimes milk, and were used as savings for retirement, hard times, or special expenses (Eastman and Gray 1987:39-50).

The livestock also served important social and cultural functions. Small-scale producers stressed the importance of the quality of life that ranching provided them and their families. They spoke of preserving a working relationship with the land that could be passed with pride to their children. Owning animals was a way for them to reaffirm ancestral ties to lands and heritage. Often, owning animals allowed the family to stay in the ancestral, rural community, and to continue part of a traditional lifestyle (Eastman and Gray 1987:39-50).

The Española/Canjilon study will gather information on these economic, social, and cultural contributions at a time of demographic change in the region. Following the format of earlier research (Eastman and others 1971, Eastman and others 1979, Gray 1974), the study will be organized around a written questionnaire, supplemented by personal interviews. The questions will be grouped to elicit the following information:

- a. Background information on the permittee and his/her family.
- b. Background information on the livestock operation.
- c. Contribution of the livestock operation to the household economy.
- d. Contribution of the livestock operation to the cultural, lifestyle, and land-use values of the family.
- e. Contribution of the livestock operation to the family's participation in the social network of the community.
- f. Other contributions of the livestock operation considered important by the permittee.

Respondents will have an opportunity to discuss sustainable resource use, land loss issues, and operating under a federal grazing permit in an interview after discussion of the questionnaire. Information from this study will be compared to information from earlier studies to assess possible changes in the role of livestock operations between the time periods. The working hypothesis is that there are no significant differences between the current contributions of livestock and those in the earlier studies.

Research Significance _____

This research will contribute significantly toward understanding the role and dynamics of grazing operations on public lands. The project will also have strong implications for National Forest land management in northern New Mexico and in other areas with culturally diverse user groups. Questions of land use and grazing management are critical political issues in the region, as is continued federal

ownership of public lands. Political leaders and land managers at the local, regional, and national levels require this type of information to make informed resource-use decisions and policies. Land managers from state and federal agencies require knowledge of the results and difficulties inherent in implementing grazing and resource-use policies. Other social scientists and ecologists will also find this work useful, especially those examining the results of intercultural resource conflict and the overall role of human culture as a critical factor in regional ecology. Most importantly, the people of northern New Mexico should benefit because the public and federal agencies will gain a better understanding of their culture and the role that livestock operations play in maintaining cultural traditions and livelihood.

References

- Briggs, Charles L.; Van Ness, John R. 1987. Introduction. In: Briggs, Charles L.; Van Ness, John R., eds. *Land, water, and culture: new perspectives on Hispanic land grants*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press: 6-12.
- de Buys, William. 1985. *Enchantment and exploitation: the life and hard times of a New Mexico mountain range*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Earls, Amy Clair. 1985. *The organization of Piro Pueblo subsistence: A.D. 1300 to 1680*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico. Ph.D. dissertation.
- Eastman, Clyde; Carruthers, Garrey; Liefer, James A. 1971. *Evaluation of attitudes toward land in north-central New Mexico*. Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico State University. *Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin* 577.
- Eastman, Clyde; Gray, James R. 1987. *Community grazing: practice and potential in New Mexico*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Eastman, Clyde; Harper, Wilmer; Guerra, Juan Carlos; Gomez, Bealquin. 1979. *New Mexico small farms: a socioeconomic profile*. Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico State University. *Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin* 407.
- Fowler, J.M.; Rush, D.; Hawkes, J.M.; Darden, T.D. 1994. *Economic characteristics of the western livestock industry*. Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico State University. Range Improvement Task Force, Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture and Home Economics Report 35.
- Gray, James R. 1974. *Economic benefits from small livestock ranches in north-central New Mexico*. Las Cruces, NM: New Mexico State University. *Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin* 280.
- Harper, Allan G.; Cordova, Andrew R.; Oberg, Kalervo. 1943. *Man and resources in the middle Rio Grande valley*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Hassell, M. J. 1968. *The people of northern New Mexico and the national forests*. Albuquerque, NM: USDA Forest Service. Southwestern Region. Manuscript on file.
- Hassell, M. J. 1981. *Northern New Mexico policy review and action plan*. Albuquerque, NM: USDA Forest Service. Southwestern Region. Memo on file.
- Hurst, William D. 1972. *Region 3 policy on managing national forest land in northern New Mexico*. Albuquerque, NM: USDA Forest Service. Southwestern Region. Memo on file.
- Korte, Tim. 1996. *Tradition vs. environmentalists: fight flares over wood gathering*. *The Press Democrat* (Santa Rosa, California). January 13.
- McClellan, Doug. 1995. *Protesters hang environmentalists in effigy: rival rally takes issue with message*. *Albuquerque Journal*. November 25.
- Ragan, Tom. 1996. *Forest feuds eyed in blast: FBI probes Española bombing*. *Albuquerque Journal*. January 9.
- Rothman, Hal. 1989. *Cultural and environmental change on the Pajarito Plateau*. *New Mexico Historical Review* 64(2): 185-211.
- Simmons, Marc. 1979. *History of Pueblo-Spanish relations to 1821*. In: Ortiz, Alfonso, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest* (9). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution: 178-193.
- Van Ness, John R. 1987. *Hispanic land grants: ecology and subsistence in the uplands of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado*. In: Briggs, Charles L.; Van Ness, John R., eds. *Land, water, and culture: new perspectives on Hispanic land grants*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press: 141-214.
- Wozniak, Frank E. 1995. *Human ecology and ethnology*. In: Finch, Deborah M.; Tainter, Joseph A., eds. *Ecology, diversity, and sustainability of the middle Rio Grande basin*. Fort Collins, CO: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, General Technical Report RM-GTR-268: 29-51.