

GILPIN UPDATE JANUARY 2010

2009, was a busy year in the Gilpin. Barry Brandow hosted several very well attended field-trips to the Gilpin in the summer to show the damaging effects of poor range-management practices and off-road vehicle damage.

As a result of Barry's complaint to Forest Practices Board (FPB) a review was conducted "**Cattle Grazing on Overton-Moody range**" in Nov 2009. See below for link to this FPB report. The FPB report mostly agreed with Brandow's complaints. Where FPB could not agree, it was primarily due to failures in the terms or clarity of the range permit issued by Range Branch, an issue subsequently discussed and criticized in the FPB's **Special Investigation into Range Permits**, Nov 2009. (see link below) FPB did not agree with the complaint that cattle were not moved as per the requirements of the RUP (range use plan/permit) The licensee claimed that cattle were moved as per schedule but some returned through gates left open by the public. While this is possible, if adequate oversight was being done by the licensee or Range Branch such events could be quickly remedied. If gates had signs indicating that they should be open or closed, most passersby would quickly rectify the careless or deliberate actions of the few. Perhaps licensees prefer not to provide signage so that any presence of unauthorized cattle can be blamed on the public.

The following news-items and FPB reports highlight some of the concerns over some of the damaging impacts of range use in sensitive areas such as the Gilpin.

◆ **Globe & Mail Article by Mark Hume Jan 10 2010**

"Grazed to stubble, Gilpin grasslands need cattle ban"

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/british-columbia/grazed-to-stubble-gilpin-grasslands-need-cattle-ban/article1426302/>

◆ **Forest Practices Board Report: Cattle Grazing on Overton/Moody Range Nov 2009**

full report: <http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/publications.aspx?id=5004>

◆ **Forest Practices Board Special Investigation Nov 2009: Range Planning under the Forest Practices Act.**

The following are extracts from FPB's comments. Highlights/emphasis added by us. The last quote might be translated by those who have raised complaints with Range Branch to mean that Range Branch staff are too "cosy" with agreement holders, operate as if the agreement holders are their clients, defend damaging practices and might as well be speaking for the industry.

"Forest & Range Planning process is not effective or efficient"

"range plans do not meet the basic content requirement of the Forest & Range Practices Act, but were approved anyway"

"Actions (in plans) were not clearly measurable or enforceable"

"Plans were not required to identify sensitive or designated features"

"Board agreed that maintaining good working relations between range staff and agreement holders is important but notes that it is imperative that the relationship not cloud the responsibilities of range

staff to ensure that agreement holders meet minimum requirements of the legislation”

full report: <http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/assets/0/114/178/186/358/7ab75688-20a1-4cf2-917c-ac999856d5ac.pdf>

◆ Article in Grand Forks Gazette, Dec 2nd 2009 by Roy Ronaghan

GRASSLANDS NEED BETTER MANAGEMENT

One Issue at a Time Opinion column by Roy Ronaghan in Grand Forks Gazette Dec 2 2009

Should the Gilpin Grasslands be turned over to the forest companies, cattlemen, dirt bikers, ATV operators and mud boggers to use as they wish or should it be preserved and systematically rehabilitated? Let's hope it's the latter.

Decisions, about land use are tough to make, and in the case of the Gilpin Grasslands, they must be made soon or the area will be lost.

Give credit where credit is due, but please don't try to hoodwink the public into believing that building fences around watering holes, where streams cross roadways or along ravines is . restorative work.

What is being touted as an effort to take better care of the grasslands is remedial work at best that will do little or nothing to restore areas that have been devastated for decades. Remedial work should have been done long ago as a matter of course.

Restoration means the reconstruction of riparian areas, planting trees and shrubs in cutblocks, removing cow paths and decommissioning logging access roads that no longer serve that purpose. Restoration will only eventually occur when motorized recreational use and cattle grazing is severely restricted or stopped.

The area is not being well managed. Infrastructure work such as proper fencing is still minimal on the Gilpin. What was put in place three decades ago by the Agriculture Rural Development Agency has never been maintained or upgraded.

All that has changed in the uplands is that fences now exist where none existed around waterholes, across streams where they meet roadways, and along ravines. An example in clear view is the page wire fencing along the lower reaches of Gilpin Creek near Highway 3. The problem with the fencing is that it does not meet wildlife fencing standards.

To accommodate wildlife, a fence should be no more than 40 inches (102 cm) high. It should have four strands of wire; two barbed and two barbless strands. Wildlife do not behave like cattle. They should be able to jump a fence easily or crawl under it.

The BC Cattlemen's Association states that the purpose of the association is "to promote, protect and develop the cattle industry in British Columbia, in an environmentally responsible manner." If the Gilpin Grasslands is an example of environmentally responsible management, it is a poor one.

The government is not being truthful about the management of grasslands across B.C. If it were, it would admit that they have been turned over to the cattlemen who hold government permits that enable them to destroy the very resource they depend upon to survive. It would also admit that motorized recreational use of Crown land is out of control.

Wildlife in the grasslands area have been losers since the first permit to allow cattle grazing was issued several decades ago. Shrubbery has been cropped so low that it no longer provides winter browse for ungulates. A once healthy mule deer population has all but disappeared. White tail deer and some mule deer have migrated to the lower elevations - including the city and Area D - where there is food both summer and winter.

At some point the government will have to recognize that the cattle industry now operating in B.C. is no longer economically feasible, and should no longer be the recipient of the government subsidy of access to Crown grasslands at minimal cost to those who own the cattle. It will also have to recognize that regulations governing motorized recreation must be adopted and strictly enforced.

The grasslands will not recover as a result of cosmetic treatment.

If they are to ever heal, both motorized recreational users and cattle owners must become better stewards.

◆ Article in Grand Forks Gazette July 8th 2009 by Roy Ronaghan

NATURE TRUST LAND TRASHED

One Issue at a Time, Opinion column by Roy Ronaghan
Grand Forks Gazette July 8 2009

There are no better words to describe what has happened to the streams, wetlands, springs, and winter range on the Nature Trust lands in the Gilpin Grasslands area than trashed, hammered, and endangered.

They are fitting words to describe the damage that has been caused over decades by grazing cattle, and in some cases, over-eager operators of dirt bikes and all terrain vehicles who like to do their stuff off the well-worn forestry access roads that were built and maintained by logging companies.

A field trip to the Nature Trust lands that took the better part of the day On Thursday, June 18, by a group of 10 people could best be called part of an ongoing basic education program needed to keep those who care about what happens to a sensitive ecosystem when cattle are introduced on a long term basis.

The Nature Trust lands cover a total of 470 acres in a couple parcels separated by private and Crown land. They were purchased in 1973 by the second Century Fund of B.C. that became Nature Trust. The purchase was made to complement the earlier purchase of the Boothman Ranch, a parcel of 1,470 acres once owned by Ed Boothman. Nature Trust of British Columbia is a charitable non-profit land conservation organization.

Roaming, grazing cattle have made a huge impact on the land in question. Shrubs have been over browsed and noxious weeds have replaced natural grasses. Watercourses, ponds and wetlands resemble barnyards where the cattle have gained access to them. George Wuerthner and Mollie Matheson, authors of a book called *Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West* suggest that one of the most problematic obstacles for those who advocate an end to livestock grazing is the subtle nature of the change that takes place where cattle are present.

The Gilpin Grasslands area is arid and aridity affects the way the cattle use the land. Instinctively they congregate near water sources, fouling trampling them in the process. Plant material of every kind is stripped and trampled; soils are compacted; stream banks are broken down; and wetlands destroyed beyond recovery.

Wuerthner and Matheson strongly recommend that “the wasteful, destructive, tragic abuse of our public lands by the livestock industry” must end because of what is at stake. They also remind us that there is no perfect management scheme that will make cattle benign beasts.

It's definitely time to seriously explore ways to remove the cattle from the Gilpin.

For pictures of cow and off-road vehicle damage in the Gilpin, see the following:

◆ Map & damage on south facing grasslands: <http://www.boundaryalliance.org/ggmar09.pdf>

◆ Gilpin East Morrissey damage: <http://www.boundaryalliance.org/gilpin%20-%20%20east%20morrissey%202008.pdf>

◆ Motor vehicle damage: <http://www.boundaryalliance.org/motor%20vehicle%20damage%202008.pdf>