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**Social Dilemmas and Public Range  
Management: Results from the  
Nevada Ranch Survey**

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## ABSTRACT

Since the late 1960s, the Nevada ranch community has come under increasing pressure from environmental groups regarding their use of public lands for livestock grazing, thus increasing tension between ranchers and public land managers and potentially reducing the social capital that facilitates action and cooperation in range management. In this paper, we use responses to a survey of all public grazing permit holders in Nevada to investigate the changing relationships between ranchers and the public land agencies, and its potential implications. In particular, we investigate factors that affect ranchers' trust in the public land agencies, and then factors that influence the nature of the relationship between ranchers and the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. Low levels of trust between ranchers and public managers were most significantly related to previous disagreements and the belief in a poor future for ranching. The occurrence of wildfire on grazing land contributed most significantly to increased disagreement between ranchers and public agencies. Finally, as a response to conflict in the ranch community, community based initiatives, such as grass banking, are examined for their potential to bring stakeholders together to realize and address common goals. Community involvement in decision making may increase levels of social capital, reduce transaction costs, and thus allow for more effective and efficient use of the range resources.

**Key words:** Institutions and social capital; effectiveness of range management policies

**JEL Category:** O17, O52

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# **Social Dilemmas and Public Range Management: Results from the Nevada Ranch Survey**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Economists have long been interested in factors that contribute to economic development. The emphasis on pure economic explanations for development – namely monetary and fiscal policies, and trade policy – has recently shifted to focus on the role of cultural, historical, social and institutional factors (Easterly 2001; North 1994; North 1990; Putnam 2000; Putnam 1993a; Shleifer and Vishny 1998; Woolcock 1998). Institutions and social capital, the features of social organizations that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam 1993b, pp. 35-36), are both important for economic development. In addition, they help resolve social dilemmas that arise when coordination of actions makes all parties better off compared to pursuit of activities that are only best from the perspective of an individual acting alone (Ostrom 2000b). In public range management, social dilemmas arise because private activities on the range, principally livestock grazing, create externalities (spillovers) that may be to the detriment of society. It is possible that institutions and social capital can aid in finding solutions to social dilemmas, and thus benefit the range ecosystem.

The Nevada ranch community has increasingly come under pressure since the late 1960s from environmental groups and public land managers because livestock grazing on public lands is seen as a contributing factor to the environmental degradation of public lands. As a result, public grazing allotments have been reduced, falling by 16% (or 473,553 AUMs) between 1980 and 1999 and resulting in an estimated direct annual loss of \$11.6 million to the livestock sector (Resource Concepts Inc. 2001). While, in total numbers, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grazing allotments fell by more than those of the U.S. Forest Service

(USFS), proportionally BLM permits fell by only 14% compared to a decline of 23% for USFS grazing AUMs (Table 1). More than two-thirds of the AUM reductions were unexplained, resource-related (presumably to protect the range ecosystem, although this is not specified), or the result of permit violations, although the importance of these factors varied between the agencies.

**Table 1: Reductions in BLM and USFS Grazing Services, by Cause, 1980-1999**

Item	BLM		U.S. Forest Service	
	Decrease in AUMs	%	Decrease in AUMs <sup>a</sup>	%
No reason given in the database	164,087	44	25,230	28
Resource-related	89,619	24	19,719	23
Permit violation	35,210	9	13,672	16
Change in the class of livestock	34,179	9	(1,960)	(2)
Forest Service Enhancement Act	19,189	5	—	—
Transfer of Ownership	11,863	3	5,716	7
Final Multiple Use Decision	10,485	3		
Boundary Change	9,413	3	41,517	48
Forest Service Enhancement Act	—	—	(17,605)	(20)
<b>Total Reduction</b>	<b>374,045</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>86,289</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>(Proportion of total allotments)</b>	<b>(14%)</b>		<b>(23%)</b>	

<sup>a</sup> Values in parentheses indicate an increase in grazing.

Source: Resource Concepts Inc. (2001)

Historically, ranchers and public land managers have worked together to manage and provide improvements to the public rangeland. However, numerous environmental laws enacted in the 1960s and 1970s and a shortage of funding has required public land managers to devote more of their time to complying with federal regulations, leaving less time for building relationships with ranchers (Resource Concepts Inc. 2001). Further, the most common response of public land managers to demands to protect non-commercial values of the range was to reduce AUM allocations. Yet, land managers often made range management decisions based on sparse information, leading to poor range decisions and systematic AUM

reductions (Resource Concepts Inc. 2001, pp. 62-63). This led to a reduction in social capital in the Nevada ranch community, particularly to a decline in trust between ranchers and the land agencies. Thus, little has been done cooperatively to resolve grazing problems on public range, with little investment in activities that increase social capital and reduce the transaction costs of range management.

In contrast to most economic studies that focus on grazing fees and ranch finances, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the potential role that institutions and social capital can play in solving the social dilemmas of public range management. We might ask: Is there sufficient social capital in the ranch community to enable public managers to use this “capital” to enhance range quality and protect the habitat of endangered species? Are extant institutions up to the task? Are existing policies of reducing livestock grazing and investing in range restoration (e.g., re-seeding programs) capable of achieving the objectives of management (reducing fire incidence, protecting wildlife habitat, forestalling and mitigating range degradation), or is there another way? In this study, we address these issues using the results of a survey of all the public grazing permit holders in Nevada.

We begin our task in the next section by defining what is meant by institutions and social capital in the context of Nevada’s ranch community, providing several hypotheses related to the public agencies and the community that are tested using results from the Nevada Ranch Survey, which is described in section 3. Survey responses are used in the empirical investigation of social capital, institutions and the public land agencies in section 4. The findings suggest that some social dilemmas related to range management can be solved simply by getting public land agencies to lean more on the social capital available in the community rather than relying on command and control. We investigate community based

initiatives as a means for raising social capital in section 5. Some conclusions follow in section 6.

## 2. INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The problems of economic development and social dilemmas are not that economic explanations are inappropriate, but rather that they are incomplete. For a democratic market economy to function properly, or for market-oriented economic policies to have effect, three criteria or factors other than markets and private property are required, namely, economic institutions, the role of the state and social capital (Fukuyama 2002).

### **Economic Institutions**

A country or state must have a set of institutions within which policy change can occur. Institutions consist of formal rules (constitutions, laws and property rights) that constrain political, economic and social interactions, and include such things as commercial and criminal courts. They also include bureaucratic agencies like the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service. Unlike cultural constraints (see discussion on social capital), they are more amenable to change, although this might require a certain inertia to overcome vested interests. Economists have often ignored institutions, even though existing institutions may not always be the 'right ones' (Bromley 1999, p. 3). Recent research in economic development now stresses the need for good institutions, as some institutions retard rather than promote growth (La Porta et al. 1999), or become an obstacle to resolving social dilemmas. In order to remain effective, institutions need to evolve over time in response to changing circumstances, and the rate at which they evolve must not slow the progress of policy change.

In agriculture, the most important formal rules concern property rights over land and water. It is not possible, for example, to implement changes in livestock grazing on public land if it is not possible to enforce such changes and have the courts uphold them. Without the ‘right’ institutional environment, ranchers may not be concerned about how their activities affect the future quality of the public range. In order for ranchers to take future range quality into account, they most likely need to have a vested interest in the land, feel morally obliged to do ‘the right thing’, or somehow be ‘coerced’. Where the required institutions are lacking, it is not usually possible, for example, to use economic incentives to get ranchers to change grazing patterns and protect wildlife habitat. In the absence of appropriate property rights and their protection, ranchers tend to rely on personal networks rather than the rule of law, but this increases transaction costs relative to the situation where the pertinent institutions are in place.

In many jurisdictions, arid rangelands are largely publicly owned, and ranching may, in some cases, be performed by state-owned enterprises or quasi-public collectives (e.g., Ukraine, Iran, Ethiopia). In other jurisdictions, the state may own the land and allocate its use to private ranchers on the basis of historical ‘rights’, subject to oversight by a public land management agency, as in the United States and Canada. If public land agencies become too rigid, or fail to evolve sufficiently to address ‘modern’ needs, then ranchers will rely on their informal contacts with agency personnel – their personal network – to implement management activities that would otherwise be held up by bureaucracy and the hierarchy that inevitably accompanies it. However, if ranchers cannot work with the public agencies, range quality may deteriorate as may the habitat of threatened or endangered species. In such cases,



other institutional arrangements may need to be considered, ones that yield better outcomes from a social viewpoint, and are also politically more acceptable.

### **Role of the State**

Second, economic policies can only be carried out by the state, but the state must be limited in scope and yet able to enforce the rule of law. The state must be competent and sufficiently transparent in formulating policy, and have enough legitimacy to be able to make painful decisions. The role and performance of government is essential to economic development (La Porta et al. 1997; Olson 1996), just as it is to the resolution of social dilemmas in the ranch community. Good governments protect property rights and individual freedom, keep regulations on businesses to a minimum, provide an adequate (efficient) level of public goods (e.g., infrastructure, schools, health care, police protection, court system), and are run by bureaucrats who are generally competent and not corrupt (La Porta et al. 1999). Unfortunately, regulatory agencies often prevent entry, courts resolve disputes arbitrarily and sometimes dishonestly, and politicians use government property to benefit their supporters rather than the population at large (Shleifer and Vishny 1998, p. 8). In the ranch community, such characteristics take a more subtle form: ranchers are denied access to historical grazing lands, decisions appear to be arbitrary as transparency disappears, and agency representatives hide information, often acting in their own self interest with guile (Williamson 1996).

In this study, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of public agencies in providing good policy and minimizing bureaucracy presents itself in the way that ranchers perceive public land agency staff and how disputes about land use and livestock grazing are resolved. We postulate that, rather than being entirely random events, disagreements between ranchers and

the public land agencies are a function of the personal characteristics of ranchers and of social capital (see below). We then test this hypothesis using the results of the Nevada Ranch Survey.

## **Social Capital**

The third factor needed to resolve social dilemmas is social capital, or “the proper cultural predispositions on the part of economic and political actors” (Fukuyama 2002, p. 24). The ‘cultural factor’ constitutes informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and norms or codes of conduct) that structure political, economic and social interactions.<sup>1</sup> Informal constraints are commonly referred to as ‘social capital’, which is “the shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules, and expectations about patterns of interactions that groups of individuals bring to a recurrent activity” (Ostrom 2000b).

Social capital can be thought of as having an individual and an aggregate component (Gelauff 2003). Individual social capital consists of intrinsic aspects (charisma, values) and aspects in which one can invest (trustworthiness, personal networks), although the two types are difficult to separate. Aggregate social capital, on the other hand, constitutes the total of the social capital of the individuals in society, varying by form (trust in people, trust in government, level of participation in society), place (firm, region in a city or country, neighborhood), and group (ethnic and religious groups, service organizations, sport associations, gangs). The manner in which the social capital of individuals is aggregated is not clear, and therefore it is difficult for society to invest in aggregate social capital. How

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<sup>1</sup> Dutch society offers some excellent examples of informal sanctions. Conduct that is considered inappropriate is deemed ‘asocial’, with citizens quick to denounce in public one’s failure to follow the social graces – the expected. Thus, at a crowded counter where one is waiting to be served, it is asocial to go ahead of someone who arrived earlier, even though it requires that one be very astute as to when one arrived relative to others.

does a society invest in culture, except by somehow affecting individuals who do the investing? For example, society can encourage couples to stay together longer by making divorce more difficult, or encourage church attendance by providing greater tax incentives for charitable giving, but both actions fail to address culture directly.

Trust is perhaps the most important component of social capital: “Virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust, certainly any transaction conducted over a period of time” (Dasgupta 2000). Trust is related to institutions and affects the costs of transacting: If one’s confidence in an enforcement agency falters, one may not trust others to fulfill their agreements and thus enter into fewer agreements. There is an element of trust in any transaction where one has to decide (make a choice) before being able to observe the action of the other party to the transaction. One has to assume that the other person is not acting with guile, keeping information hidden that could be used to their advantage at the expense of the other party to the transaction. Like other components of social capital, trust makes an economy function more efficiently (Fukuyama 1999).

In addition to trust, other elements of social capital include social norms, or behavioral strategies (always do  $p$  if  $q$  occurs) subscribed to by all in society, and networks of civic engagement (membership in swim clubs, church organizations, etc.) that enhance cooperation. Ostrom (2000a) shows how social norms of reciprocity and trust, combined with local enforcement and graduated sanctions result in effective resource management regimes. For example, irrigation systems in India, where rules were made by the local farmers, required less maintenance and experienced lower deadweight loss from rule violations than where government agencies determined water allocation and distribution.

In the ranch community, trust, social norms (shared beliefs) and social networks – social capital – are vitally important to community health and that of the range ecosystem. Ranchers function as stewards over the public range, performing such tasks as monitoring and policing trespassing and legitimate use by recreationists. As a group, ranchers are often better able to monitor range condition than the public land managers. They also are likely to have good ideas about the outcomes of various range management investments in terms of their impact on forage availability and the range ecosystem more broadly. Such knowledge can impact how public range is managed sustainably. Good relationships between ranchers and recreational users and the public land managers ensure that all parties benefit from the use of the public land.

### 3. THE NEVADA RANCH SURVEY: BACKGROUND TO SOCIAL CAPITAL

We investigate the broader role of social capital in Nevada's ranch community by examining civic engagement and altruism, ranchers' trust of the public land agencies, factors that affect disagreements between ranchers and the public agencies, and how disagreements are resolved, and how ranchers' relationships with the BLM and USFS have changed over time. For this purpose, we employ responses to the Nevada Ranch Survey.

The Nevada Ranch Survey was mailed to all 514 BLM and Forest Service grazing permit holders in Nevada on March 29, 2002, with a follow-up mailing to non-respondents on May 21, 2002. The surveys included a postage paid return envelope and cover letter. Follow-up telephone calls were subsequently made to all ranchers who had not responded to either mailing. The design and mailing procedures were based on (Dillman 2000). The survey was reviewed and pre-tested by University of Nevada Reno faculty members, Nevada

extension specialists and ranchers associated with the university. The response rate was 47.9 percent, or 246 completed surveys (Thomsen 2002).<sup>2</sup>

Nevada ranchers were found to have high levels of social capital as measured by their involvement in community and professional activities (Table 2). This is supported by the fact that "civic engagement ... gives rise to social capital" (Harriss and De Renzio 1997, p. 920). Ranchers were most active interacting with friends, donating to charity, volunteering and being involved in professional organizations.

**Table 2: Perceptions of Social Capital: Civic Engagement and Altruism (n=243)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>% of respondents indicating involvement in activity</b>
Gave blood within last year	14.4
Did volunteer work within last year	52.3
Donated to a charity within last year	78.1
Regularly interact with friends	93.0
Member of a professional organization	55.1
Member of a service organization	14.0
Spectator at community sporting and other events	44.4
Engage in non-ranch activities	37.0
Politically active	23.0
Regular church attendee	34.2
Member of Grazing Board	16.5
Other community/professional involvement	15.2

Factor analysis was used to reduce the large number of opinion variables in the survey. Factor analytic methods are useful for extracting, from a large number of variables, a smaller number of underlying dimensions that characterize the data. The choice of variables for factor analysis is made in the context of a theoretical formulation about the phenomena under consideration (Pedhazur and Schmelkin 1991). Factor analysis determines whether there are linear combinations of variables that help identify underlying relationships in the

<sup>2</sup> Lack of funding prevented us from surveying representatives of the public land agencies.

data (Hair, Bush and Ortinau 2000, p. 590). The new factors were used in the logit and ordered logit models that assessed trust, relationship strength, disagreements and disagreement resolution between ranchers and public land managers. The factor analysis results are provided in the Appendix.

#### 4. FACTORS AFFECTING RANCHERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE BLM AND USFS

The Nevada ranch survey asked how ranchers' relationships with the public land agencies had changed over time. It is hypothesized that relations would have declined more for the USFS than BLM since public grazing was reduced to a greater relative degree by the former (Table 1). This is supported by the results in Table 3, which compares ranchers' perceptions of how their relationships with the two agencies have changed over time, and how disagreements have been resolved. More respondents reported a decline in relations with the USFS (60%) than indicated a decline in relations with the BLM (39%).

Not shown in Table 3 is the extent of disagreement because this was elicited using a more general question that was not agency specific. Over 80 percent of ranchers indicated that they had had one or more disagreements with the public land agencies concerning their use of the public range. From Table 3, more disagreements between ranchers and the BLM are resolved informally than is the case with the USFS, likely due to the fact that relationships with the BLM have not declined to the same extent as with the USFS. The worse relations with the USFS is also reflected, at least partly, by the fact that more respondents reported that disagreements were resolved formally (with lawyers getting involved) in the case of the USFS than the BLM. It appears that ranchers prefer to resolve disagreements with the local land manager, but if unsuccessful, they may trust more in the

potential for District/State level resolution in dealing with the BLM than with the USFS. Overall, it appears that relations with the BLM are better than those with the USFS. In the following subsections, we further investigate the factors contributing to trust and conflict resolution with respect to these two agencies.

**Table 3: Respondents’ Perceptions of How Their Relationships with the US Forest Service and BLM Changed over Time and How Disagreements have been Resolved<sup>a</sup>**

Item	USFS	BLM	significance
	% of respondents indicating		
<i>Change in Relationship</i>	(n=94)	(n=237)	
No change in relations	21.3 (4.2)	35.9 (3.1)	**
Better relations	18.1 (4.0)	24.9 (2.8)	n.s.
Worse relations	60.6 (5.1)	39.2 (3.2)	*
<i>Resolution of Disagreements</i>	(n=96)	(n=238)	
Informal resolution	35.4 (4.9)	51.3 (3.2)	*
District/State resolution	2.1 (1.5)	2.1 (0.9)	n.s.
Formal resolution (including courts)	11.5 (3.3)	2.1 (0.9)	**
Other or multiple methods	20.8 (4.1)	21.4 (2.7)	n.s.
No resolution specified	30.2 (4.7)	23.1 (2.7)	n.s.

<sup>a</sup> Of respondents, 146 reported a relationship with only the BLM, 3 with only the USFS, and 91 with both the BLM and the USFS. The latter were separated into independent responses for each agency, resulting in more total responses than total respondents. Responses of BLM permit holders with and without USFS permits were compared and found not to be significantly different, justifying the combination of these responses. \*, \*\* = statistically significant at  $p < 0.10$  and  $p < 0.05$ , respectively; n.s. = not statistically significant.

### Statistical Model

A logit model is generally used when the dependent variable is binary, taking on a value of 1 (often indicating a ‘yes’ response) or 0 (‘no’ response). An ordered logit model is appropriate if the dependent variable is qualitative and takes the form of an ordered ranking, such as 1=better, 2=no change and 3=worse. In this study, we use a logit model to examine factors that might explain why ranchers may have had a disagreement with a public land agency. In particular, we want to determine whether ranchers’ perceptions of the level of

social capital in the ranch community translate into less conflict.<sup>3</sup> We employ an ordered logit model to determine factors affecting trust (a key component of social capital), and to investigate factors that have resulted in a change in the relationship between ranchers and the two public land agencies over time.

The (cumulative) logistic distribution function is given by Greene (2000, p. 814) as:

$$(1) \quad \Pr(Y = 1) = E(y = 1|X) = \frac{e^{\beta x}}{1 + e^{\beta x}},$$

where  $x$  is a vector of explanatory variables and  $\beta$  is a vector of parameters to be estimated. This equation calculates the likelihood that a respondent will have a disagreement with one of the public land agencies.

For a three-outcome model, the ordered logit model probabilities are given by Greene (2000, p. 876):

$$(2) \quad \begin{aligned} \Pr(y = 0) &= 1 - \Lambda(Bx) \\ \Pr(y = 1) &= \Lambda(\mu - Bx) - \Lambda(Bx) \\ \Pr(y = 2) &= 1 - \Lambda(\mu - Bx) \end{aligned}$$

where  $\Lambda(\cdot) = \frac{e^{(\cdot)}}{1 + e^{(\cdot)}}$  represents the logistic cumulative function and  $\mu$  and  $B$  are vectors of parameters to be estimated, with  $\mu$  representing critical cutoffs that separate categories. The estimated functions provide the likelihood that a respondent with the characteristics given by  $x$  will take a particular stance.

A log-likelihood ratio test was used to determine whether variables included in the model are statistically necessary in the final regressions. In each iteration, the variable with

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<sup>3</sup> Perceptions are used because, supposedly, the level of aggregate social capital is the same throughout the ranch community.



the least statistical significance was removed from the model. This continued until the Wald statistic fell below a critical value of one percent significance level, in which case the restricted model is preferred to the general model. Only the final restricted model results are presented.

Finally, for each model the marginal effects ( $dy/dx$ ) of the explanatory variables are determined. The marginal effects enable us to identify the variables that have the greatest influence on the dependent variable at the margin. These are given, respectively, for the binary logit model and ordered logit model as by Greene (2000, pp. 815, 876-877):

$$(3) \quad \frac{\partial E[y|x]}{\partial x} = \Lambda(B'x)[1 - \Lambda(B'x)]B$$

$$(4) \quad \begin{aligned} \frac{\partial \Pr[y = 0]}{\partial x} &= -\Lambda(B'x)[1 - \Lambda(B'x)]B \\ \frac{\partial \Pr[y = 1]}{\partial x} &= [\Lambda(-B'x)[1 - \Lambda(B'x)] - \Lambda(\mu - B'x)[1 - \Lambda(\mu - B'x)]]B \\ \frac{\partial \Pr[y = 2]}{\partial x} &= \Lambda(\mu - B'x)[1 - \Lambda(\mu - B'x)]B \end{aligned}$$

### **Trust between Ranchers and the Public Land Mangers**

Trust is considered an important component of social capital. Here we use an ordered logit model to identify factors affecting trust. The survey asked respondents about the extent to which they trusted the public land managers. Respondents were asked to evaluate the statement: “In general I trust the public land managers and don’t have to be too careful in dealing with them”. A Likert scale ranging from +2 (strongly agree with statement) to –2 (strongly disagree), with 0 being neutral, was employed. For the 241 respondents who answered this question, the mean opinion was –1.071 (indicating lack of trust), with a

standard deviation of 1.040 (indicating relative agreement among respondents), although the maximum and minimum responses were +2 and -2. The regression results are provided in Table 4. All of the estimated coefficients in the final regression model are statistically significant at the 10% level or better, with most significant at the 1% level.

The level of trust in public land agencies is inversely related to two factors – the extent to which ranchers had disagreements with public land managers about how the range is utilized and the extent to which respondents were negative about the future of ranching. Respondents who viewed grazing as a solution to problems of a deteriorating range ecosystem, who were more highly educated and/or were professionally active also exhibited greater trust in the public land agencies. Nonetheless, as indicated earlier, overall trust in the public agencies was not very high. This is supported by the marginal effects, which indicate that the negative influences of past disagreement and the view that ranching has a ‘poor future’ in Nevada are greater than the positive impacts of the remaining variables.

**Table 4: Trust between Ranchers and Public Land Managers (n=205)**

Explanatory Variable	Proportion responding: Estimated Coeff <sup>a</sup>	Marginal Effects					Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
Education <sup>b</sup>	0.1586 (0.0570)	-0.0376	0.0129	0.0128	0.0111	0.0009	3.8732
Disagreement w agency	-1.3222 (0.0000)	0.2716	-0.0183	-0.1120	-0.1296	-0.0117	0.8000
Factor ‘poor future’ <sup>c</sup>	-0.5580 (0.0000)	0.1324	-0.0452	-0.0449	-0.0392	-0.0031	0.0000
Factor ‘pro-grazing’ <sup>c</sup>	0.2357 (0.0900)	-0.0559	0.0191	0.0190	0.0165	0.0013	0.0000
Factor ‘professionally active’ <sup>c</sup>	0.4259 (0.0040)	-0.1011	0.0345	0.0342	0.0299	0.0024	0.0000
Factor ‘anti-social capital’ <sup>c</sup>	0.3727 (0.0060)	-0.0884	0.0302	0.0300	0.0262	0.0021	0.0000
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1093						
Log-likelihood	-233.7158						
Wald $\chi^2(5)$	0.072						

<sup>a</sup> Statistical level of significance of the coefficient is provided in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> Education categories: grade school, high school, some college or technical school, technical training in the armed forces, completed college, completed some graduate classes, completed Masters degrees, and completed Ph.D.

<sup>c</sup> Factors are described in the Appendix

### Factors Affecting Ranchers’ Disagreements with the BLM and USFS

We use a logit model to examine factors that result in disagreements with the public agencies. The survey asked if the respondent ever had a disagreement with a public land agency, but did not distinguish between the BLM and the USFS. A ‘yes’ response was coded with a one and a ‘no’ response with zero. The logit regression results are provided in Table 5. All of the estimated coefficients are statistically significant at the 2% level or better, except the coefficient on education which is significant at the 8% level. Surprisingly, younger ranchers were more inclined to indicate that they have had a disagreement with a public land agency over their use of the public range. Less surprisingly, disagreement is inversely

correlated with trust in the public agency, although the direction of causality cannot be determined.

**Table 5: Logit Model of Disagreement between Ranchers and Agencies (n=205)**

Explanatory Variable	Estimated Coefficient <sup>a</sup>	Marginal Effects	Mean
Age	-0.4669 (0.0110)	-0.0551	4.1220
Education <sup>b</sup>	0.2314 (0.0760)	0.0273	3.8732
Occurrence of wildfire	0.9419 (0.0200)	0.1269	0.6878
Trust of public land managers <sup>c</sup>	-0.6905 (0.0000)	-0.0815	1.966
Factor ‘service’	0.5331 (0.0180)	0.0630	0.0056
Constant	3.5799 (0.0020)		
Proportion of “yes” responses	0.807		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.2246		
Log-likelihood	-79.5434		
Wald $\chi^2(8)$	4.89		

<sup>a</sup> Statistical level of significance of the coefficient is provided in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> See Table 4 for definition.

<sup>c</sup> Categories 1 (“lack” of trust) to 5 (“total”) trust (see Table 4)

Whether or not a rancher’s grazing allotment had been affected by wildfire is the most important source of disagreement between ranchers and public land managers, as indicated by the estimated marginal effects. What to do about wildfire and how to respond to it remains a contentious issue in the ranch community, as elsewhere (Pyne 1997). Probably the greatest source of disagreement in the Nevada ranch community concerns when cattle can return to a site that has burned. Public land managers generally wait two seasons before permitting domestic livestock on the range (Miller 1996), whereas ranchers feel that earlier grazing might be beneficial both financially and for the range itself.

Not surprisingly, wildfire is ubiquitous, with 164 out of 242 respondents to the Nevada Range Survey indicating that they had been affected by fire in the past twenty years. Ranchers reported that 250,000 acres of private land had burned in the most recent fire experienced by 157 respondents, while some 2,100,000 acres of public land had burned (155 responses); thus, an average of 2,235 ac (standard deviation = 8,425 ac) of private land and 13,300 ac (sd=24,904 ac) of public land was burned in the most recent fires experienced by ranchers. A total of 171,041 AUMs of grazing was reportedly lost (n=140 responses), or an average of 1,222 AUMs (sd=5,482 AUMs) per rancher. Some 58% of land was reseeded following wildfire.

### **Factors Affecting Changes in Relations between Ranchers and the BLM and USFS**

For each of the BLM and USFS, survey respondents were asked whether their relationship with the agency had improved, remained unchanged or changed for the worse over time. Responses were coded so that 1 indicates a change for the worse, 2 no change, and 3 a change for the better. The ordered logit regression results are provided in Tables 6 and 7 for the BLM and USFS, respectively. All of the estimated coefficients in the BLM regression model are statistically significant at the 10% level of significance or better, while only the trust and disagreement variables are statistically significant in the USFS regression model. In both models, disagreement has soured the relationship between the rancher and agency, and this factor has the greatest impact on the relationship (as indicated by the marginal effect).

**Table 6: Change in Relationship with the BLM over Time (n=200)**

Explanatory Variable	Relations got:→ Proportion responding Estimated Coeff <sup>a</sup>	Marginal Effects			Mean
		Worse	No Δ	Better	
		.3778	0.4214	.2008	
		1	2	3	
Trust of public land managers	0.3578 (0.0160)	0.0574	0.0267	-0.0841	1.9450
Disagreement with agency	-0.8327 (0.0190)	-0.1540	-0.0251	0.1791	0.8150
Factor ‘poor future’ <sup>b</sup>	-0.6711 (0.0000)	-0.1077	-0.0500	.1578	-0.0054
Factor ‘pro-grazing’ <sup>b</sup>	-0.3259 (0.0470)	-0.0523	-0.0243	.0766	-0.0167
Factor ‘service’ <sup>b</sup>	0.2560 (0.0840)	0.0411	0.0191	-0.602	0.0056
Number of years ranching	-0.2529 (0.0150)	-0.0406	-0.0189	.0594	4.6250
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1160				
Log likelihood	-191.2275				
Wald $\chi^2(8)$	2.43				

<sup>a</sup> Statistical level of significance of the coefficient is provided in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> Factors are described in the Appendix

**Table 7: Relationship with the USFS over Time**

Explanatory Variable	Relations got:→ Proportion responding: Estimated Coeff <sup>a</sup>	Marginal Effects			Mean
		Worse	No Δ	Better	
		0.678	0.2542	0.0979	
		1	2	3	
Trust of public land managers	1.1528 (0.0000)	-0.2630	0.1612	0.1018	1.8272
Disagreement with agency	-1.1973 (0.0500)	0.2875	-0.1425	-0.1450	0.8272
Factor ‘social capital’ <sup>b</sup>	0.3377 (0.2090)	-0.0770	0.0472	0.0298	0.0060
Factor ‘survive’ <sup>b</sup>	0.3747 (0.1310)	-0.0855	0.0524	0.0331	0.0692
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1978				
Log likelihood	-60.1478				
Wald $\chi^2(10)$	4.89				

<sup>a</sup> Statistical level of significance of the coefficient is provided in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> Factors are described in the Appendix

Trust in the public agency has an effect opposite that of past disagreements – higher levels of trust are correlated with improved relations – although the direction of causality is unclear. In this regard, it should be recognized, however, that trust is a more general variable, referring to expressed trust in the public agencies generally as opposed to a specific agency.

In the BLM regression model, the factors ‘poor future’ and ‘pro-grazing’ appear to have a negative impact on the relationship between ranchers and public land agents. That is, ranchers who do not think there is a future in ranching as it is currently practiced, and ones who view grazing of domestic animals as socially and ecologically beneficial, are more likely to view their relationship with the BLM to have deteriorated over time. As the number of years the individual has been engaged in ranching increases, so too does her view that the relationship with the public land agency has declined. Only those who are active in community service appear to view the BLM relationship in a positive light. The greater one’s service in the community, the more positive is one’s view of how their relation with the BLM has changed. Perhaps this is because those who are active in service are more likely to engage with representatives of public land agencies outside of the professional confines, thereby (inadvertently) improving the professional relationship. However, none of these factors is as important as disagreement in shaping the relationship between rancher and public land agency.

The “social capital” and “survive” factors could not be eliminated from the USFS regression reported in Table 7 (according to the  $\chi^2$  tests), but neither variable is a statistically significant factor explaining the changing relationship between ranchers and the USFS over time. In addition, their marginal impacts are small. Again, disagreement is the most

important factor affecting relations between Nevada ranchers and the USFS, followed by trust in public agencies more generally.

Given that disagreement is such an important factor, which itself is impacted greatly by the occurrence of wildfire (Table 5), one obvious conclusion is that wildfire is an important driver in the Nevada ranch community. It follows that ranchers and public land managers (or the agencies), as well as environmental groups, need to determine how to manage fire. This is a difficult if not impossible task (Pyne 1997, pp. 235-237).

One of the things that may be required to solve social dilemmas related to public lands is new institutional arrangements that change the way public range is managed. New institutional arrangements may be able to improve response to wildfire, or enhance habitat for threatened species such as sage grouse. Some examples of new institutions that have emerged are considered next.

## 5. BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS

Community based initiatives (CBIs) have arisen because of a decline in social capital – because of a lack of trust between ranchers and public land agents. Some CBIs dealing with public land have formed because of dissatisfaction, on the part of local residents, with public land management. This is because local residents tend to have more at stake than other citizens (Colburn 2002, p. 198) and locals wish to contribute to the decision-making process out of their knowledge, experience and intrinsic social capital. By fostering collaboration and working toward common interests, there is an investment in social capital, thus reducing resource conflicts. When CBIs find common ground between agents, trust develops.

One means by which CBIs are working to overcome natural resource management conflicts is through the creation of grass banks. Grass banking is spreading throughout the



West as a potential way to improve range management and relationships among all parties to the public grazing debate. A grass bank essentially constitutes range or pasture land that ranchers can access if their own sources of forage are inadequate. Unlike the ‘swing allotment’ traditionally used by public land management agencies, a grass bank involves a *quid pro quo* – an environmental benefit must be created in order for the rancher to gain access to the grass bank’s forage. In some cases, a grass bank exchanges the use of its pasture to a rancher in return for an easement or covenant on the rancher’s own land, with the legal instrument (easement/covenant) stipulating that the rancher will never subdivide that land. In other situations, access to the grass bank’s forage is made in exchange for verifiable commitments to rehabilitate/restore the lands from which the cattle come – an incentive that enables range investment to occur without disrupting supply of forage (see Edwards 2002, pp. 9-10).

The Malpai Borderlands Group (MBG) consists of ranchers, scientists and environmentalists (particularly The Nature Conservancy), who have forged common interests and now manage approximately 850,000 acres of rangeland (including the 320,000-ac Gray Ranch) in New Mexico and Arizona. The MBG originally began out of a concern for the threat of wildfires and land development. It has been able to work with public agencies on prescribed burns and the development of conservation easements to protect ranch lands. A grass bank program was developed that enables ranchers to move livestock onto grass-bank land during dry years in exchange for the sale of conservation easements to the MBG on private lands.

Another example of a CBI is the Quivera Coalition, which brings together some 850 ranchers, public land managers and environmentalists in New Mexico who are interested in

sustainable ranching and the protection of environmental amenities. The mission of the Quivera Coalition is “to define the core issues of the grazing conflict and to articulate a new position based on common interests and common sense ... [and] build bridges between all reasonable people involved in the grazing debate, [because] ... cooperation, collaboration and new ideas hold the key to the future of ranching and rangelands in the Southwest” (Gerard 2002). Workshops, demonstration projects, publications, site tours, community meetings and other educational forums are used to increase awareness. These activities also enhance social capital (Putnam 2000). The Quivera Coalition created the Valle Grande Grass Bank program, which is different from that of the MBG because it does not deal with the development threat, but the bank’s main purpose is range rehabilitation. Access to the grass bank is provided in exchange for a commitment to make specific range improvements, with cattle using the grass bank while the investment activity is undertaken.

The experiences of successful CBIs might be of help to communities still struggling with resource management conflicts. Brunner and Colburn (2002) indicate that, in order for CBIs to be successful, innovation, diffusion and adaptation are essential. Innovation can create good models to guide other participants and adequate diffusion makes these innovations available to those who need them. Finally, adaptation allows all the available options to be explored and put into practice.

What might community-based initiatives do for the range community in Nevada? While there is no direct evidence linking CBIs to enhanced social capital, it is likely that, by bringing diverse agents together to solve the social dilemma of range improvement, investment in social capital is also taking place. This happens because the individuals involved, without the influence of coercion, willingly set aside differences in order to get

along and cooperatively explore solutions to common problems. Thus, CBIs help build social capital, and, based on the results of previous sections, higher levels of trust and other forms of ‘social capital’ are correlated with improved relations with public land agencies, and lower transaction costs of implementing range improvements (Hobby and van Kooten 2003). By bringing ranchers, environmental groups and community interests together, the potential exists for developing new, perhaps unique, solutions to the conflict between the environmental and domestic grazing demands of the range, and to the ever-present threat of wildfire. Indeed, by relying on enhanced social capital, such an institution may even be able to identify opportunities where domestic grazing and the environment are complements, where grazing strategies can be used to enhance range quality and habitat for threatened wildlife, for example. Certainly, current arrangements seem incapable of doing so, partly because the solutions that are implemented lack political acceptability and may have been implemented too quickly without thorough scientific investigation (Resource Concepts Inc. 2001, pp. 62-63). By their very nature, CBIs are meant to resolve the issue of political acceptability and increase use of scientific knowledge by reducing transaction costs of accessing and applying knowledge.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Nevada ranchers have suffered financially from reduced access to public grazing over the past 20 years. Relations with the public land agencies have also worsened, while disagreements over range use have affected 80 percent of the ranchers surveyed in this study. Disagreements appear to have come about mainly as a result of issues related to wildfire and its aftermath, while they in turn have had a negative impact on the relationship between ranchers and the public land agencies, making it increasingly difficult to solve social

dilemmas concerning range management. Through the application of economic theory, we can argue that an increase in social capital, primarily trust but also participation in community service and professional organizations, can benefit the ranch community by reducing transaction costs and increasing opportunities to resolve range management conflicts. However, it may also be that new institutions need to be considered, ones that are able to utilize the community's resources more efficiently than is possible by relying on large bureaucratic agencies and their local field representatives.

While the research reported here provides insights into the potential role of social capital in resolving range conflicts, more research is required. We lacked the resources to take the second step in this research, namely to conduct a structured interview of BLM and USFS field agents and representatives located in the District and State offices. Insights from such interviews would be helpful in determining why, for example, grazing permits have declined, how decisions about grazing reductions were arrived at, the importance and role of wildfire on range conflicts, and the potential to bring local knowledge to bear in managing public range. Likewise, it is necessary to go back and interview ranchers to get additional insights into the exact nature of range conflicts, why there are disagreements, and what local solutions are possible. Only by bringing together the “demand” and “supply” sides of this relationship using a sound socioeconomic framework will it be possible to make progress in resolving range conflicts.

Finally, community involvement in range management decisions may provide a route to better range management, especially where such involvement is more than just tokenism. This is particularly the case if ranchers are to become part of the solution to range deterioration, and if the knowledge of ranchers is to be put to good use in making range

improvements work. Such investments would include fencing for better range management (protecting riparian areas and allowing rotational grazing), improving water development and delivery systems, and developing prescribed burns to better manage ecosystems. Ranchers can also help in monitoring range condition, including the condition of wildlife and their habitat, and identifying the most effective range investments. Information collected by ranchers can be used by researchers to evaluate range investments. None of this can be accomplished, however, if the level of social capital in the ranch community is depreciating, as may be the case in Nevada.

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APPENDIX: FACTOR ANALYSES

**Table A1: Factor Analysis for Civic Engagement and Altruism Opinion Questions**

Item	Poor Future	Social Capital	Alt. Ranch Income	Pro-federal Agencies	Pro-grazing	Prof Active	Service	Survive	Anti-SK	Uniqueness
Donate blood	0.05194	<b>0.56714</b>	-0.14126	0.11803	0.06148	0.02586	0.28863	0.03728	0.02877	0.55179
Volunterism	-0.05631	<b>0.58779</b>	0.10205	-0.07848	0.11124	0.10231	0.06285	0.01921	-0.28246	0.52781
Donate to Charity	-0.07295	0.13944	0.09441	0.00434	-0.14255	0.02182	0.00801	0.00593	<b>-0.76654</b>	0.35783
Active with friends	-0.02965	-0.00625	0.11451	0.18962	<b>0.55952</b>	0.0217	0.04639	-0.07473	<b>-0.59765</b>	0.27156
Active in prof. Orgs.	-0.12885	-0.05657	0.04771	0.06784	-0.03235	<b>0.66273</b>	0.33766	0.18571	-0.21731	0.33733
Active in service org.	-0.03352	0.07554	0.02651	0.0512	-0.00429	0.07308	<b>0.78429</b>	-0.00361	-0.01738	0.36906
Spectator at local events	0.09926	<b>0.45296</b>	0.27296	0.31254	0.27177	0.21462	-0.15279	-0.05242	0.07565	0.46105
Non-ranch activities	-0.06471	<b>0.59147</b>	0.10207	0.04565	0.10065	-0.07586	<b>0.43173</b>	-0.06941	0.10057	0.41626
Politically involved	0.12231	0.37042	-0.05539	0.02233	0.11615	-0.11975	0.34025	0.11607	-0.21007	0.64306
Attend Church	-0.15896	<b>0.58943</b>	0.08726	-0.25404	-0.13292	-0.04868	-0.21549	0.17393	-0.31333	0.36025
Grazing Board Involvement	0.01621	0.04579	-0.06514	-0.12656	0.09099	<b>0.79255</b>	-0.1007	-0.08739	0.08023	0.31675
Ranchers are under financial stress	0.21551	0.2631	0.04155	0.12179	0.05613	-0.05589	-0.1178	<b>0.69274</b>	0.15928	0.34236
Livestock are a threat to Environment	-0.02865	-0.04787	-0.16402	-0.02197	0.71046	-0.03868	0.08272	0.11335	0.18858	0.408
Public Agen. Are doing good job	<b>-0.4587</b>	0.15771	-0.02749	0.32757	-0.20753	0.239	-0.30921	-0.0947	0.03676	0.45054
Too much public land	0.00367	0.0041	0.06068	<b>-0.78578</b>	0.02415	0.08848	-0.09226	-0.06228	0.00624	0.35799
Fed gov. ought to control pub. Land	0.2106	0.07722	-0.02023	<b>-0.60014</b>	0.21384	-0.01329	0.04158	0.24594	0.1753	0.45026
Ranchers given more rights-hunting	-0.0185	-0.11698	0.14493	-0.13071	0.00736	0.04229	0.1098	<b>0.77087</b>	-0.08957	0.33173
Grazing enhances the ecosystem	0.00159	0.13976	0.06617	-0.15482	<b>0.76647</b>	0.0786	-0.00854	-0.03901	-0.03387	0.35572
To many livestock are on public land	-0.24462	0.03625	-0.09276	<b>0.40764</b>	-0.24213	-0.24597	0.03615	-0.17202	-0.04379	0.61213
Ranching won't survive the next 50 yrs	<b>0.8025</b>	-0.00462	-0.00596	-0.02424	-0.00812	-0.10697	-0.04357	0.05675	0.20584	0.29634
Ranchers are the soln. to range problems	0.06928	0.06353	-0.15298	-0.2371	<b>0.49762</b>	0.11763	-0.12318	0.39195	-0.03678	0.47994
Ranchers see no future on public lands	<b>0.74594</b>	-0.15142	-0.20862	0.05757	-0.0544	0.04692	0.08391	0.04602	-0.02403	0.35891
Ranching will cont. as is on public land	<b>-0.86234</b>	-0.0727	-0.01265	0.0857	-0.00633	-0.02302	0.06497	-0.03039	0.04916	0.23545
Ranching will become hobby ranches	0.38606	-0.08324	<b>0.51207</b>	-0.08819	0.17618	0.10025	-0.13049	-0.06817	0.03379	0.51013
Ranching will include tourism	-0.12387	0.044	<b>0.81375</b>	-0.06494	-0.03362	-0.08394	0.1528	0.11687	-0.01736	0.27083
Ranching will include recreation uses	-0.0506	0.065	<b>0.81425</b>	0.03108	-0.04935	0.02664	-0.08079	0.04109	-0.13818	0.2988

FACTOR DESCRIPTIONS:

**Poor Future**– Ranchers feel that ranching has no future and won't survive “as is”

**Social Capital** – Ranchers who are involved in civic activities and are altruistic

**Alternative ranch income** – Ranchers will survive by developing income from tourism, recreational use, and become more of a hobby than a viable ranching operation

**Pro-federal agencies** – Ranchers feel that the Federal government should have more power in controlling and managing lands

**Pro-grazing** – Ranchers feel that grazing enhances the ecosystem, grazing doesn't negatively impact endangered species, and that ranchers are the solution, not the problem to range degradation

**Professional Activity** – Ranchers are involved in cattlemen's associations and are on grazing boards

**Service** – Ranchers are involved in community service organizations like Elks/Lion's clubs, and are involved in community activities like sports, municipal boards etc.

**Survive** – Ranchers generally feel they are under financial stress and they believe they should be given greater rights to generate income from tourism and hunting

**Anti-SK (Social Capital)** – Ranchers who are not financial contributors to community organizations and do not have friends over or are very socially involved.