
USDA Environmental Compliance Policy on Range Departmental Regulation 9500-5

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION

Number: 9500-5

SUBJECT:

Date: April 21, 1988

Policy on Range

OPI: Ecological Sciences, SCS

Section

.

1. Purpose
2. Background
3. Cancellations
4. Policy
5. Abbreviations
6. Definitions
7. Responsibilities

1. PURPOSE

This regulation sets forth Departmental Policy relating to range resources and coordination of range activities among agencies of the USDA and other executive agencies, organizations, and individuals. It is in furtherance of USDA responsibilities mandated by the legislation identified in Section 7a. Agencies of the Department affected by this regulation include APHIS, ARS ASCS, CSRS, ERS, ES, FmHA, FS, OICD, SCS, and NASS.

Range is a major agricultural resource. Range also provides essential food and habitat for wildlife and unique economic and recreational opportunities for people and for communities. Range watersheds must be carefully managed to protect soil and water resources on which all other values and uses ultimately depend.

USDA is vitally interested in the maintenance, enhancement and wise use of the Nation's range resources. The Department has played and will continue to play an active role in developing, demonstrating and applying the essential science, technology and stewardship necessary to effectively manage range resources in this nation and throughout the world.

2. BACKGROUND

The Nation's range resource include nearly 800 million acres of range in the 50 States. The USDA manages more than 100 million acres of publicly-owned range and USDA programs influence the use and management of over 400 million acres of nonfederal range. The remaining public range which is primarily managed by USDA and DOD is also influenced by USDA programs.

Range provides a major source of forage for livestock on thousands of American farms and ranches. As human populations increase and demand for food and energy expands, the need for forage and other range resources will grow.

Range provides forage, water, recreation, wildlife and fish habitat and cover, as well as minerals and archaeological, historical, cultural, and visual amenities.

3. CANCELLATION

This regulation cancels Departmental Regulation, 9500-5 dated December 15, 1983, "Policy on Range."

4. POLICY

It is USDA policy to undertake activities and implement programs to:

- a. Protect, enhance, and wisely use range ecosystems.
- b. Contribute to the social and economic well-being of people and communities that depend on range for their livelihoods.
- c. Improve the productivity of soil, water, plant, livestock, and wildlife resources of the Nation's ranges and provide continuing education and other technology transfer programs to accomplish these goals.
- d. Support and strengthen national and international cooperation designed to improve range condition and productivity.
- e. Provide continuing research and technology developments to enhance range conservation and productivity and to make optimum use of all range resources.
- f. Promote and facilitate cooperation and coordination among public agencies, private organizations, and individuals in planning and implementing range programs while minimizing duplication and overlap of duties in reaching interagency goals affecting range.
- g. Provide technical, managerial, education, and other assistance programs for range owners, operators, and other users that will encourage the adoption and use of conservation and management practices that protect, enhance, and permit wise use of range resources
- h. Provide periodic range resource inventories compatible among agencies, and based upon sound ecological principles, containing data identifying multiple-use

opportunities, and useful for protecting, enhancing, and wisely using range resources at the local, regional, and national levels.

- i. Manage the range resources of the National Forest System in an economically and ecologically sound manner, for multiple use, and for development and demonstration of effective range management.
- j. Throughout all programs, recognize and emphasize the current and future full income potentials of the nation's range resources created by varied and changing public values, expectations and demands.

5. ABBREVIATIONS

USDA - U. S. Department of Agriculture
NR&E - Natural Resources and Environment
FS - Forest Service
SCS - Soil Conservation Service
APHIS - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
FmHA - Farmers Home Administration
ASCS - Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
ARS - Agricultural Research Service
CSRS - Cooperative State Research Service
ERS - Economic Research Service
ES - Extension Service
NASS - National Agricultural Statistics Service
OICD - Office of International Cooperation and Development

6. DEFINITIONS

- a. Range embraces rangelands and also many forest lands which support an understory or periodic cover of herbaceous or shrubby vegetation amenable to certain range management principles or practices.
- b. Rangeland is land on which the native vegetation (climax or natural potential) is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing use. Rangelands include natural grassland, savannas, most deserts, tundra, alpine plant communities, coastal marshes, wet meadows and introduced plant communities managed like Rangeland.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Plans of action to implement the policies of this regulation will be developed by affected agencies and will be subject to review by the NR&E Committee of the Secretary's Policy and Coordination Council. These plans will be prepared in accordance with directions of the Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (PL 93-378), as amended; the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (PL 95-192), as amended; the Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (PL 95-306; Subtitle M, Rangeland Research, of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 PL 97-98); the Public

Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (PL 95-514); and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (PL 94-579); and the Food Security Act of 1985 (PL 99-198).

- b. The NR&E Committee will provide Department leadership through a Range Issues Working Group to help implement its range responsibilities.
- c. The NR&E Committee will:
 - (1) Coordinate the range policies of affected USDA agencies.
 - (2) Provide a forum for formulating and assessing alternative range policies and procedures to serve the missions of the various agencies within USDA and those of other executive agencies.
 - (3) Encourage and assist USDA agencies to develop liaison, as needed, with other executive agencies, public interest organizations, and professional societies.
 - (4) As appropriate, provide the Secretary with reports of range issues under consideration, opportunities for improvement, and progress toward resolution.
- d. Agency Compliance

Each agency of USDA will maintain its policies and program direction in compliance with this regulation. Agency heads will assure that current range program activities are delineated and that range programs of each agency are known to the NR&E Committee.