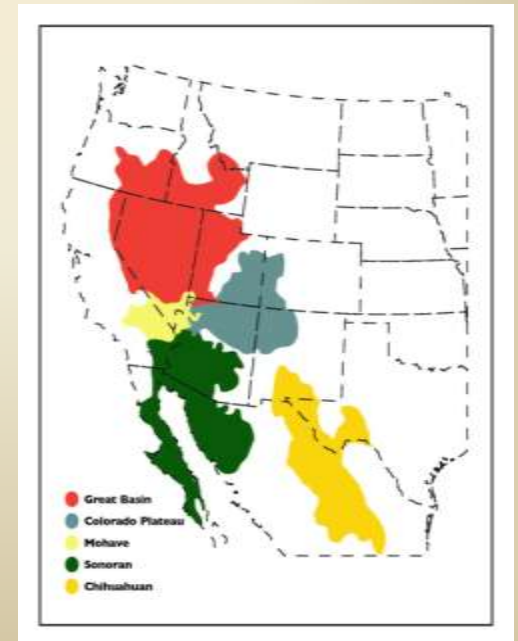


Wildfires and Invasive Plants in American Deserts

A Private Lands Perspective

Reno December 9 2008



Private Lands Perspective

- **Ken Zimmerman**, Lone Tree Cattle Company, Bishop, California; Chair, National Invasive Species Advisory Committee; Chair, Range Mgmt Advisory Committee, California State Board of Forestry.
- **Jack Alexander**, Synergy Resources Solutions Inc., Belgrade Montana www.countgrass.com

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Increased costs
 - Fencing
 - Structures
 - Seed
 - Management and planning
 - Outside labor costs

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Erosion
 - Primarily wind related
 - Loss of topsoil
 - Sand blown in from upper watershed
 - Sediment transfer in water course
 - Water channel altered
 - Culverts filled

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Vegetation Structure completely altered
 - Late seral pre-fire
 - Post-fire- mostly rabbitbrush and buckwheat
 - 90% bare soil two seasons after seeding
 - (Seeding Failure)
 - Loss of habitat

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Management
 - Decreased Flexibility
 - Diverted Assets
 - Time
 - Money
 - Equipment
 - Mental Energy and Creativity

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Increased Risk
 - Financial
 - Grazing Management
 - Fire Frequency
 - Fire Footprint

How has fire impacted Lone Tree Cattle Company?

- Benefits
 - Cleaned up stand of decadent brush

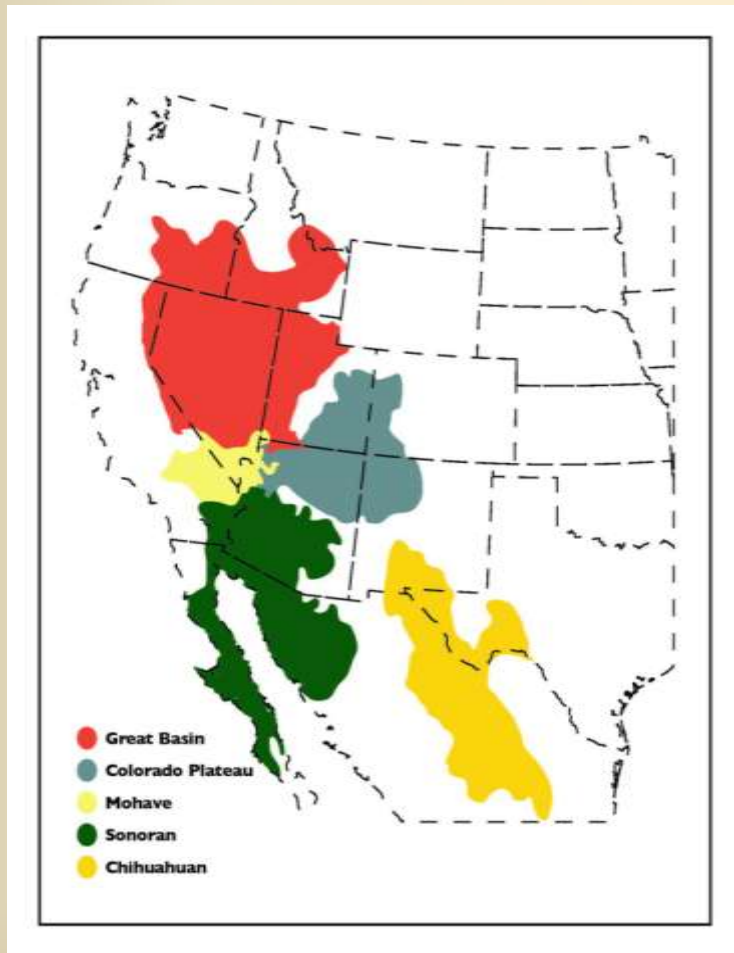
Do Ranchers Want Fire?

- Universally want more fire
 - Want fire on their terms
 - “Freshen up” decadent stands
 - Diversify age classes
 - Reduce wildfire risk
 - Increase value of fire as a tool
- We get big fires because we are scared of fires

Fire and Invasive Plants are Big Issues

- Loss of Habitat
- Loss of Grazing
- Shift in Ecological Status
- Long, Difficult Recovery
- Huge Economic Impact West-Wide

Working Together



- Throughout most of the region depicted as the American Desert wildfires burn across a mix of land ownership.
- Recognize the benefits and limitations of each owner

Insanity

- Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results

Things That Work

- Some things we did to get fewer invasives that got us more invasives
 - Ignoring Invasive Species
 - Resting Cheatgrass
 - Range Readiness

Things That Work

- “We know what doesn’t work.”
- “We know how to get more cheatgrass, why do we keep doing it?”
- “Why is every fire treated the same?”
- “We are working with good people here, why are we being punished by having to follow the same old plan?”

Things That Work

- Starting with the End in Mind

Things That Work

- Starting with the End in Mind
 - How do we want the landscape to look following fire or fire treatment?
 - What do we need to do to get there?
 - What is achievable?
 - What will it cost?
 - What is the probability of success?
 - Who is going to pay for it? (Who should pay for it?)

Things That Work

- Starting with the End in Mind
- Creativity
- Innovation
- Planning
- Active Management
- Working Together
- Using Grazing as a Vegetation Treatment Tool
- Recognizing Annuals as a Forage Resource

Financial Considerations

- Private Lands (generally) have to “pay their own way”
- Economic considerations on a ranch are “micro” in scale
- Fires create increase financial costs and risks
- Businesses must cash flow to stay alive

Future Risks

- Accelerated Mean Fire Return Interval
 - Change from 50 year to 5 year increases risk from 2% to 20%
 - This changes risk from once every 2 generations (maybe) to 5 times per generation (count on it)
- Bigger Fires
 - Burn beyond the old fire borders
- Change in Forage Base
 - From Perennial to Annuals

Innovation

- It is critical to be willing to take chances.
- We cannot succeed if we manage for mediocrity
- We need to allow the innovators and early adopters to use their creativity to do something better
- Diversify, Diversify, Diversify

Recognize Risk and Rewards

- Good management costs money
- Good managers need opportunity to make money
- If bigger inputs are required from managers, they need to be able to earn the money those inputs cost

Monitoring

- How do we know what works?
 - Every project needs to have a monitoring budget included during the planning stage
 - We have installed millions of acres of revegetation treatments but we only know what worked on a fraction of them
 - For private landowners to buy in and invest, they want to know what worked and what did not

Analyze Fire Funding

- Are fire programs funded in such a way that doing the right thing is rewarded?
- Basic management: You get the behavior that you reward.

Thank You

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- Fire Impact to Lone Tree Cattle Company
- Big Issues
- Future Impacts
- Private Landowners Perspective
- Things That Work
- Things to Thing About