

## Rangeland Responsibilities ...Rat, Retreat, or Respond?

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Group Size:** variable

**Setting:** Classroom

**Activity Author:** Ed Harper, Meridian High School

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to come to their own judgments about what they believe are responsible and appropriate actions to take in situations affecting rangelands and the environment. It is not the intent of this exercise to create “right” or “wrong” answers. The activity will help students develop decision-making skills, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills.

### Goals:

Students will:

- Examine their own values and beliefs related to rangeland and elements of the environment.
- Outline reasons why managing rangeland resources can create ethical dilemmas.
- Identify, analyze, and state actions they might take that have an impact on rangelands and the environment.

### Materials Needed:

- Copies of the attached dilemma cards

### Process:

1. *Warm Up:* Provide students with a scenario that could be found in your area. For example:

You are driving down the road leading to your favorite recreation area for a weekend of camping. As you round the corner, you see a fawn antelope at the side of the road. The fawn does not move as you approach and you do not see the doe anywhere. What are you going to do?

Ask your students to list reasons why this situation creates a dilemma or an ethical problem. Have them recall any situations that have presented similar situations and how they solved such problems. Tell them they are going to do an exercise that introduces them to other such situations that will test their skills at presenting their views and beliefs in different areas.

2. *Activity:* Divide the class into small groups and give each group one or more dilemma cards. Keep all cards face down. Provide the groups with the following instructions:

- a. One member of the group will select a card from the stack and read it aloud to the group. Group members will decide why this is a dilemma and what to do and why. This shouldn't take more than five minutes.
  - b. One member of the group reads the card aloud to the class and gives the groups' decision and briefly describes their reasoning involved.
  - c. After the group's decision is given, provide time for others in the class to question their decision and/or reasoning. This discussion gives students the experience in having their ideas questioned by their peers and is intended to remind the students of the need to take personal responsibility for decision making.
  - d. After discussion has stopped, have the group return the card and continue this process until each group has had the opportunity to express their decision and rationale about a given situation or dilemma.
3. *Evaluation:* Choose a dilemma with options and read it aloud to the class. Have each student write a short paragraph on the positive and negative effects of all the options you have read. Identify what additional information, if any, is needed to make a responsible and informed decision. Identify what seems, in your judgment (students), to be the most responsible decision and explain your reasoning.

### Variations:

- Instead of giving students the attached dilemma cards, have them create their own dilemma cards as distribute them to different groups or individuals.
- Instead of doing this during class, start a day by having a student draw a card from a stack. While you take roll, give the student a few minutes to arrive at a decision. Have that student read aloud the dilemma and discuss a decision. This could be done throughout the year using current issues as they come up.
- Invite your local resource manager to speak to your class about local resource dilemmas within your area and the decision making process involved in addressing a solution.

### **Dilemma 1**

Your home is near some rangeland managed by the BLM. You have decided it is time to change the oil in your vehicles. You know the hazards of dumping oil on the ground, yet you are in a hurry to attend an activity in town. How will you discard the used oil?

1. Put it in the shop or garage.
2. Put it in the garbage can for disposal at the county landfill.
3. Burn it in a pan.
4. Take it away from your home and pour it on the ground when no one is looking.
5. Take it to a proper disposal facility.
6. Other?

### **Dilemma 3**

You and a friend are out hunting chukker on some local rangeland when you spook a few sage hens from the cover. Before you realize what has happened, your friend has shot one of the sage hens, which you know was illegal to do. An hour later you are leaving the area and are stopped at a check station where a conservation officer tells you there have been reports of illegal shooting of sage grouse. What do you do?

1. Deny any knowledge of the incident.
2. Admit that your friend has shot the grouse.
3. Make up a story about seeing someone else shoot the grouse.
4. Say nothing, but call the conservation officer up later with an anonymous tip.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 2**

You and a friend are driving down the road and you see someone dumping a 55-gallon drum of an unknown liquid in the bottom of a nearby draw. What do you do?

1. Confront the individual on the spot, and ask what they are doing.
2. Come back after the individual has left, and investigate by smelling and feeling the wet soil where the liquid was dumped.
3. The land does not belong to you, and what is happening is none of your business.
4. Try to identify the vehicle or individual, and contact the local authorities.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 4**

You are out on the open rangeland riding your four wheelers with several friends. You know that you should stay on the roads and trails, but your friends want to cross country to get back to the parking area faster. What do you do?

1. Follow them anyway.
2. Tell them you are going back on the road and will meet them at the parking area.
3. Tell them that they should not go cross country as it can damage the land, and try to convince them to go back the long way on the road.
4. If they go cross country, report them to the local resource manager.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 5**

You are the owner of a large cattle operation and graze your cows on public rangeland. You are attending a town meeting considering the conditions of rangeland in your area. During the meeting, you are directly confronted by a local environmentalist who blames you for the condition of the rangeland. What do you do?

1. Leave the meeting to avoid confrontation.
2. Confront the individual during the meeting.
3. Say nothing at this time but confront the individual in private after the meeting.
4. Say nothing.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 7**

You are driving through the local rangeland when you see a large group of cattle gathered at a riparian area. You realize they have been there for some time damaging this fragile area. What do you do?

1. Stop and run the cattle away from the area.
2. Keep driving and don't worry about the cattle or the riparian area.
3. When you get home, call the local resource manager and report the situation.
4. Contact the rancher and explain your concerns and ask to have the cattle moved.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 6**

During the early spring, you are out camping at your favorite site located on public rangeland and you see another group leaving their campsite without cleaning up their own trash. It is clear that they are leaving with no intentions of cleaning up the trash. What do you do?

1. Move quickly to their area, and ask them to clean up the trash before the leave.
2. Wait for them to leave the area, and then move in and clean up their trash.
3. Write down their license number and report it to the local resource manager when you get home.
4. Do nothing.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 8**

You are the governor of your state. Many people in your state believe that cattle and farming operations are primary cause of water pollution. This has resulted in several large algae blooms with fish kills, and people who like to use water for recreational uses have written several letters of complaint. Agriculture is a major source of income in your state, but you also like your state's reputation of being a place where people can enjoy its rivers and streams. What do you do?

1. Ask farmers and ranchers to stop using water.
2. Ask farmers and ranchers to devise ways to keep all runoff water on their property.
3. Establish a committee to study the problem.
4. Propose that your state will fine any farm or ranch that discharges water directly into any stream or river.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 9**

You hold the lease on some public rangeland and see an individual digging up several plants and placing them in containers. You realize that they are not familiar with the area and its plant life. You recognize that they are removing some plants that are actually considered noxious weeds and must be controlled. What do you do?

1. Tell them they are on your land and to please leave.
2. Explain to them that although they are on public land, they should not dig up plants to take home.
3. They are removing weeds from your area so there is no need to stop them.
4. Write down their license and report them to your local resource manager.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 11**

The man who owned the ranch next to yours has died, and his children have subdivided the property into 40-acre parcels. One day you're out checking your fence lines when you notice that one of the new "ranchette" owners has more horses in his adjacent pasture than it can support. There's much less forage than there should be at this time of year; the banks of a seasonal gully are being eroded by hooves; and a patch of noxious weeds has appeared where no weeds had ever grown before. What do you do?

1. Laugh with your friends about the dumb city-slickers who don't know how to manage a horse pasture, but otherwise just wait to see whether the weeds start creeping toward your land.
2. Report them to county weed supervisor, who will fine them and also force them to kill the weeds or else pay the county to do it.
3. Stop by your new neighbors' place to explain the problem and why it's occurring, and discuss some ideas about how they might solve it.
4. Stop by your new neighbors' place to offer to lease some of your own pasture at really low rates.
5. Other?

### **Dilemma 10**

You have the lease on a large tract of public rangeland that was recently devastated by a wild fire. Your lease states that you are not allowed to graze the area for at least ten years. You know that control of weeds could be accomplished by early or late grazing within two years of fire. What do you do?

1. Contact the local range specialists with your concerns and ideas.
2. Contact your state legislatures and get them to change the rules for you.
3. Put your cattle on the site and tell the resource manager that someone left the gate open and you will remove your cattle as soon as possible.
4. Contact the area universities and gather study results that would support your case before contacting the agency holding your lease.
5. Sell your cattle.
6. Other?

### **Dilemma 12**

Your family has lived for three generations on a ranch that is near a river basin. The costs associated with raising cattle have skyrocketed recently and your family has been forced to explore alternative income strategies. The utility company would like to put in a series of large windmills up on the ridge above the river to generate extra power to supplement the needs of the growing community nearby. However, the windmills would be very close to a new high-end housing development and would obstruct their view of the scenic open range. The community is furious. What do you do?

1. Disregard their opinion; not their property
2. Sell a piece of ground to the development for double what you would earn from the utility company over 5 yrs
3. Put up the windmills and lose some of the ranch legacy and respect of community
4. Do nothing
5. Other?