

July 27, 2016

Testimony of Bruce B. Adams

A historical perspective might help to understand the grazing history in San Juan County. In 1879 families loaded into 80 (eighty) wagons in Parowan, Utah and began a journey to San Juan County. They brought with them 1000 (one thousand) head of horses and cattle. The purpose of this expedition was to establish a settlement among the Native American people and help them with the domestic needs that they had. Even though the settlers encountered some hostility at first, they soon became great friends.

After these families settled in what would be known as Bluff, Utah, four families moved to the base of the Blue Mountains and established the beginnings of the present day community of Monticello. When these early settlers arrived at the base of the Blue Mountains, they were met by the LC and Carlisle cattle companies. These two cattle outfits were composed largely of Texas cowboys and outlaws hiding from their misdeeds.

The grass was so plentiful in the area it is a matter of historical record that each company was running nearly 10,000 (ten Thousand) yearlings east of Monticello and down in the Verdure Creek drainage. At this time grazing was free and unregulated. As a result these grazing companies along with others overgrazed the land in the name of quick profitability for their investors and with little regard for the land which they grazed. The early settlers were anxious to find places not being grazed by these large companies to graze the cattle they had brought with them from Parowan.

In the meantime the federal government was developing policies for grazing public land and in 1934 passed the Taylor Grazing Act. It was signed by President Roosevelt and was intended to “stop injury to the public grazing lands by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development; to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range.” This Act was welcomed by the livestock men here in San Juan County because it brought stability to the settlers who depended on grazing the public land for their livelihood.

On July 16, 1946, the grazing service and the general land office merged to form the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM was in charge of the grazing permits that exist even today. These grazing permits have great value to the decedents of their ancestral families who obtained the rights to graze over 150 (one hundred fifty) years ago. Many of the original grazing permits are still part of the family heritage that exists today.

I would like to tell you the history of the BLM grazing permit that I graze my cattle on. The first holder of the grazing permit was a man named Darryl Redd. He passed that permit on to his son Lemuel Hardison Redd and then through the guidelines of the BLM I obtained the permit from him. Only three individuals have held rights to this grazing permit.

I could give you many examples of families who have obtained grazing permits from their settler ancestors. I just want to point out that these grazing permits are part of our heritage and obviously have great value to San Juan County with families continually participating in grazing throughout each generation.

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in this county. In fact it ranks in the top two for economic importance in the county. When you are raised in a family that depends on cattle grazing it becomes part of your sole and fiber. You live and breathe the cattle business. You raise your children to love the land and take care of it so it will take care of you.

Cattlemen are the original environmentalist because they could see the value of good land management. We welcome new ideas and improved management practices, but with only 8% private property in this county we must be able to graze public land.

Congressional Code Title 43 Chapter 8A subchapter 1-315b states; Preference shall be given the issuance of grazing permits to those within or near a district who are landowners engaged in the livestock business." State Code 63-38d-401 (6)(m) includes state policy for public lands grazing and support grazing of domestic livestock.

I am not sure what a new Monument in San Juan County would do to livestock grazers, but I can tell you what has happened in Garfield County, Utah after the designation of the Grand Staircase Escalante monument.

- 106,000 AUM's were permitted at the time of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (GSENM) creation. Approximately 40,000 (forty thousand) were actually used in 2015 (a 60% (sixty) cut)
- Seedlings and vegetation treatments have not been maintained due to restrictive regulations.
- Prohibition against non-native seeds has reduced range land health
- Maintenance and improvement of water developments has largely been eliminated.
- Monument designation has attracted visitors creating conflicts with pre-existing livestock operations.
- Monument designation has closed roads and reduced access to range improvements and allotments.
- Land use restrictions and zoning regulations have complicated feeding, watering, herding, and managing livestock operations.
- Monuments always result in reduction of AUM's