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SKETCH HISTORY

OF THE

NAVAJO GRAZING SITUATION

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SKETCH HISTORY OF THE NAVAJO GRAZING SITUATION
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Frequently, questions are asked relative to the history of the grazing situation on the Navajo Reservation. This is an attempt to highlight in very brief form, a resume of the grazing situation for the past 35 years.

Following the return of the Navajos from Bosque Redondo, the U.S. Government was cognizant of the need of the Navajo people to be self-sufficient. Livestock raising was a proven enterprise of the Navajo so they set about to restock the ranges. Records indicate that the Government initially issued 30,000 head of sheep and 2,000 head of goats as a nucelous to restocking the Navajo ranges.

History tells us that the Navajos very jealously guarded, protected and propogated these initial issues into a sizeable number of livestock over a very short period of time. Thirty five years ago, in the year of 1930, we were in the grips of a tremendous depression and a nation which became increasingly aware of conserving our national resources.

The following is a sequence of significant developments which occurred during these thirty five years.

1930 - Sheep scabies was seriously effecting the Navajo flocks and comprehensive program to eradicate the disease was initiated following piece meal efforts from 1926 to 1930. Livestock numbers averaged 165 sheep units per family with extremes of 15 per family to 2,500 per family. Average lamb weight, 50 pounds; average price, 4½¢ per pound; conservation minded individuals proposed a reduction in total numbers with an increase

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in quality of animal and products produced. This same year officials predicted heavy losses in livestock numbers due to a combination of lack of forage and depressed economic conditions.

1931 (August) - General regulations for the administration of grazing lands were adopted for the Indian Service. On the Navajo, a special report was prepared by William Zeh, concerning the depleted range conditions and the need for range improvement, particularly water development.

1933 - Beginning of the so called "stock reduction:" The Bureau of Indian Affairs obtained enough money (Rehabilitation and Production Corporation) to purchase 100,000 sheep and goats. Average price, $1.50 for ewes; $2.25 to $3.00 for weathers; approximately 90,000 were purchased primarily from small owners with large owners merely culling their herds.

1934 - Funds for the purchase of 150,000 goats and 50,000 sheep were obtained from Rehabilitation and Production Corporation; value paid: $1.00 per head delivered to the rail; goats reduced from 294,811 in 1934 to 146,507 in 1935; (did not get the quota of 50,000 sheep (3,500 head of goats shot at Navajo Canyon).

1934-1937 - Range surveys conducted throughout the Navajo Reservation to determine forage and range conditions as well as carrying capacity or stocking rates.

1935 - Grazing Regulations introduced to the Navajo.

1935 - Money again obtained for the purchase of livestock; only 13,000 sheep and 13,000 goats purchased under this program. Shifting of reduction to larger owners and developing more resistence in adjustment program.

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1936- LMU Districts formed and supervisors appointed. Each district formed after considering social, political, economic and educational facilities as well as topography and natural resources of the area.

1936-1939 - Developed records of individual ownership of livestock primarily through dipping programs and roundups for branding of horses and cattle. Developed agreements among the Navajo for the sale of 80% of increase of livestock in an effort to hault every increasing number of livestock.

1937 - Special grazing regulations approved following adoption by the Navajo and Hopi Tribal Councils. Class distinction, officially recognized as a problem in stock reduction programs.

1939 - Records indicate 232 families owned over 500 sheep and goats; 4,000 families owned less than 100; 2,500 families with no livestock recorded. A proposal was made by the Indian Service that the 232 large stock owners lease range lands outside the reservation and solve the overgrazing problems.

1939 - The Council endorsed a reduction program involving excess numbers of horses, approximately 12,000 head of horses removed from the range. No records available as to prices paid.

1940 (1939 Study) - Population: 40,000 Navajos; livestock income $1,400,630; agricultural income $520,800; wages $892,350; rugs $283,480.

1940-1941 - Grazing Permits were issued to 7,453 Navajos to prevent taking all of the stock of the poor people. The maximum limits were set by districts. The large owners were required to share a larger portion of the reduction.

1941 - President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote an open letter to the Navajo Tribe:

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"One of the most important objectives of this Nation is protection of its soil and other natural resources, for without soil, no Nation can endure."

1941 - Navajo Chairman, J. D. Morgan and Vice Chairman, Howard Gorman in a letter approved by Commissioner John Collier, requested reconsideration of any reduction in livestock numbers, "due to national emergencies, request special consideration based on economic loss of wages and war effort." Also, requested revision in the grazing regulations to make them more adaptable to the Navajo situation.

1941 - Special report of Amercian Association on Indian Affairs, Incorporated, "Government payroll is 38% of total income."

1941 - Special permits issued to reduce the impact of stock reduction during the war years; special permits provided for an adjustment of livestock over a three year period.

1941 (October) - Human Dependency Study indicated the following:

Total livestock per capita	15.5 sheep units
Income per sheep unit	$2.35
Total wages income	$1,195,200.00
Livestock income	$1,309,000.00
Agriculture	$ 81,014.00
Rugs and Miscellaneous	$ 374,740.00
Total Agriculture	$2,832,330.00

Total Population - 49,185

1942 -Change to the Navajo-Hopi Grazing Regulations: developed a base preference and a maximum number; (the issue of the War Stamp Book).

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1942 (January) - Memorandum from E. R. Fryer: "On the Navajo, we are at the turning point in our program of conservation and human adjustment. In the past, our work has been centered primarily on stock reduction and supplementary activities pertaining to range control. In the future our work will turn more to water development of irrigable lands, redistribution of population, encouragement of economic cooperation, education and the improvement phases of range management."

1942 - A special report relating to birth control as a major problem, however "must await a more enlightened public opinion and governmental policy."

1943-1944 - Development of livestock disposition program, slaughter houses, tanneries, etc., indicated prices paid, 7¢ per pound for lambs; 30¢ per pound for calves and operated as tribal enterprises.

1944 - Military personnel bombarding congressmen, administrators, Red Cross and religious groups with pleas on stock reduction.

1945 - Letter: Superintendent Stewart to Commissioner: "It seems that for some reason the Indian Service attempts at conserving Navajo grazing lands have recevied more public attention and criticism than any of the other range management programs supervised by the Indian Service on other governmental agencies."

1947 - Lee Muck Report - 30 day study of Navajo in 1947: proposed each individual Navajo entitled to 10 sheep units per capita; 53,000 Navajos with carrying capacity of 530,000 sheep units; pointed out the range resource could not possibly support the population; proposed revision of the 1937 Grazing Regulations.

1948 (June) - Special grazing regulations frozen in accordance and based on

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the Muck Report. Tribe to develop their own regulations acceptable to the Secretary of Interior.

1948 (October) - Deadline of July 1, 1949, set for the Navajo Tribe to revise the regulations.

1949 - Mr. Littell first interceded on behalf of Navajos.

1949 (July) - Deadline extended to April, 1950 on regulations

1950 (April) - Deadline extended to April 1, 1951.

1950 - Navajo-Hopi Long Range Rehabilitation Act ($88,570,000).

1950-1951 -Most severe drouth on record in Navajo country. (U.S. Weather Bureau information.)

1951 - Expanded water development program initiated on the Navajo Reservation; $100,000 per year contributed to USGS for studies over a five year period. 500 deep wells drilled (1951-1959).

1952 (February) - Letter from Commissioner stating further extension of time in developing regulations not warranted.

1952 (April) - Tribal Resolution CA-30-52 requesting negotiability of permits be allowed as an exception to the freeze order, also an extension of time for developing regulations.

1952 (October) - Secretary granted the extension to April 1, 1954.

1953 - Grazing Committees established; Advisory Committee developed first Handbook on Duties and Responsibilities of District Grazing Committees and rules for negotiability of Grazing Permits.

1953 (May) - Grazing Committee members and Advisory Committee met for instructions and first attempt at revision of regulations.

1954 - Navajo Tribe developed land acquisition policy developed for the primary purposes of (1) consolidating grazing land, used and occupied by Navajos;

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(2) acquire additional range land to relieve overcrowded conditions on the reservation; (3) acquire range land to relocate and establish tribal ram and bull herds.

Pojoque and Picuris lands in the Ramah Navajo area; 1957, the Best-Brown Ranch; 1961, the Ed Sergeant Ranch; 1964, the I. K. Westbrook Ranch; 1965, the Adrian Berryhill Ranch and numerous other tracts under a specially authorized exchange purchase agreements; 1965, Mark Elkins and Chambers ranches acquired. Small ranches, small land purchases and isolated tracts not listed.

1954 (June) - The Navajo Tribal Council approved a draft of proposed Grazing Regulations, CJ-22-54 following much work by the Advisory Committee and newly appointed grazing committees.

1954-1955 - Commissioner questioned several items in proposed regulations as passed by the Council, there followed many communications and meetings and much correspondence between the Central Office, Tribal Legal Counsel, Tribal leaders and Agency office on developing acceptable regulations.

1955 - Discovery of oil in the Aneth Field.

1956 (April) - Acting Secretary Davis, approved Navajo Grazing Regulations.

1956 (August) - Tribe purchased first ranch of any consequence ($705,000), the Bar-N Ranch in Arizona justified to relieve overstocking on the reservation.

1956 - First of free feed grain program with grain donated by the Department of Agriculture as a "means of protecting the range and getting range management." (1,648 train carloads).

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1956 - The Tribe instigated a Horse Purchasing Program ($10 per head) in an effort to check increasing numbers of horses.

1956 - First transplant of deer to the Reservation in northwestern New Mexico.

1957 (April) - Chairman was informed that grazing regulations had been in effect, except trespass provision which was effective April 25, 1957.

1957 (May) - Council passed a Resolution, CM-57-57 requesting the Secretary to grant another year extension to April 25, 1958 before "trespass" becomes effective. This resolution justified by a 12-Point Program, the Tribe would carry on to remedy the grazing situation.

1957 (November) - Tribe instigated first livestock purchase program administered entirely by the Tribe, designed to buy cull livestock.

1958 (January) - The Tribe was asked to report on the accomplishments of the 12-Point Program. Indications that the Tribe had fallen far short of reaching any of the objectives in the program was pointed out.

1958 (June) - Secretary extends deadline on trespass based on tribal proposal to run a human dependency survey. Delegation to Washington, June 27, 1958 obtained an extension of time based on human dependency and 12-Point Program.

1958 (June) - Telegram: Assistant Secretary to Tribal Chairman approved Council resolution for extension of time based on Tribe's justification in which he understood a human dependency survey was being conducted. (This survey was never started.)

1958 - Navajo-Hopi Long Range Act amended; $20 million appropriated for Routes 1 and 3.

1959 (July) Revolving livestock and feed relief program of the Navajo Tribe

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instigated $240,000 Tribal funds appropriated; livestock taken as trade for feed procured by Tribe, program generally ineffective. Also by resolution requested Department of Agriculture to consider an emergency Feed Grain Program #3.

1959 (July) - Letter from Chairman to Secretary explaining Chairman's stand on"grazing" and requesting a meeting to discuss the matter.

1959 (July) - Letter from Assistant Secretary Ernst to Chairman acknowledging above and stating that since the Chairman cannot go along with the program, what is to be done to bring the range and livestock in balance to stop deterioration from further imperiling the livelihood of the Navajo people.

1960 - Letter from Commissioner to Tribal Chairman relative to visit on September 12, 1960 by Kenneth Scott, of USDA wherein he suggests free grain for marketing peewee lambs, etc.

1961 (September) - Joint meeting of District Grazing Committees where Land Operations again reported the seriousness of grazing situation and explained Range Site and Condition Survey methods. At close of meeting, resolution adopted to again have Tribe buy cull livestock.

1962 (September) - Commissioner Nash visited the reservation. (One week period) A great deal of discussion at local meetings on Feed Grain and Range Programs.

1962 (November) - Commissioner Nash went to Agriculture in Washington to get Navajos feed grain based on impression of cooperation expressed to him by the Navajo Tribe; result 11-Point Plan of Operations and programs in connection with Memorandum of Agreement No. 4.

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1962 (November) - Public Works funds become available and first fencing of district lines initiated.

1962 (December) - Telegram: Secretary Freeman to Secretary Udall: "In light of your assurance as stated in your December 1 letter that the Navajo Tribal Council is prepared to accept its responsibility and move promptly and postively toward correcting these abuses, the Department of Agriculture will cooperate with your department in efforts to carry on such programs as will accomplish this goal."

1963 (February) - Advisory Committee approved an agreement with the authority of the Navajo Tribal Council between the Navajo Tribe and BIA, in connection with Memorandum of Understanding No. 4, between the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, for the donation of feed grain. This agreement required individuals to sign affidavits of compliance over a three year period with grazing permitted numbers. Area declared an economic distress area rather than drouth disaster in connection with this program. Eleven Point Program adopted as a part of Memorandum of AGreement No. 4 (Feed Grain Program V) called "Plan of Operations" for a three year livestock adjustment and range improvement plan.

1965 (February) - Letter from the Secretary of Agriculture to Secretary of Interior, declaration of reservation lands as acute distress area; "Whenever the Secretary of Agriculture determines that the chronic economic distress of the needy members of these tribes is materially increased by severe drouth or other natural disaster." Also, "prior to extending assistance to a tribe, assurance should be obtained from

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the Secretary of Interior that such assistance will not be inconsistent with the obligations to eliminate overgrazing."

1965 (February) - Letter from John Carver to the Secretary of Agriculture depicting progress on the Plan of Operations and justifications for giving Navajo Tribe additional grain and promising tribal cooperation.

1965 (February) - Tribe granted 5,000,000 pounds of feed grain approval based on 1963 Memorandum of Agreement No. 4 and Plan of Operations; last of the three year adjustment program.

1966 (January) - 1956-65 Feed Grain Program Summary: Total of six, 201,419,110 pounds of grain furnished; Tribal cost, $4,261,693; Government cost $7,717,481; approximately $25 per sheep unit invested in Feed Grain Programs.

1966 (January) - Telegram from Bennett to Gallup Area Director, outlining requirements to quailfy for feed grain and pointing out the President's Proclamation needed for disaster conditions such as drouth, etc. Telegram indicates that guarantee must be included in request and justification that accomplishments will be made in accordance with the desires to prevent further abuses to range lands.

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This is a very brief summary of the highlights of activities concerning the range and livestock programs. Some items listed, such as the accelerated roads program, may not appear to be directly connected however, improved roads have had a tremendous effect on the livestock marketing situation. Accelerated education programs, increased state and federal welfare, changes in off-reservation employment, irrigation development and on-reservation employment have all

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had an impact on livestock management and economy of the Navajo people.

There was no attempt made to elaborate on any particular development nor to be all inclusive in presenting all of the related information. Those who may be prompted to research further, any historical period on particular item may do so by examining existing files in the Navajo Area Office.

With this sketch history, I would like to propose a course of action which I feel would benefit the land management program and improve the economic soundness of the livestock economy. I feel very strongly that the Navajo will for many years hold agriculture and livestock raising in high esteem and therefore all other developments will be related. No single course of action can solve all of the ills of land management neither can a time table be established for measuring accomplishments.

The Navajos are unlike all other southwestern tribes in their use of lands due to the strong feeling of individual ownership. Although admitting that the Navajo Tribe holds title to the land their "customary use rights" many times exceeds those of the Tribe when dealing with use and occupancy problems. Capitalizing on this feeling, by developing individualism and a pride of ownership seems paramount to managing the land. Steps in this direction should start by delineating and fencing the customary use areas. Grazing Permits and Land Use Permits should be transferred to the Navajo Tribe at the Area level. Authority should be delegated to the local committees and tribal courts for carrying out the provisions of the Grazing Handbook. In light of a change in attitude negotiations should begin to amend the Grazing Handbook and revise the Grazing regulations to make them more workable.

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The livestock import regulations should be amended to include specific penalties for violations and the regulations strictly enforced.

Economically it is extremely important that this be done to protect the Tribe's investment in disease control and also add incentive for local processing of livestock products.

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