

## Why Are Goals Important for Natural Resource Management?

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Have you ever needed something bad enough to plan, scheme, maneuver and work hard to achieve it? Did you succeed? What happened if you failed to achieve what you needed? Did you give up, or did you re-evaluate the situation and try again?

### What do the above questions have to do with rangelands and natural resource management?

The primary function of management is to identify goals (needs), develop a plan, implement the plan, allocate resources and activities and achieve goals. For a ranch owner, the highest priority “needs” may be to avoid bankruptcy for another year; increase net worth; improve range, animal, personnel, physical or financial resources; and provide an adequate lifestyle for one’s family.

Management decisions and personnel activities should focus on achieving identifiable goals or objectives. For example, consider a hired employee working on a ranch. Why is the employee willing to work? Although he may like ranching, he has two types of goals to be achieved. He “needs” adequate financial returns to buy food, shelter, clothing, medical care, transportation, pay taxes, etc. for himself and his family. He also “wants” a more enjoyable and secure lifestyle. The employee must achieve financial “needs” each and every year, while accumulating savings or borrowing capacity to cover any potential crisis situations. The amount of resources he or she will have available for “wants” is his or her financial return minus survival expenses (needs).

Effective management carefully allocates income to pay survival expenses before using funds to satisfy wants. Sometimes sacrificing or delaying purchase of a “want” so that resources can be invested may improve future income and one’s overall standard of living or future security. It is risky to jeopardize long-term sustainability for short-term gain.

Rangeland resources reflect the way they have been managed as well as environmental factors. Like the employee described earlier, a ranch, pasture, range site or animal has

specific needs. Management must effectively allocate resources to specific activities within natural environmental processes occurring at the time and plan for future needs.

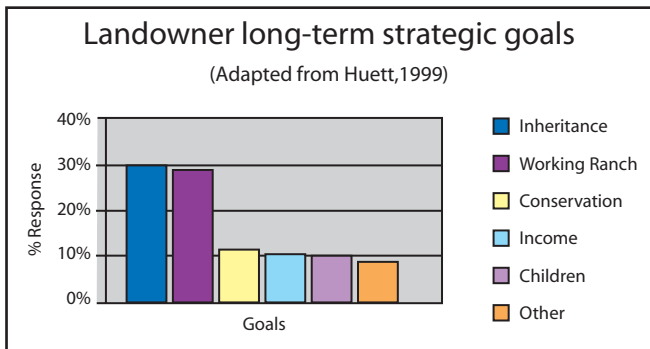
For a natural resource manager to properly allocate resources, the “needs” and “wants” of each resource must be defined. “Needs” must be achieved and, therefore, become the goals of management. Goals must be achievable, realistic and not conflicting. A ranch, pasture, range site, animal or employee cannot sustain excessive expectations without damage. A healthy natural resource will out-produce and withstand adverse circumstances better than one that is damaged and not allowed to recover.

Most rangeland resource managers aspire to maintain what they have for the future. Consequently, sustainable development becomes an over-arching goal. It is important to remember that goals do not have to be quantitative; there are many goals that are qualitative, such as making management choices that produce a healthy rangeland.

### How does a rangeland resource manager establish natural resource goals?

Although most people practice some form of goal-setting, these goals are often poorly defined or analyzed. They may not be achievable or the best use of limited resources. Goal-setting requires setting priorities, quantifying each goal and identifying a time table of mileposts (objectives) to monitor progress. Goals and objectives need to be SMART—S (specific), M (measurable), A (attainable), R (related) and T (trackable). SMART goals establish priorities for allocating limited resources from an ecological, economic and socio-political perspective.

Long-term (strategic) goals mandate that enterprises (tactical solutions) must satisfy specific annual objectives. Selected enterprises and needed resources minus available resources determine monthly and daily activities (operational goals). Management can select the correct actions to ultimately achieve the strategic goals. If these operational decisions are not properly adjusted and carried out, both the long-term and short-term success of the resources are in jeopardy.



**Example 1.** Illustrating calculation of forage production requirements and their influence on meeting family survivability.

**Family expenses:**  $\$10.25/\text{acre} \times 5,500 \text{ acres} = \$56,375$  **required income to survive**

Therefore,

$\$56,375 \div \$200$  (gross margin income for cow/calf operation) = 282 AU needed to survive, thus

$5,500 \text{ acres} \div 282 \text{ AU} = \underline{19.5 \text{ acres}/\text{AU}}$  (AU = the amount of forage required for one animal unit for 1 year of grazing)

Therefore,

1 AU = 9,490 pounds of intake per AU

Thus,

$9,490 \text{ pounds AU} \times 4$  (25 percent harvest efficiency) = 37,960 pounds of production required per AU

Resulting in

$37,960 \text{ production}/\text{AU} \div 19.5 \text{ acres}/\text{AU} = 1,946$  pounds of production required per acre for this stocking rate

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