

CATTLE as an INVASIVE SPECIES.

The following definition is essentially mirrored in worldwide invasive species definitions.

"Invasive species refers to any harmful alien or non native species including animals, plants and other organisms whose introduction or spread threatens the environment, the economy or society including human health." *Invasive Species Council of B.C.*

Not surprising then that cattle permitted to graze public lands (range cattle) are increasingly recognized as an invasive species.

Environmental Effects: In B.C. Range Use has resulted in degraded grasslands, degraded riparian zones, degraded water quality, degraded forage capacity.

Using the kind of logic that might have emerged from Alice in Wonderland's rabbit-hole, Government and organizations set up to "deal with" invasive species, fail to acknowledge the role of cattle in these degradations. In that topsy turvy world, "invasive weeds and grasses" are an economic cost to ranchers. That these weeds and invasive grasses are primarily a direct result of cattle grazing on public lands, is apparent from comparisons with un-grazed private lands.

The Double D effect: disturbance and delivery. Cattle disturb protective biological soils (cryptogamic soils) or duff, while delivering invasive seeds, enabling and encouraging invasive plant growth and tree seed growth at grassland, forest land, interfaces.



A notice on Range Land indicating that: "Noxious weeds have the potential to devastate wildlife habitat in this area. Please be careful not to introduce them."

Within 50 m of the sign, numerous cattle loafing/resting areas infested by knap weed and cheat grass delivered by cattle.

Economic Effect: There has been no economic assessment of Range Use in B.C. and the Ministry overseeing range use claims the Ministry's mandate doesn't require any assessment. A U.S. Economic Study on Range Use estimated public costs of \$35 for approx \$ 1.30 of range rental paid. We estimate B.C. public costs would greatly exceed U.S estimates due to costs of infrastructure, fences, cattle-guards etc, on the smaller B.C tenures, as well as the tens of millions in public funds spent (in Boundary-Kootenay alone) to "improve" forage, in mostly ineffective efforts to solve wildlife/range cattle conflicts.

Human Health Effects: risks from water contamination have been well documented in Boundary Alliance articles on water quality and cattle related contamination of streams:

[E.Coli Counts in Dryland Streams, including Pathogens & Protection Report 2009, Patterns of Ecoli Contamination.....related to Presence of Range Cattle 2013.](#)

Some may argue that range cattle do not qualify as invasive species as they are away from rangeland for the winter months. Not much difference though to the dormancy of various invasive grasses and weeds in the same period.

Do range cattle qualify as invasive species?
"If it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck....."



Government sign on Range Land:

However,
Primary source of Pollution in many range-land areas, cattle contamination of streams, but concerns raised are diverted to Ministry responsible for range use, the Ministry that fails to protect water quality.

A shorter version of this article can be seen on our companion blog:

Dry Rot Journal

[here](#)