

Multistate Research Coordinating Committee
Proposal from The Rangelands Partnership (formerly Western Rangelands Partnership)
Currently WERA 1008: October 2011 to September 2016

Proposed Project Title: The Rangelands Partnership (formerly Western Rangelands Partnership)

Proposed Project Duration: From October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2021

Statement of Issue and Justification: Rangelands are vast natural landscapes that include grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and deserts. They are widespread throughout the U.S., accounting for 36% of the land surface. However, most rangelands occur in the 19 Western States where they account for 53% of the private and public lands (Hart 1994). Rangelands are varied and complex systems that produce a myriad of valuable goods and services, including forage and habitat for livestock and wildlife, places for recreation and scenic beauty, clean water, and energy resources from fossil fuels, solar technologies, and wind (Maczko et al. 2004). Many forces threaten the productivity and ecological integrity of these rangelands and the human communities that rely upon them. Threats include inappropriate grazing practices, damaging wildfires, invasive species, climate variability, and intensive recreational activities.

Demand for reliable and accessible information about effective management practices has never been greater as ranchers seek to diversify their operations and improve ecological and economic sustainability (Richards and George 1996). Federal and state agency land managers also have a pressing need for information to document potential ecological impacts of their proposed management practices (Vavra and Brown 2006). Against a backdrop of changing values and controversies over land use, greater understanding of innovative, sustainable rangeland stewardship practices is urgently needed. The many important resources and geographic extent of rangelands make their proper use and management vitally important to communities and economies - nationally and internationally. The Rangelands Partnership is a group of rangeland scientists, subject librarians, and library technologists from 19 land-grant universities who have joined together to create an electronic service that provides accessibility to the world's rangeland literature and educational resources. The Partnership applied for WERA status and was approved as WERA 1008 in 2005 and reapproved in 2011.

During our first WERA cycle, the Partnership adopted an operating and governance structure for the purpose of developing the Rangelands West web portal [<http://rangelandswest.org>] to meet the needs of rangeland researchers, extension professionals, private and public land managers, policy makers, and teachers and students. The Partnership also obtained a grant to create an eXtension Community of Practice in 2008 [<http://articles.extension.org/rangelands>]. During our second WERA cycle, the Partnership developed Global Rangelands [<http://globalrangelands.org>] with funding from a NIFA International Science and Education grant.

We also changed our name from Western Rangelands Partnership to The Rangelands Partnership due to our expanding scope of work internationally. WERA 1008 has been successful primarily because it is a multistate project with engagement from rangeland professionals, librarians, and information technologists. The size and scope of the project necessitates having broad and multidisciplinary involvement and expertise.

The Partnership continues to update information, expand, and evolve. Currently, we are working with Web designers and programmers to complete a redesign of the three-tiered system of websites. The redesign is based on a survey of member needs and interests, as well as focus group sessions with a variety of stakeholders in the Western U.S. The Partnership also continues to expand its collaborations internationally. We have agreements with rangeland organizations and institutions in Australia, South Africa, Mexico, and with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). These agreements are focused on providing access to key rangeland resources to inform researchers, outreach professionals, and educators. The current and projected impacts from our continued work includes the ability for stakeholders from around the world to have one place to search and access relevant and accurate scientific information on rangelands thereby broadening the knowledge base.

Objectives

1. To continue to build and expand the 19 member state rangelands websites with locally-specific content, providing additional access through the Global Rangelands database search feature and from the home pages of all Partnership inter-related websites;
2. To expand the Global Rangelands database, a global repository of full-text rangeland science and management resources, in cooperation with rangeland-related organizations and associations in the U.S. and around the world;
3. To strengthen connections among Global Rangelands/Rangelands West, the Range Science Education Council's resources and services, and other related online services such as The Land Portal and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, and to explore opportunities for additional collaborative efforts; and
4. To incorporate, maintain, and update social media tools to encourage and increase user-engagement. The partnership currently is active on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

Procedures and Activities: Based on input gained from previous and ongoing assessments of user needs, the primary activities of the Partnership will be focused on (1) the development, organization, and maintenance of the state websites, Rangelands West website, and Global Rangelands website, (2) expanding the global repository of rangeland ecology and management resources; and (3) maintaining and updating social media applications to engage different audiences and user groups, including an extensive set of videos documenting local knowledge and current issues. This work is accomplished through e-conference meetings as well as regular communications among Partnership members through its listserv and electronic newsletter. While the listserv is primarily used to disseminate general information to all members and to promote and organize the annual membership meeting and related conference sessions, e-conferences serve to facilitate cooperative decision-making, planning, and training. In addition, to ensure coordination efforts whenever possible, Partnership members participate in scheduled conference calls and meetings of the Society for Range Management (SRM) Outreach, Communications, and Website Committee, AgNIC, the Range Science Information System (RSIS), and the Range Science Education Council (RSEC).

Expected Outcomes and Impacts:

- Increased quality and quantity of rangeland information and resources to meet the needs of a broad range of users and audiences from around the world.
- Improved navigation and accessibility of needed information through the Global Rangelands, Rangelands West, and state websites.
- Strengthened relationships among rangeland professionals, librarians, and information specialists in member states through improved communications resulting in greater sharing of information and content development.
- Development of standardized methods for harvesting metadata, incorporating input from the Rangelands Partners, FAO, GODAN (Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition), and other interested stakeholders. The metadata for significant rangelands resources, including datasets, will be identified and added to the repository database.
- Identification of member university institutional repositories with relevant rangeland resources for the purpose of harvesting content to be made accessible through the Global Rangelands database.
- Increased use and exposure of the Global Rangelands, Rangelands West, and state rangelands websites by all stakeholders through an active marketing program.
- Continued success in achieving the primary vision of Global Rangelands and Rangelands West as the premier websites for dissemination of scientifically-based information on rangeland ecology and management.

Internal and External Linkages: See Appendix for the NIMSS “Appendix E” list.

http://lgu.umd.edu/lgu_v2/pages/appendixE.cfm?trackID=8556

The Rangelands Partnership has extensive organizational linkages. In addition to the internal linkages among the 19 state partners represented by rangelands specialists, librarians and IT experts, there are external linkages with the [Society for Range Management](#), [Australian Rangeland Society](#), [Grassland Society of South Africa](#), [Range Science Education Council](#), [AgNIC](#), and FAO. The eXtension Rangelands CoP also was created under the auspices of the RP.

Educational Plan: There will be continual refinements made on the Global Rangelands and Rangelands West websites for ease of use and expanding the database. This includes new content to be harvested from collaborators' databases as well as original content developed on topics and issues in the news. There will be particular emphasis on video productions that bring science to non-scientists. An online tutorial outlining how to use the redesigned Global Rangelands and Rangelands West websites will be completed once the new sites are launched. Training on new technologies and social media will continue to be offered to enhance communications mechanisms for cooperation and collaboration. In person and virtual presentations will be made to alert potential users to available resources.

Governance: Rangelands Partnership governance includes bylaws that specify the requirements for the election of officers who serve as the Executive Committee (chair, vice-chair, and secretary). At the annual meeting an officer is elected to serve a three-year, rotating term. Officers serve in year one as secretary, year two as vice-chair, and year three as chair of the Partnership. Officers generally alternate

between range specialists and librarians. The Executive Committee, along with Ad-Hoc Committee chairs and members, make certain decisions on behalf of the membership as needed. However, issues of a complex nature or that benefit from a broad perspective are brought to the full membership for consideration. Rangelands Partnership members meet in person at least once a year for updates, training, and site development and planning.

Authorization:

Administrative Advisor: Dr. John Tanaka

Dated:

References:

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Maczko, K.A., L.D. Bryant, D.W. Thompson, S.J. Borchard. 2004. Putting the pieces together: assessing social, ecological and economic rangeland sustainability. *Rangelands* 26: 3-12.

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Vavra, M. and J. Brown. 2006. Rangeland research: Strategies for providing sustainability and stewardship to the rangelands of the world. *Rangelands* 28:7-14.