

Range Beef Cow Symposium XX

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Partner With Federal Agencies for a Win-Win Outcome

by Barb Baylor Anderson

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (Dec. 15, 2007) — A wide range of relationships exist between ranchers and various federal agencies in terms of the quality and complexity of those relationships. Any good relationship can at a minimum build on the two partners' shared interest in high-quality, sustainable resources.

"The list of reasons for differences in the quality of relationships can be lengthy," Eric Peterson told attendees of Thursday's (Dec. 13) session on range and forage management at the 2007 Range Beef Cow Symposium in Fort Collins, Colo. Peterson is area natural resource education specialist for the Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service Mountain West Extension Area. "It should be heartening to know that thoughtful management of those relationships can yield positive results. You can build win-win programs."

While many agency programs are "prebuilt" or already established programs, Peterson said other programs that benefit your resources can be structured through the right partnership. He stressed four factors that must be understood to move forward — everybody likes success; the relationship must service the interests of both parties; you must focus on interests, rather than positions; and the relationship must be fair, interests and resources must be satisfied for both sides.

"One important point often overlooked, particularly by producers, is that when entering into a negotiation with a federal agency, producers are motivated by whatever they believe the relationship can offer. They likely have a financial stake, a focus on stewardship/sustainability and personal interests," he said. "On the other side of the table, the agency representative is motivated by professional responsibility, personal values and professional success."

With those motivations in mind, producers and agencies must use sound negotiation skills. "Potential partners have something to offer, and each has something they wish to gain," Peterson explained. "Honesty and openness are almost always the best policies. Gamesmanship and hardball are poor strategies for reaching solutions when you work toward win-win programs with a federal partner. One of the outcomes of negotiation must be a durable, healthy relationship."

Peterson encouraged producers to focus on interest-based problem-solving rather than preconceived solutions or position-based tactics. When all parties value and respect each other's interests and the related issues, a variety of solutions are more likely to develop.

"Four, simple elements serve as program builders, including focusing on interests," he said. "Others include separating the people

from the problem, considering a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do and insisting that the result be based on some objective standard."

Peterson continued, "When you can build on the journey you take with the partner, and come out on the other end with a great deal of respect for that partner, it's a program that's going to last. These techniques stimulate openness and trust in a relationship, which when coupled with the program's probability of achieving the goals, assure a durable and successful win-win program."

The cooperative extension services and animal science departments of Colorado State University, South Dakota State University, the University of Wyoming and the University of Nebraska hosted the Range Beef Cow Symposium XX at the Larimer County Fairgrounds and Events Complex Dec. 11-13. Additional coverage of the symposium is available at www.rangebeefcow.com.



Editor's Note: API coverage of the Range Beef Cow Symposium XX is made available for distribution to all media via an agreement with the Range Beef Cow Symposium Committee and API. Headquartered in Saint Joseph, Mo., API publishes the Angus Journal and the Angus Beef Bulletin, as well as providing online coverage of events and topics pertinent to cattlemen.