

Range conservation being taken seriously

by Marsha Shewczyk

In 1926, 6,000 sheep grazed the Warm Springs reservation. A total of 174 head belonged to Indians. It did not occur to residents at that time to be concerned about overgrazing the land. Overgrazing could quickly deplete the land of its forage.

Now, in 1981, range management has become a concern to all. With land being such a valuable resource and the economy demanding stretching the dollar every square inch of land must produce to its fullest.

Unfortunately the condition of the Warm Springs range is nothing to boast about. In almost any direction Medusa Head and Cheat Grass cover the ground. These are annual plants producing seeds which germinate yearly.

These annuals are dependent on surface moisture and are quick to dry up when the summer temperatures rise. In a drought year a small number of seeds may germinate. Possibly no new growth will occur.

Livestock will eat these plants enjoying them in the spring when they are green and tasty. They will also eat Cheat Grass and Medusa Head after they dry up if there is nothing else, but the plant is not very palatable or nutritious. Livestock begin looking pretty thin if they are dependent on the annuals for food throughout the fall and the winter months.

At one time the range in this area was covered with native perennial bunchgrasses including blue bunchgrass, wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, squirrel tail, with some Sandberg's bluegrass and needle grasses also growing. These perennials which came up each year from deeply-planted roots had a high carbohydrate level and much nutritive value.

Perennials are found to be a better quality of forage and sustain yield on a more constant basis. They are deeper-rooted than annuals using soil moisture to a greater depth along with stored

moisture. They are green much longer than the annuals. Those that remain in this area are still green where annuals have already dried up.

Overgrazing continues to keep these perennials from establishing themselves on the range, according to range conservationist Brian Spears. He says, "It's too late for a lot of these areas." Medusa head and cheat grass is everywhere.

Attempts have been made to see how some non-native perennials will take root. An experimental plot put in by Oregon State extension agent Clint Jacks and soil conservationist Dean Elliott give evidence that perennials will take root. The experimental area, however, is fenced to keep livestock out. The same plants cultivated on the opposite side of this fence where livestock are free to graze at will are nowhere to be seen.

Efforts have been made to control grazing in the past. Ordinance 15, adopted in 1945, and Ordinance 37, adopted in 1962, sought to establish range units where grazing could be controlled. There was little group interest at that time.

Ordinance 48, adopted June of 1971, encouraged formation of range units and the formation of groups which use the areas for grazing to form grazing associations in an effort to rejuvenate the range. The advantage of these range units and associations, says range conservationist Spears, is "making a plan to utilize forage" to its utmost. The people involved though, "have to decide what they want to do with their units," Spears says. "My job is to follow through and get the units going, providing assistance in range development and improvements."

Two range units have already been formed, the 4-H unit located on Highway 26 at Sidwalter Flat and The Wapinitia unit on the McQuinn Strip, Miller Flat, Dry Creek, Webster Flat, Boulder Creek unit and Sidwalter have a grazing plant



Range conservationist Brian Spears points out a bunch of Medusa Head, an annual that covers much of the ground in and around Warm Springs.

Spilyay Tymoo photo by Shewczyk

but it has not yet been approved by Tribal Council, according to Spears.

The hold-up on approval of these units results from getting ownership records of the land. People owning the land used for livestock must be paid a fee. The Tribe, according to the Spears, has been picking up the bill so far. It is up to Tribal Council whether or not fees will

be charged for the grazing of livestock on Tribal land. Fees are authorized under Ordinance 48.

Grazing plans in a range unit might include cross fencing providing a summer and a fall pasture, reversing them every year. This would give plants, particularly perennials, the chance to grow.

Another plan might allow livestock to graze on cheat

grass while it is fresh and then close the area off allowing perennials to grow. Spears says, "A pasture doesn't have to rest all year, just long enough for the plants to develop leaf tissue."

He also says, "There are a lot of areas where there are just too many stock." When all the leaves of the plants are eaten there is not enough leaf tissue to start them growing again in the spring. After two or three years of this the plant will die. This is the reason most of the native perennials have virtually disappeared. These grasses do remain in areas with a steep incline or in places livestock cannot get to easily.

Reseeding in some areas is essential to return perennials to the range. Native grasses would, of course, reseed best. Seed of this type is generally unavailable. Some of the other types of range grasses have been tried that have proved to adapt well which is a possibility in further developing the range. Spears says he is looking into reseeding some areas and the grazing association would have this as one of their concerns.

At least 80% of the Warm Springs reservation is range land. With an estimated 1,549 head of cattle and well over 3,000 horses having grazed the land in the recent past, it is necessary to look at range management in every aspect.

The program developed for ridding the reservation of Equine Infectious Anemia has provided the opportunity to greatly reduce the number of stock dependent on the range through culling. Spears says with the reduced number of horses the range is in better shape than it has been for a long time.

With proper management, modern techniques and a concern by everyone for their land, the range may someday be replenished. Getting is in good condition "is up to the people who use the range," says Spears. "If they aren't interested it will stay like it is. If they are, "it will take a lot of work."

KNT Employee of the month

Hidden talent promotes him from kitchen to maintenance



Kah-Nee-Ta has recently reinstated its Employee of the Month program. The selection of Employee of the Month is made by department managers as an incentive for staff members to continue doing a good job. A \$50 cash award is presented to each winning employee.

According to Kah-Nee-Ta's executive assistant manager, Jerry Schaeffer, the Employee of the Month program was restored after being discussed at one of the staff meetings. He said, "It's always been done before but evidently it was let slide for a while."

The first Employee of the Month selected after reinstatement of the program was Georgia Duncan who works in the Village housekeeping department. She was selected for the month of June.

July's recently selected

employee of the month is Manuel Banda who is a member of the lodge maintenance department.

Manuel came from Chihuahua, Mexico to Kah-Nee-Ta in 1979. He joined some of his friends who already worked there.

Beginning as a dishwasher, Manuel became a part of the maintenance department when it was time to paint the lodge in 1980 during its two month winter closure. Manuel's talent for woodwork and carpentry remained undiscovered until some of his friends saw some of his work. A number of his woodcarvings were circulated around Kah-Nee-Ta. He says he has none of his own wood sculptures because he's always giving friends.

Manuel's proficiency in

woodwork developed while he was still in Mexico, he says. Carpentry was his occupation.

Working at Kah-Nee-Ta is enjoyable for Manuel. He says, "I would like to stay here for a long time. It's a pretty good place."

He also enjoys the remote location of the resort, he says. Until he was 18 years old Manuel lived on a ranch. He comments, "There is not much noise or traffic here."

Manuel says he has learned much while in the maintenance department at Kah-Nee-Ta. Some things he is unfamiliar with, such as elevators, they are apparently scarce where he comes from. But Manuel says he is willing to try to fix anything he is asked to. His speciality is working with wood, however, and he most enjoys doing that.