



Saving the World

Good management and the peculiar and beautiful blessings of bovines.

By C.J. Hadley

The future wildlife biologist had a dream of becoming a Rhodesian game warden. Even though he knew the minimum age was 25 (due to dealing with dangerous animals), he got an exception and started at age 20. “I only had a B.S. degree, majoring in botany and zoology,” Allan Savory says, “but I was fanatical.” He was interested in everything, but thought college a waste of time. One professor told his class, “You are useless little buggers when you come in and useless little buggers when you leave, but we will teach you how to learn.”

Savory always knew how to learn and constantly explored his beloved Rhodesian bush in southern Africa. When trackers became afraid to follow man-eating lions and told him they’d lost the spoor, he learned how to track. Passionate, insatiable, relentless and sometimes annoying, he often travels barefoot. As a former soldier and statesman, he fears nothing—except, perhaps, bureaucracy and nonprofit boards of directors.

In more than 50 years of working with land and animals, he’s watched constant

deterioration: ever expanding bare ground, dried water sources, overgrazed plants. He wrote reports on his research, and after intense discussion and public exposure, sometimes found out he was wrong. But that never fazed him. He just read more, researched more, and tested his analyses over and over again.

His introduction to the game department in Kafue Park was driving through with park ranger Len Vaughn in a Dodge Power Wagon and flicking out matches, setting it on fire. “The result of that was bare ground.” (The U.S. Forest Service seems to have the same view. A deputy chief told *RANGE* they weren’t concentrating on management of overgrown forests but wanted “to let it burn.”)

Soon after starting work, Savory began to realize that what he’d been taught and what he was seeing were very different. The game wardens’ lives revolved around stopping

poaching. “I realized that the poachers were not as dangerous as we biologists who were destroying wildlife habitat.” He began his own education and studied fields that he’d never trained in. “I was desperately seeking answers—reading books and articles on economics and statistics and range management.” He was forced out of his job in the game department when his analysis went against the prevailing view and he would not back down.

“I did the research and wrote a report on what I now know was wrong, where I proved there were too many elephants and too many buffalo. I’d worked out that in the national parks we would have to cull game and that was an extremely unpopular idea. Nobody in the world had suggested culling animals in a national park and I was saying we are going to have to kill them to prevent total destruction of the game and the vegetation.”



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LEFT: Cattle are moved in a tight bunch, foraging only where ranch manager Shane Bartlett tells his herders to take them. They run on a strict management plan. There are eight herders, two shifts during the day of three or four. Half stay at the temporary kraals at night to protect the livestock from lions. The kraals are moved often.

Savory believed the long-term survival of wildlife depended on their habitat and the habitat was deteriorating badly. His research was submitted to an expert panel that agreed. The killing went ahead with thousands of animals culled but the land got worse, not better. "They had concluded that I was right. But it turned out we were all wrong."

Good cowboys have what's called "try." Savory also has that, so when he gets intellectually bucked off, he gets back on. "If you believe in something deeply, and it was my country and I can say it in my old age now—any younger I would have been ashamed to say it—but I've sat on the banks of the Umzingwane River surrounded by bare ground, trying to work out what to do, and the river came down in flood with trees tumbling in the water and I just sat there and cried. That was my country being destroyed, so my feelings ran very, very deep. I fully sympathized with the World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy and George Wuerthner and all these people who condemn livestock because I did too. I was on public record saying I was prepared to shoot damn ranchers because of what they were doing to the land. Then I found again that I was wrong, that we had to have their livestock."

By the time he was 26, he had helped damage even more land with his conventional thinking. "We had very, very healthy land with wonderful reed beds and beautiful riparian areas and we made national parks out of those areas. There were people beating drums and firing muzzle-loading guns to keep animals away from their crop beds along the river. This was old Africa with lions roaring at night. More than once in my life I've seen 40 lions in a day just walking on foot. I watched all that deteriorating and still couldn't work out why. I concluded there were too many elephants and buffalo. As soon as we made these healthy places into national parks, immediately the damage began. The reed beds began to disappear. A lot of the vegetation along the river began to disappear. I never blamed weather or drought but attributed it to too many ele-



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ABOVE: Woman and sons at the employees compound at Dimbangombe Ranch. It consists of mostly mud huts and a couple of taps offering community water. Water heating and cooking is done on open fires under a thatch roof. The Centre is building new ablution huts for showers. Its goal is to have a tap beside every home. "Most African men have two or three wives; one guy had 11 wives and 57 children," a farmer says. "Having children is a badge of honor. They live off very little, grow some crops. Half the country is HIV-positive." BELOW: Impala at a water hole, with a kudu in the middle. They need to get to water daily. OPPOSITE: RANGE publisher C.J. Hadley offers a snack to Dojiwe ("lost orphan"), a tame baby elephant at Dimbangombe Ranch. Her mother was killed and two herders take turns walking with her from sunup to sundown. They kraal her at night to protect her from predators.



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phants, just like range scientists blame too many cattle. After rain, grasses green up but that's not recovery, that's just fluctuation in vegetation and the soil is still deteriorating and it's still bare ground between the plants."

As a researcher, Savory was constantly probing, spending thousands of hours sitting on his own in the bush, staring into his campfire trying to do mental experiments. "Okay, today I saw this. Why?" He finally figured out soil was the key issue and discovered that the healthiest soil was where there were the biggest populations of natural wildlife with intact pack-hunting predators.

His passion for his work and commitment to improving the world for people and animals is obvious, but endless attacks on

him have bruised. "The greatest crime a young scientist can commit is to actually discover something new. What I found, particularly in America and South Africa, was that your peers tear you apart, not your work. I've been called a character, a guru, a charlatan and worse, and asked what my motives are. I have begged academics to pull my work apart, to show me where I am wrong. Instead they get personal and even criticize the English cap I wear."

One time he was so frustrated he said to an academic group haranguing him: "OK, I am a total shit and I am incorrigible and you'll never be able to change me. I've trodden all over your toes, I've hurt your egos, and I'm beyond repair, so let's leave me alone,

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Villagers wash up after working in the bush. ▶ African children entertain themselves with very little. ▶ A herder guides the goats and cattle to the feed he wants them to eat and the land he wants them to disturb. With the right plan, extraordinary improvement is made. Dimbangombe Ranch needs more cattle. It is running 480 head and needs to get to 800 to be self-financing on the ranch side—a thousand would be better for the soil. If you'd like to help, contact asavory@savoryinstitute.com or info@achmonline.org.



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and that was it but with tight ground cover.”

As they traveled away from the water, he asked how the pastoralists behaved. “They are extremely knowledgeable,” the guide said. “They herd their stock in a tight bunch and have been protecting them from wolves for thousands of years.” Savory coined a new phrase and calls that “partial rest” because the stock are there but the predators that once kept them bunched are not and thus there’s not enough disturbance to benefit or improve the soil. They agreed to stop every mile and sample, and as they got farther from the spring, the taller the grass became. “There were more species in it, but the spaces between the plants got wider and wider. We took the last picture 16 miles from the spring and you could have built one of my mud huts on that bare ground and not touched a plant. The ground was hard, black and capped with algae. It would shed moisture, evaporate moisture—in other words, severe desertification. There were not enough animals so they had been minimizing overgrazing but they had not been maximizing disturbance.”

In 1979, Rhodesia became an independent Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe. Over the next 20 years, it became known as the breadbasket of Africa. Then, a decade ago, agriculture production plummeted when productive white African farmers who employed thousands of families were forced to leave their properties, many of which had been in the family since the 1800s. Over 60 percent of the farms had been

no more attacks on me. Here is the holistic framework that we are learning, there it is, up on the wall. Now I want you to tell me where that is wrong. Attack that.” A highly educated group was present but there was total silence. [See p. 44.]

“When something new is discovered, everybody attacks it, everybody is against it. Then you get a period where it becomes controversial, with some praising it, some condemning it. Then you get a period where everybody says, ‘Oh, we always knew that. We did that all along.’ For the past five years, I’ve heard people say there is nothing new about this. I just thank God I lived at the time I did because at least they didn’t burn me at the stake.”

Savory is anxious to move beyond the destructive attacks which he realizes are not personal but simply a matter of how humans have always responded to paradigm-shifting ideas. His receipt of Australia’s international Banksia Award in 2003, given to the person “doing the most for the environment on a global scale,” did much to begin changing academic attitudes.

Many environmentalists still believe—as did young Savory and much proof to the contrary—that livestock are causing desertification and land degradation. “That belief is ancient,” Savory says. “Hebrew texts blamed

the nomads for causing the desert. They were moving their cattle in mobs, people have been herding now for over 6,000 years and the secret to what we are doing isn’t the herding, it isn’t mob grazing or short-duration grazing. The secret to it is the simple planning process that can deal with complexity and make socially, environmentally, and economically right decisions for the people, the pastoralists, the ranchers. It’s no good herding your cattle if you go broke. It’s no good herding your cattle if you are destroying the land as pastoralists have been doing for thousands of years. Those ancient herders created the great deserts of the world.”

When Savory went to Pakistan for a job, he was shown a spring the nomads have been coming to for 5,000 years. “The spring had never gone dry, but officials blamed the devastation around it on too many animals. Pastoralists had arrived at this water point with sheep, goats and camels and so on, unpacking their tents, kids running around, animals milling around. It had a high level of animal impact and no rest. Almost every plant had been overgrazed. For about 100 yards away from the spring the ground was really trampled. You couldn’t hide a rabbit at 200 yards. But we couldn’t put our feet on the ground without touching a living plant. It was down to one species that could resist overgrazing

bought after independence with the government's assurance that the land was not needed to settle people. More than 4,000 ranches and farms were taken, mostly for politicians, heads of army, police, civil servants and presidential cronies.

Prior to political unrest, Savory gave his ranch, Dimbangombe, to the Africa Centre for Holistic Management in 1992. Earlier he had deeded a larger ranch to the people of Zimbabwe as a national park because he did not value ownership as deeply as working with people and wildlife for the nation's good.

According to Savory's wife, Jody Butterfield, they lived hand to mouth at the Centre for many years, in tents. Hunting brought a little revenue to the ranch and a donor built an open-air rondavel as a meeting room and dining room. Other donors helped finance bungalows for guests. "The first students at the Centre slept under tarps," Jody says. "It was an adventure. There was no kitchen. Women from the community came and cooked and it was very rudimentary, but we got some people trained and made some progress."

The Dimbangombe Ranch is run by manager Shane Bartlet under five local chiefs and Savory as trustees. When bare ground is developing at the ranch because they don't have enough stock, herders mill their cattle around to disturb it. "We bring them on to it when it's raining to pockmark and disturb the ground," says Savory, "to add dung and urine, because the big agent of desertification is overgrazing of plants. You cannot overgraze ranges, you cannot overgraze land, you can only overgraze or graze plants."

The ranch has 480 head of cattle and a herd of goats—not enough to heal the over-rested ground. But since ranch management was changed, water has come back in places it hasn't been seen for generations, and the river the ranch is named for has water year-round.

It's a common (but incorrect) belief that resting land in brittle environments and removing cattle is the answer to desertification. But when the land is resting too much there is no improvement. When there are too few animals, behaving calmly and walking gently, the soil and most plants are resting. "You are not laying litter and breaking the surface and disturbing the ground enough," Savory says. "Then the other thing is fire. So partial rest, fire, and overgrazing plants are practiced by almost every pastoralist in the



ABOVE: The living room, dining room, meeting room, pipe-smoking room, reading room and kitchen at the Savory compound at Dimbangombe Ranch. Thulani Ndlovu takes care of the place and makes lots of tea while monkeys and baboons like sharing their stuff. BELOW: The Savory huts at the edge of the Dimbangombe River, which used to be dry. The office is on the right, where Allan and Jody communicate sporadically via a tall aerial from a satellite at headquarters to use their wireless computers. "We are on broadband, slow and erratic, but at least it works," Allan says. "We also have three deep-cycle 12-volt batteries that are charged by six solar panels. From those we can convert current to U.S. 110 volt to use any small U.S. devices and a 12-volt light in the study. All other lighting is from battery-operated lamps."



world, every rancher in the world, so that's why the land keeps deteriorating and pastoralists are now fighting each other, killing each other over diminishing water. They can't sustain their families anymore, their culture is breaking down, and ranchers are going broke, selling their ranches to developers, et cetera. There's no need for any of that. And that's been going on for 10,000 years."

Many ranchers came to Savory's Holistic Management seminars because they were going broke, with nothing else to try. They wanted to find out how to double their stocking rates. "That's what they did and there were wrecks all over the place. They thought the secret was in the wagon-wheel

fencing layout and I kept saying, no, that's just a tool. There's nothing wrong with a radial fencing layout but the secret was in the planning."

Deb Steiner at Ohio State University did a study and looked at early adopters of Holistic Management across the United States. Nearly all were ranchers. They averaged 300 percent more profit. In the same time span, 600,000 American farm and ranch families went broke, in the same markets. Unfortunately, there is resistance to the decision making and planning process. "Ranchers say it's too complex, too difficult," Savory says, "but they can watch their families go broke and lose the

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ranch rather than doing an hour or two of paperwork a couple of times a year. They prefer riding horses and fixing fence before they will change and save themselves. They are human and that's what they do."

Allan Savory's drive isn't toward money. He wants to make a better world. And he's got the scars to prove it. In Africa there is deteriorating land and water and rising population—as there is in the United States and most other parts of the world. "History shows that a hungry man knows no boundary and that leads to violence, family breakdown and everything else. African men pride themselves on their number of children. The do-good world steps in with a knee-jerk reaction and provides more water by putting in bore holes. But the desertification accelerates, the land degradation accelerates, so the situation gets worse. Overgrazing of plants, more places to destroy. You can see this from space shots—where they have put in bore holes, the desert spreads. Other knee-jerk reactions are to come in as a humanitarian and feed the starving mothers and provide health care for the dying children or measures to improve the local economy. What happens is family size increases so the situation gets worse. We have been dealing with this situation for 40 years and there are now five times as many people killing each other.

"The answer lies in education of women and training people to reverse desertification because healing the land and feeding more people is imperative for our futures." Savory has often said that America's biggest export is eroding soil, outweighing all other exports every year in value. "You will never stop that until you start managing the ranges holistically. And ranchers could be doing that and every rancher would be better off, every rancher would be making more profit and would be saving their culture. The land is partially resting and it doesn't need protection. It just needs more people balancing family size with resources—and more livestock." ■

C.J. Hadley, publisher/editor of RANGE, loved Africa and the ranch, and appreciates the hospitality extended by Allan and Jody, and the many warm and gentle Africans. "Dangers are always lurking in the bush," she says, "but I was never afraid—even on a moonless black night while eating supper lit by flames of a tiny fire that heated our dinner—until I heard drums throbbing through the jungle and Allan exclaimed, 'Lions!' And I could see nothing."

The Power of New Thinking

Reversing desertification while benefiting yourself, your community, and the planet. By Allan Savory

Recently my wife and I drove 600 miles from Albuquerque to enjoy Thanksgiving with family. Eleven hours driving through scenic western rangeland allowed time to think about things that I am thankful for in my life, which, with luck, will last another five to 10 years. Always living in the future, I wondered how our actions today would affect the lives of my four grandsons. Like a flickering compass needle, my mind kept returning north to their future. Not just their future, but young people of all cultures, colors, tribes and religious persuasions living in the largest land areas of the world—the rangelands composed of grasslands, savannas and man-made deserts—including most of the vast American West.

Just like a cattleman who has weighed thousands of cows is able to accurately judge any animal's weight as it steps on the scale, so too am I used to judging quickly the "weight" of any rangeland after over 50 years of working around the world. Endlessly, we cruised through millions of acres of dying ("low weight") western rangelands. As usual, I kept a sharp eye out for the hordes of cattle causing such degradation but did not see one. My wife tells me I missed a couple of cows she sighted while I dozed at one point.

The single most important measure of desertification is, of course, the amount of bare soil between plants. Over our entire journey these rangelands consistently hovered around 80 to 95 percent bare soil. Range scientists, and ranchers influenced by them, would judge such rangelands healthy because they have the "right" species and few "nonnative" plants and most tourists would see only open grassland in magnificent scenery.

Throughout history, land in such condition has never led to abundance, prosperity, stability or peace and harmony but inevitably to increasing man-made droughts and floods, poverty, social breakdown, violence and collapse of economy and society. Is this going to happen in the United States? It is already happening. In fact, it is well advanced, although masked by environmental illiteracy and temporary wealth, based on fossil fuels, combined with a low and declin-

ing rural population. One of the clearest indicators of the inevitable cancer of desertification, as such terminal rangeland is called, is the dying of the rich, heartwarming western ranching and cowboy culture so much a part of the nation's psyche. Dying in reality while kept in mind by romantic cowboy poetry, films and rodeo entertainment.

How sadly those vast rangelands devoid of animal life and consequently turning gradually to desert contrast with my alternate home in Zimbabwe, Africa, where I live a simple life on a ranch I once owned. There, because the people practice Holistic Management and because they have increased livestock stocking rate 400 percent with holistic

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planned grazing, they are now struggling to keep up with grass production even in the driest years. With no fear of droughts they also now enjoy permanent water in pools throughout the long dry season where none was known in living memory. Permanent pools with water lilies, fish, otters and geese amidst teeming animal life are entirely due to increased cattle and goats properly managed.

How sadly America's dying rangelands, so devoid of animal life, contrast with a recent visit by a Chilean rancher proudly showing pictures of two flocks of 25,000 sheep each on holistic planned grazing, resulting in both the sheep and the land increasing 50 percent in productivity in the first year.

How sadly mainstream fear of animals contrasts with historical information about the many millions of bison in the past (themselves a remnant of former species diversity and numbers) or with this record of similar dry country in Africa:

"The year 1896 saw the last of the great migrations," a Mr. Gert Van der Merwe writes. "At last the sound of a faint drumming could be heard. The cloud of dust was dense and enormous, and the front rank of the springbok running faster than galloping

horses could be seen. They were in such numbers that I found the sight frightening. I could see a front line of buck at least three miles long but could not estimate the depth. All night long the buck passed. The morning air was clear, the day bright. Then I saw the landscape which had been covered with trees of a fair size were gaunt stubs and bare branches. The buck had brushed off the herbage in their passing and splintered the young trees so they would not grow again."

How sadly rancher fear and persecution of wolves contrasts with our running livestock in a predator-friendly manner with insignificant loss to lions, wild dogs, leopards, cheetah and hyena because we realize these predators are vital to running more livestock and enjoying more wildlife, just as they should be in America. We have achieved harmony through herding and overnight holding of livestock. Ranchers all over Africa, like their American counterparts, said this could

not be done because labour is too expensive. We found that employing a few cowboys (herd boys in our language) costs far less than buying three more ranches to run the animals and proper herding enables far more animals to be run with far better results for land, profit and wildlife. Now ranchers as far afield as northern Kenya are adopting our methods, as will happen one day in America if the western culture is to be saved.

RANGE magazine and its feisty editor C.J. Hadley have done as much as anyone to try to keep the western culture alive but all are losing the battle. Many explanations can be put forward for the failure of a culture or civilization, and are, but in the end it seldom differs from the failure of more than 20 civilizations through history around the world because of environmental degradation.

Some time ago I extended an invitation to CJ to visit Zimbabwe where I had donated my last ranch for the benefit of the people and the nation and on which we would demonstrate Holistic Management and its holistic planned grazing in action. To my delight, CJ actually came, despite the cost and close to two days en route, because of her deep concern for the western culture she is striving so hard to preserve.

On Dimbangombe—meaning the place where the people hid their cattle in the long grass (in this case, hiding them from raiding Matabele warriors in earlier centuries)—we have taken a seriously deteriorating ranch and simply turned it around by using Holis-



Allan Savory near the edge of the Dimbangombe River. Perennial grass has replaced less dependable annual grasses and covered most of the bare ground with the help of the herd. The cattle will come through this spot in the dry season to make sure these plants are grazed and trampled down before the rains start.



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Dimbangombe herders move the land management herd along the river to create the desired riparian habitat for wildlife. This treatment is repeated when necessary, usually after months of recovery for grazed plants. Small stock like goats generally graze to one side of the main herd of cattle.

tic Management and its holistic planned grazing at almost no expense and to the benefit of people, the economy, the environment and wildlife.

Holistic Management means managing the complexity involved in environmental, economic and social situations (such as a ranch), using a new framework for all significant actions and decisions made. If you think about it, everything we *make* is an amazing success—computers, television, planes, bombs, artificial organs, homes, bridges, et cetera—but everything we *manage* is proving increasingly difficult and now globally threatening—economies, agriculture, rangelands,

oceans, human relations, organizations, governments, et cetera.

The holistic framework, on which Holistic Management is based, ensures that social, economic and environmental aspects on any ranch are accorded equal consideration. Everything done is in line with that family's deepest cultural and spiritual values. Every step taken increases profitability—if prosperity is important to the family. And every step leads toward a more healthy and increasingly productive landscape with more forms of life that are more resilient to weather variations. If livestock is involved, either because essential to people's livelihoods and culture, or if

communities including large herds of herbivores and their pack-hunting predators with livestock, was somehow leading to accelerated desertification. Investigating livestock, I came to realize that all the countless ways people had run livestock over thousands of years had contributed to desertification—herding in many ways and increasingly a plethora of rotational and other grazing systems of which the mob grazing fad is the latest—because none had ever dealt with the daily complexity that in practice cannot be avoided.

No matter how knowledgeable ancient pastoral cultures were or modern range scientists are, none had ever recognized the daily complexity of weather, soils and soil slopes, plant communities, poisonous plants, wildlife breeding, cover and feed requirements, livestock differing needs and the necessity of planning continually for droughts in time, not area of land. And none had simultaneously dealt with the social and economic complexity.

Accordingly, I developed the holistic planned grazing process by simply adapting a British army plan applied by the Rhodesian army to this biological situation. If the British army had spent 300 years perfecting simple planning to deal with very complicated situations, in great stress and likely to change hour to hour, why reinvent the wheel? Not surprisingly, because of its origin, holistic planned grazing always results in the best possible plan at that time on any ranch and does this

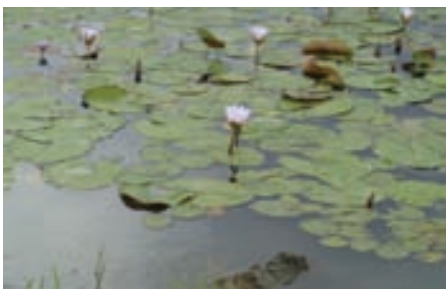


Savory Institute founders, staff and friends. From left: Zachary Jones (Grasslands Northern Plains manager), Jim Howell (Grasslands CEO), Daniela Howell (chief operating officer), Allan Savory (president), Jody Butterfield (Southern Africa Programs manager), Tony Malmburg (co-founder), Sue Probart and Shannon Horst (Consulting & Training director).

entirely from the heads of the people who know the ranch and animals best—the ranchers—supplemented by continually ongoing wildlife and other basic research. What sounds formidable is, once learned, routinely done in under two hours spent twice a year on an average ranch.

Just as riding a bicycle is a little clumsy for the first few days, so too is Holistic Management and its planned grazing. Once mastered however, all decisions and particularly those extremely difficult ones to make in our lives become so much easier and faster to make and ranchers find it relaxing to enjoy the confidence that simple planning produces. I have had an uneducated African learn and practice holistic planned grazing extremely well in less than two hours. Years of helping people have taught me that ignorance does not block learning, but egos and knowledge do.

The American West and its cattlemen with their rich culture as well as government



Permanent water where not known in living memory at end of long dry season is entirely due to increased cattle and goats properly managed.

frankly came to a fork in the road in the early 1980s when Holistic Management began to be practiced in the United States. Some 10,000 ranchers attended training. Ranchers began practicing and the USDA formed an interagency committee to work with me providing training in Holistic Management and particularly the use of the holistic framework in policy analysis. The aim was to form a federal government training centre once enough officials understood the process.

The Interagency Committee put 2,000 government officials (from the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs) through this training. Groups brought countless policies to the sessions and none were ever found to have any chance of success when analyzed holistically by those officials. As one group of government professional land managers concluded: “We could now recognize that unsound resource management was universal in the United States.”



Allan Savory, right, discusses grazing points with Australian ranchers visiting Dimbangombe.

Demand for training increased and all was set to form a government training centre for the continued expansion of Holistic Management into U.S. life. We were in serious discussion about training 17,000 Forest Service personnel. Throughout this training, resistance mounted from major environmental organizations and academics, most of whom were not going through the training. Then the administration changed.

Through the political power of major universities, far greater than a few far-sighted USDA officials who believed Holistic Management vital to the future of the United States, all USDA personnel were banned from receiving training—which was effectively stopped.

It is never too late. That alternative road so nearly taken in the early '80s is still there unused except for some leading ranchers practicing Holistic Management on millions of acres in Canada, Mexico, the United States, Chile, Australia, New Zealand and Africa. And Africa's pastoralists, already herding cattle with AK rifles amidst violence over diminishing water and grass, are seeing Holistic Management as the first thing to offer hope of saving their ancient cultures and land. Tragically, because rangeland myths dominate over science and thus policies of all governments, most ancient pastoral cultures, from Israel's Negev to China and Africa in particular, are

being subjected to culturally genocidal development policies reducing animals, feeding remnant animals in pens and settling the pastoralists in slums. I mention others whose culture is livestock dependent so that Americans can understand that the myths so deeply held are not only destroying the western ranching culture but all livestock cultures in the seasonal rainfall environments of the world.

We are at a crossroad. We can carry on business as usual in an increasingly downward spiral, or begin rebuilding western rangelands, wildlife, communities and economies steadily, with little cost except



ABOVE: The cattle kraal fence line is obvious on this field, showing (on the right) the much greater production possible after cattle. The unimpacted portion of the field on the left produced only average yields. LEFT: The large corn cobs on the left were from impacted field and those on the right were harvested outside the impacted area.

education and training. Which road will American mainstream ranching and government take from this point on? Unfortunately, the road chosen will depend on many factors—leadership or lack of leadership in the

ranching community, academic egos, government policies that only change when public opinion changes, increasing pressures as people and environmental organizations begin to comprehend that what we are doing is not working, and increasing scientific and lay voices calling for a more holistic approach.

After years of observing costly failures to deal with desertification and its associated social breakdown, poverty and violence, the USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance has (as noted in next story) granted the Africa Centre for Holistic Management and its Dimbangombe Ranch \$4.8 million to scale up and spread the knowledge in Southern Africa. Much as I appreciate this as a Zimbabwean, I see the far greater need for similar investment in the United States itself. Only pro-science public opinion demanding and supporting visionary leadership by politicians can do what is required. We have all the money in the world but do not enjoy the luxury of time.

Many years ago on a large Texas ranch, I met a highly respected American wildlifer who had worked in Africa. He made a strange statement that stuck in my mind: "Either you are wrong, Allan, and they will not be able to dig a hole deep enough to bury you in, or you are right and they will not be able to build a monument high enough." I responded that I would be happy with a shallow grave and asked what he thought. He replied that he was sitting on the fence.

Over 30 years have passed with not one scientist pointing out any scientific flaw in the Holistic Management or holistic planned grazing process, while a dwindling number of academics have stated that it is all smoke and mirrors, snake oil, more religion than science, and damaging to wildlife. Not much in the way humans respond to new knowledge has changed in the 500 years since Copernicus and Galileo pointed out that the world was not the centre of the universe. It is time for all who love the land and wildlife and value western culture to get off the fence before it is only preserved in old copies of *RANGE*, faded pictures and cowboy poetry. ■

Allan Savory is president of the Savory Institute, which he co-founded with his wife, Jody Butterfield, and others in Albuquerque, N.M., and chairman of the Africa Centre for Holistic Management in Zimbabwe. He can be reached at asavory@savoryinstitute.com.

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Saving the Culture

While solving humanity's most pressing problems. By Jody Butterfield

Livestock cultures everywhere are under threat, not just here in the American West. In the Middle East—Asia and Africa especially—pastoral, livestock-dependent people are being encouraged (or forced) to give up their way of life due to the belief that cattle, sheep and goats are destroying the environment. In many places, standard developmental policy is to reduce livestock numbers, and move the remaining animals off the range and into pens next to settlements that soon have the appearance of slums. In Kenya, where Masai pastoralists have been subjected to such policies, the suicide rate has skyrocketed.

That's not to say that cattle, sheep and goats haven't caused damage. They have, but due to the way they are managed, not merely from their presence. In the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and northern Kenya) where water and grass are rapidly diminishing and competition for the resources that remain is fierce and often violent, pastoralists are herding cattle with AK rifles. Elsewhere, including Asia and the Middle East, the story is similar. Imagine, then, how pastoralists in these regions prick up their ears when they hear that the deterioration can be reversed—

with the help of livestock, and while increasing, rather than decreasing, their numbers.

Nowhere is this more hopeful than in Zimbabwe where the Africa Centre for Holistic Management, founded by myself and my husband, Allan Savory, has been working to translate the experience of U.S. and Southern African ranchers into lessons that apply to communal agro-pastoralists who are living on the edge of starvation. The Africa Centre's Dimbangombe Ranch serves as a learning site where ideas are tested before introducing them to communities, and where community trainers receive education in Holistic Management and planned grazing and practical skills they then take back to their communities to implement.

A key skill that people come to Dimbangombe to master is herding, which even in Africa is becoming a lost art. We brought Americans over to teach Africa Centre herders low-stress herding and handling techniques and the Dimbangombe herders now help train others. Some come from as far away as Kenya and Namibia to relearn what they once knew and to benefit from the knowledge of animal-handling innovators

such as Bud Williams and Temple Grandin.

In January 2010, the Africa Centre received a three-year grant of \$4.8 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to scale up the whole training effort. This included training staffs of other nongovernment organizations in Southern Africa so they could implement their own land restoration through livestock programs. The awarding of the grant was an enormous accomplishment for the Africa Centre, which had struggled for some years to convince weary donors that Holistic Management could achieve results that many were beginning to think were impossible to reach by any means. The results on the Africa Centre's Dimbangombe Ranch (see Allan's story, page 44) provided proof of concept: it really is possible to restore land and water resources with livestock. The challenge now is to translate this success to entire communities—and the early results are promising.

In June 2010, Allan Savory and the Africa Centre won the Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award. Up against 350 projects worldwide, their win came with a prize of \$100,000. It was not only a tribute to the Africa Centre's efforts, but, of course, to Allan Savory and his work of more than four decades, which I have been honored to share for 30 years. The Buckminster Fuller Institute awards this prize each year "to support the development and implementation of a strategy that has significant potential to solve humanity's most pressing problems."

Although I'm obviously and deeply biased, it is an award richly deserved by a team and a leader that has succeeded against incredible odds. It is also a much-longed-for recognition of the fact that the deterioration of our land and water resources is one of humanity's most pressing problems, and that it can be overcome while preserving the rich and vital heritage of pastoral peoples everywhere. ■

Jody Butterfield is program director for the Africa Centre's Land, Water & Livelihoods Restoration Project (funded by USAID) and director of the Savory Institute's Southern Africa Programs. A former journalist specializing in agricultural and environmental issues, she has worked with husband Allan Savory since 1980 to advance the worldwide development of Holistic Management. She can be reached at jbutterfield@savoryinstitute.com.

PHOTOS COURTESY AFRICA CENTRE FOR HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT



The Dimbangombe herd shortly after animals have been let out of the lion-proof night enclosure. Herders are in front to keep animals from moving out too quickly, and keep the herd bunched due to the presence of predators (lion, cheetah, leopard and hyena).



ABOVE: The Buckminster Fuller Challenge Award was presented in June 2010 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The Centre took first place amongst 350 projects considered worldwide. The money, according to Allan Savory, is going to be spent "from the bottom up." Pictured from left to right and representing the Savory Institute (SI) and/or the Africa Centre (ACHM): Jim Howell (SI), Daniela Howell (SI), Jody Butterfield SI/ACHM, Allan Savory (SI/ACHM), Laurie Benson (SI), Zakhe Mpopu (ACHM), Shannon Horst (SI) and Precious Phiri (ACHM). OPPOSITE: Jody Butterfield with trainers for the Africa Centre. Front row, from left: Jody, Sibon Ncube, Mupenyu Mberi, Sunny Moyo and John Nyilika. Back row, from left: Precious Phiri, Tawana Ngwenya, Oscar Nwenye, Forget Mavenge, Nicholas Ncube and Elias Mcube.

The Brown Revolution

Over the past year, the Savory Institute (SI), along with John Fullerton and Larry Lunt—East Coast financiers steeped in the world of triple bottom line, or impact investing—have been nurturing the formation of an exciting new SI/Fullerton/Lunt partnership. SI brings nearly five decades of Holistic Management practice and expertise, and Fullerton/Lunt bring their experience, contacts and unique perspective in the world of finance and the raising of capital. The result is a newly formed entity—Grasslands LLC.

"Our Grasslands effort," Savory says, "is rooted in SI's quest to engender a Brown Revolution—a refocusing of land management on the regeneration of the world's topsoil." Fullerton and Lunt had been hunting for a project with meaning, scope, and game-changing potential. They have found that in their partnership with the Savory Institute, and the result is Grasslands. For more information, check out www.savoryinstitute.com.