

RANGE

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RANGE is an award-winning quarterly devoted to the issues that threaten the West, its people, lifestyles, lands and wildlife. No stranger to controversy, RANGE is a leading forum for opposing viewpoints in the search for solutions that will halt the depletion of a national resource—the American cowboy.

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Up Front

Lighten up!
By C.J. Hadley

When rancher Steve Wilmeth was coming home from Animas, N.M., recently after picking up a mile of black poly pipe, he received a text on his cell phone saying, "Welcome aboard! If you wish to call the United States you must dial the following 10-digit number." Wilmeth says he had to laugh. "I guess I was exiting fully controlled Mexican cartel territory and returning to the United States—or the feds have their surveillance all screwed up and they thought I was just entering nonfederal territory."

Talking about federal (USFS/BLM) territory, Mike Benefield slapped me upside the head this week with an admonition, "Stop whining...suck it up and get back to work" (Letters, p. 14). He's got a point, because we cover a lot of sad and serious issues in RANGE that can hurt you and the country, but he also misses the point. We labor to show what's coming at you from Washington, Brussels and elsewhere, and who else is going to do that? Benefield says, "I started to feel as if I should be playing a violin, as whining seems to be the hallmark of your publication."

I prefer banjo, and lighten up when I share the efforts of our great writers and researchers who are toiling hard to bring you things you need to know to protect your property and future: Dave Skinner of Montana, p. 8; Dr. Mike Coffman of Maine, p. 36; Carolyn Dufurrena of Nevada, p. 26; Leo W. Banks of Arizona, p. 32; Sue Wallis of Wyoming, p. 22; Jim Petersen of Oregon,

p. 28; Steve Wilmeth of New Mexico, p. 40; and scores more you will find in this issue, in 86 prior magazines, 10 hardback books, and at www.rangemagazine.com.

Good news, sort of: The Nevada Association of Counties (NACO) and the Nevada Farm Bureau Federation (NFBF) filed suit Dec. 30, 2013, against the BLM and its leaders, including Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Plaintiffs accuse the feds of failing to comply with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses & Burros Act of 1971, which requires BLM to "protect the natural ecological balance of all wildlife species which inhabit such lands, and to



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The first warm rays of sunrise strike a columbine on the north shore of Brooklyn Lake high in the Medicine Bow Mountains of Wyoming. BELOW: Strider King of Gondor finds it easy to lighten up and always welcomes me home. He thinks the camera could be lunch while Gen. George S. Patton knows better and wanders off. George could be a bureaucrat or a member of Congress.



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maintain a current inventory of wild free-roaming horses and burros on given areas of the public lands, and to remove excess animals."

BLM fails to comply with the law and admits there are too many horses (20,000 in Nevada alone, when 12,700 is its appropriate management level to protect the resource), but bleeding hearts, political pressure, and blatant dishonesty off- and online have—for decades—dissolved spines and dissipated common sense. If NACO and NFBF win the case the resource also wins and everywhere, everyone, and everything in the 14 states affected will lighten up.

When Americans' own surveillance of our government hits high gear and we exit critter first, social justice, earth is God, federal overregulation cartel territory and return to our beloved United States, RANGE will also lighten up. And we will break out the banjos and dance through every page. ■