



Up Front

It's personal.
By C.J. Hadley

FOREWARNED FOREARMED is a proverb that dates back to the 15th century. It makes perfect sense for *RANGE*, so in this issue several ranchers share their own warnings, to let others know what may soon get personal in their parts of the West.

In Hawaii, Keith Unger tells of a promise on a conservation easement made by the U.S. Forest Service, approved and verified, then broken by the same government via the Internal Revenue Service (page 18). Unger says, "IRS all but insinuated that both the appraisal and property were worthless."

In Northern California, John Ford tells of a promise made by state government, in jeopardy because of the federal government (page 80). This time, the California Department of Transportation and the Army Corps of Engineers. At threat of eminent domain, Ford sold a large portion of his ranch to Caltrans for the Willits Bypass. Caltrans made the promise that he could lease the land back for grazing his cattle for four years as part of the sales agreement. The Army Corps ignores that promise.

In Wyoming, Rod McQueary tells of excess horses not included in government counts [rangemagazine.com/Winter 2011, "Mustang Special Report"] that are destroying more of the West on Indian reservations (page 8). The worst example is on the Navajo Nation, which has more than 60,000 unwanted horses. That gets personal. "Most reservations are overflowing with abandoned and feral horses and, left unchecked, excess horses will eat the white sage in Nevada, prairie grasses in Wyoming, and high-desert forage in Arizona," McQueary writes. "They will starve out the deer, elk, antelope, and sage grouse in Washington. They will destroy salmon habitat and sacred ceremonial plants, all before they destroy themselves. When they do, what will be left?"



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IN MARCH I MET a photographer in Winnemucca, Nev. Not surprising, because it was at Shooting the West, a photo symposium that's been held in that small northern Nevada outpost for 23 years. What was surprising was keynote speaker Christopher Burkett, an extraordinary nature photographer and the most famous Cibachrome printer of all time—except perhaps for the photo techs at NASA. His images were so damn perfect I bought his book, "Imitations of Paradise," and I gave him the last two issues of *RANGE* ("Mustang" and "Saving the World").

A few days later, he sent me a letter and a check. "I want to subscribe," he said. "I like what I see and agree with most of it." I had taken him for a don't-let-those-awful-cows-drop-dung-and-urine-on-my-pretty-meadow anti-cow Oregonian. I was wrong. Christopher was having his own troubles with officials from the Milwaukie Planning

Commission because they wanted to change his garden to comply with their idea of what it should be. That's personal.

"I was informed that my private property and my land is a 'shared community resource,'

and that property owners must be subservient to 'the good of the greater community,'" he writes. "I strongly disagree with this subjugation of my rights as a private property owner. I believe that the sanctity of individual property rights was established when our country was founded and the proper function of government is the preservation of property, not the taking of property."

He adds, "It's extremely dangerous to think that when individuals are harmed through bureaucratic depredation, society in general can benefit. If individuals are harmed, society is harmed."

Christopher made so much sense that I asked if I could use his letter to the planning commission with a few photos of the property in question. He agreed. "My Inconvenient Garden" starts on page 30.

Things are getting too personal. Does this Oregon homeowner need help from the government? Do you?

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