

JEFF ROSS



Up Front

Inspiring courage.
By C.J. Hadley

RANGE was started in 1989. A lot of dust has blown through my sage in the past 16 years. Light has infiltrated the brain. The learning curve became constant revelation and threats to the resource industries (ranching, farming, logging and mining) real. I cussed too much. I used too many hankies.

Within a few decades environmental activists and some of their friends (politicians and academics) have helped destroy families and livelihoods in the West. Vice President Al Gore told a farmer's son a few years back: "Don't go into production agriculture, son. We are going to buy our food from Third World nations." At the time that sounded insane but, the fact is, last year we imported more food than we grew.

We are also allowing government and NGOs (nongovernment organizations) to pressure real producers to become "willing" sellers then take formerly working land off the tax rolls. In the name of conservation biology and ecosystems management (which even the government can't explain), the land is put into "nonuse" or "rest." Right now, 40 percent of the country is owned by the feds, state and county governments, or wealthy, untaxed nonprofits.

That land-loss is increasing daily and RANGE covers these stories, connecting the dots between endangered species, wetlands, takings, the Wildlands Project, water in the West, smart growth, environmental myths and our diminishing liberties.

But there is hope. A large picture of John Wayne hangs behind my desk. Hands on hips, he's wearing a white hat and a strange smile. "This is mine," he said in "Red River" as he surveyed the open range. Ted Turner's outfit had trouble getting that few seconds of film from MGM to use in their anti-livestock propaganda called "The New Range Wars" in the early '90s. But Turner's public relations lady told me that clip was "imperative."

It certainly did help set the scene, which was followed by huge herds of cattle either stampeding in choking dust or defecating on bare dirt. Narrator Peter Coyote talked about

destruction during churning dust scenes while cuddling and complimenting green activists during scenes where birds chirped and butterflies landed on perfect flowers.

Turner should stay out of our way (p.24) because we tend to be a bit more like Wayne. We believe that if you work hard to buy a piece of property of any size, then lovingly care for it and use it wisely, you should also be able to claim: "This is mine." Private property is supposed to be protected by the Fifth Amendment—that is it *was* protected until the Supreme Court trashed the Constitution in "Kelo v. New London" (p.68).

Ever-watchful, we have reported. With help from great writers and photographers, particularly lead scribe Tim Findley, RANGE has followed what's happening in the West and assembled the pieces into a steadily growing and clarifying big picture. "We write, not to lead," Findley says, "but to inspire courage."

Success for property rights and freedom have been seen at Jarbidge (shovel brigade), Klamath (bucket brigade), Ohio's Darby Plains (where 700 farms were targeted by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy for a duck refuge), Gaviota (where private land on California's coast was coveted by hikers and mountain bikers), and in the Wayne Hage takings case against the U.S. Forest Service. All that's left in the Hage case is for the judge to decide how much money the government owes Hage for taking away his livelihood for 14 years.

RANGE reports have led the national media in revealing details of land and water grabs and the enviros' deceitful use of the Endangered Species Act and other elements of law and regulation. Our Web site <www.rangemagazine.com> includes many of these stories and special reports. And, inside this issue, the story continues with endangered species: "Pombo the Great" (p.17), "Woodpeckers, UFOs & Elvis" (p.22), "An Act of Deception" (p.14), and "Bad Wolf!" (p.38); with environmental power: "Big Hurt from the Big Easy" (p.18); and with land use: "The Gardeners of Eden" (p.32), and "Swallowing Camels" (p.52).

We keep track of the bad guys with insufficient funds and against unfair odds. RANGE may seem alone in a major battle with very few troops, but our mission is clear: provide real and honest reporting so that you can decide what's right or wrong, who's productive or not, and where to fight this ongoing war on the West.

No wonder John Wayne is wearing that strange smile. I think he's pleased. ■