

CCA History and Policy for Hardwood Range Management¹

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Today I will discuss the history and policy of the California Cattlemen's Association (CCA) regarding hardwoods on California rangelands. There are 58 counties in California, and all but three have hardwood tree species that are predominantly oaks. Since the European settlement of California, the hardwood rangelands have been primarily managed for livestock production. Livestock production continues to be the dominant hardwood rangeland use, on 67 percent of the estimated 7.4 million acres of hardwood rangelands. Since 1985, the percentage of large-parcel owners who rely on ranching as their major source of income has declined from 70 percent to near 50 percent in 1992. For the most part, the decline has been due to the need to find alternate sources of income to supplement the ranch income. The increased costs of doing business, especially in California, and an unstable cattle market have added pressure to the large-tract landowners to seek out other sources of income, some of which are firewood sales, recreational hunting, and public participation in rangeland activities, such as gathering and moving our cattle from our ranges.

Our livestock operators have been the best caretakers of our land and renewable resources because they need to sustain the resources for future use or go out of business. This means not having the state's rich ranching heritage to pass down to future generations. Since 1986, CCA has recognized the need for an integrated hardwoods range management plan and, through our Range Improvement Committee, has coordinated and communicated with the University of California and the Board of Forestry to help develop a set of basic guidelines. At CCA we support strong private property rights protection and endorse the concepts of landowners having a maximum right of self-determination. Eighty percent of the oak resources are privately owned, and the landowners provide the best source of stewardship. I would like to remind you that Webster's definition of stewardship is "the individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard for the rights of others."

CCA has consistently encouraged landowners to participate in education, land use management plans, and self-monitoring of their hardwood resources. The Land Use Committee in CCA has a resolution on the books which supports efforts designed to maintain the physical and economical capabilities of agricultural land for the production of food and fiber and allow local governments to determine and implement specific land-use plans for their area. The Range Improvement committee of which I am co-chair has a hardwood policy which encourages landowners who harvest oaks to develop their own management plans and to contact private and public sources for expert assistance when developing their plan. Part of their plan should include a review process to evaluate and substantiate the effectiveness of the program. CCA has been active in review of the draft Integrated Hardwood Range Management Plan guidelines and has participated in the monitoring programs which were used in compiling of data to write these guidelines. In my travels through the state, I have noticed that the large tracts being developed are primarily old rangelands. There is a need to maintain these large tracts because the clearing of these lands removes the residual dry matter, canopy cover, and

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also any potential regeneration of hardwood ranges. It seems ironic that the same people who scrutinize and criticize our management practices on the hardwood ranges are the same people who buy homes on what was once hardwood habitat. CCA supports the counties' development of policies to address issues such as urban sprawl and its impact on oak hardwood ranges, harvesting of oak hardwoods for firewood, habitat enhancement for wildlife, and regeneration and restoration of oak hardwood ranges.

The county policies are referred to as Oak Hardwood Conservation policies and fall into three categories: formal voluntary county guidelines, county ordinances, and county land use planning. It is the policy of the California Cattlemen's Association to encourage local county Cattlemen's Associations to get actively involved within their respective counties in the development of formal voluntary guidelines regarding conservation of oak hardwoods. Management decisions by the landowners and managers are important because 80 percent of California hardwood ranges are privately owned. Hardwood ranges are a rich source of ecological value because of the past and present stewardship by the owners and managers of these lands. We must look at the ever-changing climate of human needs, environmental policies, population growth, and market changes; set broad-base guidelines for the management of our hardwood ranges; and still maintain our options for the future.