

Rangelands West/Global Rangelands, eXtension Rangelands, and the Range Science Information System: A Suite of New Web Resources

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If you are conducting research or looking for reliable answers to specific questions about rangeland ecology and management, there are several new Web resources available to meet your needs.

Throughout the world, rangelands are important to the livelihoods and quality of life of many people. Extending over one-third of the earth's surface, rangelands are often at the center of changing values and controversies over land use and management practices, making it essential for people everywhere to have knowledge of and quick access to the information and tools they need to apply innovative and practical rangeland stewardship strategies.

Similarly, rangeland managers recognize that their work needs to be based on the most current research available, no matter the source or location. Because of this, it is necessary to have ready access to science, education, and outreach materials that address these needs. Currently, no one resource provides this level of accessibility to the world's authoritative rangeland literature, educational resources, and practical tools. However, several related initiatives are now working to fill this gap. Here we describe a complementary set of three resources: Rangelands West/Global Rangelands, eXtension Rangelands, and the Range Science Information System (RSIS). Together, they provide a comprehensive set of tools covering all aspects of rangeland science and practice.

The purpose of the newly redesigned Rangelands West/Global Rangelands portals is to offer a growing repository of readily available full-text and multimedia materials (e.g., journal articles, reports, conference proceedings, learning modules, etc.) that form the basic foundation for understanding rangelands. Partners in this effort include not only land-grant

universities but also the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Australian Rangeland Society, among others. Next, eXtension Rangelands, with its focus on practical, how-to fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), provides a complementary tool to Rangelands West. Though eXtension Rangelands is still under development, once these two resources are fully functional, direct links will connect the citations in the eXtension Rangelands fact sheets and the full-text materials in Rangelands West/Global Rangelands. In addition, the RSIS database, which provides added value through extensive summaries of key grazing management articles, will soon be searchable through the Rangelands West/Global Rangelands database as well as a stand-alone resource. This dynamic combination of linked tools promises to be a breakthrough resource for anyone interested in learning more about the world's rangelands.

Rangelands West/Global Rangelands

For more than a decade an interdisciplinary team at the University of Arizona (UA), made up of rangeland scientists, extension specialists, librarians and/or information specialists, and IT experts, has been developing a Web portal of rangeland management resources.¹⁻³ At first largely focused on Arizona and the southwestern United States, the UA team expanded the initiative in 2001 to include partners from 18 other western land-grant universities.^{4,5} This led to the formation of the Western Rangelands Partnership (WRP) and the development of the Rangelands West portal and its 19 state-specific affiliated sitesⁱ (Fig. 1). The purpose of Rangelands West is to serve as a central access point for

ⁱThe Rangelands West portal, available at: <http://rangelandswest.org>.