2019 CCRC Spring Meeting

April 18, 2019

Blaire Ranch, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

**Rancher panel: Brent Kirk, Mike Miller, and Justin Fields**

**Rancher Panel Questions**

1. What are the biggest challenges to livestock production and grazing management that you face, specifically on public lands?
2. How could your public lands lease agreements better support livestock production or ranching sustainability?

The below bullet points were recorded by Larry Ford recorded summarized here by Devii Rao.

**CHALLENGES**

* Recreationists increase time and expenses ranchers devote to their public lands leases
  + A park visitor wedged a geocaching tube into water trough pipe as a hiding place. This stopped the water trough from working correctly until lessee noticed and fixed the issue.
  + Sometimes recreationists leave gates open on purpose
    - In this situation, ranchers have to go find their cattle, which are sometimes mixed with other peoples’ cattle. Once the cattle are found, the rancher has to gather them and bring them back to the field where they are supposed to be. In one situation, a rancher had to bring three other people with him to get the cattle back.
      * The cost of labor for assistance with the ranch operation is high. The only way to get help is from neighbor ranchers.
* Grazing lease rates are too high
* Infrastructure
  + Often times public agencies will remove grazing infrastructure when they acquire the land. In one situation, when the agency decided to bring grazing back the costs to install the grazing infrastructure was charged to the lessee.
* Parks often have rules about dogs being on leash or dogs not being allowed in grazing fields at all. However, people sometimes let their dogs run free and chase cows. This can cause cattle to run and break through fences, costing the rancher time and money to repair the fence.
* Communication
  + Sometimes grazing lessees are not informed of a park event that conflicts with their operation
* Agencies often have staff turnover. It takes time for new agency staff to get to know their grazing lessees and understand the different grazing operations. If that person leaves the agency, the new person will need to be trained, taking additional time by the rancher.
* Depredation
  + Some public lands have high mountain lion populations, which has led to higher than typical depredation rates on cattle.

**HOW AGENCIES COULD BETTER SUPPORT LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION RANCHING SUSTAINABILITY**

* Recognize added time and expenses rancher contribute beyond what is required in the lease related to weed control, unplanned maintenance, etc.
* Provide rent credits for infrastructure improvements implemented by ranchers
* Streamline processes for working with the agency