

Eastfork Livestock

Joel, Susan Jim, Kristy, and Cotton Bousman

A family cow-calf/yearling operation in Sublette County, Wyoming

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Section I—Eastfork Livestock—the Joel Bousman Ranch

Special points of interest:

- A Family Ranch
- Diverse Ownership Pattern
- Model Public Rangeland Ranch
- Diverse Environments
- Abundant Wildlife Habitat
- Community Leader
- Industry Leader
- Recognized for Excellence in Land Stewardship

East Fork Livestock is a family owned ranch located near the East Fork River twelve miles southeast of Boulder, WY on the western slopes of the Wind River Mountains within the borders of Wyoming's last frontier, Sublette County. Joel and Susan Bousman, together with their oldest son, Jim and his wife, Kristy; and their youngest son, Cotton run a 350 head mother cow/calf/yearling operation stretching from the sagebrush steppes of the BLM below 7,000 feet, across privately owned flood irrigated hay meadows, and on up to the montane and alpine grazable meadows near 10,000 feet on the Forest.



Joe Bousman, walking the talk. Monitoring on the forest with family and fellow Silver Creek Grazing Association permittees.

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Ranch History

Joel Bousman's family has roots going back several generations in the Boulder Community; in fact, his grandchildren, six-year old Sarah and one-year old Dennis Bousman are the sixth generation to live here.

Knute Jomen, a Norwegian immigrant, who homesteaded on the south side of the East Fork River, was Joe's grandfather. Knute's sister Bertha married Hans Olson, also from Norway, and he had adjudicated the earliest water

right out of the East Fork River. The town of Olson, where Joel and Susan live today, had a post office and store operated out of the Olson ranch house and also had a school across the road. Knute bought the Olson place



Cattle on Deeded Land

Ranch History, continued

in 1913. His ranch then consisted of the Pocket Creek unit, the Church Place unit above Pocket Creek and the Olson unit.

Thomas and Josephine King, along with their six children, homesteaded on Silver Creek six miles from Olson. Their daughter, twenty-year old Edith King married forty-year old Knute and they had two children, Margaret (Joel's mother) and Tom. Because of Knute's ill health, they sold the Olson place and lived at the Pocket Creek unit. Knute died when the children were 3 and 5 years old but Edith continued to ranch, doing nearly all the work herself, with the help of an older couple to care for the children and

household. She later married a neighbor, Gladwon Jensen, who acquired a grazing section next to the Pocket Creek unit. Edith and Gladwon also bought back the Olson ranch.

Floyd Bousman, originally from Missouri, hired on as a hay hand for Gladwon, where he met his wife-to-be. After WWII, Floyd and Margaret purchased the Boulder Lake ranch, an outfitting business. In the 1950's, Floyd purchased land in the Boulder area where he ran cattle. They had three children, Brad, then Joel and their daughter, Susie. In 1970, Joel graduated with a degree in Farm and Ranch Management and served a

short time in the Army. Also at this time, Joel's Uncle Tom became too ill to operate the Olson ranch with his mother Edith. Tom and Edith sold the ranch to Joel's parents.

Joel met his wife, Susan Griffin, while attending the University of Wyoming and they moved to the Olson place and ranched with Floyd and Margaret. In 1978, Joel and Susan chartered East Fork Livestock, Inc., while Floyd kept the ranch at Boulder. In 1992, East Fork Livestock purchased the Barney Tibbals place, adding around five sections to the operation. Presently, the ranch is leasing hay and grazing land from three neighbors.

“There are few ranches with such a diversified land ownership pattern.”

The Current Ranch Operation

At the present time, East Fork Livestock is made up of 3500 acres of private lands - 1,000 of those acres are native grass hay meadows under flood irrigation which produce the feed to carry their cows and weaned calves through the winter. They lease over 4,600 acres of State land (including several school sections). They also have one individual and two common BLM allotments totaling

over 900 AUMs. Their single US Forest Service grazing permit is on Silver Creek Common Allotment where they have approximately 1200 AUMs.

Their operation

consists of winter feeding on hay meadows. In the spring, after calving (about April 10-15), 100 cow/calf pairs go to the Squaretop Common BLM Allotment until July 1st. The rest of the pairs go to the State leases above the East Fork River until July 1st. At that time, all pairs are moved up the mountain on the Silver Creek Common Allotment, where they stay until September 15th. They are trailed back down through the Pocket Creek unit (State lease and private range) in the fall where they graze for a week or two before coming back to the main ranch for aftermath grazing on the hay meadows until about December 1st, when they start feeding hay. The steers are moved to the Fremont Butte individual BLM allot-

ment starting in early May, staying until July 1st. They are then moved to private grazing leases for the remainder of the summer until fall, when brought back to the home place. The heifers start out the spring grazing season on a couple of state sections out on the desert south of the ranch in the lower end of the 10-14 inch precipitation zone, then are moved to the Pocket Creek Unit and Church Place in the foothills at 7,500-8,500 feet elevation for the summer, where annual precipitation averages 15-19 inches.

In the last few years, Joel has acquired additional private leases from absentee landowners as well as additional federal grazing permits. This has added more



Sage Grouse in Thinned sagebrush

The Current Ranch Operation, continued

grass to their operation, which has enabled them to rotate non-use on their federal lands and incorporate more rotational flexibility on their privately owned and private lease lands, benefiting both their cow/calf as well as the yearling part of their operation. During the last three years of intense drought, this flexibility has proven a tremendous asset.



Cattle and rider in the high country

Ecological Description of the Ranch

As noted earlier, Eastfork Livestock is composed of East Fork Livestock is made up of 3800 acres of private lands, 4,600 acres of State land, and BLM and USFS lands comprising 2100 AUMS – where acres aren't "in the language." The upper reaches of the Forest permit are contained within the Bridger Wilderness of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The private and state lands are in the foothills of the mountain range and extending into the high sagebrush desert steppe, following the riparian corridors of Pocket Creek and East Fork River where the ranch lands interface with the BLM lands.

The Forest Lands are grasslands and montane extending from the 10,000 foot elevation down to approximately 8,000 feet. Annual precipitation will exceed 20 inches with 4-10 foot accumulations of snow in the winter. Soils are generally very sandy and of granite origin. Creeks, lakes and potholes abound, yielding substantial acreage of sedge dominated riparian communi-

ties. The streams are lined with willow. The first terrace above the carex community is dominated by Tufted Hairgrass and this community is quite extensive in the grassland area. Drier sites are signaled by abundant Timber Oatgrass and a healthy complex of forbs. The grassland meadows and Lodgepole Pine timber is interspersed, yielding a very high index of edge at the landscape scale.

At the edge of this remarkable "plain", the mountain quickly falls away into the foothill region. This is where the private and state lands begin. As the elevation decreases, Quaking Aspen becomes an important tree specie, and Big Sagebrush becomes a dominant in the mixed shrub community. The slope of the foothills channels water into high gradient streams.

As the elevation decreases and approaches 7500 feet, the gradient flattens and deposition of the streams create the irrigated haylands and riparian bottoms.

Forage production in this area of extremely short growing seasons is limited to grass hay. At this extreme of growing seasons, the length can be quite variable. Freezes do occur within every month of the year. The "presumed" length of the growing season is < 40 days. As a result, forage yields are comparatively low, averaging approximately 1.0 – 1.25 tons per acre, with some lower and only fertilized lands exceeding the range.

Beyond the stream corridors and the private lands are those of the BLM. Earlier in time, the more productive lands and those more hospitable for human habitation were claimed, leaving the public lands which were either a mountainous winter wonderland, or high, dry, windy sagebrush plains. The BLM lands generally make up the latter. Big Sagebrush is the dominant plant specie in this zone of 8-10 inch precipitation. The accompanying grasses and forbs are those which are tolerant of this environment.

"The "presumed" length of the growing season is < 40 days."



Haylands in the fall

Other Uses of Natural Resources Providing Income

The ranch provides wonderful year-round habitat for Moose, Elk, Deer, Antelope, Sage Grouse, and waterfowl. It also controls the access point to a significant portion Forest Service lands. The income which the ranch receives from sharing this bounty is intangible. The Bousman's charge no fees, preferring to grant access to "all who will ask and some who don't!" The good will of the recreational community is their pay.



Winter Range Deer

Community and Industry Involvement

Organizations

- School Board for SCSD #1 in 1970's
- SCCD supervisor in 1970's and also from 1996-2000
- Federal Lands Committee (former chairman and currently serves on committee)
- State Grazing Board (current chairman)
- Statewide Sagegrouse Working Group – by appointment only (current member)
- Green River Valley Cattlemen's Association (former president and current member)
- Honorary Vice President of the Wyoming Stockgrowers (former position and current member of WSGA)
- Representing the voluntary range monitoring initiative of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association in Washington, DC

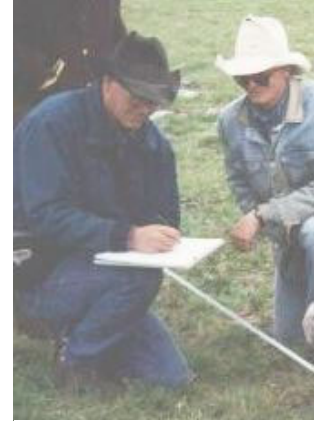
*“The good will
of the
recreational
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Organizations utilized by operation in environmental efforts

University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
 US Forest Service
 Bureau of Land Management
 Wyoming Game and Fish
 Sublette County Conservation District

Section II - Stewardship Goals of the Operation

Joel Bousman believes that one must utilize science-based data for decision-making in the area of natural resource management. The University of Wyoming has been the academic training ground for the Bousman family. Joel earned his B.S. in Farm and Ranch Management. For a time, their oldest daughter Tomi Sue worked for the Wyoming Farm Bureau after receiving her UW degree in Ag Communications. The younger daughter Julie is currently Deputy Press Secretary for the Secretary of Agriculture, in Washington D.C. Their oldest son, Jim received his B.S. in Ag Business while their youngest son, Cotton, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Range Ecology, all at UW. An important stewardship goal is the maintenance of this ranch as an ecologically sound and sustainable family ranch into the future



Joe and son documenting current conditions and management objectives

Section III - Stewardship Practices of the Operation

Conservation practices implemented on private lands include rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure of the Tibbals Place, riparian corridor fencing to create riparian pasture along East Fork River to more carefully manage grazing on the upland bench above the river and the riparian area adjacent to the river. Spike[®] has been applied and grazing deferred on several hundred acres of sagebrush uplands to increase forage production by targeting Big Sagebrush while not affecting other woody species and. This type of chemical treatment provided greater biological diversity for wildlife habitat while also increasing forage for livestock.

The highlight of Joel's stewardship-based management is demonstrated by his leadership in initiating the voluntary rangeland monitoring program on the Silver Creek Allotment which was started in 1996. This USFS common allotment currently has seven permittees. Records on the allotment go back to

1911 when ten permittees ran 725 cattle from the 1st of May through October. Stock numbers varied over the next 18 years from 860 to 3,177 head. Although the allotment was considered common, each permittee generally ran on their own 'area' of the allotment. One of the permittees even converted his 279 head permit to 1,047 sheep for a time in the 1930s, although this allotment has always been considered a cattle allotment. In 1927, the turn-in and turn-out dates were adjusted to July 1st and September 15th, which are the same as at the present time.

In the early 1990's, the concept and practice of monitoring rangelands became more important. In 1995, the county extension office began an effort to make monitoring part of the day-to-day business of the grazing associations in the county. Concurrently, the Bridger-Teton National Forest supervisor sanctioned a committee of producers, educators and scientists to

develop a voluntary permittee monitoring protocol. Joe volunteered to serve on the group, resulting in the development of a Voluntary Permittee Monitoring plan in which producers could actively and cooperatively monitor their range.

Joe has extended this to the Silver Creek Grazing Association, of which he is a member, by spearheading this association's monitoring effort. From the beginning, a foremost objective of Joe's was to employ the monitoring effort to expose and discuss problems and to help carry the message that livestock producers were interested in good management and great stewardship. Part of the interest in telling the story of good stewardship was the fact that the Forest Service had developed an internal report detailing several perceived ecological problems on the permit.

The cooperative monitoring program which Joe initiated tackled the problems which had been identified. Under Joe's leadership, he pulled together resources and brains to cooperatively understand

“The highlight of Joel's stewardship-based management is demonstrated by his leadership in initiating the voluntary rangeland monitoring program on the Silver Creek Allotment “

Stewardship Practices, continued

and solve the problems. In retrospect, Joe's instinct was to develop a CRM effort – without knowing or recognizing the similarity of the properties of his effort with those of a CRM project.

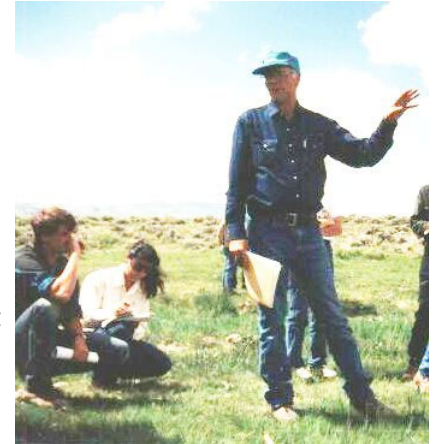
Joe has organized annual monitoring rides on the Forest Permit, inviting Forest Service personnel ranging from range specialists, soils specialists, taxonomists, regional ecologists, Rangers, and supervisors. Game and Fish has participated with habitat biologists and regional supervisors. BLM has sent Range Specialists. NRCS has sent District Conservationists, and extension has marshaled the talents of 2-4 scientists, specialists, and educators. Joe has been anxious to include media in these trips so that the story of stewardship of

natural resources can be told to the general public.

The monitoring rides feature the identification of issues, key areas and species which can be monitored to measure progress toward objectives. Participants are encouraged to pitch in to the discussion and be fruitful members of the issue identification process, and also to roll up their sleeves to learn, practice, and master the monitoring processes. In addition to performing and teaching the monitoring processes on the Silver Creek allotment, Joe is often invited to discuss and teach the monitoring processes at extension and other gatherings of range users and managers.

In addition to the monitoring program, the association has implemented an

intensive rider/herding program with the cattle. The objective of the investment in riders is to improve grazing utilization and implement a sort of rotational grazing system. The result of the program is a remarkably uniform level of utilization throughout the pasture. An unanticipated benefit of enhanced uniformity of utilization is the propensity of the cattle to “want to stay on the mountain longer”. Previously, cattle often would begin to leave the high country for the foothills near the beginning of September. Now, cattle are demonstrating a willingness to remain two to three weeks longer.



Joe, teaching others what he has learned

Participants are encouraged to pitch in to the discussion and be fruitful members of the issue identification process...

Section IV—Views

How have practices affected business?

The forest permit is truly high country. The grazing season is short because spring comes late and winter comes early in those elevations. Prior to the implementation of the monitoring program, the close attention of uniformity in utilization, the expansion of the riding program, and the inclusion of the riders in the educational and monitoring efforts; the association cattle often left the permit well before the ranches were

ready and before the grazing capacity had been approached. Informally, Joe and other association members will share with you the meaning of the additional time that the cattle will stay on the forest. In tangible terms, the financial value easily accounts for a shiny new pickup. In other ways, it has been important to shifting of gathering and sorting work from a situation where it overlapped with haying operations to a more leisurely period.

Leadership

The leadership that Joel has demonstrated in the permittee monitoring program is but one facet of Joe's active involvement in industry affairs and the leadership roles Joel has undertaken. Joe is an active and important member in the Green River Valley Cattleman's Association. He serves on the leadership team of the Wyoming Stock-



A teachable moment on the monitoring ride

Section IV—Views, continued

grower's Association and has accomplished a great deal for the industry in his role as Chair of the Stockgrower's Federal Land Committee, his assignment to any number of special workgroups. His reputation as an effective industry spokesman and his dedication to science based decision-making won him a seat on the Wyoming Sage Grouse Workgroup, and the State Grazing Board currently enjoys his leadership of that board. He is, quite simply, highly sought after as a valuable member or leader of any working or advisory committee and is recognized by his peers as a competent spokesman and advisor.

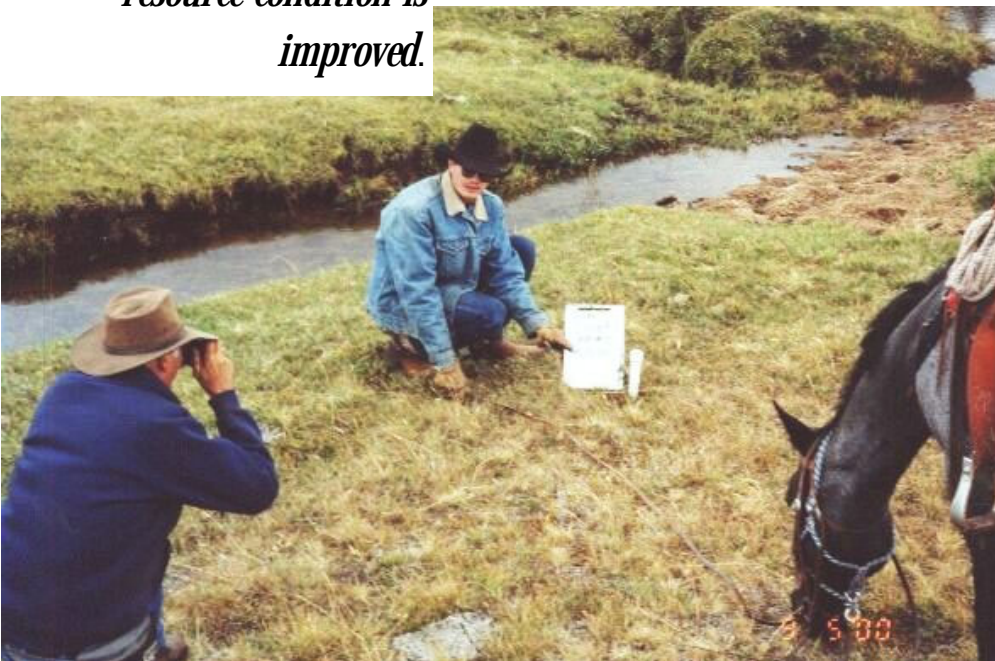
Management of the resource is always armed with science based information, a commitment to balanced uses, and a genuine concern that the resource condition is improved.

How does cattle business contribute to a positive public perception of cattle impact on environment.

Joe Bousman, and his family, run a working cow-calf ranch in an environment which is full of challenges. The ranch's mixture of federal, state, and private lands would make it among the state's most diverse in terms of ownership patterns. The ranch spans tremendous variations in climate, productivity, ecological types, and wildlife habitat.

With the highest ideals of land stewardship in mind, the family is managing this mix of variables while being an extremely active contributor to the community and industry. Management of the resource is always armed with science based information, a commitment to balanced uses, and a genuine concern that the resource condition is improved. He has always been open about his decision-making, often including others in that process. Joe firmly believes that he and the ranching industry is doing the best that they can to be great land stewards and always looks for opportunities to share his and others' stories. He is a strong proponent of rangeland monitoring, encouraging and teaching other ranchers

how to implement programs on the lands that they manage. The public is welcome to share the bounty of his ranch; and in total the public's understanding of the ranch industry is much improved as a result of the efforts of Joel Bousman and family of Eastfork Livestock.



Joe and Cotton, ensuring the condition of the resource is documented and recorded for the future!