

Babbitt Ranches Overview

If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.

— Abraham Lincoln

This quote, first considered in our planning processes in 1991, continues to inspire and direct Babbitt Ranch decisions today. All too often our decisions and planning processes are enthusiastically focused on the future with little regard for where we are today and with even less thought as to how we got here.

Since 1886, Babbitt Ranches has remained deeply committed to the raising of livestock, participating in the livestock industry and defining a land ethic. As learning and understanding about the industry and the management of livestock has evolved, so too has our learning and understanding about the environments we utilize. With this in mind, it has been important for the Babbitt Ranch organization to participate in and support efforts to accumulate and assess information about ecological processes, the impacts we have on them and to define our decision making processes to include this information.

Every decision about land use must be made with an overarching mission of learning and understanding and a sense of responsibility and obligation. We are one part of a regional network of private landowners, state and federal land management agencies, reservations, recreational users and communities. The highest quality ecological, social and conservation science is required to guide this responsibility and obligation. Accurate, comprehensive and timely information must be produced, disseminated to the regional participants and incorporated into our overarching mission. Ultimately, it is through these efforts of learning and understanding that we are better able to join, to share and to be a part of better decisions and planning about northern Arizona.

This **Science Edition** of the *Babbitt Times Review* acknowledges wide and varied science taking place across Babbitt Ranches and the Colorado Plateau. In doing so, we celebrate the dedication and commitment of the many individuals in the broader Babbitt Ranches community who share in this land ethic.

Together we work to ensure that Babbitt Ranch Land and Natural Resources are managed in accordance with Babbitt Ranch values; that policies and activities are coordinated with regional plans; and, decisions provide processes for the resolution of resource management issues and conflicts. Because in the end, with ourselves, with family and friends, with the community and with the environment, one way or another, relationships are all there is.

As conservationist Aldo Leopold stated, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise. An ethical obligation on the part of the private landowner is the only visibly remedy for these situations."

BABBITT RANCHES

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Range Manager Reflects on Land Stewardship, Biological Surveys and the Cowboy Way

Out West, folks might call him a tall drink of water. Standing a lanky 6-foot-6, Buck Wickham may be one of a dying breed who knows what it means to be a cowboy, what it means to be a rancher and what it means to have a responsibility to the land.

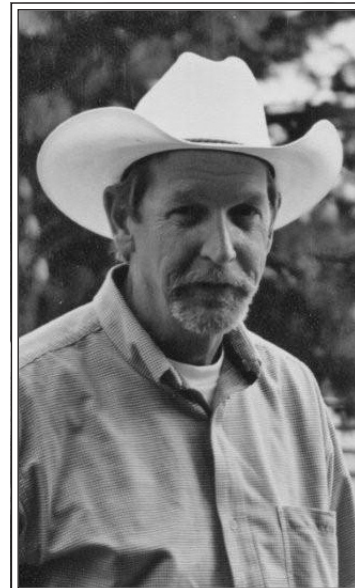
In a cowboy hat and Forest Service greens, Wickham can be found surveying the rangeland north of the San Francisco Peaks for a diverse landscape of different plants and animal species.

"I look at the thick vegetation that has occurred since European settlement more than a hundred years ago when natural fire was taken out of the picture. I like to take in the condition of the forest and try to determine if we could reach pre-settlement conditions with open stands of ponderosa pines and grassy meadows."

He also pays attention to the condition of the man-made improvements such as wells, watering holes and fences.

After two decades in range management on the Peaks Ranger District, Wickham, now a fire management officer, has had a relationship with Babbitt Ranches for years, administering grazing permits and coordinating range improvement projects.

"I have all the respect in the world for the Babbitt Ranch community. Some people are just good stewards of the land. They've taken actions that not only benefit the current resources, but that will benefit these resources into the future. I'm not sure people are aware of the benefits that Babbitt



Ranches' stewardship on the land has had for the people of Arizona and our country."

Article III Cowboy Essence

Section 3.

Friendship

Mutual esteem, respect and devotion are the ingredients of an enduring friendship. Like marriage, it must not be taken for granted but requires a joint effort.

One of the long-term benefits Wickham cites is the action of entering rangeland into conservation easements and curtailing development of the land.

"They allow the public to utilize those open spaces on their land as more and more places are being locked up."

Wickham says conservation easements are a huge benefit for many species of wildlife. "Urban sprawl

is a real issue in this state. The biggest threat to wildlife is habitat fragmentation as open spaces are subdivided with roads and fences. Babbitt Ranches also has tried to maintain the antelope herd south of the Grand Canyon. I admire them for that."

Babbitt Ranches also conducted a biological survey to inventory different species of plants and animals and habitat groupings

similar to the work of the country's first eco-biologist C. Hart Merriam at the end of the 19th century to document life zones and see how things changed over time.

"That was something nobody asked them to do, they just thought it would be a good tool for them for the long-term management of the ranch."

Wickham adds that Babbitt Ranches not only maintains its own fences, it maintains other people's fences as well. "They are just good permittees. They've done a boatload of water improvements. They pay to have water hauled in and just by their practice of maintaining water improvements they provide water for a huge number of wildlife on a huge chunk of ground, probably bigger than some states."

Wickham grew up in the Winslow area and has great respect for the cowboy way.

"Most working cowboys seldom go into town. They are very polite. They have traditional values and manners. They are true gentlemen. Babbitt Ranches has maintained this culture of raising cattle and cowboying. It's very important to the history of our country, but personally I think it's neat they still run that place as a working cow outfit. They could be a lot more modern by hauling cattle instead of driving cattle, but they are one of the few remaining ranches that does things in traditional ways with traditional values."

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Thought for the day:

Sitting silently,
Doing nothing,
Spring comes,
And the grass grows by itself.

— Osho