ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Is Holistic Management a Suitable Strategy for the Landscape of the Western U.S.?
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ABSTRACT: Holistic Management (HM) is a land management decision-making platform that may be used for the restoration of degraded lands and producing a number of ecological benefits including water infiltration and carbon storage. HM consists of a complex model that incorporates economic, social, and environmental concerns into the management process. Components of the system include items such as historical landscape assessments, setting goals, and adaptability. The model also includes specific management tools of fire, land rest, and managed grazing. This paper explains whether HM is a suitable model for restoring damaged lands in the western U.S. The ecological benefits of the HM grazing technique has been called into question. Papers for both sides of the argument provided references which enabled a snowball effect of sources. The papers in opposition to HM grazing techniques propose that experiments are not repeatable, have been anecdotal, and provided very little quantitative data. HM is a model that is appropriate for the Western U.S., but that does not mean that all components of the model will be appropriate in areas that have different histories, climates or topography. The HM grazing method is one tool in the HM toolbox and while it sometimes plays a pivotal role in rebuilding unhealthy soils, it is not always needed, and should not be used on every landscape, such as wetter soils. Also, the grazing technique should not be isolated from the model and be seen as an all-encompassing solution to degraded soils. HM could be beneficial for degraded soils in the western U.S if goals were set for soil restoration, practiced in watershed scales, incorporated stakeholder input, and had built-in adaptation strategies. There could be a broad range of benefits from increased soil water infiltration and carbon sequestration/storage, to more productive farmland and grass-fed beef, to an easing of the tensions between ranchers and land management agencies.