**MacKenzie Family Ranch “Rancho de las Vacas Feliz” Scenario**

The MacKenzie’s are new to livestock ranching.  The house they rent includes 100 acres with a corral, some holding pens and a barn. Because of the small size of their property, they have not found it feasible to own their own cattle, so the land has been utilized by stock owners in the area. Because they would like to be in the livestock business, the Mackenzie’s are seeking to increase the land that they might manage. They understand that keeping overhead costs low is a key to a successful livestock enterprise. They recently spoke to the next door neighbor about leasing his property, approximately 500 acres of rangeland. The neighbor’s property hasn’t been grazed for 12 years and the infrastructure including the fencing is in disrepair. The property has a stockpond that in most years provides year around water although the quality of the water is very poor in the summer and late fall. The neighbor wants $19/acre for the lease, and is understood that the tenants will have to maintain the infrastructure, including bringing it up to a functional state. Their house (headquarters) also neighbors park land, 1500 acres. The park has extensive recreation use and the current tenant is having trouble dealing with park user’s dogs and open gates. The MacKenzie’s are hoping to take over the grazing lease on the park land. In addition to recreation the park has a couple of resource concerns that they expect the grazing tenant to help them manage for including 1) invasive species management (control of artichoke thistle and medusahead), 2) kit fox habitat, 3) tiger salamander habitat.  The Park has a caveat that the calving season must be concluded by October 31. The park recently developed a water system which include 3 troughs fed by a developed spring. There are also two stock ponds that provide habitat for special status species but need sediment removed. The Park wants $20/acre for the lease. However, because they are beginning ranchers, they are eligible for cost sharing assistance through the EQIP program through the local NRCS office.

The MacKenzies have a number of decisions to make. They would love to be successful in the livestock business with the idea of creating something for the future of their children. Currently they are employed in non-farm jobs and would like to spend more time out on the land than they do in an office.

An immediate decision that they must make is whether to:

1. Lease the neighbor’s 500 acres – giving them a total of 600 acres to manage
2. Lease the Park Land – giving them 1600 acres total but with substantial strings attached
3. Lease both of the properties for a total of 2100 acres.

What you advise them to do?

**Rancho de las Vacas Feliz**

Management Team

* + Ralph Mackenzie
  + Ruth Mackenzie

Assets

* + Children – Jim and Debbie
  + Other family members in the area
  + Local experts, ag extension agent, county ag department, veterinarian
  + On line educational resources
  + 1800 acres
  + 80 cows
  + 5 bulls
  + 3 horses
  + Perennial stream through part of the ranch – ephemeral stream bisecting the ranch
  + Ranch equipment (handling equipment, 2 quads, 1 ton pickup and 24’ gooseneck trailer
  + Savings
  + Investments – IRA, 401K, etc.
  + Line of credit with local bank.

**Management Considerations**

* Deer season – Sept. – Oct. Hunters have access to County Road
* Rain season – Dec – April
* Cattle Association Convention – last week of January
* Vernal Pools – home to Cook’s lomatium and Fairy Shrimp – South River Paddock – lomatium sets seed in mid April – mid May
* Fall run Salmon in central creek
* Canada Geese nesting season April
* Transect Creek only runs February – April.
* Calving season March – April.
* Weaning - November