

FIVE WAYS TO VALUE THE WORKING LANDSCAPES OF THE WEST: AN INTRODUCTION

Gary Paul Nabhan, Director, NAU Center for Sustainable Environments

www.environment.nau.edu

www.garynabhan.com



The Term “Working Landscapes”

- Suggests large, healthy, functioning ecosystems
- Suggests food & fiber produced on solar budget, unsubsidized
- Suggests that people work to produce these products & eco-services...no dude ranches need apply!





- Since its inception, NAU's Center for Sustainable Environments has partnered with the Diablo Trust & others to assist rural residents in establishing or deepening their involvement in the management, protection & restoration of **WORKING LANDSCAPES**.

BUT new strategies are needed, since working landscapes more at risk than ever before

- By 2020, Arizona will likely see over 1.3 million acres of prime ranchland converted to low density residential development as it assumes its role as the fastest growing state in the country

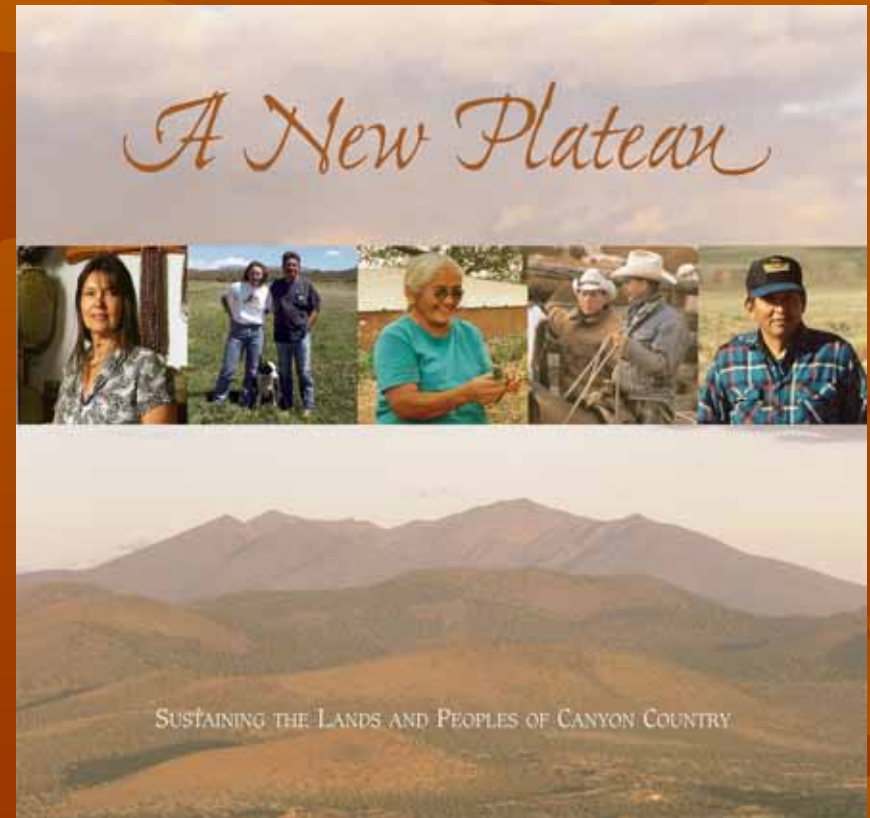


Over the past five years, several Southwestern states have been losing 690-750 acres/day of farm & ranch lands to houses, roads & malls

- Texas, New Mexico & Colorado are literally losing ground as fast as rural Arizona is
- Rural real estate (development) values in Arizona & New Mexico jumped 9.4% between 2004 & 2005.
- Exurban growth—not metro urban growth—will dominate the next two decades **UNLESS WE GET SOCIETY AT LARGE TO *MORE FULLY VALUE THE MULTIPLE BENEFITS* OF LARGE ,COHESIVE WORKING LANDSCAPES**

Toward a multivalent appreciation of working landscapes

- Producing food & fiber in wild habitats dominated by perennial cover
- Providing multiple ecological services
- Providing an open space buffer from urban sprawl
- Maintaining local traditional knowledge & rural culture
- Preventing nature deficit disorder otherwise rampant among kids (& politicians!)



We need a new benchmark by which to make decisions regarding land use & conversion costs in the West

- The long-term value of the food & ecological services provided by large intact landscapes must be valued by society more than the short-term income from a strip mall.
- Unless we change the way land use planners value these functions, we will inevitably lose much of what currently *works* in the West

We must fully admit that food production from Western ranches is not currently adding what it should to local economies

- Nearly all Western county economies engaged in meat production run in the red, losing millions of \$/yr by selling 99% of what they produce into national commoditized markets.
- By not selling their beef & lamb locally, ranchers are letting most of the wealth associated with their lands drain away...
- **KEN METER WILL SPEAK TO THIS ISSUE!**

Getting the public to pay for the ecosystem services provided by ranchlands



- Water reaching Colorado River delta valued at \$200/acre foot
- Endangered fish & waterfowl habitat valued by USFWS, Ducks & Trout Unlimited, DOT & others
- Mitigation monies available for habitats comparable to ones lost to development: Spring Creek, Montana

Using new landscape protection designations for private rural lands

- National Preserves (Valles Calderas)
- Graze-able National Parks & Monuments (Great Sand Dunes Natl Park & Preserve)
- Conservancy Areas Protected from Development
- National Heritage Areas (Silos & Smokestacks)
- Globally-Important Agricultural Heritage Sites
- Rural Planning Areas (Diablo Trust)
- Land Trusts (Lava Lake Land & Cattle)



THANK YOU