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This week's Highline was graciously written by a dear friend and longtime guest of McGinnis—Darwin.

The New Grazing Allotment - An Insiders Perspective



As a 12-year veteran of McGinnis Meadows and proclaimed graze junkie, I have become enamoured with everything graze. Who, in the early days, didn't absolutely feel the thrill of driving across that bridge with the loose board, having to hit it just right. Who doesn't enjoy the humbling familiarity of being up on top of the mountain looking down on the reservoir; the challenge of the slopes at Gobblers Knob, that "western movie" experience descending the mountain into Conniff

Creek behind the herd; that end of day thrill we all feel when we've completed an especially challenging, or long, ride?

When I heard the phrase "graze is going away" my heart shrunk a little, and that small, tiny knot started to form in the midst of my insides. After all, aside from the friendships and comradarie I've developed with the constant ranch staff and repeat guests, that grazing allotment, and the challenges it provided me and my horsemanship, was the biggest pull to return to McGinnis Meadows, year after year. I lived for the magnificent views and broad sweeping panoramas that seemed to change, second-by-second.

While Randy has repeatedly portrayed the new allotment as much better, I have to admit I've not fully appreciated the truth of that statement until I had a chance to view a large portion of it on my own. As a result of that, this part of the Highline is being written from the perspective of a well-seasoned graze junkie, and long-time McGinnis Meadows guest. What is this new grazing allotment going to be like?

There & Back

The most obvious change is the act of getting there. I don't know about you, but those trips in the truck before and after a day at graze sometimes got a bit



long. Most of the time I've enjoyed the company in the truck and sometimes well, I just zoned out and nodded off. An hour to an hour and a half in the truck, after a long day of riding was just too much.

In stark contrast, it took 15-minutes, on snow-covered, icy, roads to arrive at a far point in the new pasture. Now, how cool is that? We can meet the truck at 9:00AM and by 9:30AM, after the requisite bathroom break, wardrobe adjustment and general prep, be on our horse and headed out toward country and cattle. In some cases, no need for the truck, just mount up, ride and be in the cattle in just a few minutes.

While the truck rides and the conversations we've had, over the years, have been both interesting and entertaining, I'm primarily there to spend time riding horses and enjoying the horsemanship. One can always chat while riding, at breakfast, at lunch or at dinner. For those of us that truly like to ride, and ride in the graze environment, we can add another 2-3 hours onto EVERY day that we're there. How cool is that? I know I'm looking WAY forward to it.

What about the View? How's the Riding? Will I Be Challenged?



Let's start here... I think that this view, looking toward The Cabinet Mountains, is absolutely amazing. On many of the logging trails, in the new allotment, this view is frequently encountered. It can't be beat for majesty and grandeur; it's simply breathtaking and will only look better from horseback. When I shot this, and the photos to come, I was either inside a vehicle or standing on the ground. Elevating another 4 ½ to 5-feet, on the back of a horse, will remove some of the foreground clutter and open up vistas for a view that will only serve to amaze far more than these photos are able to show.

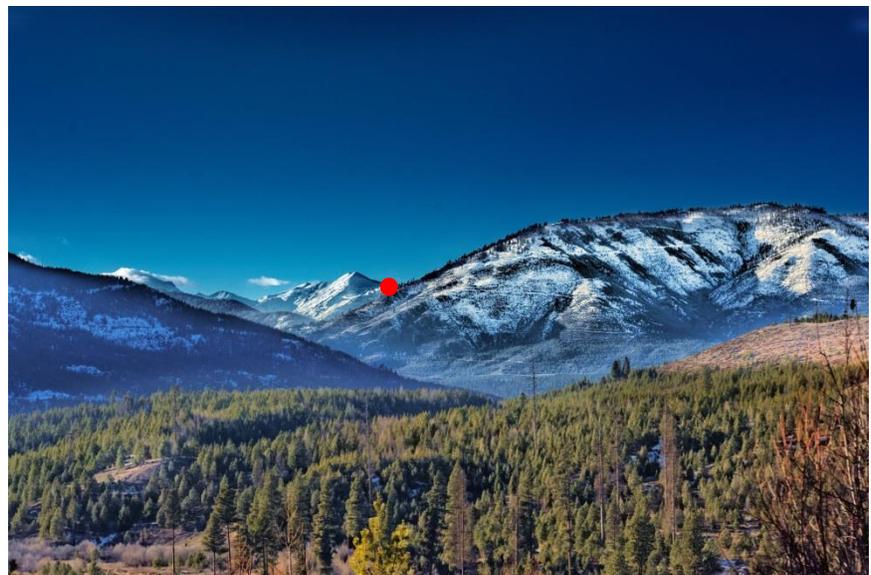


Despite the differences, the country also sports many similarities. One has only to travel round the next bend and the views and panoramas change more toward the familiar. Trees standing regally along roadsides shield the view into canyons and ridges that one can drop off of to move, or find, cattle. This scene was oft repeated in the old allotment and it's just as prevalent here, mixing in a bit of nostalgia and

memory with the new and the different. The roadside views are as picturesque as any we remember and they hearken us back to the look and the feel of the old grazing allotment, with the anticipation of the new.

Coupled with the new views are more opportunities for riding, as the terrain can range from relatively gentle to downright steep. For those of us who are on the timid side, there's an opportunity to stay within our comfort zone while those who wish to challenge themselves a bit more can ride off to find that challenge without having to "leave" the group.

From this new pasture, the ranch is often "in view." Look for the red-dot, and just the other side of the ridge is Shayne's place. One could ride through the valley, go up and over the ridge right to the ranch; though the scale of the photo belies the fact that the distance, covered by the valley to the red dot, is about 10-12 miles of riding.



Summary



As one chapter of graze comes to a close, another chapter of opportunity, growth and challenge is opening up in a grand, sweeping, prospect before us. As we look behind us, we can see, with clarity, where we've been, what we've achieved, and the relationships we've forged, both with each other and with the landscape we've all grown to know, love and treasure.

Moving forward this season, I am welcoming the new grazing allotment with open arms. It points the ranch toward a much more robust and sustainable future. There is some amazing country, enough challenge and opportunity to keep us going for years and years to come. McGinnis has never failed us in providing opportunity, challenge, enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment at the end of every stay and, with this new territory, I see nothing but that continuing. It's the pure magic of McGinnis!

