**The University of Arizona Santa Rita Experimental Range -- History and Status**

* The Santa Rita Experimental Range traces back to 1902, when President T. Roosevelt established the Santa Rita Forest Reserve. Later, the forested areas became National Forest and the rangeland portion was called a Range Reserve (1910) and an Experimental Range (after ~1921).
* The push to create SRER came from University of Arizona (UA) and government scientists. They saw the need for a large area to study recovery and maintenance of rangeland damaged by unregulated livestock grazing (during the Open Range Era). Though it was initially a Forest Reserve, it has been dedicated to range studies since establishment.
* UA professor and member of the UA Agricultural Experiment Station, Robert H. Forbes, is most responsible for establishment of SRER. His proposal for what is now SRER was adopted by Gifford Pinchot, US Forest Service.
* SRER is the oldest continuously studied rangeland facility in the world. It is also, almost certainly, the first federal land area of large size (initially 50 square miles) to be fenced for livestock management in the western US.
* For most of its history up to 1988 the Santa Rita was managed by the research arm of the USFS.
* The property was part of a land swap in 1988, when it transitioned from federal land to state property and became Arizona State Trust Land.
* State legislation in 1988 specified it would be used for research and managed by the UA under an agreement with the Arizona State Land Department.
* When the land swap occurred in 1988, about 700 acres of what had historically been part of SRER lay within the Coronado National Forest. This part did not transfer and remains part of the Forest Service Coronado National Forest.
* Florida Station, the headquarters for the Range since 1921, is in this area (part of the National Forest) and today is used by the UA through a permit with the USFS.
* The science of sustainable range management in arid environments was originated at SRER (G. Ruyle, 2003).
* Although its original purpose was agricultural research, from the beginning a wide range of investigations occurred here including wildlife, botanical, soils and geology, archaeology, and ecological research.
* The range is especially famous for repeat photographs and long-term studies documenting vegetation changes (McClaran, 2003). The photos and much other data may be accessed on our website: [www.cals.arizona.edu/SRER](http://www.cals.arizona.edu/SRER) . The cited papers by Ruyle and McClaran can be found here: <https://www.cals.arizona.edu/srer/proceedings.html> . It is distinguished to be one of 20 core sites for the National Ecological Observatory Network: <http://www.neonscience.org/> .
* The UA research program is administered by Dr. Mitchell McClaran, UA, and the land is managed as part of the UA’s College of Agriculture and Life Science’s Agricultural Experiment Station.
* About 80 square miles (or more than 50,000 acres) are set aside for research and education.

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