Here is a list of Frequently Asked Questions with answers submitted by Utah BLM range specialists. If you want to follow up with additional questions, below you can find contact information for some of these contributors.

1. **What kinds of jobs are available to graduates with range degrees?**

   “There are different fields within the BLM that those with a range degree would qualify for. The obvious one is a range management specialist, where you would work directly with the range user and the interested public. You are responsible for a number of grazing allotments within a given field office. Another is a noxious weed coordinator, they manage the weed program within a given field office or district. They can go into the fire and fuels program. With the right qualifications in the fire program those with degrees often move into fuels program and fill a capacity there.”

   “Rangeland technician/Management or Natural Resource technician/specialist jobs with the federal government or state programs as a grazing administrator or a fire management specialist. The fire program also hires Rangeland professional for fuel specialist and other management related jobs. Jobs are also available through different university extension programs. Ranches also hire Range personnel to make ranching more in sync with federal and state criterion’s.”

   “The BLM offers a handful of positions a range graduate would qualify for, specifically Rangeland Management Specialist, Range Technician, Natural Resource Specialist, Ecologist, and Botanist.”

   “Any type of job that you would like. Basically if you understand ecology and plants you can work in a field that interests you. There are livestock management focused jobs, restoration focused jobs, riparian focused jobs, T and E [threatened and endangered] plant work, wildlife biology work, NEPA writing and consulting and teaching.”

2. **How hard is it to get these jobs? (In your agency, how often do vacancies open up and how many qualified applicants to you receive for each vacancy?)**

   “Like all professional jobs there is always going to be competition. Especially in light of sequestration, budget cuts and the like. With budget cuts there is often positions that go unfilled, as the funding for it was cut. Currently in Utah there are about 29 Rangeland Management Specialist positions. There are about 10 or so positions that are currently unfunded vacancies. There are usually 2-5 qualified applicants for most positions depends on the location.”

   “The Richfield Field Office should be filling some vacancies soon. There is a high demand for Rangeland Management specialist everywhere and it is not hard to get these jobs. The most common place to look is on USAJOBS.GOV for those jobs. I highly recommend starting a Range Management career in a SCEP (Student Career Experience Program) via the one of the Federal Agencies (apply thru USAJOBS.GOV).”
“We have a hard time finding qualified students. University of Utah and universities back east do not seem to teach the correct courses, but yet it seems that those are the ones we hire for summer help. These people are not able to get a permanent job because they do not have the correct classes. I would think that it would be easy for Range graduate at Utah State University to get Career Jobs. I would first recommend that they get BLM experience working during the summers.”

“Some jobs are harder to come by than others, ecologist and botanist are not typically seen hiring as an entry level position. Range positions are a bit more common, especially if you are willing to move. Nevada BLM seems to offer the most entry level range positions and is where many a BLM range con has started their career. Getting your foot in the door is the key to remember.”

“Vacancies have been available in several locations on a monthly basis. If you are limited to only one or two cities, then the job search is tough. Typically we do not receive many applicants for the jobs.”

3. **If you could start over, would you do a range degree?**

“I think if given the chance to start over I would still be a range specialist. Yes there are aspects that make the job undesirable. I think it is the same with all jobs, there are and will be difficulties, but for me it is just a job and as jobs go it is a good and fun job.”

“YES!”

“Yes, but also get classes in National Environmental Policy documents (Environmental assessments and Environmental Impact Statements and environmental writing), hydrology, forestry and inter-human community. We do not do much with economics and animal science.”

“Most of our range people serve in their position for about 4 years and they then want to get into management or switch over into something else. There is ridiculous red tape in conducting the range program due to all of the rhetoric caused by the environmental community. It is kind of like that you are doing all kinds paper work exercises instead of getting your on-the-ground work done. Some allotments do not receive the full on the ground supervision that should be happening and some ranchers are taking advantage of that.”

“Yes, if I could start over I would still get my degree in range. First of all, I enjoy the type of work I do and having the opportunity to work in the field (though not as much as I had originally anticipated). Second, range positions have very specific degree qualifications, unlike many other positions in the bureau, so you are mainly just competing against other range professionals for a position and don't have near the competition with the veterans hiring preference.”

“yes - I have a minor in range and a degree in wildlife. If I could start over, I would get more of a range and ecology degree. I need more plant knowledge.”

4. **Any other advice for undergraduates interested in range?**

“Work hard on their writing skills and develop them early on, good communication is key. I would research the various fields in natural resource management. I would look into the number of
vacancies in each field and compare it against the number of students in each discipline. That is what I did and it was very simple straight forward math to figure what not to go into.”

“In my opinion, being in the Range Program requires being assertive and learning to work diplomatically with people. Sometimes you have to deliver bad news to grazing permittees (such as getting off the Federal Lands due to drought or reduce numbers due to a NEPA decisions or other things). If you don't like negative confrontations this is not the job for you.”

“Be prepared to confront opposition groups in a diplomatic fashion.”

“I am a recent graduate, 2012, of USU in Rangeland Science. I could offer plenty of advice, but I feel the most important advice would be to make sure summer jobs are in the field of range. There is no better background than experience. With the BLM, two fundamental skills that are greatly appreciated are knowledge of NEPA (I hope the new students know the amount of desk work that comes with the field work), and I wish I had taken a GIS course. When I was at USU, I thought that perhaps we could have substituted a core requirement and added the GIS course instead. We use ARCMAP daily. Also, A good reminder is that summer jobs are usually posted in January, and students should be on USA JOBS relatively early in January to start applying.”

“English! Make sure you do well in your english classes, take any environmental planning classes offered, take any scientific writing classes offered! You will be writing more than you expect and probably more than any other program in the BLM. Look for opportunities to gain experience - summer internships or volunteering for the agency you would like to obtain a job with.”

“Stay active in your professional societies, join SRM and other groups. Work seasonal jobs in your field before graduating. Develop good plant ID skills and field techniques. Be comfortable with maps and GPS.”

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