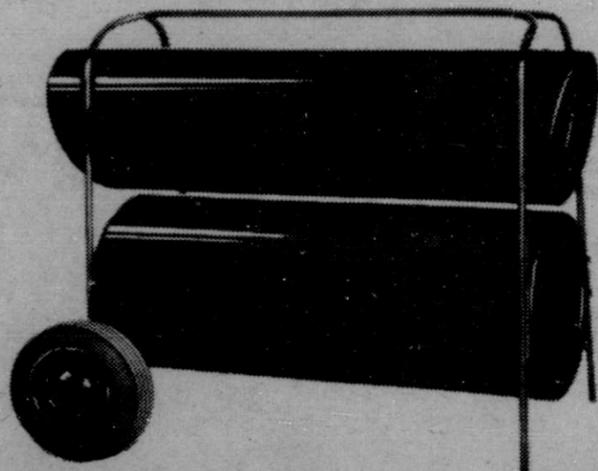


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## Cheatgrass, Erosion--- Nature's Blessing?

(Continued from page 1)

which empty into Montana's main "arteries." This summer the Powder, Tongue, Yellowstone and many other rivers in Montana were so loaded with silt and soil that at times they had the viscosity of light oil.

They flowed with such speed that the soil was held in suspension. Most of it was probably deposited on the flood plains of the Missouri River in the Dakotas, Nebraska and on down to the Mississippi Delta.

The ideal situation, of course, would be to maintain such a heavy cover of vegetation that no erosion could take place. This isn't always possible, particularly during and following a dry period such as we have just experienced. And many parts of eastern and southeastern Montana is rough, badland country with nude clay buttes that won't support vegetation under any conditions.

Erosion and silt-filled streams are a fact of life.

But erosion to Bruce Orcutt isn't just an unavoidable evil. Like cheatgrass, he regards it as a blessing of nature.

"Erosion made this country," he exclaims. "All of our rich farm land was built up from soil that was deposited by our rivers."

### Natural Law

Soil erosion, says Orcutt, is an example of the Natural Law. "Man, through the use of his personal intellect, can adapt himself to nature's laws and can 'use' erosion for his benefit and well being."

How does Man adapt to the Natural Law? "By turning on his brain. By grabbing a shovel, a hoe or a stick of dynamite; by climbing aboard a tractor and working to adjust nature's laws and by putting them to work for him according to his own individual circumstances," he says.

"Our opportunities are limitless. Thank Heaven there is no allotment program on opportunity," he adds.

Bruce Orcutt adapted to the Natural Law of Erosion by slowing down the water and allowing the soil to settle out on his ranch instead of flowing on down to the Yellowstone River.

### Created Meadows

Through a series of step-down dams that spread the water out over the creek bottom, he has literally built hundreds of acres of fertile hay meadows on what was formerly rough range land.

Orcutt's reclamation project started some 30 years ago when he threw a rock and log dam across a deep gully. Silt-bearing runoff water backed up behind the dam and spilled over onto the rough, eroded sagebrush land. Silt filled in the low spots. Sagebrush, unable to tolerate the high moisture, gradually died out. Western wheatgrass began to grow in the newly deposited soil.

Where water flooded out over the land, the need for another dam became evident to further spread and slow down the water, which led to the building of another dam . . . and another . . . and another, until today he has over 25 dams on one creek that have built up some 2,000 acres of hay meadows out of successive layers of sediment. The fields are as level as a table top.

### Four-Ton Yields

On most fields alfalfa was broadcast directly in the mud with a cyclone seeder. In years of normal runoff yields are better than four tons to the acre. During "alfalfa seed years" the mea-

dows produce thousands of pounds of excellent seed.

Orcutt's land building program has followed no set plan. It evolved. It grew as the need arose. His first dams were built by shovel and horse-drawn fresno. In later years more modern earth moving equipment was used on some of the larger structures.

"Anyone can do what we have done," he states. "It's just a case of recognition of and adjustment to Natural Law."

Bruce Orcutt is always pleased to pass on any information about his "man-made meadows" which were built by using "controlled" erosion. But he derives his greatest satisfaction from the fact that they were built with sweat and imagination instead of government assistance.

"Water," says Orcutt, "is our least appreciated but most important and irreplaceable resource." Practical ranchers and water users, he says, should give thoughtful consideration to the Western intermittent stream watershed law, as it is presently interpreted, and encourage sound, long-term, non-subsidized development of this great resource.

## Wheat Yield May Be World Record

A WORLD RECORD winter wheat yield on dryland may have been produced in Washington State this year.

Grogan Bros., Cheney, Wash., harvested 132,379 bushels per acre on 39.5 acres. The wheat was the new Gains (shorty) variety.

Russia is credited with the world's top wheat yield of 144 bushels per acre in the proceedings of the 1961 International Soils Science Congress, but it is not known whether it was produced on dryland or under irrigation.

Regardless of the conditions under which the Russian yield was produced, another Washington grower, John Bain, Quincy, probably holds the record for irrigated wheat. This year he harvested 155.5 bushels of Gains per acre on an 11-acre field in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project.

The Grogan Brothers' dryland yield was produced on a field that had been in wheat in 1959. In 1960 it was seeded to barley and sweet clover. Last year the sweet clover was plowed down for green manure.

The field was seeded Sept. 20 at a rate of 42 pounds of seed per acre. It was fertilized with only 32 pounds of ammonium nitrate per acre. Because of a wet spring, the Grogans were unable to spray with 2,4-D. Normal precipitation for that area is 16 inches a year.

## No Marketing Quotas On 15-Acre Growers

MARKETING QUOTAS will not apply to farmers who plant 15 acres or less of wheat for harvest in 1963, according to an announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Farmers who planted no wheat in the past may seed up to 15 acres without marketing quota penalties, and those with a history of less than 15 acres may plant up to 15 acres without penalty.

This change in the provisions voted on by growers in the August referendum applies only to the 1963 crop.

Details on the 1963 voluntary wheat acreage reduction program as applied to 15-acre producers can be obtained from county ASCS offices.