Rangelands Encyclopedia Article

Rangelands

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Rangelands

Concentrated in 16 western states, rangelands comprise 770 million acres (311.6 million ha) and over one-third of the land base in the United States. Rangelands are vegetated predominately by shrubs, and they include **grasslands**, **tundra**, marsh, meadow, **savanna**, **desert**, and alpine communities. They are fragile ecosystems that depend on a complex interaction of plant and animal **species** with limited resources, and many range areas have been severely damaged by **overgrazing**. Currently over 300 million acres (121 million ha) within the United States alone are classified as being in need of **conservation** treatment and management. Effective range-management techniques include **soil conservation**, preservation of **wildlife habitat**, and protection of watersheds.