Decision Memo

Scarborough Grazing Allotment Management Plan

USDA Forest Service
Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest
Gila County, Arizona

Background

The Scarborough Allotment (see Map 1) is on the Globe Ranger District of the Tonto National Forest. Current permitted use for the Scarborough Allotment is 110 adult head of cow/calf pairs yearlong and 67 head of yearling carryover for 5 months (January 1st through May 31st). The Scarborough Allotment consists of approximately 7529 acres, divided into 4 pastures (see Map 2). These pastures include: Copper hills, Chrome Butte, Reservation, and Richmond. This allotment is located about 6 miles north of Globe, Arizona bordered by the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation on its east side.

The permitted use is based on the Vegetation Monitoring and Trend Analysis conducted by the University of Arizona in agreement with the USDA Forest Service (PRD21). The monitoring was conducted in 2003, 2004 and 2005 and was compared with data collected in 1957 and 1980-1981 and the Actual use data for the allotment for the past 13 years and the effects of this use on resource conditions.

The allotment vegetation consists of Velvet Mesquite Desert Grasslands, Juniper Semi-arid Grassland, Pinyon-Juniper woodlands, and a minor amount streamside vegetation (approx. 200 acres). Elevations range from 4,000 to 5,800 feet. The topography is varied with 805 acres 0-10% slope, 4,177 acres at 10-30% slope, 2197 acres 30-60% slope, and 80 acres greater than 60% slope.

Decision

I have decided to reauthorize grazing for up to 110 cattle (cow/calf) yearlong and up to 67 yearlings for five months (January 1st to May 31st). The authorization will be through a term grazing permit.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment under Section 339 of the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-447). The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because this action meets the provisions outlined in the Appropriations Act as follows:

1) The decision continues current grazing management:

- My decision continues current livestock numbers and grazing management, as described in the "Background" section of this Decision Memo.

2) Monitoring indicates that current grazing management is meeting, or satisfactorily moving toward, objectives in the land and resource management plan, as determined by the Secretary:

Design Features

Management

- Grazing will be managed to sustain or improve satisfactory watershed, riparian, and wildlife habitat conditions while providing forage for livestock and wildlife. A primary objective on upland watersheds will be to maintain or improve the hydrologic conditions and soils to enhance the productivity, ecological functioning, and sustainability of the watersheds. Utilization levels are targeted for conservative use (30% to 40%) in the uplands at the end of the growing season in order to achieve these goals.

Adaptive Management

- The reauthorization includes the continued use of adaptive management, which provides more flexibility for managing cattle. Adaptive management allows the Forest Service to adjust the timing and duration of grazing, movement of cattle within the allotment, and cattle numbers. If adjustments are needed, they are implemented through the Annual Operating Instructions, which will adjust numbers so cattle use is consistent with current productivity. This allows plant, soil, and watershed conditions to be maintained or improved while range improvements are implemented over time. An example of a situation that could call for adaptive management adjustments is drought conditions.

- Adaptive management is designed to provide sufficient flexibility to adapt management to changing circumstances. If monitoring indicates that desired conditions are not being achieved, management will be modified in cooperation with the permittee. Changes may include administrative decisions such as the specific number of livestock authorized annually, class of animal or modifications in pasture rotations, but such change will not exceed the limits for timing, intensity, duration, and frequency defined in this Proposed Action.

Monitoring

The type and frequency for monitoring the Scarborough Allotment will include:

- permittee compliance, allotment inspections, range readiness, forage production, rangeland utilization in key areas at the end of the growing season. However, grazing intensity will be evaluated during the growing season in order to practice adaptive management, and make management changes that are needed to stay within the target utilization levels at the end of the growing season
- condition and trend - every five to ten years
- frequency and canopy cover plots and a soil condition rating will be continued at long-term monitoring sites throughout the allotment - every five to ten years

Based on the following resource narratives and the project record (which includes monitoring information), I find my decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Tonto Forest Plan) 1985, as amended (PRD #1). The Scarborough Allotment falls within the Tonto Forest Plan management area 2F which is managed for livestock grazing, watershed protection, non-wilderness dispersed recreation and wildlife habitat improvement.

- Trend Analysis

  The monitoring of vegetation and trend by the University of Arizona indicates rangeland conditions on the allotment are being maintained or improved with the current cattle grazing management in place. Continued monitoring will help managers to evaluate the status of maintaining and improving rangeland conditions (PRD #21).

  Vegetation was monitored in 2003, 2004 and 2005 to estimate ground cover, plant species frequency, litter and ground cover, and plant frequency. The findings were compared to data that was collected in 1957 and 1981. Of the sites monitored, all showed a stable or upward trend with the exception of one measured cluster (PRD #21).

- Wildlife

  Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Findings:

  No effect to species or its habitat (PRD #22).

  This determination is made based on the fact that the project will not alter or impact habitat conditions, nor will it create a disturbance to threatened and endangered species of concern on the District's Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species List (PRD 14 and 15).

  The proposed action is not expected to affect the habitat for any MIS species based on current habitat trends and a 40% utilization level. (PRD #23).

3) There are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. I considered the following resource conditions in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warranted further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS:

- Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat: There are no threatened or endangered species or critical habitat within the project area (PRD #22).

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds: There are no flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds in the project area.

- Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas: There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas in or near the project area.

- Inventoried roadless areas: There are no inventoried roadless areas in the project area.

- Research Natural Areas: There are no Research Natural Areas in this project area.

- Native American areas of traditional cultural importance, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas: 13 Native American tribes have been consulted on this project and none of them have expressed concern to date. An archeological survey and clearance report was completed for this project and no effects to archeological resources or sites are anticipated. (PRD #13).

The project record files, located at the Globe Ranger District, contain further documentation supporting the findings of no extraordinary circumstances.

Public Involvement

This project has been listed in the Tonto National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) since April 2004. On February 18th 2004, a detailed Proposed Action was mailed to seven interested individuals, ten groups, 6 agencies and 13 tribes for a 30-day scoping period. Three comments were received in response to this public scoping.

Findings Required by Other Laws

In addition to meeting Tonto Forest Plan standards and guidelines, this project is also consistent with the following:

- Congressional intent to allow grazing on suitable lands (Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, National Forest Management Act of 1976).
- Forest Service policy on rangeland management (FSM 2202.1, FSM 2203.1).
- Federal regulation (36 CFR 222.2 (c)) which states that National Forest System lands will be allocated for livestock grazing and these allotment management plans will be prepared consistent with land management plans, and the Clean Water Act of 1948, Clean Air Act of 1955, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and 13186 (Conservation of Migratory Birds), and National Historic Preservation Act 1966, as amended.
- Authorization of livestock grazing permits for a ten-year period is required by law (FLPMA Sec. 402 (a)&(b) (3) and 36 CFR 222.3), unless there is pending disposal, or it will be devoted to other uses prior to the end of ten years, or it will be in best interest of sound land management to specify a shorter term.

Implementation Date

This project can be implemented immediately following the decision date. The decision may be implemented during the permittee appeal period, unless the Reviewing Officer grants a stay under 251.91.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

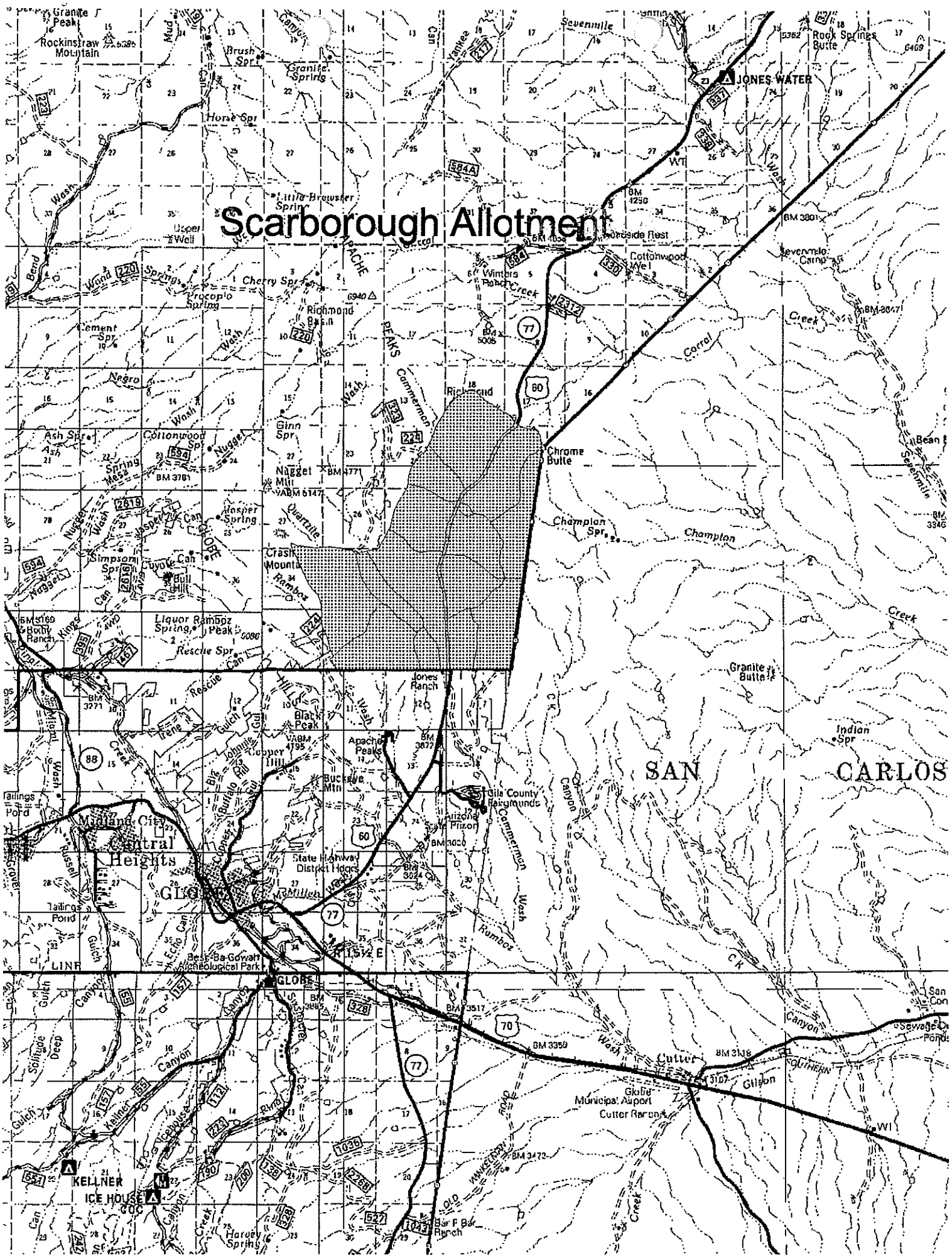
This decision is not subject to administrative appeal under 36 CFR 215. The Scarborough Allotment permittee may appeal the decision under 36 CFR 251. A Notice of Appeal must be consistent with 36 CFR 251.90 and filed simultaneously with Gene Blankenbaker Appeal Deciding Officer and Globe District Ranger, Lee Thornhill, within 45 days from the date of the decision.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning my decision, please contact Ivan L. Warren, Range Specialist for the Globe Ranger District at (928) 402-6200.

Lee W. Thornhill
District Ranger

Sept. 29, 2006
Date


Scarborough Allotment
JONES WATER
Rock Springs Butte
Sevenmile
Horse Spr
Granite Spring
Little Brewster Spring
Upper Well
Cottonwood Wel
Sevenmile Camp
Richmond Basin
Richmond
Cherry Spr
Procopio Spring
Cement Spr
Negro
Ash Spr
Cottonwood Spr
Nugget Mill
Ginn Spr
Chrome Butte
Champion Spr
Champion
Jasper Spring
Simpson Spr
Liquor Ramboz Spring
Rescue Spr
Jones Ranch
Black Peak
Apache Peaks
Buckeye Mtn
Gila County Fairgrounds
Arizona State Prison
Granite Butte
Indian Spr
SAN
CARLOS
Tailings Pond
Miami
Central Heights
Globe
State Highway District Hdqrs
Besh-Ba-Gowah Archeological Park
GLOBE
Cutter
Globe Municipal Airport
Cutter Ranch
KEILNER
ICE HOUSE
Harvey Spring
Bar F Bar Ranch
Old Maverick Road
Sevenmile Wash
Corral Creek
Commerman Wash
Rumboz Ck
Yankee Ck
Pinal Peaks
Apache Trail
Hill Gulch
Johnnie Gulch
Big Buffalo Gulch
Russell Gulch
Deep Gulch
Spitzure Gulch
Kellner Canyon
Icehouse Canyon
Devils Canyon
Gibson
Gutierrez
Sewage Ponds
San Con
LINE
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