

A-1 Mountain Grazing Allotment

Finding of No Significant Impact and DRAFT Decision Notice

USDA Forest Service
Flagstaff Ranger District
Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, AZ

Introduction

The Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest has completed an analysis to reauthorize livestock grazing using a deferred rotation or deferred, rest-rotation management system on 5,085 acres, referred to as the A-1 Mountain Grazing Allotment (A-1 Mountain Allotment). The purpose of this project is to authorize livestock grazing in a manner that maintains and/or moves the area toward Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions, including maintaining and/or improving vegetation and soil conditions and trends on the Allotment.

Livestock grazing within the A-1 Mountain Allotment area has occurred since the time of initial historic settlement around the 1870s, and has been managed by the US Forest Service (Forest Service) since the early 1900s.

Background

This decision will approve the reauthorization of livestock grazing under a Term Grazing Permit on the A-1 Mountain Allotment, on the Flagstaff Ranger District. The project area is located within all or portions of:

- Township 21N, Range 6E, Sections 1-3, 10, 11, and 13-15;
- Township 21N, Range 7E, Section 7; and
- Township 22N, Range 6E, Sections 25 and 34-36 of the Gila and Salt River Meridian.

The project area is flanked to the east by the City of Flagstaff and to the west by the Maxwell Springs Grazing Allotment, and is located less than a mile from the Lowell Observatory, in the Observatory Mesa area. The A-1 Mountain Allotment is approximately 6,448 acres and includes Forest Service managed lands (5,085 acres), City of Flagstaff managed lands (1,313 acres) and privately managed lands (50 acres) (Appendix A, Figure 1).

Desired conditions for the A-1 Mountain Allotment were derived from Forest Plan direction, agency range management policy, shared inter- and intra-agency resource goals, and direction relevant to wildlife, water quality, and cultural resource laws and regulations. The desired conditions for the A-1 Mountain Allotment include maintaining or increasing the abundance of desired native perennial herbaceous vegetation, maintaining and/or improving species richness and overall ground cover, protecting cultural resources, maintaining/improving watershed and soil conditions, and to maintain and construct range improvements necessary for allotment management. These actions will help support a stable and desired plant community, which in turn would support grazing ungulates, wild and domesticated.

There is also a desire to continue to facilitate livestock grazing on National Forest System lands where livestock grazing is managed to maintain or improve range conditions over the long-term.

Existing conditions on the A-1 Mountain Allotment are considered to be meeting or moving toward desired conditions within an acceptable rate (Environmental Assessment, pages 22-28).

Purpose and Need

These actions are being proposed at this time to meet direction set forth in the Rescissions Act of 1995, which directs the Forest Service to establish and adhere to a schedule to complete environmental analyses and decisions on all allotments in order to ensure that livestock grazing is consistent with goals, objectives, standards and guidelines of Forest Land and Resource Management Plans.

There is also a need to enhance allotment management flexibility through the use of an adaptive management strategy. Adaptive management is based on monitoring and involves identification of future management options that may be needed to accelerate or adjust management decisions to meet desired conditions and/or project standards and objectives. Adaptive management allows land managers to address changing and/or uncertain environmental conditions within an allotment much faster than historical management techniques.

There is a need to reduce unneeded structural range improvements. The Coconino National Forest's Forest, Land and Resource Management Plan or Forest Plan (1987, as amended) directs land managers to "[A]nalyze range structural improvements to determine whether they are needed...Reconstruct only those improvements that are needed... [R]emove improvements that are no longer needed" (p. 68)".

There is a need to construct a livestock handling facility to improve allotment management. There may also be a need to add fencing to bisect a pasture in two to improve distribution of livestock throughout the Fort Valley Pasture (EA, p. 10).

Protection and management of heritage resources on National Forest System (NFS) land is mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act, 1966 as amended (NHPA); 36 CFR 800; Forest Service Manual 2360; the American Indian Religious Freedom Act; the Archaeological Resource Protection Act; and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The A-1 Mountain Allotment has a number of sites; one site is within 656 feet (200 meters) of a stock pond and showed signs of disturbance. There is a need to ensure that historic resources are protected.

In addition to the above needs, currently there is a 300-foot segment of fencing along the West and Belle Pastures that is not aligned with the actual boundary. There is a need to ensure that these boundaries are accurate.

The environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of two alternatives to meet this need.

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, comments from the public and our responses, and input from the allotment permittee, I have decided to implement Alternative 2-Proposed Action which includes six major components: authorization, structural range improvements, project-specific resource protection measures, monitoring, an adaptive management strategy, and a drought management strategy.

Authorization

- Permitted livestock numbers will be maintained at a maximum of 498 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) which is the equivalent of 99 head of adult cattle for approximately five months.
- Annual authorized livestock numbers will be based on existing conditions, available water and forage, and predicted forage production for the year. Adjustments to the annual authorized livestock numbers and AUMs (increase or decrease) may occur during the grazing season, based on conditions verified by range inspections. Annual authorized livestock numbers will not exceed permitted numbers and therefore will always be between 0 and 498 AUMs.
- The permitted season of use will be June 1 through October 31. As part of the adaptive management strategy, and depending on Allotment conditions, the grazing periods may vary in length allowing livestock to enter the Allotment as early as May 15 and/or remain on the Allotment until November 15. An extended season of use will only be authorized if it has been determined through range inspections that soil, water and vegetation conditions are suitable. If an extended season of use is authorized, the maximum permitted AUMs of 498 will not be exceeded.
- Grazing Management: Grazing will occur using either a deferred rotation or a deferred-rest rotation management system, which will allow for plant growth and recovery. Having the option to use either the deferred rotation or deferred-rest rotation grazing system will allow the Forest to adjust management depending on monitoring and conditions. Additional grazing management guidelines include:
 - Generally pastures will be grazed only once during the grazing season. A second grazing period of a previously grazed pasture during the grazing season will only be authorized by the Responsible Official when conditions warrant and it has been determined through range inspections that soil, water and vegetation conditions are appropriate, and that utilization guidelines for the pasture will not be exceeded as a result of a second grazing period.
 - In some cases, pasture re-entry may be needed to facilitate livestock movement on the Allotment such as trailing livestock from one pasture to another. This is not the same as a second grazing period. Pasture re-entry for livestock movement purposes will be allowed provided the livestock are actively herded through previously grazed pastures.
- Forage Utilization Guidelines: The term may refer to either a single plant species, a group of species, or the vegetation community as a whole. It is a comparison of the amount of herbage left compared with the amount of herbage produced during the year. A management guideline of conservative use (30 to 40 percent forage utilization) will be employed to maintain or improve range vegetation and long-term soil productivity. Forage utilization guidelines take into account the cumulative effects of wildlife and livestock.
- Seasonal Utilization: Seasonal utilization will be managed to allow for the physiological needs of plants. For the A-1 Mountain Allotment, the Forest will manage for moderate seasonal utilization (up to 50%) in late spring and early summer months when sufficient opportunity exists for plant regrowth. During late summer and fall, seasonal utilization will be managed at the conservative level (30 to 40%) when the potential for plant regrowth is limited.

- Pasture Grazing Periods: Actual grazing period within each pasture will depend on current growing conditions and the need to provide for plant recovery following grazing. The length of the grazing period within each pasture will also be dictated by the seasonal utilization guidelines. When seasonal utilization guidelines are met, livestock are moved to the next pasture.

Structural Range Improvements

- Currently an approximately 300-foot portion of pasture fence is incorrectly located. Re-alignment of a 300-foot segment of pasture fencing between the West and Belle pastures to align with the existing pasture boundary (EA Appendix B, Figure 10).
- Construct approximately 300 feet of fence between the southern boundaries of pastures 008 and 006 (EA Appendix B, Figure 11) to remove the water lane, which is no longer needed.
- Removal of approximately 0.8 miles of fence that is no longer needed for livestock and allotment management along the north and west edges of the 006 Pasture (EA Appendix B, Figure 8). Removing this fence will eliminate the 006 Pasture on the A-1 Mountain Allotment, and make it part of the A-1 Mountain Pasture.
- Currently, there is not a permanent livestock handling facility (corral) on the Allotment. To address this need, we propose to construct an approximately 200-foot x 200-foot (about 40,000 square feet, or less than one-tenth of one percent of the Allotment) permanent corral facility with a portable loading chute to facilitate movement of cattle onto and off the Allotment (Appendix B, Figure 12).
- Through adaptive management monitoring, a new pasture fence approximately 1 mile in length, could be constructed bisecting the Fort Valley Pasture and creating the West Fort Valley Pasture (EA Appendix B, Figure 9).

Drought Management Strategy

Region 3 and Coconino National Forest drought management policies identify numerous adaptive management actions for mitigating grazing effects during drought. The following are examples of management actions that could be used on the A-1 Mountain Allotment during periods of drought:

- Reduce authorized AUMs (livestock numbers). Reductions may be necessary prior to the permitted season of use and/or during the permitted season of use.
- Shorten season of use. Depending on the severity of the drought and authorized AUMs, a reduced grazing season may be necessary.
- Shorten pasture use periods.
- Lack of livestock water, or poor distribution of livestock water, may result in reduced pasture/allotment use periods.
- Pastures will only be grazed once during the same grazing season and this may ultimately result in an early exit from the A-1 Mountain Allotment.
- Pastures may need complete rest from livestock use. Pasture resting periods will depend on the severity of the drought. Livestock use of planned rested pastures due to drought will not be authorized.

- Reduce forage utilization and/or seasonal utilization levels. Depending on the severity of the drought and the authorized AUMs, reduced forage utilization and/or seasonal utilization levels will likely result in shortened pasture use periods and may ultimately result in an early exit from the Allotment.

The Responsible Official in consultation with the range specialist and the permittee will make any adaptive management actions necessary due to drought conditions.

Adaptive Management

Under Alternative 2- Proposed Action, the adaptive management strategy has been modified to adjust the timing, intensity, duration and frequency of livestock grazing in response to changing ecological conditions, climatic conditions, and management activities. Specifically, the following modifications will be implemented:

- Current management allows the grazing season to be shortened, but does not allow it to be extended or shifted. Under Alternative 2, the grazing season may be shorted, extended or shifted.
- Current management does not allow for both the deferred and/or deferred-rest rotation management, whereas Alternative 2 does.
- Current management does not include new structural range improvements as part of the adaptive management strategy, Alternative 2- Proposed Action does.

Adaptive management uses monitoring and specialist expertise to determine if management activities need to be adjusted. If monitoring indicates that changes are needed, management will be modified in cooperation with the permittee and the changes will be implemented through the Annual Operating Instructions (AOIs).

Monitoring

We plan to use implementation monitoring and effectiveness monitoring for monitoring resource conditions and livestock management in the A-I Mountain Allotment, in accordance with the Interagency Technical References, Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Management Training Guide, and the Region 3 Allotment Analysis Handbook. Monitoring frequency varies by each activity and is a collaborative effort by Forest Service personnel, the grazing permittee, and cooperating agencies. See EA for detailed description.

Resource Protection Measures

The following resource protection measures will apply to the proposed action and its connected actions, including the adaptive management strategy.

Range Management

- During drought conditions and in periods of drought recovery, all or some of the following management activities may be used: adjust grazing timing, intensity, frequency, numbers, and the management system as necessary to protect the range vegetation resource; implement the Drought Management Strategy.
- Throughout each grazing season, District Range staff will monitor activities on the Allotment to ensure compliance with permit terms and conditions, the Allotment Management Plan (AMP), and the AOIs.

- Salt or mineral supplement locations will be rotated annually and avoid areas where livestock concentrations could cause excessive vegetation trampling, soil loss, or disturbance to sensitive species or habitats. Salt and mineral supplements should not be placed closer than ¼ mile from a water source.
- Water will be left in troughs when cattle leave the pastures per forest-wide Forest Plan direction (p. 68).
- At least 60 days prior to the start of maintenance of earthen stock ponds, the permittee will be required to contact the District so biological and heritage surveys can be completed, if needed, and resource protection measures for the protection of aquatic species could be implemented.
- Use grazing BMPs in keeping with Arizona Administrative Code R18-9-501. Grazing management and mitigation practices, which could be considered for these allotments, are described in the National Management Measures to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution from Agriculture published by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2003. You can download this publication by visiting: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/agmm/index.html>.
- Spread of potential and existing noxious or invasive weeds by heavy equipment used in the maintenance or construction of structural range improvements will be prevented by cleaning the heavy equipment before entering the area and by avoiding weed infestations during travel. Noxious or invasive weed populations that may occur in areas of proposed structural improvements will be identified and treated.
- Incorporate BMPs for noxious or invasive weeds as listed in Appendix B of the 2005 Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds into all management actions.

Wildlife, Fisheries and Rare Plants

- Prevention measures from the State of Arizona Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan (Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, 2011) will be required to avoid spreading aquatic invasive nuisance species and pathogens during pond/tank cleaning activities.
- Any construction of new or replacement fencing will be done in accordance with specifications developed to facilitate wildlife passage.
- Survey areas containing proposed structural improvements before construction for noxious or invasive weeds before construction of improvement. Identify populations and mitigate impacts of management actions if needed.
- All open storage tanks and drinkers will be constructed with entry and escape ramps for wildlife. These ramps will be built to the current Bat Conservation International Specifications.

Soil and Watershed Resources

- Work on all projects (earthen stock ponds, pipelines, trick tanks, fences, power line, roads, etc.) may only be conducted when soils are dry enough to support heavy equipment without causing class two or higher soil disturbance as defined in the Soil Disturbance Field Guide (USDA, 2009).

Cultural and Historic Resources

- New ground disturbing activities planned for implementation within two years of the signing of this EA and which are identified on the ground have been surveyed prior to signing of this EA. These locations will be cleared prior to authorizing grazing on the A-1 Mountain Allotment as per Section 93.2 of the Region 3 Issuance Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Grazing Permit Administration Handbook, Chapter 90, and following the First Amended USDA, Forest Service, Region 3 Programmatic Agreement Regarding Cultural Property Protection and Responsibilities, dated Approved September 27, 2007.
- Before initiating any of the ground disturbing activities that are part of this project, the District Archaeologist will be notified to ensure the proposed activities have cultural resource clearance. Any future ground disturbing activities must receive archaeological clearance prior to implementation.
- Located sites will be marked for avoidance and will be avoided during construction. If any new sites are discovered during construction activities, they are to be reported to the district or forest archeologist and ground-disturbing work halted.
- To avoid adverse effects to an existing historic site, approximately 100-feet to 150-feet of fencing will be constructed around the site.
- Management practices that tend to concentrate livestock, such as placement of salt, construction of fences, etc., will be located away from known cultural resources.

My decision will allow livestock grazing to continue under a deferred rotational grazing system or a deferred-rest rotation management system, and includes conservative forage utilization guidelines.

When compared to the other alternatives this alternative will best meet the purpose and need to reauthorize livestock grazing in a manner that (1) is consistent with applicable laws, orders, standards, practices, and guidance, including the Forest Plan, and (2) protects environmental resources to the greatest extent practicable. The selected alternative will formally apply an adaptive management strategy by identifying specific scenarios and possible management responses. This decision facilitates proactive adaptive management procedures to protect resources and thus will move the allotment toward greater consistency with applicable standards and guidelines. The selected alternative includes a number of resource protection measures that will minimize Forest resource impacts to the extent practicable by limiting the timing, intensity, or location of activities, and identifying site-specific adaptive management scenarios. My decision is based on consideration of the best available science.

Alternative 2 was chosen because it addresses important resource issues and represents the best balance of social, economic, and environmental interests as identified through laws and regulations for livestock management and resource protection. For example, Alternative 2 includes the following advantages not included in the other alternative:

- Maintain or improve vegetation cover and satisfactory soil conditions over the long-term
- This alternative will involve additional costs compared to the No Action, but will meet Forest Plan guidance to continue contributions to the economic and social well-being of people by providing opportunities for economic diversity and promoting stability for communities that depend on range resources for their livelihood

- This alternative will provide increased flexibility to address periods of severe or frequent drought resulting from climate change, and will result in a more sustainable livestock grazing operation over the length of the term grazing permit.
- This alternative will remove 0.8 miles of fence no longer needed for wildlife management, which will help reduce potential entanglement hazards to wildlife.
- This alternative will protect an existing historical site from potential impacts

This alternative meets requirements under the Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Chapter 90 (Grazing Permit Administration; Rangeland Management Decision Making).

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered one other alternative in depth. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 6 -19.

Alternative 1- No Action

No action in livestock management planning is synonymous with no authorized livestock grazing. This would mean that livestock grazing would no longer be authorized within the A-1 Mountain Allotment. Therefore, existing structural range improvements currently maintained as part of the permit would no longer be maintained, nor would any new range improvements be constructed.

Alternative 1-No Action does not reauthorize cattle grazing and therefore does not meet the purpose and need. Alternative 1 would result in decreased water sources for wildlife, and would both affect wildlife populations and result in concentration of wildlife near limited watering sources, which would limit improvement potential for vegetative diversity and density.

Public Involvement and Scoping

On December 21, 2015, we distributed a scoping letter providing information on the proposed action. Mailings included federal; state; and local agencies including Coconino County, the City of Flagstaff, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), Arizona State Lands Department, and neighboring US Fish and Wildlife Service offices; affected organizations and individuals; and tribes. We asked for responses that include comments and concerns regarding the proposed action. We also sent scoping letters to local government agencies.

A proposal to analyze the re-authorization of livestock grazing on the A-1 Mountain Allotment was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions beginning January 1 2016, where it has appeared in each subsequent issue. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a public comment period starting October 2, 2016.

In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency initiated consultation for the A- 1 Mountain Project with representatives of The Hopi Tribe and will continue discussions according to the Memorandum of Understanding as the project progresses. We received a letter of support from the Hopi for this project, with stipulations for cultural resource protection and discovery. Resource protection measures have been developed specifically to address these concerns for existing and new discoveries if any are made.

We also contacted representatives of The Hualapai Tribe, The Navajo Nation, Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, Yavapai-Apache Nation, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Tonto Apache Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, The Havasupai Tribe, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, and Pueblo of Acoma.

Using the comments from the public and other agencies, the interdisciplinary team identified one major issue regarding the effects of the proposed action. During the public scoping period, we received comments to “investigate removing Section 7 from the A-1 Mountain Allotment Boundary” (see EA pages 17-19). To address these concerns, the Forest Service developed a fourth alternative, Removal of South Flag Pasture. This alternative was considered, but eliminated from detailed study for reasons identified on pages 17-19 of the EA and 97-98 in Appendix A.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The following is a summary of the project analysis to determine significance, as defined by Forest Service Handbook 1909.15_05. “Significant” as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity of the expected project effects.

Context means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts (i.e. local regional, worldwide), and over short and long time frames. For site-specific actions, significance usually depends upon the effects in the local rather than in the world as a whole. This project is limited in scope and duration. The project was designed to minimize environmental effects through

Intensity refers to the severity of the expected project impacts and is defined by the 10 points below.

Context

I have determined that the selected alternative is limited in context. The Forest is 1.8 million acres. The activities described in the selected alternative would be confined to approximately 5,085 acres of a single allotment on the Forest, or a little less than 0.5 percent of the Forest’s land base. Furthermore, the portion of the Forest where this allotment occurs includes no natural water or wetland features, and few wildlife concerns. The effects from this project will primarily be localized to the A-1 Mountain Allotment.

Intensity

My decision to reauthorize grazing in the A- 1 Mountain Allotment is a site-specific action that by itself does not make international, national, regional or statewide decisions. The scope of the selected alternative is specific to the allotment area. The following discussion is organized around the ten intensity factors described in the NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) as they pertain to the context of the A-1 Mountain Allotment under the selected alternative.

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on the balance the effects will be beneficial.

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the allotment activities on various resources are disclosed and discussed in the Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives section of the EA (pages 48- 94) and the associated project record.

Grazing has occurred on this allotment since around the late 1800s, and this decision authorizes livestock grazing with lower AUMs and utilization levels compared to historical levels. This decision is based on monitoring and adaptive management practices that have illustrated the ability to manage grazing at sustainable levels. With proper management, livestock grazing will not result in a decline in soil conditions, forage, wildlife or other resources on the allotment. Although there are some potential effects to resources as described in the EA (pages 48- 94), these

effects are limited based on the resource protection measures identified as part of the proposal, and are not expected to be significant.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The selected alternative is not expected to affect public health and safety because no long-term public safety problems are anticipated from implementing the selected alternative. No broad public health or safety issues were raised during the scoping or analysis processes, and no unusual actions are proposed that might lead to issues within the project boundary.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The selected alternative will not cause any loss or destruction of historic resources, cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas. There are no designated park lands or prime farmlands in the A-1 Mountain Allotment. Historic and cultural resources are numerous on the Forest and present within the allotment area, and this decision will result in no adverse effects to historic and cultural resources identified on the allotment (pages 90-92 of EA). The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the Forest's assessment (page 91 of EA). There are no mapped wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas on the allotment (page 39 of EA). The selected alternative will not cause effects to the unique characteristics of the area.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of implementing this proposal on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Expected environmental effects were analyzed and disclosed in the Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives section of the EA (pages 48- 94). This analysis represents the judgment and expertise of natural resource management professionals. Though some members of the public are opposed to livestock grazing on public lands, and others view the Forest Service's management of that use as too restrictive, this action is not highly controversial within the scientific context of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Furthermore, there is little controversy on this specific proposal as to the effects on the quality of the human environment. Research regarding grazing in the southwest and on the Forest has repeatedly shown that incorporating appropriate management practices while grazing livestock can minimize or avoid impacts to other resources including, but not limited to, water quality, wildlife, soils and cultural resources.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects of the selected alternative on the human environment are not highly uncertain, nor do they involve unique or unknown risks. The effects of livestock grazing are well known. Furthermore, current livestock AUMs and utilization levels are lower than in the previous century, thus the effects of grazing are expected to be well within the range of impacts observed in the past. The effects described in the EA (pages 48-94) represent the judgment of experienced natural resource management professionals using the best available scientific and commercial information.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The selected alternative is not precedent-setting, livestock grazing is a routine activity and has occurred on this allotment for over 100 years and does not represent a precedent for land use. Incorporation of the principles of adaptive management is not new, but this decision provides for a clearer, scenario-based management program for addressing climate variability and other potential resource conditions on the allotment. This decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future actions not authorized by this decision will be evaluated through the NEPA process with opportunities for public comment and administrative review.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The cumulative impacts to different resource areas are discussed and disclosed in the Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives section of the EA (pages 48- 94). None of the effects are determined to be cumulatively significant. This decision will allow for a more effective, efficient and beneficial management of the allotment. While this decision may include impacts to some resources, these impacts are not expected to result in a cumulatively significant impact due to the resource protection measures and the approved adaptive management framework (pages 11 and 14).

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.

Historic and prehistoric resources are numerous on the Coconino National Forest and occur within the allotment area, but known cultural resource concerns from grazing in the A-1 Mountain Allotment are limited. The selected alternative will not have an adverse effect on significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. The Arizona State Historical Preservation Office concurred with the Forest's assessment that the selected alternative will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This concurrence is documented in the project record.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

The Flagstaff Ranger District's wildlife specialist investigated the potential effects of the selected alternative to endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species and proposed and designated habitat (page 57-78).

Suitable habitat for the Mexican spotted owl exists on the A-1 Mountain Allotment. No additional endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species or proposed or designated habitat occurs on the allotment (page 29-30). This decision is not expected to result in substantial impacts to any endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species or proposed or designated critical habitat (pages 57 and 77).

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The selected alternative is consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local laws for protecting the environment. The selected alternative fully complies with all standards and guidelines in the

Forest Plan as documented in the project record. More information on relevant laws and regulations are discussed in the "Required by Other Laws and Regulations" section of this notice.

Conclusion

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA and specialist reports, I have determined that Alternative 2-Proposed Action will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

The planning and decision making process for this EA was conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies and plans. This section briefly describes my findings regarding the legal requirements most relevant to this decision.

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

This decision to reauthorize livestock grazing on the A-1 Mountain Allotment is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives listed on pages 21- 26 and 68-69. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for:

- Emphasizing high quality range forage and improvements (pg. 23).
- Managing allotments at the C through D level of Management Intensity in existing allotment management plans (AMP) (pg. 66-2).
- Analyzing range structural improvements to determine whether they are needed and only reconstruct only those that are needed. Remove any improvements no longer needed (pg. 68).
- On open storage tanks or drinkers provide entry and escape ramps for wildlife (pg. 69).
- Improve livestock handling and water facilities for optimum production while maintaining cost-effective management systems and techniques. Construct structural range improvements necessary to implement and maintain range resource management level identified for the Management Area (pg. 69).

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

If golden eagle nests are identified in the allotment area, seasonal restrictions on structural range improvements will be implemented, where applicable, according to current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines to comply with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Alternative 2 will not result in take of golden eagles as defined under this Act.

The Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 USC 1531 et seq.) requires that any action authorized by a Federal agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of a threatened or endangered species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of such species. The A-1 Mountain Allotment includes habitat for one federally listed species, the Mexican spotted owl. Based on this information, Section 7 an informal consultation with USFWS was conducted. We received a letter of concurrence on December 27, 2016 from USFWS concurring with our determination that the selected alternative "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the Mexican spotted owl. No

additional endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species or proposed and designated habitat occurs on the A-1 Mountain Allotment.

Clean Air Act

The selected alternative is consistent with the Clean Air Act because it is not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental effects related to air quality. Any air quality impacts as a result of implementing this decision are not expected to exceed the Federal and State ambient air quality standards because impacts will be minimal, local and will not cause regional changes to air quality.

Executive Order 13186

Executive Order 13186 (Migratory Birds) requires that an analysis be made of the effects of Forest Service actions on Bird Species of Concern listed by Partners in Flight (PIF), important bird areas (IBA) identified by PIF, and important over-wintering areas. The wildlife specialist analyzed the effects of allotment activities on migratory bird species and found that the selected alternative could potentially result in unintentional take of individuals, but would not lead to a decline in migratory bird populations.

Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act

Where consistent with other multiple use goals and objectives, the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 declares a Congressional intent to allow grazing on suitable lands. All areas approved for grazing in this decision are identified as suitable lands under the Forest Plan (1987).

National Forest Management Act

The selected alternative complies with the National Forest Management Act (1976), 36 CFR 219 Regulations, and the Forest Plan, as amended. The EA incorporates all applicable forest-wide standards and guidelines and management area direction as they apply to the allotment area. This EA is also in compliance with Forest Plan, as amended, goals and objectives. All required interagency review and coordination has been accomplished.

Archeological Resources Protection Act; American Indian Religious Freedom Act; Executive Order 11593 (Cultural Resources), and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to consider the potential effects of an agency decision on historic, architectural, or archaeological resources that are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and to afford the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment. Potential impacts to archaeological and historic resources have been evaluated in compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. Based on the resource protection measures the selected alternative will have no adverse effect on cultural properties and values. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted and concurred with the determination of no adverse effect on August 29, 2016. In addition, implementation of the selected alternative will not affect tribal access to Federal lands within the allotment area.

The Rescissions Act of 1995

The Rescissions Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-19) Section 504(a) requires National Forests to develop a schedule by which they would complete NEPA analyses on allotments. Completing a NEPA analysis and decision that will ensure that livestock grazing is consistent with goals, objectives, standards and guidelines of the Coconino National Forest's Forest, Land and Resource Management Plan will result in compliance with the Rescissions Act of 1995.

Administrative Review and Objection Rights

The EA and draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impacts (DN/FONSI) were subject to review and objection (Objection Process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. No objections were received. Pursuant 36 CFR 218.12(c)(2)), a decision notice may be approved (signed) on the fifth business day following the end of the objection filing period if there is no objection filed. The objection period started on February 22, 2017 and lasted for 45 days ending on April 10th, 2017.

Contact Person

Additional information concerning the A-1 Mountain Grazing Allotment Project, contact Jessica Richardson, NEPA Coordinator at 928-527-8219, or via email at jessicalrichardson@fs.fed.us during normal business hours.

Responsible Official's Decision

Through my signature, I am making the decision to implement Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, as described in the EA for the A-1 Mountain Grazing Allotment Project and summarized in this Decision Notice.

Debra Mollet

Debra Mollet

Deputy District Ranger
Flagstaff Ranger District
Coconino National Forest

6/6/2017

Date

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Appendix A

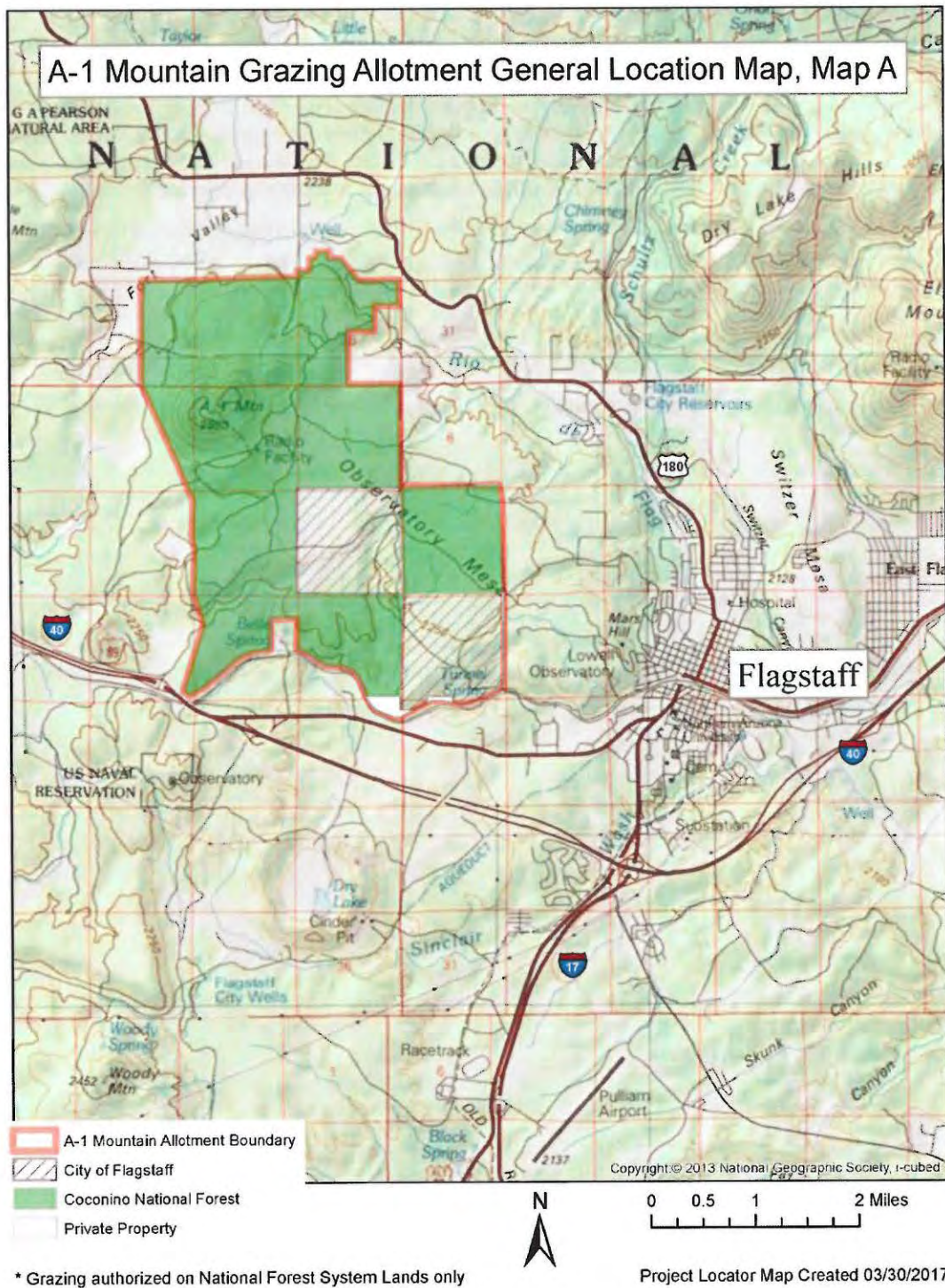


Figure 1. A-1 Mountain Allotment location map.