

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ARIZONA STATE OFFICE

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Instruction Memorandum No. AZ-94- 018
Expires: 09/30/95

To: District Managers
From: State Director
Subject: Ephemeral Grazing Authorizations

Ephemeral vegetation follows a history of high and low production years. Some annual plants can dominate a range site for a period of time, while sparse perennial vegetation dominates the remainder of the year. We must manage the complex mosaic of desert vegetation so that the common species are not managed at the expense of the rare and the annuals are not managed at the expense of perennials. In these ecosystems we should be responsive to take advantage of the times of plenty, while ensuring no resource damage is done. —

Applicants for ephemeral grazing commonly operate on short time frames. The vegetation starts growth and completes phenological stages rapidly. The operators desire to harvest the vegetation when it is green, growing and succulent. Often applicants seek approval before they have the livestock. All offices should strive to be responsive to these applications, however, our actions cannot jeopardize the basic resources entrusted to our management.

Each District has administered ephemeral use authorizations somewhat differently. Documentation leading to our authorizations has been inadequate or inconsistent. There are no consistent criteria to determine if, when, or how livestock use of ephemerals can be made. Our objective is to ensure adequate annual vegetation exists for resource needs at the beginning and end of authorization periods while providing forage for livestock use.

This directive provides guidance for the authorization of livestock grazing on grazing allotments designated as ephemeral or for the authorization of ephemeral grazing use above the grazing preference on allotments managed as perennial (perennial/ephemeral). It will take into consideration other constraints such as those in land use plans or Fish and Wildlife Service biological opinions, or where coordination is needed with Arizona State Trust lands pertaining to livestock grazing leases or special land permits.

Upon receiving an application from a permittee for ephemeral grazing use the following policy will be used. Prior to authorizing ephemeral use an allotment inspection will be made.

The authorized officer will ensure that the following criteria have been met. This is our interpretation of the special rule.

1. Presence of ephemeral vegetation in draws, washes, and under shrubs.
2. Sufficient surface and subsurface soil moisture for continued plant growth exists.
3. Ephemeral forage has grown to useable levels by the time grazing begins.
4. Enough serviceable waters to provide good grazing distribution on the allotment for the number of livestock to be authorized.
5. All range improvements and livestock facilities needed for proper administration of authorized grazing use are properly maintained.
6. The level of grazing use allows for sufficient annual vegetation to remain on site to satisfy other resource concerns. i.e. watershed, wildlife, wild horses and burros.

Salt and minerals may be provided. However, maintenance feeding of livestock on ephemeral rangeland is prohibited. The authorization of ephemeral grazing use must be based on professional judgement tempered by historical data, including past authorizations, ecological site descriptions, clipping studies and experience. Other things to consider are climate (amount of precipitation received and forecast for additional precipitation), and other specific resource concerns. (e.g.: Desert bighorn sheep or desert tortoise habitats, wilderness and/or sensitive watershed concerns.

On grazing allotments where no resource conflicts have been identified, livestock grazing authorizations can be given for a maximum period of 60 days per authorization. If there are known resource conflicts with livestock grazing (such as habitat for special status species) ephemeral authorizations will be limited to a maximum of 30 days per authorization. Because the Sonoran desert tortoise generally remains in burrows until the end of March, authorizations can be given for 60 days or until March 31. After April 1, authorizations will be limited to a maximum of 30 days, in categories I and II desert tortoise habitat. Initial grazing applications will not be authorized for less than 15 days.

An important part of the ephemeral evaluation and authorization processes is ensuring proper documentation leading up to recommendations for an authorization.

Documentation must be uniform and consistent throughout the state. Attachment 1 is the worksheet to be used to document allotment inspections and rationale for recommendations identified in this instruction memorandum. It is to be completed for each initial application and for each extension that may be requested.

Minimum monitoring is a series of photographs before authorization and at the end of each authorization period. Checklists and labelled photographs are to be kept in the monitoring files.


Lester K. Rosenkrance

Attachment
Ehpemeral Worksheet (1 p.)

EPHEMERAL INSPECTION AND EVALUATION WORKSHEET

ALLOTMENT NAME AND NUMBER: _____ DATE: _____

INITIAL APPLICATION? _____ EXTENTION? _____

CLASS OF LIVESTOCK: _____ PROPOSED USE PERIOD: _____

WATER FACILITIES: _____

OTHER RANGE IMPROVEMENTS: _____

VEGETATION:

PERENNIALS: WHITE BURSAGE _____ PALO VERDE _____ RANGE RATANY _____
GLOBEMALLOW _____ BIG GALLETATA _____ 3-AWN SPECIES _____ TOBOSA _____
MESQUITE _____ IRONWOOD _____ (OTHER) _____

(GROWTH STAGE) DORMANT _____
GREEN-UP _____

GRAMA _____ ANNUALS: DESERT INDIAN WHEAT _____ FILAREE _____ SIX WEEKS
SCHISMUS _____ RED BROME _____ CHEATGRASS _____ ANNUAL FESCUE _____
(OTHER) _____

(GROWTH STAGE) CURED _____
GREEN-UP _____
HEIGHT _____

COMPOSITION: GRASSES ONLY _____ GRASSES AND FORB MIXTURE _____
AREA WIDE _____ DRAINAGE CHANNEL ONLY _____
PROTECTED AREAS ONLY _____ OTHER _____

SOIL MOISTURE:

DEPTH _____
POTENTIAL FOR CONTINUED PLANT GROWTH? YES _____ NO _____
IF YES, ESTIMATE HOW LONG _____

RESOURCE CONCERNS/OBSERVATIONS: (EG. DESERT TORTOISE, BIGHORN, RECREATION)

CARRYING CAPACITY ESTIMATE: _____

RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

SIGNATURE(S): _____