

DECISION NOTICE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Pertaining to the Range Allotment Management Plan
Bar T Bar Allotment
Blue Ridge Ranger District
COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

The Bar T Bar Allotment is located on the Blue Ridge Ranger District and occupies nearly two thirds of that land base. The last Bar T Bar Allotment Management Plan (AMP) expired in 1981 and has not been updated. The lack of a current plan is not in compliance with Resource Planning Act (RPA) direction or with the Forest Plan.

The purpose for this AMP is to comply with RPA and Plan direction as well as implement a series of projects and a livestock management system that will bring the allotment into compliance with Forest Plan and RPA direction.

Several changes have taken place since the expirations of the last AMP. In 1987, a new permit was issued which combined seven allotment into one, to be known as the Bar T Bar. The permit allows for a total of 16,050 AM's (animal months) with no on-off dates and capacity set for the entire allotment. This was done to improve the efficiency of administration and allow the use of mixed classes of livestock within the new terms of the permit.

Elk numbers within the allotment have more than tripled in the last ten years, according to the 1987 Arizona Game and Fish Department Annual Report. Elk have reached a significant population that must be managed along with other ungulates grazing within the National Forest. In the absence of such management, elk graze pastures prior to livestock entry. Livestock enter the allotment on these somewhat heavily grazed pastures. Once livestock are removed, elk return to the area, attracted by the new growth of recovering plants. This can result in severe overgrazing which will eventually result in mortality of forage plants.

There is a need to update livestock management on the Bar T Bar allotment to ensure proper utilization of forage plants, manage wildlife and livestock in a complementary manner, and provide sustained-yield management of rangelands.

The practical alternatives available to the Forest Service for resolving the situation are:

BLE I

Evaluation Criteria	Alt. 1	Alt 2.	Alt. 3
Riparian conflicts	Riparian conflicts would continue/shoreline vegetation would continue to decline. Age class distribution and species composition of riparian obligate spp. will continue to decline.	Some riparian conflicts would be reduced due to pasture division & reduced length of livestock impact. Estimated 10 acres of riparian and shoreline improved.	Riparian conflicts would be reduced. Shoreline veg. is expected to improve, age class distribution & spp composition should improve. Estimate 150 acres of riparian and shoreline improved.
Watershed-soil conditions	Effective ground cover will continue to decline; soil erosion is expected to continue. Zero acres improved.	Effective ground cover will continue to decline, soil erosion to continue but at a slower rate. Estimated 200 acres improved	Effective ground cover is expected to improve; soil erosion will decrease. Estimated 10,000 acres improved.
Range condition, plant vigor & availability	Continue to decline, plants would become "wolfy" & gradually reduce forage availability. Some plants would be overgrazed and some ungrazed. Range condition is expected to decline.	Some improvement in range condition is expected. Plant vigor and forage availability would be slightly increased but at a much slower rate. Expected acres of improvement in next 5 yrs. would be 200 acres.	Plant vigor should improve as utilization approaches desired levels. Wolfy plants would be reduced & forage availability would improve for all ungulates. Expected acres of improvement in next 5 yrs. would be 1500 acres.
Wildlife-livestock impacts	Elk-livestock conflicts would continue for critical spring and fall forage. Elk would continue to use rested or deferred pastures.	Elk-livestock conflicts would continue for spring & fall forage. Elk will continue to use rested or deferred pastures	Elk-livestock conflicts should be reduced. Pastures should be void of grazing ungulates during scheduled rest or deferred periods.

TABLE I continued....

Evaluation Criteria	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3
Permittee mgmt. & income	No problem for permittee to manage. Pastures remain large and hard to gather, income would decline as animal performance and range condition decline. This is the least favorable from the permittees perspective.	Similar to Alt. 1 but pastures would be smaller and easier to gather. Range condition and animal performance would continue to decline. This is not a favorable alternative to the permittee.	No problem for permittee to manage. Pastures would be smaller & easier to gather. Range condition & individual animal performance is expected to improve. This is the most favorable alternative to the permittee.
Private land conflicts	Private land conflict would continue to be a problem.	Duration of livestock impacts adjacent to prvt. lands would be slightly reduced.	Private land conflicts would be reduced due to reduced duration of lvstk. impacts use of attractants removal of bulls from affected pastures.

It is my decision to adopt Alternative #3. This alternative should result in improved riparian and wetland conditions, improved wildlife habitat, reduced conflicts with livestock, elk and private land owners, and improved watershed and soil conditions. Alternative #3 should provide for improved animal performance, plant vigor and forage availability. Permittee income should increase and livestock management should reduce conflicts with private land owners. Alternative #3 provides management with the best opportunity to monitor potential effects of livestock grazing on elk and antelope habitat, and make any needed management changes.

Alternatives 1 & 2 do not meet the evaluation criteria for management of the Bar T Bar allotment as well as Alternative #3. Refer to Table I for Alternative comparison.

Alternative 1 - This alternative is identified as the "no action" alternative. Overall management on the allotment would continue as a rest-rotation grazing system with long rest periods (in excess of 12 months in each pasture). No new range improvements would be constructed. The allotment would continue to decline in cool season forage. Elk-livestock conflicts would remain unresolved.

Alternative 2 - This alternative would require new range improvements, including fence construction for pasture division to reduce the size of each pasture. Management would continue as a rest-rotation grazing system. Elk-livestock conflicts would be slightly reduced but would remain unresolved.

Alternative 3 - This alternative would require new range improvements, including fence construction for pasture division, reducing the size of each pasture. Grazing management would change from a rest-rotation grazing system to a best pasture grazing system. Best pasture grazing would involve rest-rotation management but would not fix pasture rotations over the next five years. Range inspections would be utilized to direct pasture use based on current resource conditions and desired resource objectives. Extensive monitoring of elk and antelope activities would be implemented to gain understanding of habitat requirements and livestock interactions.

Each of the alternatives were evaluated using the following Evaluation Criteria:

1. Riparian management

-Improve age class distribution and density of riparian obligate species. Monitor by acres of improved riparian/wetland.

2. Wildlife management

-Identify adequate cover requirements of antelope fawning areas. Maintain or improve adequate habitat after livestock grazing. Monitor by acres of habitat improved/sustained.

3. Watershed/soil condition

-Improve effective ground cover. Monitor by acres of effective ground cover improved/sustained.

4. Range condition

-Improve vigor and availability of forage plants; increase diversity of plants and animals; reduce oxidized plant material; reduce pedestalled plants. Monitor by acres of range condition that meets LMP standards and guidelines; acres moving toward LMP standards and guidelines.

5. Livestock management

-Influence elk movements by livestock impacts. Monitor by percent of elk herd influenced by grazing (Arizona Game and Fish Dept. to do aerial surveys), and ocular estimates.

6. Permittee management/income

-Provide the opportunity for permittee income to increase through improved animal performance.

7. Private land/recreation conflicts

-Reduce livestock impacts on private lands within the subdivisions and recreation sites around Long Lake. Monitor by amount and time of grazing adjacent to subdivisions and recreation areas.

In the early analysis stage, other potential issues were identified but were not effected by a change in range management and dropped from consideration. Those issues include:

Feral hogs which reside within the allotment are creating some environmental damage to the area around Jacks Canyon.

Road access during wet weather conditions is creating resource damage to Forest Service system roads. Much of this damage is due to hunter access during hunting season and will be managed through the RATM (Road Access Travel Mgmt.) Plan.

Another issue identified in the scoping stage was the potential for elk populations to respond to the improved range condition. If populations expand as seen over the past ten years, the population would far exceed the carrying capacity of the habitat. The 1987 Arizona Game and Fish Dept. Strategic Plan has indicated that elk habitat capability will be increased 10% over the next ten years state-wide. This area should remain stocked at current levels in order to realize a change in range condition and influence of elk movement by livestock impacts. This requires extensive monitoring of

elk populations and use patterns, as addressed in the Bar T Bar AMP.

Table I summarizes the environmental effects based on the evaluation criteria.

Plant vigor and availability improvement objectives would not be met in Alt. 1 & 2. Alternative 3 best achieves these objectives.


The permittee can easily manage the grazing system under any alternative. Considering animal husbandry practices would be constant between alternatives, Alt.1 would not show any improvement in animal performance. However, Alternatives #2 & #3 would improve the efficiency of gathering the allotment and improve the ease of operation. Alternative #3 would maximize increased income in terms of individual animal performance.

Riparian conflicts can be resolved by Alternative #3. Alternatives #1 & #2 do not meet riparian objectives. Alternative #3 would reduce conflicts with livestock and private land owners, Alternatives 1 & 2 do not meet these objectives.

The alternatives were developed using an ID Team approach along with public participation. Refer to Table II (attached) for a complete listing of persons involved in the development of this AMP.

I have determined, based on the environmental analysis, that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination was made considering the following factors: (a) the AMP will allow utilization of forage without damaging other resources; (b) conditions for future wildlife and range habitats will be improved; (c) there are no irreversible or irretrievable resources commitments; (d) there are no apparent adverse cumulative or secondary effects; (e) the physical and biological effects are limited to the area of the range allotment; (f) no known threatened or endangered plants or animals would be adversely affected by the proposed actions.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 211.18.



NEIL PAULSON
Forest Supervisor
Coconino National Forest



Date

TABLE II. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Interdisciplinary Team members for the Bar T Bar Allotment Management plan include:

Dan Derrick - Blue Ridge R.D. Timber Staff
DeAnn Zwright - Blue Ridge R.D. Silviculture Staff
Jim Bedlion - Blue Ridge R.D. Fire and Recreation Staff
Vernon Ely - Blue Ridge R.D. Assistant FMO
Janette Kaiser - Blue Ridge R.D. Range Staff
Buck Wickham - Blue Ridge R.D. Sup. Forestry Tech.
Paul Boucher - Wildlife, Blue Ridge

Consultants include:

Gary Bell - Coconino SO Fisheries
Greg Goodwin - Coconino SO Wildlife Staff
Jerry Mundell - Coconino SO Range Staff
Bob Kenworthy - Coconino SO Watershed
George Robertson - Coconino SO Soils
Kath Farr - Coconino SO LMP

Consultation with others include:

Two public meetings were held to solicit public involvement in the formulation of issues, concerns and opportunities as well as goals and objectives for the Bar T Bar AMP. Persons contacted in the scoping phase include the following:

George G. Shoemaker - Bar T Bar
Charles L. Phillips - Bar T Bar
Bob and Judy Prossor - Bar T Bar
Bruce Gordon - Soil Conservation Service Range Conservationist
Gary Hase, Jr. - Arizona State Land Dept. Range Conservationist
John Goodwin - Arizona Game and Fish Biologist
Marc Peterson - Arizona Game and Fish Wildlife Manager
Mike Cupell - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) Board of Directors
George Kaminski - RMEF Southwest Field Director
Robert Button - RMEF Arizona State Chairman
Ace Peterson - Coconino Sportsman & Az. Wildlife Federation
Betty Robinson - Clear Creek Pines Homeowners Assoc.
Virginia Zaballa - Clear Creek Pines Units 8 & 9
Dawson Henderson - Plateau Group Sierra Club
Andy Lorenzi - Nature Conservancy
Dr. Paul Krausman - Wildlife Society, Az. Chapter
Eugene McFarland - Northern Az. Audubon Society

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Coconino
National
Forest

Blue Ridge
Ranger
District

HC31, Box 300
Happy Jack, AZ
86641

Reply to: 1950/2230

Date: October 26, 1987

Subject: Scoping Meeting, Bar T Bar Allotment

To: Files

This letter documents the proceedings at the October 22, 1987 scoping meeting held at the Flagstaff Supervisors Office. In attendance were the following:

Bob Kenworthy, Hydrologist, Coconino NF
George Robertson, Soil Scientist, Coconino NF
Katherine Farr, Planner, Coconino NF
George G. Shoemaker, Bar T Bar Ranch
Charles R. Phillips, Bar T Bar Ranch
Judy and Bob Prosser, Bar T Bar Ranch
Buck Wickham, Range & KV, Coconino NF
Bruce Gordon, Range Con., SCS
Gary Hase, Jr., Range Con., Arizona State Land Dept.
John Goodwin, Biologist, Arizona Game and Fish Dept.
Mike Cupell, Board of Dir., Rocky Mt. Elk Foundation
George Kaminski, Southwest Field Dir., Rocky Mt. Elk Found.
Robert Button, Az. State Chairman, Rocky Mt. Elk Foundation
Gary Bell, Fisheries Zone Biologist, Coconino NF
Greg Goodwin, Wildlife Staff Officer, Coconino NF
Janette Kaiser, Range Con., Coconino NF
Cliff Dills, TMA & Facilitator, Tonto NF

The groups expressed a series of Issues, Concerns and Opportunities which relate to a change in management on the Bar T Bar grazing allotment. The group also participated in an exercise which somewhat prioritized the ICO's. The following is a list, by priority, as determined in the scoping session:

1. Improve watershed, wetlands and riparian areas.
2. Manage competition between elk and livestock; wildlife and livestock.
3. Improve coordination between the Forest Service, State agencies and the private sector.
4. Improve the profit margin for the Bar T Bar Ranch.

5. There is concern over the funding allocations (FS, ranch, donation) to achieve the needed improvements.
6. The allotment contains key wildlife habitat, prime elk winter habitat, antelope fawning areas, possible spotted owl habitat, turkey and small game habitat.
7. There is concern over T&E species protection.
8. There is concern over where the Bar T Bar ranch is going to be in 20 years; will grazing be allowed and at what density?
9. There is an opportunity to manage livestock better in order to derive more production from the resource for the ranch and all other resources.
10. There is an opportunity to improve relations between recreation and other resources.
11. The allotment management plan needs to be developed within the guidelines of the Forest Plan and needs to allow enough flexibility for management.
12. There is concern over livestock distribution.
13. There is an opportunity to develop the type of management that others will want to follow.
14. There is an opportunity to interact with outside groups and agencies so they can help develop management within the allotment.
15. There is an opportunity to learn more about the characteristics of elk grazing and utilize that knowledge in our management of the area.
16. There is an opportunity to manage for both wildlife and livestock on the allotment.
17. There is concern over cultural resources in the area.
18. There is an opportunity to harvest fuelwood in the Pinyon-Juniper vegetation type.
19. Private lands in the area are being developed.
20. There is concern over management of the areas around the Lakes and areas of high recreation use.
21. There is an opportunity to stabilize the ranching operation with the development of a good management plan.

22. Diablo Canyon is a critical watershed.

23. There is an opportunity to coordinate with surrounding ranches; to demonstrate good management on the Bar T Bar. There is also concern that the ranch doesn't become overused by wildlife due to poor management on neighboring allotments.

24. There is increased opportunity in managing a large diverse land base.

25. There is a concern as well as an opportunity in utilizing the concepts of HRM on the allotment.

26. There is a concern over the use of cells.

27. There is an opportunity to determine what we want from the resource and utilize whatever tools we have to get us there.

28. There is an opportunity to develop capacity for both livestock and wildlife yearlong, concentrating on the cool season grasses as key to management.

29. The Bar T Bar operates on private, Federal and State trust lands. There is a need to educate the public.

The meeting facilitated by Cliff Dils from the Tonto National Forest. The group was given a November 9 deadline date for input concerning more specific ICO's, additional comments and requests for field trips to view specifics on the ground. At that time, the district will determine future needs and notify the group of future actions.

Janette Kaiser
Range Staff

United States
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Agriculture

Forest
Service

Coconino
National
Forest

FILE
Blue Ridge R.D.
HC 31, Box 300
Happy Jack, AZ.

Reply to: 1950/2230

Date: November 3, 1987

Betty Robinson
HC 31 Box
Happy Jack, AZ. 86024

Dear Betty,


The Blue Ridge Ranger District is in the process of updating the Bar T Bar Allotment Management Plan (AMP) which will guide management on this allotment in the future. The intent of the AMP is to improve livestock distribution and use within the allotment and to utilize livestock as a tool to improve the resource. Your subdivision is located within the Bar T Bar allotment and your participation would be greatly appreciated. Please direct your comments concerning issues, concern and opportunities to Janette Kaiser at the district office (477-2255)

The Clear Creek Pines Homeowners Association has asked me to extend an invitation to you and your association to their upcoming meeting to be held in Phoenix, November 18 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Griffith School located at 4505 E. Palm Lane. They will be discussing an upcoming timber sale and a portion of the Bar T Bar allotment which they are located in. There will be representatives from this agency to answer any questions you might have. I would like to extend our services to your homeowners association, should you have a similar need to discuss issues with representatives from this office.

Fencing private lands is always an issue. I have recently dealt with many individuals within your subdivision concerning livestock damage to private lands. I assure you, it is not the intent of this office to promote conflict between livestock owners and private land owners. As you know, the laws in the State of Arizona dictate that the private land owner is responsible for fencing the livestock out. In the absence of a legal fence, which the State defines as a four strand barbed wire fence or its equivalent,

there is no legal recourse to recover damages suffered by livestock. I understand that your subdivision has deed restrictions which prohibit metal fencing within the unit. You may wish to consider fencing the perimeter of your subdivision in order to prevent metal fencing within the unit.

I would like to thank you for your participation in developing this management plan. I hope that you will call on us at any time you have questions or concerns regarding any issue related to the National Forests.


TOM CLIFFORD
District Ranger

Nov. 6, 1987

Dear Janette,

Enclosed are my comments on the IGO's. Please excuse the lined paper and the sloppy handwriting - I'm claiming the Nov 9 deadline caused me to be so informal. Please keep me posted on this as I definitely want to be involved - also, The Bar & Bar has expressed interest in my continued involvement.

Sincerely,

Mike Cupell

5242 W. Cheryl Dr.

Glendale, CA 91202

Reactions on Bart Bar Grazing Allotment Plan

1. Encompasses many of the others because of its holistic nature.
2. The best way to manage competition is by planning so that the two species will complement rather than compete.
3. The Bart Bar should have a "Management Team" that meets 4-6 times a year to develop & oversee a comprehensive mgmt plan.
4. Concur. The Bart Bar needs to survive economically the way it is right now. By that I mean that the progressive, enlightened, and holistic ranch operation that exists there needs to survive and prosper if for no other reason than to serve as an example for others to follow.
5. The RMEF stands ready to assist in any way we possibly can within the constraints we have to operate under. We encourage others to do the same. Reason: We feel that the Bart Bar can serve as a model of what can be.
6. No comment

7. No comment - don't know enough to say anything.
8. If we all do the things that are needed and necessary and we work cohesively I have no doubt that The Bar T Bar will still be operating 20 yrs. from now.
9. Agree
10. Agree - This would be part of the responsibility of the Management Team to come up with a plan here - I personally think that this is an area that the Bar T Bar should actively explore and aggressively pursue - They are sitting on a goldmine, should they choose to develop it, i.e., 12-24 rustic rental cabins at the south end of the Hay Lake meadow could be booked up all summer, etc. (For example, how about limited access fishing to Tremaine Lake, etc..)
11. The damn Forest Plan has to be flexible enough for quicker changes in the allotment plan so that the ranch can survive! Let's design a box that fits the ranch instead of making the ranch fit into a pre-designed (and ill-fitting) box.

12. No comment - not enough information
13. Totally Concur.
14. Totally Concur
15. Perhaps the RMEF could help to fund this effort
16. Totally Concur
17. No comment - not enough personal knowledge.
18. Could the Bar T Bar do this on private holdings also - make \$, clear land, provide recreation, increase forage for all species, be more profitable, etc
19. Plan for this if possible
20. Could this concern be turned into a ranch profit center with planning for recreational development and income?
21. Concur
22. No comment - not enough personal knowledge
23. Definitely feel that this should be pursued. We don't want the Bar T Bar to become an "island" in a comparative wasteland.

- 23 (cont) Management Team Could Coordinate with surrounding ranches.
24. Totally Concur
25. Is there any other way to go? Seriously, HRM is the best bet we have - we've got to use it and, in the process, learn how to use it better.
26. Need more information to comment
27. The Mgt. Team should do this work
28. No comment - don't know enough
29. Once again, this is a task for the Mgt. Team to address.

Field Trips -

If the Bart Box & USFS decide to put together a Ranch Mgt Team, then the Mgt. Team would need to do some extensive field trip work in order to begin & continue mgt. suggestions. Otherwise, I think that field trips are not necessary.

I'd seriously consider an offer to serve on such a Mgt Team, were it to be organized.