

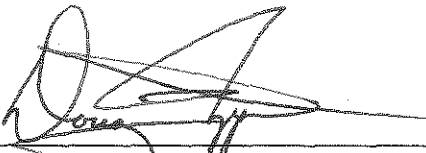
ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR


Boss Allotment

Douglas Ranger District

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

Prepared By: 
Douglas T. Ruppel
Rangeland Management Specialist

Date: 08/22/11

Recommended By: 
Joseph E. Harris
Range & Watershed Staff

Date: 08/22/11

Agreed To By: 
Peggy Boss
Permittee

Date: 8-23-11

Approved By: 
William A. Edwards
District Ranger

Date: 8/23/2011

Introduction

The Boss allotment is located in the southern section of the Chiricahua Mountain Ecological Management Area (EMA) of the Douglas Ranger District, in Cochise County. It is bounded on the north and west by the Pedregosa allotment and on the east and south by the Forest boundary. The allotment is located along the southeastern foothills of the Pedregosa Mountains. This is a relatively small allotment, consisting of 873 acres, of which 817 are considered capable.

Until 2004, the allotment was used yearlong and vegetation and soil condition were estimated to be poor as recently as 2002. Rangeland assessments conducted in 2006 indicate that resources are now recovering as a result of growing season rest. Soil condition is considered 100% satisfactory, and soils retain their inherent productivity.

Most of the vegetative cover on the capable acreage is desert grassland, with some Madrean encinal woodland on the north facing slopes. There is no riparian habitat within this allotment.

Recent Management

The Boss family has had the Boss ranch on Buck Creek almost as long as the Forest Service has been in existence. At present, four generations of the family have been involved with this ranch and with the cattle industry in Arizona and New Mexico. The ranch was purchased from Ocie Reasonover by R.O. (Dick) Boss and his wife Leona in 1910. Roy and Peggy Boss took over the ranch in 1956. Roy Boss, who was a well known horse breeder, trainer and cowman in the area, passed away in 2005. At present, Mrs. Peggy Boss and her son Bob Boss operate the ranch.

In 2004 the Boss allotment was changed from yearlong use to seasonal use. A new term grazing permit was issued to Peggy Boss in May 2006 authorizing 43 yearling cattle, not to exceed 326 AUM's from 10/01 – 03/31. A private land permit for 15 bulls 09/01-2/28 and one horse year-round is also authorized.

The allotment is composed of two pastures; yearlings are grazed in the main pasture and the second pasture is used for bulls or cows. Because there are only two pastures, they are used season long. The allotment is a small portion of a much larger ranch, and the cattle are moved off of the Forest onto private or state land during the summer growing season.

Issues, Concerns, & Conflicts

No issues specific to the Boss allotment were identified during the Environmental Assessment, through field visits to the allotment, discussions with the permittee, consultation with Forest resource specialists or by soliciting comments from interested publics.

Goals and Objectives

The Coronado National Forest Plan has identified goals for the range, wildlife, soil, water and lands, wilderness and recreation programs on the Forest (Forest Plan pp. 9-11). These goals can be found on page 5 of the Environmental Assessment for the Bruno allotment published in March 2008.

Based on Forest Plan goals and site-specific knowledge of the allotment, the following objectives constitute the desired condition for the analysis area:

- Stocking rate is consistent with annual forage production and use is monitored annually. Management controls livestock use and distribution so that sufficient herbaceous vegetation is retained to protect soils and provide herbaceous wildlife cover; zones of heavy use are minimized.
- Ecological sites within the allotment have stable soils, functional hydrology and support functional biotic communities. All areas are at or moving toward their ecological potential.
- Native vegetation in riparian bottoms is a diverse mix of perennial grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. Recruitment of young trees is occurring. Riparian bottoms throughout the allotment provide suitable year-round habitat for species dependent on herbaceous cover.
- Mesquite encroachment is reversed in western portions of the allotment at lower elevations.
- Areas of historic heavy livestock use have increasing ground cover and litter and stable soils.
- Occupied habitats for threatened, endangered, sensitive and management indicator species are maintained or improved, and recovery objectives are being met.
- All grazing improvements necessary for management on the allotment are in proper working order and are contributing toward improved livestock distribution and pasture reliability.

Grazing Strategy

The current authorized use for the Boss allotment is 43 yearlings or equivalent not to exceed 326 AUM's from 10/01 – 03/31. The use of this allotment will remain the same based on the Decision Notice dated 12/19/2008.

The sequence and timing of pasture moves and entry and exit from the allotment will be based on monitoring of range readiness, ecological condition, water availability and utilization.

Forage utilization will be managed at a level corresponding to light to moderate intensity in order to provide for grazed plant recovery, increased plant vigor, and retention of herbaceous litter to protect soils and provide forage and herbaceous cover for wildlife. Consistent patterns of utilization in excess of 45 percent of key species in key areas would be used as a basis to modify management practices or take administrative actions necessary to reduce utilization in subsequent grazing seasons.

The number and class of livestock will be allowed to vary depending on resource conditions and management objectives, provided that annual use does not exceed the AUMs authorized or the season of use identified for the allotment. Annual adjustments would be documented and authorized in annual operating instructions. Depending on prevailing climate, resource conditions, management needs and permittee preference, actual use may be less than authorized in some years.

Mitigation

To mitigate resource impacts, the following measures will be implemented. These practices have been demonstrated to be successful when used on similar projects and are considered effective at reducing environmental impacts. They are consistent with applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, Best Management Practices and the terms and conditions and conservation measures of applicable U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinions. Implementation of the mitigation measures and design criteria is intended to preclude the occurrence of potentially significant environmental impacts.

Soil, Water and Vegetation: The objective is to mitigate effects of livestock grazing and facility construction through the use of Best Management Practices and adaptive management. Practices include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Utilization of key upland herbaceous forage species in key areas will be managed to achieve the goal of light to moderate grazing as a pasture average. The objective is to protect plant vigor, increase herbaceous residue needed for soil protection and to increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. A utilization guideline of 45 percent use of key species in key areas will be used to achieve this objective.
- Management practices will be used to achieve proper distribution or lessen the impact on sensitive areas. Practices include herding, salting and controlling access to waters. Salt will be placed on good feed, one quarter to one half mile from waters and salting locations will be moved annually. Placement of liquid or bulk supplements will require prior approval of the District Ranger.
- No hay will be placed on Forest lands in order to minimize the introduction of weeds.

Wildlife: The objective is to mitigate impacts to wildlife from livestock grazing and from disturbance associated with maintenance and construction of range facilities.

- All water developments will include wildlife access and escape ramps. Waters will be kept available to wildlife year round.
- All new and reconstructed fencing will be built to Forest Plan standards (Forest Plan, p. 35) to provide for wildlife passage through the fence. At a minimum, this will be a 4-strand fence with smooth bottom wire 16 inches off of the ground and a total height of 42 inches or less.
- Range construction projects will be designed to avoid the destruction of agaves. If impacts to agaves are unavoidable, no more than 1 percent of agaves within 800 meters of a project are to be impacted. The objective is to avoid impacts to lesser long-nosed bat food resources.
- All proposed range improvements will be evaluated by a qualified wildlife biologist for effects to threatened, endangered or sensitive species prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Facilities will be designed and constructed to have no adverse effect on listed species.
- Within areas meeting the definition of high quality Mearns' quail habitat, herbaceous vegetation will be managed to maintain a minimum of 6 inches of

herbaceous stubble height, which is generally interpreted as less than 45% utilization of key herbaceous species. The objective is to provide herbaceous vegetation as cover for quail and other wildlife.

Heritage Resources: The objective is to protect heritage resources (historic and prehistoric sites) from direct or indirect impacts caused by ground-disturbing activities associated with the construction of range facilities and to monitor the effects of cattle grazing on sites to ensure that adverse effects are not occurring. In general, these measures include the following:

- All structural range facilities will be surveyed by qualified personnel for heritage resources prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Facilities will be built or modified to avoid impacts to heritage sites. If unrecorded sites are discovered during the course of project implementation, activities will cease and the Forest or District Archeologist will be notified.
- Range facilities, if needed, will be located so as to avoid concentrations of livestock on identified heritage resource sites.
- No salting will occur within, or adjacent, to identified heritage sites.
- If impacts from grazing (e.g. excessive trampling, cattle rubbing against and knocking down standing features) are occurring to heritage sites, measures will be taken (e.g. fencing) to protect them.

Livestock Distribution Aids

- Use of salt, protein and other nutritional supplements are encouraged for livestock health and to improve livestock distribution. All supplements will be placed on forage, no less than ¼ mile from water, and away from natural concentration areas such as drainage bottoms, saddles, roads and trails. Supplement locations will be rotated periodically. No hay or bulk feed may be fed on Forest Lands.
- Water may be turned off to discourage livestock use in a portion of a pasture, but must be made available again once livestock leave the pasture.
- New water developments will be constructed in uplands to encourage livestock use out of the bottoms.
- Existing water lots around dirt tanks will be maintained in satisfactory condition to control livestock access to water.
- Regular herding of livestock will be used to improve livestock distribution.

Range Improvement Construction Priority

There are currently no structural improvements proposed for this allotment at this time.

There are currently no non-structural improvements such as brush control or erosion control measures planned for this allotment. However, if the use of herbicides could be approved there may be an opportunity to treat approximately 70 acres of mesquite encroachment in the Main Boss pasture. This project will require further NEPA review and documentation.

Range Improvement Maintenance

Maintenance of all structural improvements listed in the term grazing permit is the responsibility of the permittee. Likewise, the maintenance of any new improvements as a result of this plan will be the responsibility of the permittee. All improvements must be kept in a serviceable condition. Given the increased probability of both prescribed fire and wildfire in this area for the foreseeable future, special attention should be given to protecting infrastructure from the affects of fire. In particular, fences should be kept clear of brush for 3 feet on either side of the fence and brush should be removed from the area around wooden brace and corner posts. The Forest Service will assist in supplying materials for maintenance needs if budgets allow. The Forest Service will also assist the permittee in planning for potential cost share and grant opportunities whenever possible.

The only maintenance needed at this time in regard to this allotment other than routine maintenance of fences is the cleaning and repair of Rough Tank (126003).

Fires

District wide, there is an effort to re-establish the role of fire on the landscape. Naturally ignited wildfires may be aggressively fought when they endanger life or property. However, when such fires do not threaten life or property they will most likely be fought with a containment strategy, being allowed to burn to the nearest roads or natural barriers. It is Forest Service policy to suppress all unplanned, human caused fires using the most appropriate tactics. Suppression may take the form of direct attack, indirect attack or containment.

Relatively large, prescribed fires will be an important tool in returning a more natural fire regime to the Forest. When planning prescribed fires, the permittee will be consulted, so that they will have time to make adequate preparations for their livestock operation, and so the rotation can be altered to allow fine fuels to accumulate. Burned areas will be allowed to rest for at least one growing season to ensure adequate recovery before livestock will be allowed access. In some cases, more than one season may be required for adequate recovery of forage resources depending on the available moisture. The Forest will coordinate rehabilitation efforts with the permittee in regards to both forage resources and infrastructure repairs whenever possible.

Monitoring

The objective of monitoring is to determine whether management is being properly implemented and whether the actions are effective at achieving or moving toward desired conditions.

Effectiveness monitoring includes measurements to track condition and trend of upland and riparian vegetation, soil, and watersheds. Monitoring will be done following

procedures described in the Interagency Technical Reference and the Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Training Guide. These data will be interpreted to determine whether management is achieving desired resource conditions, whether changes in resource condition are related to management, and to determine whether modifications in management are necessary. Effectiveness monitoring will occur at a minimum of five-year intervals, or more frequently if considered necessary.

Implementation monitoring will occur yearly and will include such things as inspection reports, forage utilization measurements in key areas, livestock counts and facilities inspections. Utilization measurements are made following procedures found in the Interagency Technical Reference and with consideration of the Principles of Obtaining and Interpreting Utilization Data on Southwest Rangelands.

Utilization will be monitored on key forage species, which are native perennial grasses that are palatable to livestock. At a minimum, monitoring will include use in key areas, but may include monitoring outside of key areas. The Douglas District Range Staff Officer and the permittees will be responsible for monitoring livestock grazing utilization. Over time, changes in resource conditions or management may result in changes in livestock use patterns. As livestock use patterns change, new key areas may be established and existing key areas may be modified or abandoned in cooperation with the permittee(s).

Permittees are strongly encouraged to participate in monitoring activities. Records of livestock numbers, movement dates and shipping records will be kept by the permittee and will be provided to the District Range Staff annually.

Additionally, species-specific monitoring requirements are in place for Montezuma quail, Goshawk, Chiricahua leopard frog, and Mexican spotted owl, as described in the Grazing Strategy portion of the Environmental Assessment.

Travel Management

The administration and operation of this allotment may involve the use of motorized access to some portions of the allotment and the associated infrastructure on either a one-time or a recurring basis. This need for access may be for maintenance of existing improvements or for the construction of new improvements, as well as other logistical needs. Access is usually provided on existing system roads. If access is required beyond that available on existing system roads, it may be authorized on a case by case basis by the District Ranger.