Environmental Assessment Report

Decision Notice

and

Finding Of No Significant Effect

For The

Bronco Allotment

Interim Management Plan

Cave Creek Ranger District

Tonto National Forest

Region Three

Prepared and submitted by (b)(6)

District Forest Ranger

2/25/81

Date

The proposed action is to initiate an interim management plan for the Bronco cattle and horse grazing allotment. The initial range analysis is not scheduled for several years and the District's program cannot be changed due to ongoing priority commitments elsewhere. The permit is currently under suspension and a revised number and season of use has been negotiated.

The primary objective of this proposal is to take advantage of an opportunity to gain a foothold towards sound resource management. This is due to the recently submitted and newly issued term permit with revised numbers, class and season of use. A willingness to proceed towards improved management has been indicated by the permittee. The adopted plan will provide direction for managing the grazing resource under a schedule where previously there was little or no management.

Compared to other allotments on the District, the "Bronco" is relatively free of existing or potential conflicts with grazing stemming from other uses. There are no inventoried T&E species or habitats, no wildernesses or RARE II areas or established zones of riparian vegetation targeted for special emphasis at this time.

No public issues have been identified with this proposal. The alternative plan that will best resolve the management concerns and resource opportunities of the following criteria should be selected:

A. Provides for improved resource management.

B. Results in a grazing schedule, that provides at least seasonal deferment from grazing use.

C. Eliminates seasonlong use in same areas each year.

D. Restores vigor, improves condition and reverses trend over the majority of the range resource.

E. Provides for the reduction of noxious/toxic and undesirable plants.

F. Facilitates the working of livestock to improve the standard of husbandry and animal performance.

G. Achieves uniform distribution over suitable areas.

H. Cost/effectiveness with regard to level of investment vs. permit size and current on-the-ground situation.

I. Ease of implementation, recognizing past management problems.

J. Social acceptability by all Forest user groups.

The alternatives considered were (1) six month seasonal use over the entire area each year, (2) a three pasture rest-rotational system and (3) a two pasture deferred-rotational system.

The following matrix displays how the alternatives have been evaluated against the decision criteria so that the basis for the identification of the preferred alternative is more visible:

	Alternatives		
Criteria	1	2	3
A	-	0	0
B	-	+	0
C	-	0	0
D	-	+	0
E	-	0	0
F	-	0	+
G	-	0	0
H	0	-	+
I	+	-	0
J	0	0	+

Legend: + best meets decision criteria
0 meets decision criteria
- least meets decision criteria

Any one of the alternatives would be a marked improvement over what existed previously. Alternative (1) is the least intensive and would result in cattle being scattered over the entire allotment for the full six month season. This is undesirable due to the relative size of the area and the number permitted.

Alternative (2) represents a very intensive system usually reserved for ranges in poor to very poor condition with a downward trend and overstocking problem. Such is not the case on this allotment at this time. This approach features yearlong rest as well as seasonal deferment and would require dividing the allotment into three approximately equal units to facilitate proper application and results. The allotment is not estimated to be overstocked and the on-the-ground improvements and managerial ability to successfully implement this intensive of a system is questionable at this time. Rest-rotation also requires the removal of an additional portion of the capacity each year until vegetational response and forage capacity are recuperated.

Alternative (3) represents a level of improved livestock grazing management that addresses the resource needs on most desert/chaparral ranges under winter seasonal use. Under this approach, warm season growers will be deferred each year from grazing during the critical growth period. Additionally, the cool season component of the forage will be seasonally deferred by early and late rotational use around February 15 each year. This allotment can easily accommodate this management system and will facilitate the minimum husbandry practices expected under new management.

Range developments needed amount to securing the allotment boundary along three miles of presently unfenced Forest boundary, replacement of a flood-destroyed cattleguard adjacent to Cave Creek, and the extension of an existing interior fence by one-half mile to better divide the Cottonwood and Cave Creek pastures natural barrier control point.

It is my decision to adopt alternative (3) as the Interim Management Plan for the Bronco Allotment. It best meets the evaluation criteria presented and represents the most practicably feasible approach to improved livestock and resource management on this portion of the Tonto National Forest at this time.

The information above indicates no significant negative effects on the quality of the human environment will occur and an environmental statement will therefore not be proposed. This action is in conformance with the goals, objectives and direction as described in the Forest Multiple Use Guide and Region 3's range management and planning direction.

JAMES L. KIMBALL
Forest Supervisor
Tonto National Forest

Date