

KINGMAN RESOURCE AREA EA SCOPING, REVIEW, AND APPROVAL FORM

Proposal: Cane Spring Ranch Cooperative Management Plan (Hibernia Peak allotment GR#2053)

AZ-025-97-048

EA Number

RMP Implementation No.

AWP: Work Category and Task

and Description: The Cane Springs Ranch is located 35 miles southeast of Kingman, Arizona, and 15 miles north northwest of Wikieup on Highway 93, on the eastern slopes of the Hualapai Mountains. Elevation on this allotment ranges from 2,680 to 6,922 feet.

Applicant: Anita Waite (Permittee)

Address: P O Box 7 Wikieup AZ 85360

Type of Case: Live stock Management Serial No: _____

Coordination: Indicate in the left column which disciplines were analyzed in the EA and print the name of the individuals who participated on the right. Author's name should be used if the author analyzed the impacts. Place an asterisk in the column on the right to indicate that written comments have been provided during clearance. If changes were made to the recommended mitigation, the appropriate specialist will initial this column to show concurrence.

Needed	Discipline	Team Input and Review
input (X)		
	<u>Lands</u>	
	<u>Minerals</u>	
<u>XX</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Michael Blanton 4/5/99</u>
	<u>Wild Horse and Burro</u>	
<u>XX</u>	<u>General Recreation</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4/9/99</u>
<u>XX</u>	<u>Cultural and Paleontological Resources</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4/16/99</u>
<u>XX</u>	<u>Wilderness</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4/7/99</u>
<u>XX</u>	<u>Soil</u>	<u>Tal Felt 4-6-99</u>
	<u>Water Quality/Water Rights</u>	
	<u>Air Quality</u>	
<u>XX</u>	<u>Wildlife</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4-8-99</u>
<u>XX</u>	<u>Threatened and Endangered Plants & Animals</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4/5/99</u>
	<u>Surface Protection</u>	
	<u>Hazardous Materials</u>	
	<u>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern</u>	
<u>XX</u>	<u>Visual Resource Management</u>	<u>Beau N. Poljan 4/7/99</u>
	<u>Socio-Economics</u>	

Writer: Michael M. Blanton

Date: 4/21/97

Environmental Coordinator: _____

Date: _____

Area Manager: Beau N. Poljan

Date: 8/20/99

Cane Springs Ranch Coordinated Management Plan Environmental Assessment

E.A. No. AZ-025-97-04

I. INTRODUCTION

This environmental assessment evaluates the effects of livestock management changes on public land within the Cane Springs Ranch. The majority of public land within the ranch is located within the Unit A or the Mountain pasture. The Bureau of Land Management and the grazing permittee have identified the need to develop a livestock management plan for the Cane Spring Ranch and/or the Hibernia Peak allotment (GR#2053). The focus of the plan is to change from the historical year-long grazing to a deferred grazing system.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The Purpose of the Cane Springs Ranch Coordinated Management Plan is to change the historical livestock management to meet the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. These changes in the livestock management will facilitate overall objective of the range program by improving the productivity of rangelands and to fulfill social, economic and environmental needs on public lands. The changes in livestock management are needed to enhance riparian habitat and livestock management (distribution and season of use) within the allotment.

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan

The Proposed Actions is in conformance with the Kingman Field Office Management Plan signed in 1995.

C. Relationship to Other Plans Statutes and Regulations

The Proposed Actions are also in conformance with the Hualapai-Aquarius Grazing EIS (1982), Hualapai Habitat Management Plan (1987) and the Hualapai/Aquarius Management Framework Plan (1982) all of which cover the area.

II. Description of the Alternatives

A. Proposed Action

Livestock Management

The Proposed Action is to implement the Cane Springs Ranch Coordinated Management Plan. The main focus of this plan is to allowing for rest during the growing season. Typically, Unit A receives late fall, winter, and early spring grazing. Cattle on Unit A are removed from May 1 to October 15 most years. This schedule, however will allow the flexibility necessary for the livestock operator and the BLM to meet the management objectives. See Chapter I, sections V, and VI for more detail.

2. Range Improvements

The Cane Springs Ranch Coordinated Management Plan identified the need to development a network of livestock trails in unit A portion of the ranch. Due to the dense chaparral vegetation in the Mountain pasture the permittee has identified need for these trails to move livestock. These trails will be cut by hand along existing game trails, jeep trails and drainages. These trails will not be put into potential Vole habitat.

If these measures are unsuccessful in meeting management objectives, additional measures will be considered such as, livestock management changes, additional riparian fencing and/or pasture fencing to better control livestock.

B. No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the current management would not change and current trends and conditions would continue. Refer to Chapter I, section VI, of this document for description of the current livestock management.

C. Alternatives considered but not analyzed

A. Removal of livestock grazing from the allotment.
This alternative was dropped because the monitoring data indicates that careful livestock management is an acceptable use in this allotment.

B. Complete rest the allotment from grazing for several years before allowing livestock grazing to resume.

This alternative was also dropped because the monitoring data indicates that careful livestock management is an acceptable use in this allotment.

III. Affected Environment

The planning area is located approximately 35 miles south of Kingman, Arizona. Refer to Chapter 1, section V and VI of this document for a complete description of the affected environment.

IV. Environmental Impacts

The following resources are either not present or not impacted by the Proposed Action: Native American religious concerns, hazardous waste sites, area of critical environmental concern, wild and scenic rivers known cultural or paleontological resources, prime and unique farmlands, and air quality.

Before any ground disturbing actions occur, a Cultural Resource and Threatened or Endangered Species inventory will be conducted in compliance with all the policies and regulations governing these resource.

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action

a. Negative Impacts

Environmental justice

The change from year-long grazing to the new system may result in additional labor costs.

Soils and Vegetation

Development of the livestock trails would result in the disturbance of no more than 20 cubic yards of soil and the disturbance or destruction of vegetation (less than 1 acre)

Changing the grazing from year-long to the proposed system will also result in increased grazing pressure in the uplands since pressure is being reduced on the bottoms.

b. Positive Impacts

Environmental justice

The changes in livestock management on the allotment could allow the frequency of key species to be maintained or improve and this may increase the over all value of the ranch. Improving the vegetation should improve the condition of cow/calf ratio and weight gains and therefore over time improve the economic condition of the Cane Springs ranch.

Soils and Vegetation

The changes in livestock management should improve the frequency of key species on both the uplands and riparian range sites on the allotment. The Proposed Action would provide for better distribution of livestock grazing within the allotment and this should also help maintain or improve overall vegetative conditions in the area. The improved vegetation could help reduce soil erosion throughout the allotment.

Standard 1. Upland Sites:

Upland soils exhibit infiltration, permeability, and erosion rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and landform (ecological site).

Standard 2. Riparian–Wetland Site:

Riparian–wetland areas are in properly functioning condition.

Standard 3: Desired Resource Conditions:

Productive and diverse upland and riparian-wetland plant communities of native species exist and are maintained.

Based on frequency, apparent trend, utilization, riparian and precipitation data the grazing management appears to be meeting standards 1, and 3 (See chapter 1 for the data evaluation). Data collected in Hibernia and Bull canyons indicates these riparian habitats are functional at risk with an upward trend. Therefore, these riparian zones seem to be meeting standard 2.

Wildlife

The Proposed Action is expected to benefit wildlife and wildlife habitat because of the expected improvement in riparian habitat, aquatic habitat, and upland habitat health as a result of the proposed seasonal grazing. Grazing deferment during the growing season, which is primarily during the spring and summer, will allow plants the time to grow, replenish carbohydrate reserves, and reproduce. Rest during the growing season will result in improved vigor and productivity of plants. This in turn will result in increased forage production, cover, and shelter sites which positively affects wildlife and aquatic animals by providing more food, and diversity of living space. Working from the ground up by maintaining the health of the plant community will directly translate to improved productivity for microorganisms, invertebrates, and on up the food chain to vertebrates such as big game, small game, and neotropical migratory birds.

Special-Status Species

a. Hualapai Mexican Vole

There will be no impacts to the vole habitat in Pine Flat as a result of the Proposed Action because it is fenced from livestock grazing. Impacts from the Proposed Action to the unfenced, potential vole habitat in the headwaters of Bull Canyon may occur as a result of livestock grazing. Grazing in this area is restricted because of the difficulty of access into this area due to rough terrain, and because of the fall/winter grazing period which will inhibit livestock from concentrating in the bottoms because of low air temperatures due to cold air drainage down the canyon.

Utilization by livestock is expected to remain minimal in this area. Utilization is not expected to exceed the slight grazing levels (which is less than 20 percent utilization of current years growth) within this potential vole habitat area. BLM considers this low level of utilization ($\leq 20\%$) to be compatible with improving and/or maintaining "properly functioning" riparian habitat conditions capable of supporting Hualapai Mexican voles. Monitoring on other allotments that have a similar fall/winter grazing systems has shown limited use of the riparian zones. Typically use limits remain below slight levels. It is believed that utilization will remain at or below 20%.

b. Sonoran Desert Tortoise

The Proposed Action alternative would result in fall and winter grazing on the small amount of desert tortoise habitat occurring on the public lands on this allotment. This would allow for the increased production and availability of desirable food and cover plants for tortoises.

c. Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Evaluation of Bull and Hibernia canyon determined that these canyon are most likely not suitable flycatcher habitat. Under the Proposed Action, riparian habitats will be steadily improving. If utilization for a single year ever exceeds 50%, cattle will be removed and the riparian pasture will be rested for two years during the growing seasons.

d. Long-fin Dace

As previously discussed habitat for this species occurs only on a temporary basis. The habitat that does occur is expected to improve under the Proposed Action. See the above discussion in this same section under Wildlife.

Water Quality and Floodplains

The Proposed Action should improve water quality by allowing the riparian habitat to improve. Research shows that water quality improves as riparian vegetation improves. Vegetation acts like a filter and helps reduce sediments in the system.

B. Impacts of Alternative (No Action)

a. Negative Impacts

Environmental justice

The livestock management on the allotment would not be changed and vegetative communities may not be maintained and downward trend is anticipated. In the long term this could lower the value of the ranch and have a negative effect on the economic condition of the ranch.

Soils and Vegetation

Livestock management would remain as year-long grazing and range condition may not be maintained and downward trend is anticipated. Livestock distribution would not change within the allotment and overall vegetative conditions in the allotment may not improve. Downward trend in range condition could increase soil erosion throughout the allotment.

Wildlife

Habitat health of the uplands, riparian, and aquatic habitats would not improve under this alternative. This would have a negative effect on the wildlife populations in the allotment by keeping productivity of plants and animals at a low level.

Special Status Species

a. Hualapai Mexican Vole

Under the No Action alternative, the small amount of potential vole habitat in the upper portion of Bull Canyon would most likely remain in healthy condition due to the inaccessibility (to livestock) and the light utilization levels. Drift cattle grazing on a year

around basis might find their way into the potential vole habitat although it is expected to be an uncommon occurrence.

b. Desert Tortoise

Year around grazing on desert tortoise habitat would allow spring and summer grazing. Tortoises would compete with livestock for forage and cover. Cattle would seek desirable spring forage plants as soon as they green up, before tortoises emerge from their winter shelters. Continuous, year around use would not result in continued improvement and recruitment of desirable tortoise forage and cover plant species. Key forage species may even decline depending on rainfall and livestock numbers.

c. Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Under the No Action, year around grazing alternative, riparian habitats would not be expected to improve due to the lack of seasonal rest, especially during the spring and summer growing season. Cattle would concentrate in these areas, degrading the habitat and desirable plant species, while increasing erosion and sedimentation. There would be less chance that these habitats would ultimately support flycatchers in the long term.

d. Long-fin dace

Under the No Action alternative., habitat for this species would not be expected to improve for the same reasons as discussed above for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

Water Quality and Floodplains

The riparian habitat along Hibernia and Bull Canyon is not expected to improve under the No Action alternative. Water quality and the floodplain conditions would remain at the current levels.

b. Positive Impacts

Environmental justice

The total active grazing preference on the allotment would remain unchanged and may not have an effect on the overall value of the ranch. Remaining on the year-long grazing system and not developing new range improvements may result in no additional labor costs.

Soils and Vegetation

Under this alternative the proposed project would not be developed and this would result in the no disturbance to soils and vegetation in the allotment.

C. Cumulative Impacts

1. Negative Impacts

The development of livestock trails combined with other facilities such as water developments, roads, corrals and fencing on the allotment may alter the visual resource quality in the area.

2. Positive Impacts

The Proposed Action combined with other management changes in the resource area could help to maintain or improve the vegetative conditions in the area. The proposed trail project combined with existing facilities should increase forage availability in the allotment.

D. Mitigation

- a. Before any ground disturbing actions occur, a cultural resource inventory will be conducted in compliance with all the policies and regulations governing the protection of cultural resource values.

IV. Consultation and Coordination

A. Agencies/Individuals Consulted

Anita Waite, Rancher

Rob Grumbles, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arizona

Patrick H. Boles, Arizona State Land Department

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Loretta J. Metz, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bob Posey, Habitat Specialist, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Mike Blanton, Range Management Specialist, BLM–Kingman Field Office

Rebecca Peck, Wildlife Biologist, BLM–Kingman Field Office

Bob Hall, Threatened and Endangered Species Biologist, BLM–Kingman Field Office

Paul Hobbs, Soils Specialist, BLM– Kingman Field Office

Bruce Asbjorn, Recreation and Wilderness Specialist, BLM–Kingman Field Office

B. List of Preparers for the Environmental Assessment

Paul Hobbs, Soils Specialist, BLM– Kingman Field Office

Michael M. Blanton, Range Specialist, BLM– Kingman Field Office

Rebecca Peck, Wildlife Biologist, BLM–Kingman Field Office

Hibernia Peak Allot.

MOUNTAINS

Unit (A)

Unit (B)

HEALAPAI

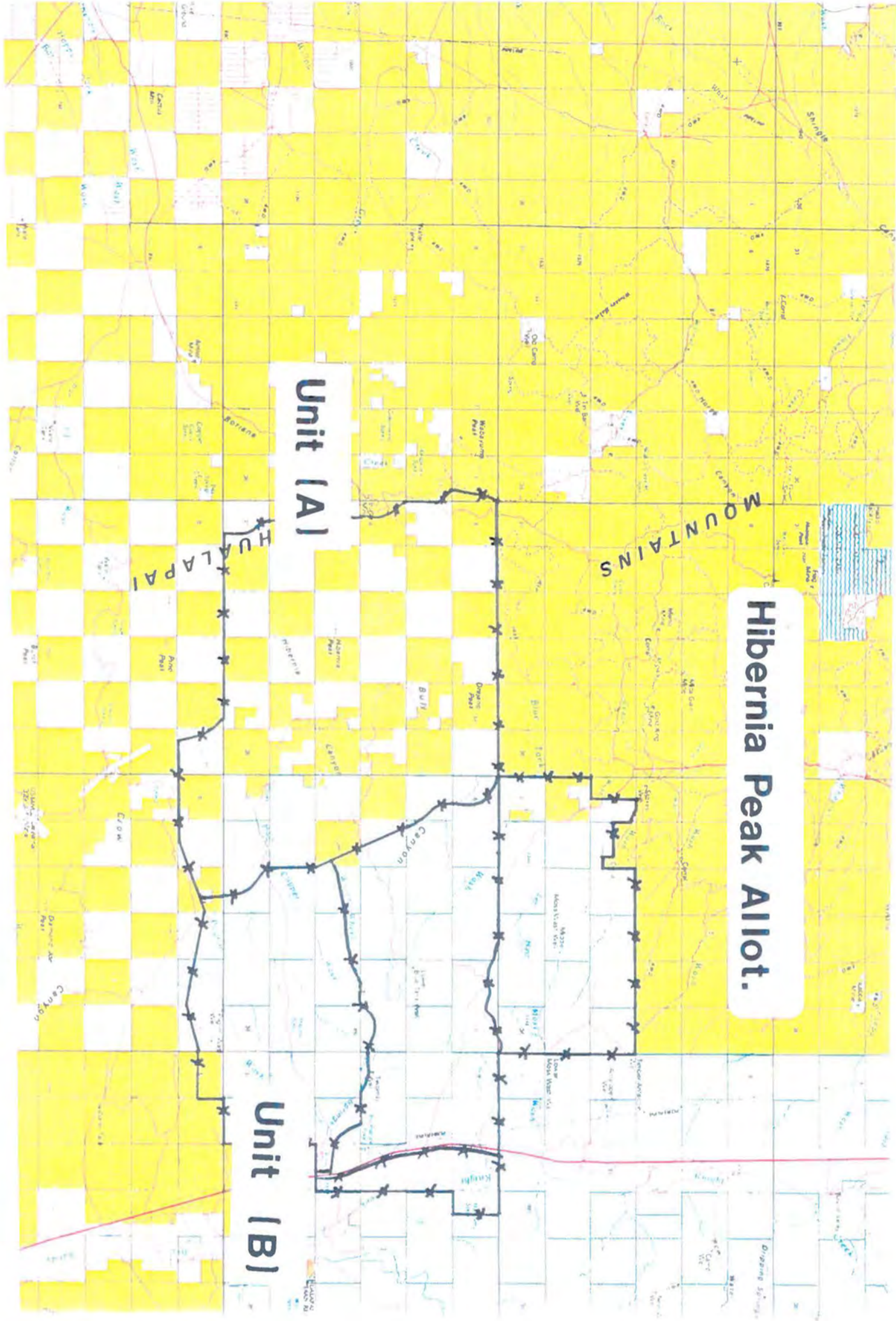


TABLE (1)

PRECIPITATION DATA HIBERNIA PEAK

