

Allotment Management Plan

Copper Canyon

USDA Forest Service

Verde Ranger District, Prescott National Forest

Yavapai County, Arizona

Introduction

The 10,205 acre Copper Canyon Allotment is located approximately 3 miles south of Camp Verde between the Verde River and the Verde Rim. Elevations range from 3280 ft. to 5280 ft.

Pinyon/juniper communities occupy the mid to upper elevations and Desert shrub communities dominate the lower elevations of the allotment.

This Allotment Management Plan implements the decision (supported by the Verde Rim Livestock Grazing Project Environmental Assessment) made by the Verde District Ranger on May 2, 2006.

Objectives

- Increase or maintain VGC and perennial grass composition and cover in pinyon/juniper woodlands, desert shrub/grassland, and chaparral communities to the extent attainable with the existing tree/shrub canopy.
- Improve soil function to enhance soil conditions.
- Allow riparian vegetation to reach or move towards potential.
- Allow channel profiles to return to appropriate dimensions for site morphology and channel functions.

Grazing Management

A. Permitted Numbers, Season of Use, and Head Months

Permittee	Permit Type	# of Livestock	Season of Use	Head Months
Mike S. Mulcaire	Term (10 years)	70 – 100 cattle (cow / calf)	Year-long (3/1 – 2/28)	840 - 1200

The period of grazing and the stocking numbers on NFS lands will be determined by monitoring, designated in the Annual Operating Instructions and authorized in the Bill for Collection.

B. Grazing Management and Allowable Use

Grazing Management

Apply deferred rotation in the four main pastures in conjunction with two small pastures keeping the Tompkins Pasture winter-use only to aid in the protection of riparian areas in the Copper Canyon drainage.

The Monroe Pasture, while not scheduled in the rotation, will be used when needed to maintain the rotational schedule.

Re-entry into a pasture will be allowed as part of the rotation following additional vegetation growth.

Restrict livestock use in Copper Canyon Pasture during an April 1 – July 31 time period each year to provide a cowbird buffer zone for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

Control duration of use in the desert shrub communities of the Cottonwood and Lucky Pastures using salting and herding techniques.

Annual Operating Instructions will be prepared each year in cooperation with the permittee to allow for consideration of current allotment conditions and management objectives. This AOI will detail the current season's grazing schedule, the stocking level, the improvement maintenance needs, needed improvements, and the allowable use levels on key forage and browse species.

Application of standard management practices such as salting, herding, and controlling access to water to achieve proper distribution or lessen the impact on areas which are sensitive or are natural concentration areas will be applied by the permittee.

Protein, salt, and other supplements will not be placed within ¼ mile of water or any identified sensitive plant population. New improvements (e.g. pipelines, troughs, tanks, or fences) will be designed to avoid adverse impacts to any such populations.

All new or reconstructed fencing will be built to accommodate wildlife passage using a 4-strand fence with a smooth bottom wire 18 inches off the ground and a total fence height of 42 inches or less.

All new or reconstructed water developments will include wildlife access and escape ramps. Cooperation of the permittee will be sought to make stock water supplies available for wildlife needs during critical periods, if water is available at the sources (e.g. storage tank).

The permittee will ensure that structural range improvement maintenance is completed to standard; that livestock do not enter the allotment or a pasture prior to the approved entry date;

that livestock are removed from pastures and the allotment as specified in the AOI; and that livestock do not enter or re-enter pastures that either have already been grazed, or that are planned for rest.

Allowable Use

Site	Use of Herbaceous Plants	Use of Shrubs
Upland sites	40% on key forage plants (except in the Cottonwood pasture where it will be 30%) at the time livestock are moved from a pasture and 50% on key forage plants (30% in the Cottonwood pasture) at the end of the growing season.	50% of current year's leaders
Riparian sites	20% on riparian grasses, sedges, and forbs measured during the growing season as an indicator for pasture moves and at the end of the growing season to determine utilization	20% of current year's leaders

The herbaceous plant utilization levels above represent the percentage of last season's growth, if grazed during the dormant season, or the percentage of the current season's growth, to date, if grazed during a growing period (relative or seasonal utilization).

C. Rangeland Improvement Program

- Burn under prescription approximately 550 acres of desert shrub/grassland community to sustain existing herbaceous ground cover by reducing prickly pear cactus, juniper, and mesquite.
- In the event early movement from the Tompkins Pasture is required due to reaching riparian allowable use/utilization levels, additional riparian exclosures will be constructed.
- In the event disproportionate use occurs in Lucky Pasture on unsatisfactory soil areas, a 1/3 mile fence will be constructed to control use.
- Areas that later exhibit riparian attributes (which may not now be apparent because of drought conditions) will be fenced or protected from livestock grazing impacts through management actions controlling timing and intensity of livestock use.
- In the event pasture rotations deferring Copper Canyon Pasture April to July for the cow bird buffer zone can not be achieved, drift fences on the ridge northwest of the Copper Canyon drainage will be constructed. This will allow use of the northern part of the pasture that is beyond the 2 miles needed for the buffer zone.

D. Maintenance Responsibility

Existing improvements are shown on the allotment map and range improvement inventory sheets of the permit.

All maintenance must be done annually whether the allotment is actually grazed or not.

Maintenance must occur throughout the season and cannot be a one time action.

Damage resulting from big game, wind, other acts of nature, or human caused actions, must be repaired in a timely manner so as to ensure the integrity of the structures.

All maintenance of exterior fences must be completed prior to turn on each year. *(It is the responsibility of the permittee to ensure that the necessary coordination occurs between adjacent allotments to ensure maintenance is completed in a timely manner).*

E. Drought Management

Perennial grasses and major browse species need deferment/rest in order to provide time to recover from drought induced stress.

Move cattle when utilization in pastures is met. If removal of livestock is necessary, they may be authorized to return to the allotment once conditions improve; meaning sufficient recovery from the effects of drought stress has occurred and there has been enough herbaceous production to support livestock numbers. Potential return of livestock will be evaluated no earlier than the summer growing season.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A. Implementation (Compliance) Monitoring

--- Periodic field checks will be conducted by the Forest Officer and/or the grazing permittee to measure forage use to determine if allowable use levels are being reached and determine any needed pasture movements.

(Monitoring of allowable use on key forage species in key areas is the joint responsibility of the Forest Service and the permittee. Although the Forest Service will make every effort to assist the permittee in ensuring compliance with standards, the permittee has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the allowable use standards are met).

---- Periodic field checks will be conducted by the Forest Officer to assess vegetation health and trends as well as soil function to identify needed adjustments in season of use and/or livestock numbers.

Field Checks will include informal inspections, formal inspections, and permittee compliance monitoring.

Informal Inspections

Informal inspections conducted by the Forest Officer will be made as the opportunity arises, such as when the Forest Officer is working in the area or is passing through the allotment.

The permittee will be notified by telephone of any significant observations needing immediate attention. Significant observations will be documented in writing by the Forest Officer and a copy of the inspection notes will be sent to the permittee in a timely manner.

Formal Inspections

Formal inspections conducted by the Forest Officer will be made as time and competing duties allow with an attempt to inspect each of the pastures.

The permittee will be requested to accompany the Forest Officer during the inspections. Significant findings from these inspections will be documented in a letter or inspection report sent to the permittee in a timely manner.

Permittee Compliance Monitoring


The permittee will:

- Monitor the allotment continuously throughout the grazing season to determine current resource conditions and to ensure the terms of the permit are being met.
- Document all findings through notes, photographs, or other means decipherable by the Forest Officer
- Share monitoring information with the Forest Officer, and
- Coordinate with the Forest Officer to resolve any problems that arise.

B. Effectiveness Monitoring

The permittee is encouraged to participate in any effectiveness (e.g. long term condition and trend) monitoring and evaluation conducted on the allotment.

Permittee Review / Agreement

Reviewed by/ agreed to  Date _____
Permittee

Forest Officer Approval

Approved By  Date 11/21/08
Dee Hines, Verde District Ranger