ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

Fourr

Douglas Ranger District

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

Prepared and Recommended by:

Joseph C. Harris — Date: 04/02/2015

Joseph Harris

Range and Watershed Staff

Agreed to by:

[signature] — Date: 4-2-15

Fourr Ranch Land and Cattle, LLC

Permittee

Approved by: [signature] — Date: 5/7/15

Kevin Warner

District Ranger

Purpose and Scope

This Allotment Management Plan (AMP) will serve to provide the framework under which livestock grazing will be carried out on the Fourr allotment. This AMP will implement the December 22, 2008 Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact issued by William A. Edwards, District Ranger of the Douglas Ranger District - Coronado National Forest. This AMP will be incorporated into and be considered a part of the terms of the current Term Grazing Permit issued February 5, 2010 and any future Term Grazing Permits that are issued for livestock grazing on the Fourr allotment. This AMP will remain in effect until it is either revised or replaced with a new AMP created for the allotment.

Allotment Description

The Fourr allotment lies on the western face of the Dragoon Mountains of the Coronado National Forest. The allotment is located entirely within Cochise County, Arizona. It is bordered on the east by the Halfmoon allotment, on the north by the Dragoon allotment, and on the south by the Slavin allotment. The Fourr allotment is comprised of 3,628 acres, of which 1,920 are considered capable for livestock grazing. Approximately 47% of the allotment is over 40% slope and therefore considered not capable for livestock grazing. The allotment is comprised of two pastures and one trap: Upper and Lower Forest and Horse Trap.

Elevations on the Fourr allotment range from approximately 5,000 feet to 7,100 feet. There is one riparian area on the allotment, which is the area near Cave Spring. All drainages found on the allotment drain into the Upper San Pedro River watershed. Vegetation on the lower elevations of the Fourr allotment consists of desert grassland, which includes hairy grama, blue grama, sideoats grama, curly mesquite and other common grasses. Lehmann lovegrass is also widespread at the lower elevations. Mesquite is prevalent and increasing in the vegetation type, as are other brushy species such as snakeweed and acacia. The upper elevations of the allotment are comprised of broadleaf and coniferous woodlands containing oaks, juniper, and piñon pine. Mid-story vegetation is primarily composed of shrubs such as manzanita, sumac, silk-tassel, mahogany, and Apache plume. Under-story vegetation consists of common perennial grasses such as bull grass, three-awn, Texas bluestem, and sideoats grama. Other desert plants are common throughout the grassland and woodland vegetation types, including bear grass, agave, mesquite, yucca, and prickly pear.

The Coronado Forest Plan identifies the majority of the Fourr allotment as Management Area (MA) 4, which emphasizes sustained harvest of livestock forage and fuel wood resources, while maintaining and improving wildlife habitat. There is a small portion classified as MA 1, consisting of steep, rugged lands that are managed for visual resources and semi-primitive dispersed recreation opportunities, including those related to wildlife.

A trend study completed in 2006 found the allotment to be in good to excellent condition with static trends. Soils were found to be 100% satisfactory. Some sites may have scored more poorly due to the presence of Lehmann lovegrass.

Recent Management

The Fourr allotment has been permitted to H/H Safford Ranch LLC since 2005. When the H/H Safford Ranch LLC acquired the allotment in 2005, permitted numbers were 117 head from 11/1 through 4/30. The most recent permit, signed in 2010, was modified to 88 head year round, not to exceed six months or 700 AUMs. Since having the permit, the permittee has stocked the allotment nearly every season, usually with a little less than full permitted numbers.

Historic records indicate that the permitted numbers on the Fourr allotment from 1910 to 1946 ranged from 25 head to 180 head year round. Sometime in the early 1950's season of use was changed to seasonal winter use, with numbers varying from 100 to 143 head until 1982. In 1983, permitted numbers were 117 head and remained so until the current permit reduced numbers to 88 head. H/H Safford Ranch LLC acquired the permit for the Fourr allotment in 2005.

Issues, Concerns, and Conflicts

No issues were identified during the Environmental Assessment (EA) through field visits to the allotment, discussions with the permittee, consultation with Forest resource specialists, and 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 Fourr allotment published in November 2008.

Based on Forest Plan guidance and site-specific knowledge of the allotment, as well as permittee input, the following objectives constitute the desired condition for the allotment:

- Implement a framework for management that provides the flexibility to adapt to changing resource and administrative conditions.
- Ensure livestock grazing is continued on the Fourr allotment and that it is in line with the capacity of the allotment.
- Ensure that livestock grazing on the Fourr allotment is carried out in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, Forest Service policies, the Coronado Forest Plan, and the December 22, 2008 NEPA Decision for this allotment.
- Implement livestock management practices which, under normal climatic conditions, will improve vegetative, soil, and watershed conditions across the allotment to achieve a fair, or better, range condition rating.
- Implement livestock management practices which, under normal climatic conditions, will sustain or improve riparian conditions and any seeps or springs that may have the potential to support riparian vegetation.

- Implement livestock management practices which, under normal climatic conditions, will not have any adverse effects on any endangered, sensitive, and/or management indicator species.
- Livestock stocking 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 in fair range condition or better.
- Lower elevation sites are dominated by warm season native perennial grasses and are increasing in diversity of grasses, forbs and shrubs.
- Within dense chaparral stands, shrub density contributing to poor ecological condition and high fire hazards is reduced and herbaceous cover is increased.
- Native vegetation in evergreen riparian bottoms is a diverse mix of perennial grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. Trees and shrubs show no evidence of high-lining or heavy browsing resulting in hedging and recruitment is occurring. Riparian bottoms throughout the allotments provide suitable year-round habitat for wildlife species dependent on herbaceous cover.
- 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 on the allotment are in proper working order and are contributing toward improved livestock distribution and pasture reliability.
- Management plans provide sufficient flexibility to allow management to adapt to changing resource conditions.

Management Strategy

Permitted use on the Fourr allotment will be 88 head of cattle or equivalent year round, not to exceed six months or 700 AUMs. The number and class of livestock will be allowed to vary depending on resource conditions and management objectives, provided annual use does not exceed the total AUMs authorized. Such changes will be documented and authorized in the annual operating instructions (AOI) for the allotment. Depending on prevailing climate, resource conditions, management needs, and permittee preference, actual use may be less than authorized in some years.

The Fourr allotment is comprised of two pastures and one trap. The trap is typically only used at the end of the season before cattle leave the Forest. Cattle are usually placed in the Upper Forest pasture during the first half of the season and then are moved into the Lower Forest pasture for the remainder of the season. The allotment is watered by four springs, two wells, one dirt tank, and a trick tank. The two wells are reliable and provide primary water to the allotment. The Fourr well, in particular, provides water to four

troughs on Forest as well as numerous other troughs found off Forest. Two of the four springs are considered reliable in years of at least average precipitation and help to supplement the well water.

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% 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.

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 (FSH 2509.22) 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, provide herbaceous residue for soil protection and to increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. An annual utilization guideline of 30-45% 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 weed seeds.

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 if possible.
- 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, the Forest will insure that no more than 1% of agaves within 800 meters of a project are impacted. The objective is to avoid impacts to lesser long-nosed bat and Mexican long-nosed bat food resources.
- All proposed range facilities 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.
- The Forest will implement the Forest's Stockpond and Aquatic Habitat Management and Maintenance Guidelines for the Chiricahua leopard frog (*Rana chiricahuensis*) (PR 49). The objectives are 1) to minimize short-term impacts to frogs while allowing maintenance activities that maintain occupied habitats, and 2) to protect shoreline and emergent vegetation and to improve water quality.

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 proposed 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 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 if possible.
- 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

The Fourr allotment currently has no new range improvements planned. If management actions indicate the need for additional range improvements not listed above, further interdisciplinary (ID) review or NEPA analysis will occur. Based on the results of the ID review, the District Ranger will determine whether further NEPA analysis or documentation is required.

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 effects 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.

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. Two basic types of monitoring will be carried out on the Fourr allotment in order to implement timely and effective adaptive management.

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.

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.