

**DECISION NOTICE**  
and  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
USDA, Forest Service, Region 3

**ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
for  
**GRANDFATHER (PS) and RED HILL ALLOTMENTS**

**Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests**  
**Alpine Ranger District**  
**Apache and Greenlee Counties, Arizona**

**DECISION**

Based on comments from public scoping, input received during the 30 day comment period, and the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the allotment management plan for the Grandfather (PS) and Red Hill Allotments, it is my decision to implement Alternative 5 while incorporating one aspect from Alternative 4, i.e., livestock numbers, on a temporary basis. Major components (actions) of this decision and how the decision will be implemented are detailed below.

**ACTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

1. The south portion of the PS Allotment identified in the EA is renamed the Grandfather Allotment.
2. Year-long grazing on the Forest under a deferred rotation grazing system will continue. There are two grazing periods: summer/fall (6/1-10/31) and winter/spring (11/1-5/31).
3. Livestock numbers in a new Term Grazing Permit will reflect estimated grazing capacity which is determined from "available herbaceous forage," the Agency's basis for stocking (FSH 2209.21, R-3). Permitted numbers will therefore be:

Permittee	Number of Head*	Season of Use	AUMs	Allotment
Moore Estate	32 cow/calf	6/1-10/31	162	Grandfather
Moore Estate	15 cow/calf	11/1-5/31	104	Red Hill

\*includes correction based on animal weight

4. The grazing permittee will be given one year's notice of this decision. From the date of this decision until May 31, 2000, the current grazing permit will have no changes except those already in place based on the March 25, 1998 consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The new permit will be issued June 1, 2000 for the above numbers and seasons.

5. The reduction to new permit numbers will be phased in beginning June 1, 2000, with one-third of the reduction being implemented each year during 2000, 2001 and 2002. Phased in reduction numbers and temporary numbers will be reflected in the Annual Operating Plans for these years (see table below).

6. In addition to the new Term Grazing Permit for Moore Estate, a temporary 1-year grazing permit for up to three years will be issued for additional cow/calf numbers to bring the number to 45 c/c (Alternative 4 numbers) for the summer/fall period on Grandfather Allotment and the winter/spring period on Red Hill Allotment. This temporary permit period will begin with the summer/fall period in 2001, i.e., on June 1, 2001. Term permit numbers (c/c) and temporary permit numbers (c/c) are shown in the implementation summary table below. GF indicates the Grandfather Allotment and RH indicates the Red Hill Allotment.

**IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY TABLE**

year	New Permit Number	Phased in Reducion Numbers	Temporary Numbers	Total Numbers Authorized
1999*	no change	n/a	n/a	no change
2000	GF-29 RH-15	GF-70 RH-65	n/a**	GF-70 RH-65
2001	GF-29 RH-15	GF-50 RH-40	GF-n/a** RH-5	GF-50 RH-45
2002	GF-29 RH-15	GF-29 RH-15	GF-16 RH-30	GF-45 RH-45
2003	GF-29 RH-15	na	GF-16 RH-30	GF-45 RH-45
2004***	GF-29 RH-15	na	na	GF-29 RH-15

see follow  
attached  
corrected  
table

\*no change from current permit for 90 c/c; this per FS manual which directs a one year notice of permit number reduction be given

\*\*numbers still above 45 c/c of Alternative 4

\*\*\*stocking will be evaluated in 2004 based on monitoring utilization results from 2001 through 2003

7. Allowable forage use levels, hereafter called **grazing utilization standards**, will be implemented. They will become effective June 1, 2000 with current AOP standards applied until then. These standards will be applied *regardless* of scheduled grazing periods for each pasture and *regardless* of the number of livestock in each pasture. These standards are a point-in-time measurement upon which pasture moves will be based. The grazing utilization standard on shrubs which are browsed will be 40%, except from 3/16- 5/31 when it will be 30%. The grazing utilization standards for grazed or "key" herbaceous species in key areas, based on range condition, are:

**GRAZING UTILIZATION STANDARD BY RANGE CONDITION**

Season of Use	Good	Fair	Poor
6/1-7/15*	30%	25%	20%
7/16-10/31	40%	35%	25%
11/1-5/31	none	35%	25%

\*lower during this period because of limited growth and no rest years for pastures

8. Monitoring will be conducted by the Forest Service as noted in the EA, Appendix H, including implementation monitoring of grazing utilization standards and effectiveness monitoring of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

8a. Grazing utilization monitoring will be conducted a *minimum* of two times for each pasture scheduled for livestock use: once prior to livestock entry and once at about the mid-point of the scheduled pasture use period (earlier or later, if indicated). Utilization at that point in time, on key species in key areas, will be measured. Some utilization monitoring in excluded pastures will be conducted in conjunction with Arizona Game and Fish Department. This, along with pre-livestock utilization monitoring, will help determine wild ungulate use.

8b. Monitoring of BMPs will occur via various methods, one of which is grazing utilization monitoring as noted above. Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) and General Aquatic Wildlife (GAWS) are two other methods that will be conducted and include assessment of factors (bareground, plant cover, etc.) that reflect effectiveness of BMPs (see Appendix C in the EA).

9. There will be one cow/calf herd with associated bulls. There will be no separate yearling herd.

10. Range developments listed in the EA are part of this decision. The construction schedule for new developments will be identified in the Allotment Management Plan. Construction priority is:

10a - On Red Hill Allotment, fence construction or reconstruction that prevents livestock access to the Blue River.

10b - On Grandfather Allotment, construction and realignment of fences that prevent livestock access to the main Black River riparian corridor.

11. Full implementation of Arizona state Best Management Practices (BMPs), developed to prevent or reduce pollution generated by nonpoint sources such as rangeland livestock grazing, are a part of this decision.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

There are three categories of mitigation which are based on (a) the environmental analysis, (b) discussions with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and (c) discussions with the permittee.

1. Mitigation for threatened, endangered and proposed species:

- a. No livestock will be allowed to graze on the Blue River riparian corridor on National Forest System lands on the Red Hill Allotment. This means that the North River (also called River) Pasture, FS Trap, and Bush Trap, or 203 acres (0.027% of the allotment), will not be grazed by livestock.
- b. All livestock crossing the Blue River on the Red Hill Allotment on National Forest System lands will be at the concrete low water crossing at Blue Crossing (Forest Road 567).
- c. There will be no livestock entry on to the Grandfather Allotment before June 1st.
- d. There will be no livestock entry on to the Red Hill Allotment before November 1st.
- e. There will no re-grazing of pastures on either allotment. When, for a particular period (summer/fall or winter/spring), scheduled pastures have been grazed through by livestock before the scheduled exit date for that period, livestock will be removed from the allotment and off

Forest if it is before the entry date of the next period, i.e., before 6/1 for summer/fall or 11/1 for winter spring. The grazing permittee will need off-Forest arrangements if removal is necessary.

2. Mitigation for permittee livestock operations:

- a. Phased in reduction from current permit numbers to new permit numbers.
- b. Temporary permits to bring numbers to 45 c/c for three years (2001, 2002, 2003) with stocking evaluated in 2004 based on monitoring utilization results from 2001 through 2003.

3. General mitigation:

- a. In order to help mitigate the "season of use" issue, the grazing utilization standards will be 5-10% lower during early summer on Grandfather Allotment and 10% lower during spring on the Red Hill Allotment (see number 7 under Actions above). The adjustment is necessary where livestock grazing use occurs during these periods because of limited growth prior to summer rains, increased livestock/wild ungulate competition during this period, and lack of other management options, such as a rest rotation grazing system.

### RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

1. Issuing a term permit for more than estimated carrying capacity for livestock (Alternative 4) is inconsistent with Forest Plan standards, therefore Alternative 5, which is consistent, was selected. However, more intensive management in some cases can allow greater numbers while meeting resource objectives, hence, the temporary permits for up to three years to see if this is possible.

2. Utilization monitoring will validate capacities. This and other monitoring (see Appendix H) fulfills requirements for the Apache-Sitgreaves Forests' Monitoring Action Plan, US Fish and Wildlife concurrences, state Best Management Practices, etc.

3. Implementation of grazing utilization standards consistent with Forest Plan direction, upon which pasture moves are made, will provide for recovery of vegetation in terms of plant vigor, reproduction, and amount of growth (forage production). Improvement of soil and watershed condition will take place.

4. Because there are no years of rest for pastures and in order to better address the season of use issue, grazing utilization standards are lower from 3/16 through 7/15. This will help assure movement toward Desired Conditions (DCs).

5. While available forage is the basis for stocking, 100% of available forage is *not* 100% of all the vegetation on the allotment. Available forage represents 26% of total herbaceous production on the Grandfather Allotment. On the Red Hill Allotment, it represents 4% of total herbaceous production (see the tables under Forage in the Existing Conditions section of the EA). Regardless of number of livestock, the actual use period in each pasture will be determined by the grazing utilization standard with livestock moved out of the pasture when it is reached.

6. The remaining production on Potential Capacity range and all production on No capacity range (those areas whose production is not used to determine livestock capacity) is therefore present for wild ungulates. In addition, available herbaceous forage within pastures excluded from livestock (North River, FS Trap or Bush T pastures) is present for wild ungulates. Because wild ungulate grazing utilization levels may still be a concern, they will be monitored.

7. Pre-livestock utilization checks of pastures to be grazed will be conducted to allow monitoring of wild ungulate use and become input to an analysis of wild ungulate needs and population objectives as noted in the EA.
8. Implementation of grazing utilization standards will allow for recovery of riparian and other key areas, although at a slower rate than if livestock were not on the forest from about mid March through Mid July, that period of limited and critical growth (season of use issue).
9. Exclusion of livestock from the Blue River, thereby eliminating direct livestock impacts, will allow for recovery and enhancement of occupied Loach minnow habitat.
10. Loach minnow, American Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle and other Threatened and Endangered species or species Proposed for listing are not likely to be adversely affected (9/18/98 concurrence by the US Fish and Wildlife Service via the Guidance Criteria).
11. Implementation of grazing utilization standards also provides for habitat and foraging needs of Forest Service Sensitive and Management Indicator Species, and their prey. Continued livestock exclusion from the main Black River riparian corridor and most of the benches above it within the Grandfather Allotment will provide maintenance and improvement of important habitat for bighorn sheep, a sensitive species, during the critical winter and spring period.
12. The one year's notice to the permittee and a phase-in of reduced livestock numbers will help mitigate impacts to livestock operations and allow time for adjustments.

Grazing additional livestock with temporary permits will require more herding and placement of livestock pasture but provides an opportunity to determine whether grazing utilization standards can be met through more intensive management by the permittee. Based on monitoring, stocking will be evaluated in the year 2004.

14. Accommodating a separate heifer herd on the Forest would require setting aside some pastures for a second herd. Because this would reduce the pastures and capacity for the main cow/calf herd, no accommodation was made.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Members of the public, interested private groups, grazing permittees and County, State and Federal agencies were involved. Specific actions were:

- 180 scoping reports and maps sent to District NEPA mailing list parties and to parties who had expressed interest prior to or during the analysis;
- contacts with Apache and Greenlee Counties, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Game and Fish Department, White Mountain Apache Tribe, US Fish and Wildlife Service and grazing permittees;
- written replies, telephone conversations and/or informal meetings with concerned respondents; and
- 37 parties were sent copies of the Environmental Assessment or were notified of the availability of the Environmental Assessment for review.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**(FONSI)**

**IMPACT SUMMARY**

This is a brief summary of impacts that are detailed in the Environmental Assessment. For specifics see the tables in the EA located under Alternatives (Section II) and Environmental Impacts of the Alternatives (Section III). Even though impacts are caused by other than livestock grazing, this summary, based on the decision to be made, reflects fully implemented livestock effects only.

**Alternative 1.** Given the level of livestock grazing in this alternative (none), the expected effects would be:

- \* payments to County and US Treasury from livestock grazing receipts - none
- \* forage utilization consistent with FSM, FSH and Forest Plan considering only livestock - NA
- \* estimated watershed/riparian recovery time - 1 to 2 decades
- \* % of wild ungulate needs met on FC/PC range - 100% plus
- \* pastures receiving cool growing season rest from livestock grazing - NA

**Alternative 2.** Given the level of livestock grazing in this alternative (stocking based on 74-91% of available herbaceous forage and a 8.5 month grazing season), the expected effects would be:

- \* payments to County and US Treasury from livestock grazing receipts - \$81 and \$452
- \* forage utilization consistent with FSM, FSH and Forest Plan considering only livestock - yes
- \* estimated watershed/riparian recovery time - 1 to 2 decades
- \* % of wild ungulate needs met on FC/PC range - 100%
- \* pastures receiving cool growing season rest - 10 years out of 10

**Alternative 3.** Given the level of livestock grazing in this alternative (current permit; depending on allotment, stocking based on 266-553% of available herbaceous forage and a year-long season), the expected effects would be:

- \* payments to County and US Treasury from livestock grazing receipts - \$370 and \$1,880
- \* forage utilization consistent with FSM, FSH and Forest Plan considering only livestock - no
- \* estimated watershed/riparian recovery time - no recovery expected
- \* % of wild ungulate needs met on FC/PC range - none
- \* pastures receiving cool growing season rest from livestock grazing - 7.5 years ave. and 5 years ave. out of 10 on Grandfather and Red Hill allotments, respectively

**Alternative 4.** Given the level of livestock grazing in this alternative (stocking based on 133-276% of available herbaceous forage and a year-long grazing season), the expected effects would be:

- \* payments to County and US Treasury from livestock grazing receipts - \$185 and \$941
- \* forage utilization consistent with FSM, FSH and Forest Plan considering only livestock - no
- \* estimated watershed/riparian recovery time - 2 to 3 plus decades
- \* % of wild ungulate needs met on FC/PC range - none
- \* pastures receiving cool growing season rest from livestock grazing - 7.5 years ave. and 5 years ave. out of 10 on Grandfather and Red Hill allotments, respectively

Alternative 5. Given the level of livestock grazing in this alternative (stocking based on 100% of available herbaceous forage and a year-long season), the expected effects would be:

- \* payments to County and US Treasury from livestock grazing receipts - \$85 and \$437
- \* forage utilization consistent with FSM, FSH and Forest Plan considering only livestock - yes
- \* estimated watershed/riparian recovery time - 2 to 3 decades
- \* % of wild ungulate needs met on FC/PC range - none
- \* pastures receiving cool growing season rest from livestock grazing - 7.5 years ave. and 5 years ave. out of 10 on Grandfather and Red Hill allotments, respectively

## SIGNIFICANCE FINDINGS

**Context.** This decision is a site specific action that by itself does not have international, national or state-wide importance. The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the actions and results expected as a consequence of this decision. The discussion that follows is within the context of local and regional importance. "Local" is considered to be the area associated with the Alpine Ranger District and "regional" is considered to be Apache, Greenlee and Navajo Counties.

**Intensity.** The following is based on the Ten Significance Criteria described in National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1508.27).

### 1. Impacts from this decision are both beneficial and adverse.

As noted in the EA, changes in livestock income may be substantial for an individual permittee. However, on a local or regional level, changes are small (less than one percent). For example, this decision, based on the 25% Fund Payment to Counties, is expected to generate \$209 (\$303 with temporary numbers) for Apache County. These amounts represent 0.2% and 0.4%, respectively, of the total amount paid to Apache County. For comparison, the current amount paid from grazing associated with these allotments, as a percentage of the total 25% Fund Payment to Apache County, is 0.8%. Based on this decision, the amounts for Greenlee County are \$240 (\$597 with temporary numbers) which are 0.25% and 0.6%, respectively, of the total amount paid to Greenlee County. For comparison, the current amount paid from grazing associated with these allotments, as a percentage of the total 25% Fund Payment to Greenlee County, is 0.9%.

These amounts, and the changes in them, are based on one source of income to the counties, i.e., 25% Fund Payments. The amounts and changes are smaller when considered as percentages of the total 1998 General County Receipts. All amounts and percentages would be even less in the three county context.

If 1995 Permit Issuance decisions expected effects are included with 1997 AMP decision expected effects, the Payments to Counties as a percent of 1998 General County Receipts would change from 10.9% to 6.2% for Apache County and from 3.5% to 3.8% for Greenlee County, *provided that* other sources of county income did not increase or decrease. In terms of year long jobs associated with the 1995 and 1997 decisions for both Apache and Greenlee Counties, jobs per 100 head of livestock would be expected to change from 62.2 to 51.8.

Beneficial impacts are primarily to vegetation, soils and water with concomitant benefits to wildlife. These benefits will accrue over time, with two to three decades to

realize full recovery and improvement. Once the decision is fully implemented, benefits will also accrue to livestock operations as stocking within capacity assures operational stability and long term productivity on a per animal basis.

2. The nature of this decision does not deal with factors of Public health and safety and is therefore expected to have no effect on Public health and safety. This action is not a new type of action for the Forest Service and nothing has developed in the analysis or scoping that indicates a threat to Public health and safety.

3a. The geographic area affected by this decision (two allotments: Grandfather and Red Hill) is not in proximity to any park lands or prime farmlands, so no significant impacts would result from implementation of the decision.

The southern boundary of the Grandfather Allotment is within a tenth to one-quarter of a mile from the main Black River which is considered eligible for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River System. Management and activities on the allotment will cause no significant impacts to the, primarily scenic, qualities which are the basis for this eligibility. This is because the allotment is mostly above the high canyon walls of the Black River.

3b. Other unique characteristics:

Areas meeting Army Corp of Engineer definition for wetlands [33 CFR 328.3(b)] are present on the allotments but impacts will be minimized with implementation of the grazing utilization standards and Best Management Practices, and there will be no unavoidable loss of wetlands which would require compensatory mitigation.

These allotments contain heritage resource properties, however, there will be no significant effects to historical and prehistoric heritage resources due to 1) the low likelihood of impacts by livestock grazing, 2) due to some expected recovery from erosional processes and 3) livestock exclusion from around Caldwell Cabin and proper use with expected recovery in the vicinity of Moore Cabin.

4. The human environment includes both the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment (40 CFR 1508.14). There is no disagreement over the fact that there may be adverse economic impacts to individual livestock operations.

5. There is no indication, nor has any data been presented, that there are highly uncertain or unique or unknown risks to the human environment as a result of implementation of this decision.

6. Implementation of a decision to authorize grazing and in a particular manner (allotment management plan) is not a new type of decision for the Forest Service. As such, it does not establish a precedent. Authorization of grazing does not preclude or predetermine any future decisions regarding grazing authorizations or other uses of the lands within these allotments.

7. Cumulative impacts in the context of the analysis, i.e., across the locale (District) or region (Counties), were considered and found to be insignificant. Even if expanded to include all counties affected by grazing decisions on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, effects to the human environment as defined by 40 CFR 1508.14 are not significant.



8. In accordance with the Programmatic Agreement for Region 3 and with further discussion with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, the decision is considered to have no effect on properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

9. This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, through their 9/18/98 concurrence on the "Guidance Criteria for Determining Effects of Issuing Term Grazing Permits on Threatened, Endangered, or Species Proposed for Listing," has concurred with the findings of "May affect, not likely to adversely affect" for these allotments. This is contingent upon implementation of Mitigation Measures as described above and upon yearly documented confirmation that criteria, such as grazing utilization standards, are being met.

10. The decision incorporates requirements from Federal laws imposed for protection of the environment, some of which are implemented through State law and agency authority (see Findings section below).

#### FONSI SUMMARY

The above considerations and the analysis compiled for this site specific project proposal have not revealed any potential for significant environmental effects, therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

#### FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAW AND REGULATION

This decision is consistent with applicable law and regulation. Some examples of which include the population viability and biological diversity requirements of NFMA (36 CFR 219.19; 219.26) and the conservation of soil, water, streams/streambanks, and site productivity requirements of NFMA (36 CFR 219.27). Additional examples are Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Plan requirements regarding grazing utilization (allowable use) standards, balance of permitted use with capacity, and riparian desired conditions; and the Clean Water Act (as reauthorized 1987), Section 319, regarding nonpoint sources of pollution.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 215. A notice of appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Appeals must be filed with Eleanor S. Towns, Regional Forester, 517 Gold Ave. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102 within 45 days of the *publication date of the legal notice* of this decision in the White Mountain Independent.

Decisions related to issuance, denial, or administration of written instruments to occupy and use National Forest System lands, may be appealed by permit holders under 36 CFR 251, Subpart C, or 36 CFR 215 as noted above; but cannot be appealed under both regulations. To submit an appeal under 36 CFR 251, a permit holder must submit a written appeal to John Bedell, Forest Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, Arizona 85938 within 45 days of the *date of his decision* (see below). A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously sent to Philip R. Settles, District Ranger, Alpine Ranger District, P.O. Box 469, Alpine, Arizona 85920.

**INFORMATION CONTACT**

For further information, contact Philip R. Settles, District Ranger, or Buck McKinney, Range Staff, at Alpine Ranger District, P.O. Box 469, Alpine, Arizona, 85920, telephone 520-339-4384.

**SIGNATURE**

*Philip R. Settles*

**PHILIP R. SETTLES**  
District Ranger

2-1-99

Date of Decision Notice