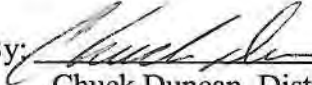



Grant Creek Allotment Management Plan

Safford Ranger District
Coronado National Forest

Prepared By:  Date: 02/13/07
Chuck Duncan, District Range Staff

Agreed to By:  Date: 2/5/07
Stockton Pass Cattle Co., Permittee

Approved By:  Date: 2/14/07
Sharon Wallace, Acting District Ranger

Description

Grant Creek: Located on the west side of the Pinaleno Mountains, the Grant Creek Allotment contains 5,325 acres, of which 2,685 are classified as capable for livestock grazing. Areas classified as "not capable" primarily consist of steep slopes in the upper elevations of the allotment. The permitted number is for 30 cattle yearlong for a total of 360 Animal Unit Months (AUM's).

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this plan is to maintain a healthy ecosystem on all land the permittee grazes, meet the needs and desires of the American public, and provide the Permittee's family an opportunity to utilize the forage resource in an environmentally sensitive and cost effective manner. This will be accomplished through pursuit of the following objectives:

- A. Use best management practices to maintain a healthy ecosystem.
- B. Improve animal husbandry practices to improve pounds of beef production while minimizing impacts on the plant resource.
- C. Use annual operating instructions to limit utilization of forage species in designated key areas to 45% in upland vegetation and 40% in riparian vegetation
- D. Maintain or enhance habitat conditions for resident wildlife by improving ground cover and riparian conditions.
- E. Stabilize soils in areas that are currently eroding.
- F. Maintain or improve visual quality of grazing allotment, through improvement of livestock management, maintaining range improvements and improving plant density and diversity.
- G. Decrease livestock impacts to meet Coronado N.F. Land Management Plan Objectives for riparian areas through design of a grazing system that addresses the physiological growth requirements of riparian plants.
- H. Maintain water sources for wildlife when cattle are not scheduled in pasture.

Management Strategy

The management of the Grant Creek Allotment will be a deferred rest rotation grazing system. The grazing schedule is presented graphically on the attached form. There are three pastures: Upper Grant, Lower Grant, and Gold Gulch. Thirty cattle are rotated between the three pastures with Lower Grant and Gold Gulch switching every other year with the cattle being present during the growing season. Implementation of this AMP will be documented in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) developed in coordination between the Forest Service and the permittee. The AOI will set forth the maximum permissible grazing use authorized for the upcoming grazing season, the planned sequence of grazing, improvements to be constructed, reconstructed, or maintained, allowable use or other standards to be followed by the permittee, and required monitoring for the grazing season.

Terms and Conditions of the Biological Opinion

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed the Final Biological Opinion on the Continuation of Livestock Grazing on the Coronado National Forest in October 2002. The Service concluded that grazing on the Grant Creek Allotment as proposed in this AMP will have no effect on the Mexican spotted owl, aplomado falcon, Apache trout, or jaguar. They also concluded that grazing as proposed is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the lesser long-nosed bat or result in incidental take; therefore, no terms and conditions were stipulated.

Livestock Distribution

Distribution of livestock within each pasture will attempt to minimize concentration of animals and the resulting overgrazing of "soft" areas. Methods to be used to improve distribution are placement of salt and protein supplement in areas of good feed; at least ¼ mile from water sources, horseback movement of cattle, control of waters where feasible, and use of existing fences.

Range Improvements

Replace two miles of Bear Canyon Pipeline & replace water storage (413009).

Range Improvement Maintenance Schedule

A list of current range improvements assigned to the permittee is attached with this document along with a map showing the location of each improvement and key study area. It is the permittee's responsibility to keep range improvements in a good working manner.

Monitoring

Progress towards the goals of this plan and the Coronado National Forest Land Management Plan will be monitored through periodic range inspections by the permittee, Forest Service, and other interested parties. Key areas have been selected for monitoring annual forage utilization (see attached map). The District Range Staff and the permittee will jointly monitor key areas in each pasture as the pasture is grazed to assure that forage use levels in individual pastures are maintained within the established limits of 45% use of the current years production in uplands and 40% use in riparian areas. Cattle should be distributed throughout the pasture to prevent areas of overuse. Normally, when any key areas begin to reach the stated use objective and/or areas of heavy use are apparent throughout the pasture, it will mean that cattle will need to be moved. Utilization of the key area will be compared to overall pasture conditions to determine if it is time to move

livestock from the pasture. This determination will be made in coordination with the permittee. If a determination is made that livestock must be moved to the next designated pasture and if evaluations of forage conditions in the next pasture indicate insufficient forage, then the livestock will be moved off the Forest.

Pace Frequency Transects, and permanent photo points will be used to document soil and vegetative condition and trend. Periodic production and utilization studies will further evaluate range capacity. The monitoring aspect will be to determine if the applied management is or is not leading to or meeting the Forest Plan objectives and goals. Should this monitoring show trends that are not moving toward or meeting forest plan objectives, replanning or stocking adjustments will be initiated. The permittee will be invited to assist in all monitoring procedures.

Flexibility

Minor adjustments to this plan in response to changing weather, prescribe burns, etc., will be made through agreement between the District Ranger and the Permittee and will be appropriately documented. Significant changes will require a written amendment to this plan.

Attached Documents

- A. Grazing schedule
- B. Map of Allotment showing range improvements and key areas for monitoring

