



United States Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

# Allotment Management Plan

## Hell's Hole Allotment



Clifton Ranger District  
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests  
Arizona

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8/31/2023

Date

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8/31/23

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8/31/2023

Date

## **I. Introduction and Background Information**

The Hell's Hole Allotment is located on the Clifton Ranger District of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests and encompasses approximately 5,635 acres in the semi-desert grasslands and pinyon/juniper woodlands.

Elevation on the Allotment Varies from 4,800 to 6,800 feet above sea level. Terrain varies from moderately sloped on the southern and western foothills to steep sloped canyons and drainages. The terrain is volcanic in origin with the alluvial low hills and plains, massive rock outcrops and uneven mountainous terrain.

## **II. Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this Allotment Management Plan (AMP) is to document management outlined in the September 30, 1999, grazing management decision for this allotment. The AMP is intended to be incorporated into, and be made part of, the current and any future Term Grazing Permit(s) that authorizes livestock grazing on this allotment. This AMP, as called for in the September 30, 1999, Decision Notice, provides for flexibility of the yearly stocking rates and scheduled pasture use periods ( $\pm 15$  days) on the Hell's Hole Allotment in order to be responsive to annual fluctuations in resource conditions and permittee requirements. Annual adjustments in management will be developed with permittee input and documented in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).

The objectives of this AMP are to:

1. Maintain or improve current range conditions on the allotment by limiting grazing use of forage plants to conservative or moderate levels and by providing periods of growing season rest or deferment for forage plants.
2. Maintain or improve watershed conditions to satisfactory levels on the allotment by managing for the ecological site potential level of herbaceous ground cover and allowing for residual plant materials to accumulate.
3. Maintain current proper functioning riparian conditions for all springs/seeps on the allotment by not salting or placing supplements near the springs/seeps.
4. Manage for drought conditions by maintaining forage plants at, or near, their highest potential for growth (vigor) and reserving unused forage when possible.

### III. Management

#### **Stocking Level and Class of Livestock**

The Decision dated September 30, 1999; sets guidelines authorizing the grazing of 82 head of cattle (cow/calf) or 117 head of cattle (yearlings) from October 16 to April 15. The objective of the AMP is to reduce the level of utilization in areas with unsatisfactory range condition by redistribution of use to other areas of the allotment without creating unacceptably high levels of use in these other areas. This AMP will use adaptive management to make annual adjustments in the livestock grazing system to meet the objectives.

A Biological Opinion (02EAAZ00-2015-F-0849) was issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on February 2, 2017 which provided that *“The ASNFs shall ensure that allotment and pasture fences are maintained to ensure that cattle are not using the Blue River for forage or watering. If fences are found to be damaged they shall be immediately repaired. If livestock are found in the Blue River they will be immediately removed.”*

The following management measures will be implemented:

1. Grazing of livestock of up to 82 head of cattle (cow/calf) or 117 head of cattle (yearlings) from October 16 to April 15. Included in these numbers are replacement heifers, weaned or yearling holdovers, and bulls.
2. Provide supplement for livestock as follows (to encourage distribution of forage use):
  - Locate supplement sites 0.25 miles or more from waters, except where prior written approval has been obtained from the District Ranger.
  - Place supplements where forage is abundant and current grazing use levels are low. Supplements should not be placed at any one location more than once during the grazing season (this will prevent the concentration of livestock).
  - Limit supplement types to salt, protein, and mineral blocks to reduce risk of spreading noxious weeds and to reduce the risk of creating areas of concentrated livestock use.
  - Supplementing or feeding grass, alfalfa or any other type of hay (whether in bale or cube form) on National Forest System Lands is not authorized. Feeding hay or supplements indicates a lack of available forage and livestock shall be removed from areas with little or no forage available. Exceptions that may be authorized by the District Ranger include feeding animals held in corrals and emergency situations.
3. Continued maintenance of all assigned and existing range developments.

#### **Standards for Maintenance of Range Improvements**

Maintenance Standards for range improvements: stock water developments, troughs, pipelines, and stock water ponds are as follows:

1. All spring source facilities should be adequately protected.
2. Water troughs will be maintained to a functional status.
3. All troughs should be equipped with a wildlife escape ramp.
4. Pipelines will be maintained to a functional status.
5. Pipelines with valve cover-boxes will be kept covered and repaired when needed.
6. Stock water ponds will be cleaned and maintained as needed with coordination of the District Range Staff.

**Range Fences and Corrals**

All range fences will be maintained to a functional status.

**Monitoring and Inspections**

This AMP will utilize a seasonally deferred management system.

**Grazing Utilization Guidelines**

Proper utilization of forage plants is a necessity to maintain long term productivity of the rangeland and to protect soils from erosion. Proper utilization will maintain sufficient ground cover to prevent erosion and meet the physiological needs of key forage plants for maintenance and reproduction over the long term. Allowable use is determined from considering proper use and all influencing factors such as grazing system, range condition, watershed condition, timing, and duration of livestock use and scheduled amount of rest between use periods.

The Decision dated September 30, 1999, sets guidelines for forage utilization of 40% in key areas. Key forage utilization monitoring areas are identified on the allotment map.

**Implementation Monitoring**

Monitoring would be conducted within the identified key areas of each pasture by Forest Service personnel in coordination with the permittee. The following key areas and pastures would be monitored annually:

Pasture	Location	Key Areas	Allowable Use
Hell's Hole Allotment	Uplands	All	40% herbaceous

Alternative monitoring sites could be established to address resource concerns outside of the existing key areas.

Monitoring would be conducted at the approximate midpoint of the scheduled use period and/or within the time frame of 2 weeks prior and 2 weeks after livestock are scheduled to exit a pasture. Key areas and/or permanent transects will be monitored to determine actual grazing/seasonal use by livestock/wildlife.

If utilization levels are approaching allowable use levels, livestock will be required to be moved to areas within the pasture or other pastures that are not approaching allowable use levels. In the event that areas not approaching the allowable use are unavailable, livestock will be removed from the allotment when allowable use rates are met. Management adjustments will be made to the following year's Annual Operating Instructions to avoid recurring instances of over-utilization.

**Effectiveness Monitoring**

Long term condition and trend monitoring will be used to assess the effectiveness of management in achieving desired objectives for range and watershed conditions. This monitoring may include but is not limited to measurements to track upland vegetative soil conditions and trend. Methods may include Common Non-Forested Vegetation Sampling Protocol (CNVSP), Parker 3-Step, ground cover, and photo points.