

Allotment Management Plan

Horner Mountain

USDA Forest Service

Verde Ranger District, Prescott National Forest

Yavapai County, Arizona

Introduction

The Horner Mountain Allotment is located on the Verde Ranger District of the Prescott National Forest. It encompasses the eastern edge of the Aqua Fria Grasslands, T11N, R4E, GSRBM. The allotment is approximately 10 miles east of the I-17 /Dugas Road interchange. The allotment is characterized by wide, flat mesas dissected by steep canyons draining southwesterly from the Verde Rim. The mesas are dominated by tobosa, the canyon bottoms and slopes are generally browse species with Sideoats grama and squirrel tail found in the browse openings. The higher elevation mesa tops are a juniper vegetation type. Soils are primarily of basaltic origin with clay being the dominant soil component. The Horner Mountain Allotment contains approximately 21,143 USFS acres, elevations run from 4,100 to 5,900 feet. The allotment is run on a 4 pastures rest-rotation system.

Desired Condition & Resource Objectives

The desired conditions and resource objectives for resources and infrastructure on this grazing allotment, based on the Forest Plan and the work of the Interdisciplinary Analysis Team, include:

- rangeland management that can respond to local or national demands for livestock production while maintaining air, soil and water resources at or above minimum local, State or Federal standards (Forest Plan, pg. 11);
- range administration that provides for the maintenance of satisfactory rangeland management status with a static or upward apparent trend (Forest Plan, pg. 32);
- management of the grazing operations using a system that is responsive to changing climatic or environmental conditions;
- the maintenance of vegetation with mid- to high similarity to the potential natural plant community (PNC) providing for ecological functionality and resiliency following disturbance while sustaining long-term productivity of the land;
- the installation and maintenance of structural improvements, such as water-supply systems, that enhance management control and flexibility and allow for effective distribution of forage use;
- the control of noxious weeds which is managed under the Tri-Forest Noxious or Invasive Control Plan;
- the maintenance of soils in satisfactory condition over the long-term with improving conditions in areas departing from satisfactory condition;

- the maintenance of satisfactory conditions for water resources that meet total maximum daily load (TMDL) and other State water quality objectives;
- the maintenance of functioning spring-fed riparian systems, and saturated soils where potential exists, that support vegetation within site potential and provide habitat for riparian-dependent plants and animals while providing water sources for wildlife and livestock needs;
- the maintenance of fully functional riparian systems supported by herbaceous and multi-age woody vegetation, within site potential, that provides for geomorphically stable stream channels and banks and habitat for riparian-dependent plants and animals. Functional riparian systems support water quality and both hydrogeomorphic and biological attributes and processes;
- protection and preservation of important historic and cultural sites; and
- the maintenance of suitable habitats for Management Indicator Species, Migratory Bird Treaty Act species, federally Threatened and Endangered species, Forest Service Sensitive species, and for indigenous plant and animal species.

Grazing Management

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

Permittee	Permit Type	# of Livestock	Season of Use	Animal Months
Four Leaf Cattle Co. LLC	Term (10 years)	330 (cow/calf) & 5 horses	Year-long	4020 Animal- Unit- Months ¹

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. The current grazing permit will allow for 330 cow calf pairs and 5 horses to run a four pasture rest rotation grazing system, with each of the pastures being grazed for 4 months, providing seasonal deferment. Each pasture would only be grazed during the same season every third year. Flexibility would be built into the plan, to change an utilizations level in a particular pasture or to allow maintenance of tobosa pastures to enhance antelope habitat.

B. Grazing Management and Allowable Use

Grazing Management

Apply deferred rotation in the 4 pastures. Defer using a pasture the same time of year every year. Re-entry into a pasture will be allowed as part of the rotation following additional vegetation growth.

¹ Animal-Unit-Month (AUM) is the amount of oven-dry forage required by one mature cow of about 1,000 pounds, either dry or with a calf up to six months of age, or their equivalent, for a standardized period of 30 animal-unit-days.

Allowable Use

Site	Utilization levels
Upland sites	Upland forage (growing season) – 30-40% Upland forage (non-growing season) – 40-50%
Riparian	Riparian Woody - 20%

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). The level of use on a pasture at the time livestock are removed, is recognized that this use is "seasonal use", not utilization. Utilization should be measured at the end of the growing season.

Livestock grazing during the summer (warm-season, typically July -September), would be managed at Conservative (30-40%) use intensity on key herbaceous species identified within key areas on the allotment.

Livestock grazing prescribed use levels outside of the summer forage growing seasons would be managed at a Moderate (40-50%) use intensity on selected key herbaceous species within key areas on the allotment.

20% allowable use of current year's production on selected key riparian woody species (willow, cottonwood, ash and alder). These use prescriptions would apply at any time of the year that livestock are in the riparian area.

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.

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.

C. Rangeland Improvement Program

Adaptive management would allow for the construction of rangeland improvements if they have been identified and are determined, through monitoring, to be necessary for achieving resource objectives. Appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and cultural and biological inventories would have to be done prior to any improvement being constructed.

- All new or reconstructed fencing will be built to accommodate wildlife passage using a 4-strand fence with a smooth bottom wire 20 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.
- No ground disturbing activities, such as tank cleaning with machinery, will occur until some prior written or verbal permission has been obtained from the District. Also that cutting trees other than minor clearing along fencelines requires a permit or prior authorization.
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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.

The key area concept is based on the premise that no range of appreciable size will be grazed uniformly (Holechek, Pieper and Herbel, 1998). When key areas are “properly” used there may be substantial areas that are used more or less than the key areas, including some that will not be used at all. Forest Service personnel can work with the permittee in selecting these areas.

(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

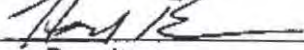
The permittee will:

- 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.

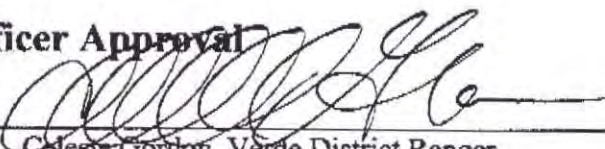
B. Effectiveness Monitoring

The permittee is encouraged to participate in any effectiveness (e.g. long term condition and trend) monitoring and evaluation conducted on the allotment. This type of monitoring evaluates the success of management in achieving the desired objectives within key and critical areas or on permanent transects at an interval of 10 years or less. Effectiveness monitoring may also be conducted if data and observations from implementation monitoring indicate a need.

Permittee Review / Agreement

Reviewed by/ agreed to  Date 5/1/12
Permittee

Forest Officer Approval

Approved By  Date 5/7/2012
Celeste Gordon, Verde District Ranger

Horner