

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

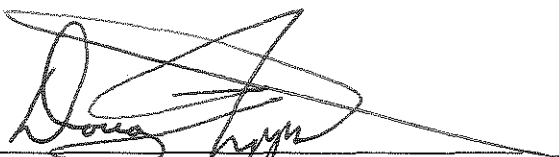
FOR

**Hunt Canyon Allotment**

Douglas Ranger District

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

Prepared By:

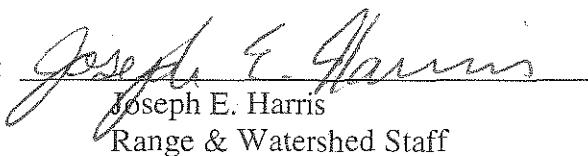


Douglas T. Ruppel  
Rangeland Management Specialist

Date:

05/04/2011

Reviewed By:

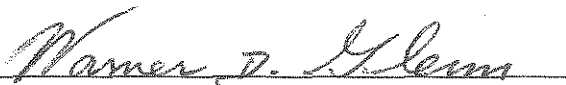


Joseph E. Harris  
Range & Watershed Staff

Date:

08/24/11

Agreed To By:



J Bar A Ranch LLC, Permittee

Date:

8/29/2011

Approved By:



William A. Edwards  
District Ranger

Date:

9/15/2011

## Introduction

The Hunt Canyon allotment is located in the southern section of the Chiricahua Mountain Ecological Management Area (EMA) of the Douglas Ranger District, in Cochise County. It is bounded on the east by the Tex Canyon allotment and on the west by the Barboot allotment. The Pedregosa allotment is to the south and the Bruno allotment is to the north. The allotment consists of 8,311 acres, of which approximately 6,920 are considered capable for grazing. Approximately 17% of the allotment is greater than 40% slope and considered non-capable for grazing.

Allotment condition and trend studies have been conducted since the mid-1950s and most recently in 2006. Range and soil conditions are improving and meeting Forest Plan standards, although the presence of Lehmann and Boer's lovegrass tends to reduce condition estimates on some sites. Soil stability at all sites is improving as evidenced by increases in litter and decreases in bare soil.

Several allotment trend studies have been conducted on the Hunt Canyon Allotment in 1953, 1969, 1978, & 1995 using the Parker-3 method. Trend studies indicate a gradual improvement in range and soil condition. Most recently in 2006 Parker transects were read using the dry-weight rank method indicating that range condition to be improving with a upward trend. One of the four clusters rated as being in poor vegetation condition, due to the presence of large amounts of Lehmann lovegrass. Since 1998 on-the-ground inspections have indicated a visible improvement in range condition. There has been light stocking of the allotment due to drought conditions. A recent assessment of soils indicated 100% of the allotment in satisfactory condition.

There are five large pastures and two smaller pastures that are used in a deferred rotation. The Doane pasture is a relatively rough pasture on the southeastern corner of the allotment covered by madrean encinal vegetation with no road access. The High Lonesome Johns and Home pastures are in the middle of the allotment and are comprised of a desert grassland vegetation type with varying amounts of juniper and oak. These pastures have limited road access on FR 722 and FR 4362. The Bruno pasture on the north end of the allotment is a rough pasture in the madrean encinal vegetation class with no road access. The five larger pastures are rotated in a deferred manner but were very dependent on the availability of stock water prior to recent improvements. The allotment is watered by 13 concrete and earthen dams, two trick tanks with over 44,000 gallon capacity, four wells (one on private land), and two springs with pipelines.

Most of the capable acreage falls within a desert grassland vegetation type. The desert grassland vegetation acres are mostly on lower elevation uplands and south facing slopes. The north facing slopes are mostly a madrean encinal woodland vegetation type. The lower portion of Hunt Canyon is designated a riparian area under the Coronado Forest Plan. The riparian tree over-story is comprised of mostly Arizona walnut and some Arizona ash trees and therefore, it is considered a deciduous riparian area.

Under the Coronado Forest Plan most of the allotment lies within Forest Management Area (MA) 4, which allows livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and fuel wood harvest. The lower portion of Hunt Canyon is classified as MA7 or riparian designation.

### **Recent Management**

The Hunt Canyon allotment has been permitted to the Glenn family since 1940. Since that time the average stocking rate has been 154 cow/calf pairs yearlong. Dependable stock water on the allotment was the limiting factor in most years. Utilization levels of 45% were occurring in key areas even at the lower stocking rates that the Glenn family had voluntarily chosen over an extended period of time. Due to these factors the decision was made to reduce the permit to the historical use level and to seek improvements in water distribution and the distribution of grazing pressure.

The production/utilization studies conducted in 2005/06 recommended a stocking rate of 182 cows or 2887 AUMs. Based on actual historical stocking, capable acres, and ecological site guides for the area, it is felt that the allotment could run full permitted numbers in most years if it had reliable stock water.

The permittee has run a cow/calf operation on this allotment for more than 60 years and has been proactive in addressing range management concerns. The primary management issue historically has been the lack of reliable water in large portions of the allotment.

### **Issues, Concerns, & Conflicts**

The following 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:

- Water availability and distribution was mentioned in the EA for this allotment. As has been mentioned, the water developments now in place should have a significantly positive impact on the future management of this allotment.

### **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 Hunt Canyon allotment published in March 2008.

Based on Forest Plan goals and site-specific knowledge of the allotments, the following objectives constitute the desired condition for the analysis area:

- Stocking rate 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 allotments have stable soils, functional hydrology and support functional biotic communities. All areas are at or moving toward their ecological potential.
- Native vegetation in riparian bottoms is a diverse mix of perennial grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. Recruitment of young trees is occurring and trees and shrubs show no evidence of high-lining or hedging. Riparian bottoms throughout the allotments provide suitable year-round habitat for 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 necessary for management on all allotments are in proper working order and are contributing toward improved livestock distribution and pasture reliability.

### **Grazing Strategy**

A new term grazing permit was issued to J Bar A Ranch LLC in January of 2010. This permit is for 154 cow/calf pairs yearlong. This was a reduction from the previous permit for 195 cow/calf pairs over the same period.

The stocking rate has been reduced on this allotment to reflect historical stocking rate, ecological conditions and the lack of reliable waters. Since additional waters have been developed, the Forest will conduct additional production/utilization studies in the future and other monitoring as necessary to determine the potential for increasing the stocking rate and to what extent.

Grazing will be authorized on each pasture using rotational or seasonal grazing in order to incorporate growing season rest or deferment to allow for grazed plant recovery. Pastures grazed during the summer growing season (July-September) will not be grazed during the growing season the following year. On all allotments, the sequence and timing of pasture moves and entry and exit from the allotments would be based on monitoring of range readiness, ecological condition, water availability and utilization.

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 percent 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.

The number and class of livestock will be allowed to vary depending on resource conditions and management objectives, provided that annual use does not exceed the AUMs authorized for the allotment. Annual adjustments would be documented and authorized in annual operating instructions. Depending on prevailing climate, resource

conditions, management needs and permittee preference, actual use may be significantly less than authorized in some years.

## **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 prevent 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, increase herbaceous residue needed for soil protection and to increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. A utilization guideline of 30-45 percent 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 weeds.

*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.
- 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, no more than 1 percent of agaves within 800 meters of a project are to be impacted. The objective is to avoid impacts to lesser long-nosed bat food resources.
- All proposed range improvements 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.

*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 structural 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 heritage 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.
- Supplements will be packed into remote country, and not simply dumped out of a truck where it is convenient, as this does not promote improved livestock distribution.
- 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. 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 improved livestock distribution.

## **Range Improvement Construction Priority**

The following structural improvements were proposed in the Decision Notice signed in 2008 in order to improve livestock distribution and pasture reliability.

- Drill a water well in the upper portion of John's pasture in order to provide reliable stock water for the John's, Doane and High Lonesome pastures.
- Install a fiberglass umbrella rainwater catchment on the ridge west of the gate in Bruno pasture.
- Extend the fence 1.0 mile between the Bruno and the John's pastures.

The permittee has been very successful in acquiring outside funding for many of the range improvements needed to improve the infrastructure on this allotment. In 2010 the permittee was awarded a combined EQIP contract and HPC grant which included the proposed water developments in the Doane, High Lonesome and John's pastures. This project included two 5,000 gallon poly tanks at Saner Spring and one 5,000 gallon poly tank at Upper High Lonesome well. These storages were flown in by a Forest Service contract helicopter and solar pumping units were provided for each site by the permittee. In addition, the permittee drilled a new solar well at the Upper Johns site to supply water to a 15,000 gallon storage site. This well and storage system were connected by 3,800 feet of 1.25" Numex pipe to 3 new troughs. One trough is located in the Doane pasture, one in the John's pasture and one in the High Lonesome pasture. As requested by the Forest Service, the permittee also constructed 8,100 feet of new fence between the Bruno and John's pastures using material provided by the Forest Service. The permittee has completed most of the water developments contemplated in the Decision Notice which was signed in 2008. The water catchment in the Bruno pasture has not been completed.

There are currently no non-structural improvements such as brush control or erosion control measures proposed for this allotment.

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 affects 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.

*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.

Additionally, species-specific monitoring requirements are in place for Mearns' quail, Goshawk, Chiricahua leopard frog, and Mexican spotted owl, as described in the Grazing Strategy portion of the Environmental Assessment.

### **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 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.

**J BAR A RANCH LLC  
HUNT CANYON ALLOTMENT  
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Phone (520)558-1800 \*\*\* Fax (520)558 1900**

September 2, 2011

William A. Edwards  
District Ranger, Douglas Ranger District  
Coronado National Forest  
Douglas, AZ 85608

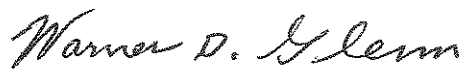
Dear Bill,

Concerning the Allotment Management Plan for Hunt Canyon Allotment:

I would like a memo attached to the Allotment Management Plan that we have hired a Natural Resource Consultant, Mr. Larry Allen, USFS (ret), to conduct a forage production and utilization evaluation on the Hunt Canyon Allotment for the last 10 years. Copies of these reports are on file in the Douglas Ranger District Office.

This was done to aid us, as ranch managers, to help plan future management decisions and realize the changes over the last 10 years of the US Forest Service and our management of this allotment.

We also want it on record that we thank the Forest Service for their help with the many improvements completed in the last year on the Hunt Canyon Allotment.

Sincerely,  
  
Warner D. Glenn

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September 12, 2011

William A. Edwards  
District Ranger, Douglas Ranger District  
Coronado National Forest  
Douglas, AZ 85608

Dear Bill,

We have one more concern that we would like to have on the record:

Concerning Fire on the landscape; we are a year around permit and in the event that a fire were to start on the Hunt Canyon allotment, we are asking that the feed conditions and the weather (dry, moderate, etc.) be considered before a let-burn action is taken. A fire could be detrimental to our allotment management plan and our survival as permittees.

We are pro-fire, however in this case, we are asking for this point to be taken regarding the grazing use areas on the Hunt Canyon Allotment.

Sincerely,

*Kelly Glenn-Kimbrow*  
*for J Bar A Ranch LLC*  
Warner & Wendy Glenn      *POA for Warner + Wendy Glenn*  
Kelly Glenn-Kimbrow