ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR THE

LOCHIEL ALLOTMENT

SEIRRA VISTA RANGER DISTRICT

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

Prepared By: _____ Date: 5/7/05
William A Edwards
District Range & Watershed Staff

Agreed To By: _____ Date: 5-9-05
Ramon De La Ossa
Permittee

Approved By: _____ Date: 05/11/05
Stephen L. Gunzel
District Ranger

INTRODUCTION

The Lochiel Allotment is permitted Ramon De La Ossa. In 2005, an environmental analysis (EA) was completed, and a new term permit was issued for a range of 50-61 cow/calf cattle for nine months (October – June). The EA and decision notice were the guiding documents for this allotment management plan.

The Lochiel Allotment is located approximately 25 miles east of Nogales and just west of Lochiel, Arizona. It includes 2,557 acres in the foothills on the east side of the Patagonia Mountains and lies along the Mexico border to the south. The allotment is bordered on the west corner by the Alisos Allotment, the Duquesne and Hayfield Allotments to the north, and the San Rafael Valley and the Coronado National Forest Boundary on the east.

The same family has owned the ranch for over 70 years. Until 2005, it was permitted for 79 CYL with an additional 2 CYL private land permit for 160 acres of private land (1283 total AUM). It is operated under a cow-calf, two-pasture deferred rotation. With only 2 pastures, management flexibility has been limited. The permittee has attempted to mitigate this by splitting growing season use between the two pastures and removing livestock during dry periods. Allowable use has been set at 45% of key species in key areas.

An allotment analysis conducted in 1969 indicated that approximately 23% of the allotment was in good range condition, 66% was in fair condition, and 11% was in poor condition. An analysis conducted in 1999 indicated that approximately 69% of the allotment was in good ecological condition, 18% was in fair condition, and 12% was in poor condition. Riparian studies conducted in 1999 at one location on the allotment (San Antonio Canyon) showed an upward trend from a study done in 1986 and rated the site in good condition overall. This was attributed primarily to an increase of young woody riparian species in that portion of the drainage. It is worth noting that different methods were used during the 1999 range and riparian analyses than were used in the previous studies. Two transects were re-read in 2002 with mixed results. One transect indicated a significant improvement from poor to fair ecological condition in the East Pasture. The other indicated a decline from good to fair ecological condition, largely attributable to a high annual weed component that year. A production-utilization study conducted in 2003recommended proper stocking of 728 AUM's (46 CYL cow/calf).

During the San Rafael ecosystem planning effort of 1992-94 desired conditions were described for the forest land in the area of the San Rafael Valley. The desired conditions and objectives in this document are strongly influenced by that planning effort.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Coronado LRMP (page 10) contains the following goals for the range program on the Forest:

- To restore rangeland to at least moderately high ecological condition (70% to 75% of potential production, fair range condition) with stable soil and a static-to-upward trend.
- Produce livestock products consistent with other resources and uses.
- Eliminate grazing from areas not capable of supporting livestock without significant detriment to range or other resources.
- Balance permitted grazing use with grazing capacity.
- Provide habitat for wildlife populations consistent with the goals outlined in the Arizona and new Mexico Department of Game and Fish Comprehensive Plans and consistent with other resource values.

- Provide for ecosystem diversity by at least maintaining viable populations of all native and desirable nonnative wildlife, fish and plant species through improved habitat management.
- Improve the habitat of and the protection for local populations of Threatened and Endangered species to meet the goals of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The grazing permit and allotment management plan for the Lochiel Allotment will support these goals by providing for the following specific objectives, which constitute the desired condition in the analysis area:

- Grazing activities contributing to impaired soil quality are corrected through improved distribution.
- Ecological condition as expressed by the number of acres in fair or better condition is maintained or improved.
- Range production and movement toward site potential for each soil/vegetation site is increased.
- All grazing improvements on all allotments are in proper working order.
- Develop reliable upland waters to improve livestock distribution and pasture reliability.
- Ensure full growing season rest in all pastures every year.

The purpose of this allotment management plan is to describe on-the-ground management practices, which will achieve the above goals and objectives.

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. Grazing Strategy

To expedite recovery of degraded rangelands, both numbers of livestock and season of use will be adjusted. A range of 594-728 AUM, equivalent to 50-61 cow-calf pairs for 9 months will be authorized. Livestock will be rotated between the two existing pastures during the October-June grazing period. The order in which the two pastures will be used will alternate each year in order to provide for cool season plant species growth. Livestock will be removed from the allotment and placed on private land every growing season (July 1-September 30) in order to provide annual growing season rest on the entire allotment. See the attached rotation guide. An upland water pipeline will be developed to improve distribution in both pastures.

Initial stocking will be 50 cow-calf pairs for 9 months, October-June (594 AUM) and would remain at this level until resource conditions improve and upland waters are implemented. As improvements are completed and are effective at improving distribution, and if monitoring demonstrates achievement of desired conditions, stocking would be allowed to increase within the range defined above.

This rest-rotation plan is intentionally designed to be fairly flexible. Actual move dates will be dictated by forage and water availability. Utilization in all pastures will not to exceed 45% in the key areas. Herding and salting will be used to ensure allowable use is not exceeded. Salt and supplement will be placed appropriately, on good feed, at least ¼ mile from water and out of livestock concentration areas. Salt and supplement locations should be rotated so as not to degrade a particular site. All troughs should have water when livestock are not present, and be equipped so that small animals can safely enter and exit.

B. Terms & Conditions from Biological Opinion

The following mitigation measures have been developed to reduce or eliminate potential wildlife impacts:

- All range construction projects will be designed to avoid the destruction of agaves and the disturbance of lesser long-nosed bat roosts. If impacts to agaves are unavoidable, the Forest will ensure that no more than 1% of agaves within 800 meters of the project are impacted.
- Sonora Tiger salamander stock pond management and maintenance guidelines are in effect on the Lochiel Allotment and will continue to be implemented (EA p. 15, PR Doc. 22). The Forest will continue to inventory stock ponds within the range of the salamander with the objective of identifying sites where bankline vegetation or submerged aquatic cover can be enhanced to benefit salamander habitat.
- The Forest will implement conservation measures on the Lochiel Allotment in order to minimize impacts to Chiricahua leopard frog (EA p. 15). These measures include requirements to survey for and salvage frogs during stock pond cleaning activities; measures designed to minimize the introduction of non-native species or chytrid contamination into occupied sites; measures to reduce direct mortality and damage to aquatic cover as a result of livestock impacts and the requirement to monitor and report incidental take. The Forest will continue to inventory stock ponds within the range of the Chiricahua leopard frog with the objective of identifying sites where bankline vegetation can be enhanced to benefit frog habitat.
- Stockponds will be evaluated for the feasibility of partially fencing tanks (or completely fencing tanks in the case of double tanks, or if upland water is developed in the vicinity) for habitat enhancement of aquatic species.

C. Other Mitigation Management Practices

- The District Biologist in cooperation with AGFD has identified Mearns' quail key areas within identified high quality habitat. Allowable use within key areas will be 45% maximum with a desirable level of 35-40%. The objective of these use levels will be the maintenance of an average minimum standard of six inches of herbaceous stubble height as quail cover. This standard will be met within the normal cycle of wet and dry years.
- All water developments will be equipped with wildlife access and escape ramps, and water will be available in all troughs whether livestock are present or not, unless water has been turned off to reduce livestock impacts in a particular portion of a pasture.
- All new fencing will be built to Forest Plan standards that provide for wildlife passage through the fence. At a minimum, this will be a 4-strand fence with a smooth bottom wire 16 inches off the ground and a total fence height of 42 inches or less.
- The following Best Management Practices for grazing (FSH 2209) apply: Annually prepare an operating plan with the permittee to allow for current allotment conditions; make periodic field checks to identify needed adjustments in season of use and livestock numbers, including stock counts, forage utilization, assessment of rangeland to verify soil and vegetative condition and trend; and use necessary techniques to achieve proper distribution or lessen the impact on areas which are sensitive or will naturally be overused.

D. 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 improve livestock distribution.

E. Range Improvement Construction Priority

A pipeline will be constructed from an existing well to provide upland waters and improve distribution in both pastures. Due to topography, the storage will be placed on the Hayfield Allotment. This is the only structural improvement in the plan, and it should be completed by 2006. Unless the permittee obtains a grant or other funding source, the Forest Service will supply the materials for the above projects and the permittee will provide the labor for installation.

F. 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. The forest service will assist in supplying materials if budgets allow.

G. Fires

One of the goals of that evolved from the San Rafael Valley ecosystem management planning effort was to re-establish the role of fire on the landscape. Naturally ignited wildfires will be aggressively fought when they endanger life or property. Fires on other portions of the allotment will be fought with a containment strategy, being allowed to burn to the nearest roads or natural barriers. When planning prescribed fires, the permittee will be consulted, so that he will have time to make adequate preparations for his livestock operation, and so the rotation can be altered to allow fine fuels to accumulate. Burned areas will be allowed to rest for 1-2 growing seasons to ensure adequate recovery before livestock will be allowed access. Large portions of the Lochiel Allotment are candidates for mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loading and improve watershed conditions.

H. Monitoring

Key grazing areas have been identified in most pastures, and will be monitored for utilization levels and long-term trend. The permittee is encouraged to participate in the monitoring practices. Close records of livestock numbers, movements dates, shipping records, and rainfall dates and amounts will be kept by the permittee and will be provided to the USFS annually. Long term trend monitoring will include, but are not limited to: measurements to track upland range condition and watershed condition (hydrologic function), as well as the use of permanent photo points. Techniques may include, but are not limited to: dry weight rank, comparative yield, pace transects, parker 3-step, repeat photography, grazed plant count, and clipping and weighing.

Additionally, species-specific monitoring requirements are in place for Mearns quail as described in the Grazing Strategy portion of this document.

Lochiel Rotation Guide

YEAR 1 **YEAR 2**

Pasture	Months	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
West	5.5																								
East	3.5																								
Private (off Forest)	3.0																								

Rotation Begins Again

GROWING SEASON USE

DORMANT SEASON USE