

Allotment Management Plan
For The
Lyle Canyon & Canelo Allotments
Sierra Vista Ranger District
Coronado National Forest

Prepared By: Thomas E. Lorenz Date: 7/28/04
Thomas E. Lorenz
District Range & Watershed Staff

Agreed To By: Byrd Lindsey Date: 28 July 04
Byrd Lindsey, for
E Lazy H Ranch Partnership
Permittee

Approved By: Stephen L. Gunzel Date: 07/28/04
Stephen L. Gunzel
District Ranger

Introduction:

This document is an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for the Lyle Canyon and Canelo Allotments on the Sierra Vista Ranger District, Coronado National Forest. It is designed to be a flexible guide for improved livestock management on these allotments, as directed by the environmental assessment (EA) and subsequent decision notice (DN) signed by District Ranger Stephen Gunzel on May 13, 2003. This AMP is part of the permit for the Lyle Canyon and Canelo Allotments.

The Lyle Canyon Allotment is located west of the Huachuca Mountains and extends into the Canelo Hills in Cochise and Santa Cruz Counties, Arizona. It contains approximately 11,738 acres, of which 8,814 acres are capable of supporting livestock. Elevations range from 4900 ft. in Lyle Canyon to 7900 ft. at the head of Lyle Canyon. Vegetation is predominately broadleaf woodland with smaller acreages of coniferous forest and deciduous and evergreen riparian woodland. The EA indicates that 62% is in moderately high range condition with an upward (1%) or static (61%) trend, 35% is in moderately low range condition with an upward (28%) or static (7%) trend, and 3% is in low range condition with an upward trend.

The Canelo Allotment is located in the east end of the Canelo Hills in Santa Cruz County, Arizona and is adjacent to the northern end of the Lyle Canyon Allotment. It contains 556 acres all of which is considered capable of supporting livestock. Elevations range from 4950 feet on Turkey Creek to 5250 ft. on the ridge tops of the Canelo Hills. Vegetation consists mostly of broadleaf evergreen woodland and a small acreage of deciduous riparian woodland. The EA indicates that 98% of the allotment is in moderately high range condition with a static trend and the remaining 2% is in moderately low range condition with an upward trend.

The Lyle Canyon and Canelo Allotments are permitted to the E Lazy H Ranch Partnership. The permit on the Lyle Canyon is for 117 to 182 CYL, cow-calf (1404-2184 head months (HM), or 1853-2883 Animal Unit Months (AUM's). The Permit on the Canelo Allotment is for up to 102 cattle for two months (March-April), cow-calf (up to 1224 HM's or 1616 AUM's).

Goals and Objectives of Management:

The Coronado Forest Plan designates the following goals for the range program on the Forest.

1. To restore to at least a moderately high ecological condition (70% to 75% of potential production. Fair range condition) with stable soil and a static or upward trend.
2. Produce livestock products consistent with other resources and uses.
3. Eliminate grazing from areas not capable of supporting livestock without significant detriment to range or other resources.
4. Balance permitted grazing with grazing capacity.

The following goals and objectives were identified in the Environmental Assessment (Page 8):

1. Downward trends in range condition caused by grazing are reversed. Areas in moderately low condition improve toward moderately high or high condition where site potential allows.
2. Satisfactory soil conditions are maintained and unsatisfactory or impaired conditions are improved.
3. Unsatisfactory riparian areas are improved to satisfactory or better condition; satisfactory or better conditions are maintained.
4. Recovery of threatened, endangered and proposed species is facilitated.
5. Management of high-density Montezuma (Mearns) quail habitat meets Forest Plan standards.
6. All grazing improvements are in proper working order.
7. Allotment boundaries, permitted numbers and rotation systems reflect recent actual use, and permit the attainment of desired resource conditions.

Management Strategy:

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.

In order to accomplish the above goals a site specific management plan has been developed that includes water developments and a rotational grazing schedule which provides for season of use, physiological needs of key forage species, forage capacities, and livestock management. The allotments contain eighteen pastures. Three higher elevation pastures designated for winter use (Oct-Mar), four pastures designated for early spring use, ten pastures designated for spring, summer, or fall use (some of which are combined into management groups which will be treated as single pastures for grazing and rest purposes), and one pasture designated for gathering, branding, and hospital purposes. The rotation (appendix A) uses two of the three rougher pastures during the cooler months (Oct-Mar) followed by the early spring pastures (Apr-May) and the uses half of the remaining pastures during the late spring and summer. Pastures that are grouped may be used together or individually, depending on water availability or livestock management requirements.

1. Winter Pastures: Algerita and Mountain and Oso Negro Pastures.
2. Early Spring Pastures:

- East and West Canelo Pastures (Canelo Allotment) (Mar-Apr use only)
- Group 1 – Harkey and House Pastures

3. Late Spring/Summer Pastures

- Group 2 - Becker, Weaner, and Page Pastures
- Group 3 - Matthews and Lower Algerita Pastures
- Merrit Pasture
- Tom's Corner Pasture
- Lower Lyle Upper Lyle Pasture
- Korn Pasture

4. Designated Use Pastures

- Horse Pasture (Gathering, Hospital, Branding, etc)

To make this rotation work, several pastures need reliable and properly placed water sources. To this end, several new pipelines and water storage facilities were approved. Several additional structural improvements were also approved. They are described in the following prioritized list:

1. Construct a water storage tank in Center Pasture (Manila Allotment) and run a pipeline and drinkers to the Weaner, Page and Algerita Pastures. This improvement will also serve the Manila Allotment.
2. Construct a pipeline from the storage tank in Mountain Pasture to the southwest corner of the Algerita Pasture, the southeast corner of the Lower Algerita Pasture, and the southeast end of the Page Pasture.
3. Develop a well with a windmill and submersible pump in Merrit Pasture; construct pipelines to troughs in Upper Lyle, Merrit, Mountain, Oso Negro, and Tom's Corner Pastures.
4. Develop a well with pipelines and troughs in the Oso Negro Pasture.
5. Fence the stock tank in Mathews Pasture.
6. Construct ¼ mile of fence around the spring in Merrit Canyon in the Oso Negro Pasture.

7. Build check-dams in the northwest portion of the Korn Pasture and south portion of the Mathews Pasture.

Terms and Conditions of the Biological Opinion:

Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was completed on October 24, 2002. The Service concurred with the findings of the Biological Assessment prepared by the Forest and concluded that the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed or proposed species. The following terms and conditions to minimize take and/or species-specific conservation measures were stipulated in the BO and are included as mitigation measures.

- The Forest will continue to actively monitor livestock herbivory on flowering agaves in order to better understand the effects of such herbivory on the lesser long-nosed bat which depends on agaves for food (Biological Opinion AESO/SE 2-21-98-F-399-R1, Doc. 116). In addition, all range construction projects will be designed to avoid the destruction of agaves and the disturbance of 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.
- The Forest has adopted Sonora tiger salamander stockpond management and maintenance guidelines that are in effect on allotments in the San Rafael Valley and surrounding areas (Doc. 116).
- Measures to minimize effects to Chiricahua leopard frog will apply to the allotment. 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. These measures will be included in the annual operating instructions for the Lyle Canyon and Canelo Allotments.

Other Mitigation management Practices:

Mearn's quail key areas have been identified in the allotments. 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 new or reconstructed water developments will include wildlife access escape ramps.

All new fencing will be built to Forest Plan standards (page 35) 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) will 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.
- Use necessary techniques to achieve proper distribution of lessen the impact on areas that are sensitive or would naturally be overused.

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 Maintenance Schedule:

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.

Fire:

Fires are an important, yet lacking component of the ecosystem. Naturally ignited wildfires will only 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

permittees will be consulted, so that they will have time to make adequate preparations for the 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.

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. The permittee has been active in conducting rangeland monitoring activities with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service. Such activities are encouraged to continue.

Additionally, species-specific monitoring requirements are in place for lesser long-nosed bat, as described in the Biological Opinion portion of this document and for Mearns's Quail as described in the Other Mitigation Management Practices portion of this document.

