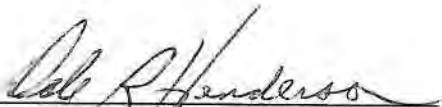


Polecat Allotment Management Plan

Safford Ranger District
Coronado National Forest

Prepared By:  Date: 8/28/07
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Agreed to By:  Date: 8/28/07
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Approved By:  Date: 8/28/07
Toni Strauss, District Ranger

Description

Polecat: Located on the southwest side of the Winchester Mountains, the Polecat Allotment contains 3,436 acres, of which 1,164 are classified as capable for livestock grazing. Areas classified as "not capable" primarily consist of steep rocky slopes in the upper elevations of the allotment. The permitted number is for 17 cattle yearlong for a total of 204 Animal Unit Months (AUM's). The allotment is an On/Off grazing permit which provides for grazing of 52 head of cattle for the grazing period 03/01 to 02/28 on the Forest Service administered land and land controlled by the permittee which together form a natural grazing unit. The use by these livestock will be approximately 41% on the Forest Service administered land and 59% on the lands controlled by the permittee.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this plan is to maintain a healthy ecosystem on all land the permittee grazes, meet the needs and desires of the American public, and provide the Permittee's family an opportunity to utilize the forage resource in an environmentally sensitive and cost effective manner. This will be accomplished through pursuit of the following objectives:

- A. Use best management practices to maintain a healthy ecosystem.
- B. Improve animal husbandry practices to improve pounds of beef production while minimizing impacts on the plant resource.
- C. Use annual operating instructions to limit utilization of forage species in designated key areas to 40% in upland vegetation.
- D. Maintain or enhance habitat conditions for resident wildlife by improving ground cover and riparian conditions.
- E. Stabilize soils in areas that are currently eroding.
- F. Maintain or improve visual quality of grazing allotment, through improvement of livestock management, maintaining range improvements and improving plant density and diversity.

Management Strategy

The management of the Polecat Allotment will be authorized year round in conjunction with grazing on adjacent state and private lands. Although year-around grazing will be authorized there is no developed water within the Forest. 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.

Terms and Conditions of the Biological Opinion

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed the Final Biological Opinion on the Continuation of Livestock Grazing on the Coronado National Forest in October 2002. Effects specific to the Polecat Allotment were evaluated in 2006. Informal consultation with the FWS was completed on March 29, 2007. The Service concluded that grazing on the Polecat Allotment as proposed in this AMP will have no effect on any threatened or endangered species.

Livestock Distribution

Distribution of livestock within the Polecat Allotment will attempt to minimize concentration of animals and the resulting overgrazing of "soft" areas. Methods to be used to improve distribution are placement of salt and protein supplement in areas of good feed; at least ¼ mile from water sources, horseback movement of cattle, control of waters where feasible, and use of existing fences.

Range Improvements

No new improvements are scheduled at this time.

Range Improvement Maintenance Schedule

A list of current range improvements assigned to the permittee is attached with this document along with a map showing the location of each improvement and key study area. It is the permittee's responsibility to keep range improvements in a good working manner.

Monitoring

Progress towards the goals of this plan and the Coronado National Forest Land Management Plan will be monitored through periodic range inspections by the permittee, Forest Service, and other interested parties. Key areas have been selected for monitoring annual forage utilization (see attached map). The District Range Staff and the permittee will jointly monitor key areas in each pasture as the pasture is grazed to assure that forage use levels in individual pastures are maintained within the established limits of 40% use of the current year production in uplands. Cattle should be distributed throughout the allotment to prevent areas of overuse.

Face Frequency Transects, and permanent photo points will be used to document soil and vegetative condition and trend. Periodic production studies will further evaluate range capacity. The monitoring aspect will be to determine if the applied management is or is not leading to or meeting the Forest Plan objectives and goals. Should this monitoring

show trends that are not moving toward or meeting forest plan objectives, replanning or stocking adjustments will be initiated.

Flexibility

Minor adjustments to this plan in response to changing weather, prescribe burns, etc., will be made through agreement between the District Ranger and the Permittee and will be appropriately documented. Significant changes will require a written amendment to this plan.

Attached Documents

- A. Map of Allotment showing range improvements and key areas for monitoring

