ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR THE

POST CANYON ALLOTMENT

SIERRA VISTA RANGER DISTRICT

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

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INTRODUCTION

The Post Canyon Allotment is permitted to the Diamond C Ranch, L.L.C., and managed by James Jelks under a Holistic Resource Management (HRM) system. The Diamond C Ranch has held both the Post Canyon term grazing permits since the late 1970's. In 2005, West Collie, East Collie, and Mountain Pastures plus 290 acres in Cemetery Pasture were waived to the Canelo Hills Cattle Co. L.L.C. in exchange for West, East and Roundup Pastures on the Papago Allotment. In 2007, an environmental analysis (EA) was completed. The EA and Decision Notice (DN) are the guiding documents for this allotment management plan (AMP).

The Post Canyon Allotment is located just northwest of Canelo, Arizona, and approximately 15 miles southeast of Sonoita, Arizona, on the west side of the Huachuca Mountains. Post Canyon runs through Calloway Pasture at the north end of the Post Canyon Allotment. The Post Canyon Allotment is bordered on the north by private land, on the west by the Papago Allotment, on the south by the O'Donnell Allotment, and on the east by the Canelo and Chuney Allotments.

The Post Canyon Allotment consists of 3,243 acres (all capable and suitable for grazing). Monitoring data show most of the uplands are in fair or good ecological condition with stable or upward trends in recent years. This allotment represents only a small portion of the total ranch. Most of the ranch is composed of state and private land.

A new term grazing permit was issued in 2018 for 200-1050 Animal Unit Months (AUM), equivalent to 13-66 cow/calf pairs yearlong, on the Post Canyon Allotment. Numbers authorized in annual operating instructions (AOI) may fluctuate from year to year based on such variables as precipitation patterns and resulting forage production, changes in the grazing system, potential impacts of wildfire, and the permittee's performance in implementing proper grazing practices as indicated in the AMP and AOI. For the Diamond C Ranch, forage and water availability on the state and private lands dictate annual fluctuations in cattle numbers on Forest land.

DESIRED CONDITIONS & GUIDELINES

The Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, page 90-92) contains the following Desired Conditions for the range program on the Forest:

The Coronado National Forest provides forage for grazing in support of domestic livestock production as a viable, sustainable economic activity. Communities surrounding the Coronado National Forest benefit from the interactions of livestock production activities with other economic sectors, and from the social, cultural, and ecological values tied to conservation ranching.

Domestic livestock grazing does not move the landscape away from the desired composition and structure of plant communities. Rangeland ecosystems are diverse, resilient, and functioning within a healthy, sustainable landscape in the face of a changing climate. Areas that are grazed have stable soils, functional hydrology, and biotic integrity, while supporting healthy, diverse populations of native wildlife.

By supporting livestock production on working landscapes with an extensive, low impact land use, the Coronado National Forest contributes to preserving large areas of unfragmented open space. These open spaces sustain biological diversity and ecological processes and help to preserve the rural cultural heritage of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

The Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan also identifies the following guidelines for rangeland management;

- Forage utilization should be based on site-specific resource conditions and management objectives, but in general should be managed at a level corresponding to light to moderate intensity (15 to 45 percent of current year's growth). Exceptions may be allowed in order to meet objectives related to scientific studies, fuels reduction, invasive plant control, or other targeted grazing or site-specific objectives.
- Burned areas should be given sufficient deferment from grazing, especially during the growing season, to ensure plant recovery and vigor.
- Construction or reconstruction of livestock fencing and replacement of nonpermeable fencing where wildlife movement is restricted should be consistent with the appropriate state wildlife agency standards for safe passage of wildlife and/or species-specific fencing guidelines developed at the local or regional level.
- Grazing management practices should be designed to maintain or promote ground cover that will provide for infiltration, permeability, soil moisture storage, and soil stability appropriate for the ecological zone. Additionally, grazing management should retain ground cover sufficient for the forage and cover needs of native wildlife species.
- Within riparian areas, structures used to manage livestock should be located and used in a way that does not conflict with riparian functions and processes.
- Treatments for restoring rangelands should emphasize the use and perpetuation of native plant species.
- Grazing intensity, frequency, occurrence, and period should provide for growth and reproduction of desired plant species while maintaining or enhancing habitat for wildlife.

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

This AMP is part of the terms and conditions of the Forest term grazing permit. The AMP incorporates an adaptive management strategy, whereby, if monitoring indicates that desired conditions are not being achieved, the Forest Service and permittee will cooperatively modify management practices. Modifications may include the number of livestock authorized in the AOI, dates for grazing, the class of animal, pasture rotations, and grazing systems. Any changes will not exceed the limits for timing, intensity, duration and frequency analyzed in the EA.

GRAZING STRATEGY. The permittee and the Sierra Vista Ranger District Range Staff concur in continuing the current rotation system in which a single herd is moved through the pastures guided by an adaptive management strategy that responds to changing conditions. The number of cattle, season of use and pasture rotations will vary from year to year depending on forage and water availability, resource conditions and management objectives. Forage utilization will be managed at a level corresponding to light to moderate intensity (maximum of 45% annual utilization in key areas) in order to provide for grazed plant recovery, increased herbage production and retention of herbaceous litter to protect soils. Traditionally, the Post Canyon Allotment has been used in the fall and winter. However, the allotment can be used at any time of

the year as part of managing the larger ranch, which includes private and state lands. Forest pastures grazed during the growing season (July through September) will be rested during the next year's growing season. Records of livestock numbers, movement dates, shipping records, and rainfall dates and amounts will be kept by the permittee and will be provided to the USFS annually.

MITIGATION. To mitigate resource impacts, the following measures will be implemented. These measures have been used on previous 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 existing biological opinions. Implementation of the mitigation measures, in combination with project design criteria, should preclude the occurrence of potentially significant environmental impacts.

Soil, Water and Vegetation. The objective is to mitigate effects of livestock grazing management and to assure that management is responsive to changing resource conditions. The objective will be accomplished through the use of Best Management Practices 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, provide herbaceous residue for soil protection and to increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. A utilization guideline of 45% use of key species in key areas will be used to achieve this objective.
- The Forest and permittees will jointly prepare annual operating plans that consider current conditions and management goals. Periodic field checks including stock counts, range readiness and utilization monitoring will be used to identify needed management adjustments. The objective is to assure achievement of resource and management objectives.
- 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 supplement will require prior approval of the District Ranger.
- No hay or bulk feed will be placed on Forest lands in order to minimize the introduction of weed seeds.

Wildlife and Plants. The objective is to mitigate impacts to wildlife and sensitive plants from livestock grazing and from disturbance associated with construction of range facilities.

- All new or reconstructed water developments will include wildlife access and escape ramps.
- All fencing will be built to Forest Plan standards 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.

- All proposed range facilities will be surveyed for 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.
- Range construction projects will be designed to avoid the destruction of agaves. If impacts to agaves are unavoidable, the Forest will insure that no more than 1% of agaves within 800 meters of a project are impacted.
- 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.
- Stock pond maintenance activities will be conducted in compliance with the Forest's stock pond management and maintenance guidelines for the Sonoran Tiger Salamander and the Chiricahua leopard frog in order to reduce effects to these species as a result of stock pond maintenance activities. The objective is to maintain occupied habitats for the species

Heritage Resources. The objective is to protect heritage resources (historic and prehistoric sites) from impacts caused by range construction projects or livestock concentration.

- All proposed range facilities will be surveyed for heritage resources prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Facilities will be built or modified to avoid impacts to sites. If unrecorded sites are discovered during the course of project implementation, activities will cease and the forest 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

LIVESTOCK DISTRIBUTION

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.

- 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.
- 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.

RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

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 DN authorizes several projects to provide reliable water, improve livestock distribution, and control invasive junipers:

1. Extend the Freeman Pipeline into the uplands of Calloway Pasture. Currently, the only water in Calloway Pasture is in Post Canyon or at Welsh Spring, and only when they are running.
2. Fence the Forest boundary in Calloway Pasture to regulate livestock access to and use on the Forest.
3. Remove invading junipers in Cemetery and Mountain Pastures by hand cutting to control invasive plants and restore the native community.

These improvements are listed in their order of priority. Not all projects will necessarily be implemented, depending on the success of management practices and funding availability. The projects are expected to be completed over a period of years. The Freeman Pipeline extension and the Post Well Pipeline are slated for implementation during 2008-2009.

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 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

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. Permittees are encouraged to participate in the monitoring activities.

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[1] and the Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Training Guide.[2] 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 least once over the ten-year term of the grazing authorization, or more frequently if considered necessary.

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[1] Sampling Vegetation Atributes, Interagency Technical Reference. 1996. Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDI Bureau of Land Management.

[2] Rangeland Analysis and Management Training Guide. 1997. USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region.

Long term trend monitoring will include, but is not limited to measurements to track upland range condition and watershed condition (hydrologic function). Techniques may include, but are not limited to dry weight rank, comparative yield, pace transects, Parker 3-step, repeat photography, grazed plant count, Grazing Response Index and clipping and weighing.

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[3] 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. Utilization will be measured after the growing season; however, grazing intensity will be monitored throughout the grazing period in order to practice adaptive management and make necessary management changes needed for plant development and recovery. At a minimum monitoring will include use in key areas, but may include monitoring outside of key areas. The Sierra Vista Ranger District Staff Officer and the permittee 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.

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[3] Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements. Interagency Technical Reference. 1996. Cooperative Extension Service, USDA Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and USDI Bureau of Land Management. Revised 1999.