

**DECISION NOTICE**  
**AND**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**AUTHORIZATION OF GRAZING**  
**SPITZ HILL AND SITGREAVES ALLOTMENTS**

USDA Forest Service  
Williams Ranger District  
Kaibab National Forest  
Coconino County, Arizona

**Background**

This decision applies to the Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments, which were analyzed as part of the Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Grazing Project Environmental Assessment (EA). The Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments are located on lands administered by the Williams Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest, in Ecosystem Management Area 2. The Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments are adjacent to one another and contain 13,710 and 20,410 acres, respectively.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to authorize continued livestock grazing on the Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments through the issuance of a 10-year term permit. This action is needed to respond to 36 CFR 222 Subpart A, 222.2 (c) that requires the Forest Service to make forage available for livestock under direction contained in the Land Management Plan of the Kaibab National Forest. In addition, Section 504 (a) of the Rescission Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-19) requires the agency to establish and adhere to a schedule for completion of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision on all allotments.

The EA analyzes two alternatives in detail, the proposed action and the no-action alternative. In addition, four other alternatives were considered, but eliminated from detailed study. The EA will be available online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai>. Printed copies are available upon request from the Williams Ranger District, 742 South Clover Road, Williams, Arizona 86046, (928-635-5600).

**Decision**

Based upon my review of the alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the Proposed Action.

Under this alternative, the Spitz Hill Allotment will be managed under a five-pasture, deferred-rotation grazing system, with a maximum of 885 animal unit months (AUM) authorized. Average allowable use in key areas will remain at 35% for timbered pastures and 40% for prairie pastures. The maximum season of use will be May 15 to October 31.

For the past several years, the Spitz Hill Allotment has been managed under a four-pasture deferred rotation system. Under Alternative 2, the Randall and Curry Pastures will be managed as separate pastures to provide for shorter grazing periods and reduce regrazing of plants. Additionally, on the Spitz Hill Allotment, this decision authorizes the construction of five roadside pit tanks, the removal 0.8 mile of fence, and the construction of 0.1 mile of fence that will be built to meet Arizona Game and Fish fence standards for pronghorn management.

Management for the Sitgreaves Allotment will change from the current three-pasture deferred rotation to a three-pasture deferred rotation. A maximum of 1531 AUM's will be authorized and the maximum season of use will be May 15 to October 31. Allowable use in key areas will remain at 35%. The change to a deferred rotation system will provide more grazing deferment for cool-season grasses. Additionally, this decision authorized the removal of 1.6 miles of fence on the Sitgreaves Allotment. The following mitigation and monitoring measures are included as part of my decision to implement the Proposed Action, Alternative 2:

### **Mitigation Measures Specific to the Proposed Action Alternative**

- Regardless of the normal scheduled season of use, the livestock-accessible portions of the Duck Lake ephemeral wetland will not be stocked when soils are "wet" (other than the stock tank itself). Soils will be assessed ten days after the disappearance of standing water for saturation and range readiness.
- No human activities or construction actions associated with livestock grazing will occur in Mexican spotted owl Protected Activity Centers on the Spitz Hill or Sitgreaves Allotments during the breeding season (March 1 through August 31).
- Construction of the pit tank near Shultz Pass will be built to meet scenic integrity objectives (SIO) for SIO-2, so that the structure is not evident to the casual observer.

Note: Additionally, there are "standard management measures" implemented for all allotments (EA, Chapter 1).

### **Monitoring Specific to the Proposed Action Alternative**

- Monitoring of utilization in key areas will be conducted in each pasture at the end of the growing season to ensure compliance with the established utilization standard.
- Using utilization cages, fenceline contrasts, and ocular estimates, grazing intensity will be assessed in key areas at least once during livestock use in each pasture. This is to assure that grazing intensity is not exceeded and to aid in identifying timing of cattle rotation through pastures.
- Within Mexican spotted owl habitat, grazing intensity monitoring will occur prior to livestock entering, during livestock use, and when livestock leave the pasture to assure that grazing intensity is limited to light use.
- Parker clusters will be read approximately every 10 years to determine range condition and trend.
- Paced transects will be done at approximately 5 year intervals to assess range condition.

### **Reasons for the Decision**

I have decided to implement Alternative 2 because it will institute management changes on both allotments that are predicted to improve range condition and trend, while at the same time, maintaining watershed condition, protecting ephemeral wetlands, and maintaining stable wildlife habitat conditions and populations.

Alternative 2 meets the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, and National Historic Preservation Act.

## **Other Alternatives Considered**

The only other alternative I considered was the No Action Alternative. I did not consider any other “action” alternatives because Alternative 2 was designed with sufficient management flexibility relative to livestock numbers, season of use, and class of livestock to meet objectives and attain desired conditions. In addition, the significant issues identified were adequately addressed without the need for additional alternatives to be analyzed in detail.

The No Action Alternative would discontinue livestock grazing on the allotment. I did not select this alternative because it would result in terminating the permit holder’s ranching livelihood and lifestyle when there is no compelling resource reason to do so.

## **Public Involvement and Scoping**

This project was placed on the Kaibab National Forest’s Schedule of Proposed Actions in October, 2004. An initial project proposal was sent out to stakeholders and interested parties on April 12, 2005. Four comments were received, and in response, the proposed action was slightly modified. The final proposed action was sent out for “Notice and Comment” on July 10, 2005. Following comment analysis, two significant issues were identified. These were addressed by modifying and mitigating components of the proposed action.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA and the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27), I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I based my finding on the following:

### **A. Context:**

The setting of this proposed action is local as it pertains to short and long-term effects on both human and natural resources. The effects of this project are limited to a small portion of Coconino County.

### **B. Intensity:**

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. Both beneficial and adverse effects were considered in the environmental analysis.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety under Alternative 2. Water quality in Scholz and Kaibab Lake will not be compromised (EA Chapter 3).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because the Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments do not contain unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas such as unique park lands, prime farmlands, fisheries, or wild and scenic rivers. The historic and cultural resources and ephemeral wetlands on the allotments have been analyzed and no significant effects will occur (EA Chapter 3).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (EA Chapter 3).

5. The District has considerable experience implementing the types of activities covered by this decision. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks (EA Chapter 3).
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because the analysis of effects for Alternative 2 indicate there would be no significant effects (EA Chapter 3). Additionally, future projects within the area or in surrounding areas will be analyzed on their own merits and implemented or not, independent of the actions currently selected.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (EA Chapter 3).
8. The action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act. Implementation will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (EA Chapter 3). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant cultural, or historical resources [SHPO concurrence dated August 12, 2005 (PR #40).]
9. The action complies with the Endangered Species Act, and specifically with Section 7 of this Act, in that potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented. The action is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, (EA, Appendix 5). Reference USFWS concurrence letter dated June 3, 2005 (Project Record #25).
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action complies with the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. It is consistent with the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Public involvement has occurred during project planning, and potential environmental effects were considered and documented in the EA (EA Chapter 3).

## **Findings Required by other Laws and Regulations**

This decision to authorize livestock grazing on the Spitz Hill and Sitgreaves Allotments under Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) is consistent with the intent of the Kaibab National Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives listed on pages 17-20. The project conforms to the land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines identified for producing forage for wildlife and livestock on a sustained yield basis (Kaibab Land and Resource Management Plan, pages 22 to 42).

In addition to consistency with those laws already addressed above, this decision also complies with the following additional laws:

***Clean Water Act*** - This Act was created to restore and maintain the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with the Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended) by incorporating Best Management Practices (BMP's) into project implementation. These BMP's are designed to improve or protect the soil and water resources (EA, Appendix 3).

***Federal Land Policy and Management Act*** - The regulations at 36 CFR 251 guide the issuance of permits, leases, and easements under this Act. Permits, leases, and easements are granted for occupancy, use, or crossing of National Forest System lands when the need for such is consistent with planned uses and Forest Service policy and regulations. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976

(FLPMA), as amended by the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978, requires consultation and coordination with the permittee in the development of the allotment management plan. This has occurred during project planning (see EA, page 5).

## Implementation Dates

If no appeal is filed, implementation may begin 5 business days after the close of the appeal filing period (see next section). If an appeal is filed, the project may be implemented no sooner than 15 business days following disposition of the last appeal.

## Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal for administrative review by written notice pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Holders of livestock grazing permits may appeal this decision under 36 CFR 215 or 251, but not both. A written notice of appeal must be filed within 45 days after publication of the legal notice of this decision. The appeal period begins the first day after the date of publication of the legal notice in the *Arizona Daily Sun* (Flagstaff, AZ). The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer. Written appeals must be submitted to:

Appeal Deciding Officer  
800 South Sixth Street  
Williams, Arizona 86046

Appeals may be faxed to the Appeal Deciding Officer at (928).635-8208. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to [appeals-southwestern-kaibab@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-southwestern-kaibab@fs.fed.us). The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals. Please put the project name in the “subject” line.

In accordance with 36 CFR 215.14, the appeal must include:

1. Appellant’s name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request;
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
5. The regulation under which the appeal is being filed;
6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
7. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
8. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official’s decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
9. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

## Contact

For further information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

Ms. Ariel Leonard  
Williams Ranger District  
742 S. Clover Road  
Williams, AZ 86046  
telephone: 928-635-5614  
email: [aleonard@fs.fed.us](mailto:aleonard@fs.fed.us)

/s/ M. Steven Best  
M. STEPHEN BEST  
District Ranger  
Williams Ranger District  
Kaibab National Forest

September 15, 2005  
DATE

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