Allotment Management Plan

Wildbunch Allotment
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest
Clifton Ranger District

July 2019

Permitee Review / Agreement

Reviewed by/ agreed to _____ Date 8/1/19
Permittee

Forest Officer Approval

Approved By _____ Date 8/1/2019
Ed Holloway Jr.,
Clifton District Ranger

Introduction

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was conducted to assess management of livestock grazing on the Wildbunch Allotment. A Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on (February 7, 2019) with Alternative 2 – Proposed Action being the selected alternative.

The purpose of the Wildbunch Allotment Management Plan (AMP) is to provide direction regarding the management of livestock grazing on the Wildbunch allotment consistent with the (February 7, 2019) NEPA Decision. This AMP will become a part of Part 3 of the Term Grazing Permit. This AMP describes how alternative 2 will be implemented.

The Wildbunch Allotment consists of 23,027 acres of National Forest System lands on the Clifton Ranger District of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The purpose of the proposal analyzed in the final Environmental Assessment (EA) for with Wildbunch Allotment Management Plan is to consider livestock grazing opportunities on public lands identified as suitable, and to do so in a manner consistent with the desired conditions and other objectives, standards, and guidelines set forth in the 2015 revised forest plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. This proposal additionally is designed to consider necessary long-term management direction on grazing through allotment management plans and subsequent annual operating instructions designed in accordance with the proposed action in this analysis.

Grazing Permit

A 10-year term grazing permit would be issued, authorizing the following stocking ranges, rotations, season of use, and adaptive management criteria:

Grazing Management Strategy

LIVESTOCK			PERIOD OF USE		GRAZING ALLOTMENT	
NUMBER	KIND	CLASS	FROM	TO		
188 - 311	**Cattle**	**Cow/calf**	**3/1**	**2/28**	**Wildbunch**	**(2,256 AUMs)**
29 - 48	**Cattle**	**Yearlings**	**1/1**	**5/31**	**Wildbunch**	**(101 to 168 AUMs)**
22 - 35	**Cattle**	**Yearlings**	**1/1**	**10/31**	**Wildbunch**	**(154 to 246 AUMs)**
8	**Horses**		**3/1**	**2/28**	**Wildbunch**	**(115 AUMs)**
					Total Permitted AUMs = 2,626 to 2,785	

Adjustments to the annual authorized livestock numbers, within the ranges listed in the permit, may occur during the grazing year based on the on-the-ground conditions. This includes numbers that could potentially be adjusted down-ward if conditions are not favorable, such as in the case of drought, insects or other environmental factors. The maximum numbers could be allowed when desired conditions are met.

Grazing Management

This element of the chosen alternative consists of the rest-rotation grazing system, administrative changes to livestock pasture rotations, and the installation of structural range improvements. The large South pasture would be administratively divided into two sections and called the Southwest and Southeast pastures. Chapter 2 in the final EA and the map attached (Appendix A, figure I) to this document provide more detail and clarification on the actions detailed below.

Allowable Use and Use Monitoring:

In accordance with the February 7, 2019 Decision Notice, upland forage utilizations are to be managed at conservative (31-40%) levels during the dormant season and light to non-use (0-30%) during the growing season for all pastures with the exception of excluded areas and Little pasture.

Little Pasture is to be grazed incidentally as livestock are moved off the allotment using FS road 475 and between the Southwest pasture and Mud Springs pasture. Incidental use is limited to 0-5%.

Percent allowable use for riparian areas in functioning condition is limited to 0-35% use whereas riparian areas in functioning-at-risk and non-functioning condition is limited to 0-25%.

Utilization will be measured at key areas. Utilization levels of key species can ultimately determine the length of the grazing period in each pasture. The permittee is expected to move livestock before allowable use guidelines are exceeded. The purpose is to protect plant vigor, provide herbaceous residue and to increase forage production.

Rotation Strategy:

A pasture rotation strategy would be used to provide rest in six pastures and to allow vegetative recovery in all pastures. Livestock would be managed under a deferred/rest rotational grazing system where the length of the grazing period within each pasture would be determined annually. Rest could include incidental use which is de-fined as 0 - 5% allowable use. The pasture rotation strategy includes:

Mud Spring Pasture - Graze up to three months during the growing season one out of two years.

North/Joe Fritz Pastures - Combine pastures and graze up to one month during the growing season, one out of two years, and rest one out of five years.

Roan Cow Pasture - Graze up to four months during the growing season, one out of two years, and rest once every five years.

Southeast Pasture - Graze up to four months during the growing season, two out of three years, and rest one out of three years.

Southwest Pasture - Graze up to two months during the growing season, one out of five years, and rest two out of three years.

Indian/Oak Pasture - Graze up to three months during the growing season one out of three years.

Horse Pasture - Graze yearlong for eight horses. When grazing utilization levels are reached the horses would be removed.

Little Pasture - Grazed incidentally as livestock are moved off the allotment using FS road 475 and between the Southwest pasture and Mud Springs pasture. Incidental use is limited to between 0-5% allowable use.

Blue River Pasture - Excluded from livestock use entirely by topography and strategically placed fences that prevent livestock entry into this 945 acre area surrounding the Blue River on both sides. Any drifting livestock would be removed immediately. These provisions are incorporated into this Allotment Management Plan and subsequent Annual Operating Instructions, in accordance with the provision of the Environmental Assessment and Forest Officer instructions.

Summary:

Growing Season Use & Rest Schedule (J J A S)

Pasture	Duration	Frequency	Notes
Mudspring	up to 3 months	1 out of 2 yrs.	"Deferment", at least, every other year.
North/Joe Fritz	up to 1 month	1 out of 2 yrs.	"Rest", at least, 1 out of every 5 yrs.
Roan Cow	up to 4 months	1 out of 2 yrs.	"Rest", at least, 1 out of every 5 yrs.
Southeast	up to 4 months	2 out of 3 yrs.	"Rest", at least, 1 out of every 3 yrs.
Southwest	up to 2 months	1 out of 5 yrs.	"Rest", at least 2 out of every 3 yrs.
Indian/Oak	up to 3 months	1 out of 3 yrs.	
Horse	yearlong	n/a	to grazing intensity standard.
Little	Incidental	shipping	0-5% allowable use
Blue River	Excluded	yearlong	pasture entirely excluded.

The final Biological Opinion received from USFWS (February 2017) provided the following term and condition for the proposed allotment management, in accordance with our proposed action: "*The ASNFs shall ensure that allotment and pasture fences are maintained to ensure that cattle are not using the Blue River for forage or watering. If fences are found to be damaged they shall be immediately repaired. If livestock are found in the Blue River they will be immediately removed.*" No additional reasonable and prudent measures were issued by the USFWS.

Range improvements:

Pasture	Proposed Improvements	Description	Location
Southwest	Big Tank Series Tank #1 Water-lot	¼ mile of fence around Bag Tank Series Tank #1	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 28
Southwest	Big Tank Series Tank #2 Water-lot	¼ mile of fence around Bag Tank Series Tank #2	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 28
Southwest	Big Tank Series Tank #3 Water-lot fence	¼ mile of fence around Bag Tank Series Tank #3	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 33
Southwest	5,000 gallon storage tank	Tank to store water for the existing drinker.	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 21
Southeast	5,000 gallon storage tank	Tank to store water for the existing and proposed drinkers	T2S, R31E, Middle of section 15
Southeast	150-600 gallon trough	Drinking trough with shut off valves installed to help control distribution and use	T2S, R31E, Middle of section 15
Southeast	150-600 gallon trough	Drinking trough with shut off valves installed to help control distribution and use	T2S, R31E, NE ¼ of section 21
Southeast	1 mile extension of pipeline	1 mile of 1 ¼ inch black poly plastic pipe laid on top of ground.	From existing water tank at T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 22, traveling south to T2s, R3lw, SW ¼ of section 27
Southeast	150-600 gallon trough	Drinking trough	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 27
Southeast/west	Fence	4 miles of fence, dividing south pasture	From Cienega creek #2 corral at T2S, R31E, NW ¼ of section 15 traveling south along ridge top to T2s, R3 l w, SW ¼ of section 33
Little	Fence	0.88 miles of fence	T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 8 to and SW ¼ of section 7

Horse	Fence	1 mile of fence	From private land at T2S, R31E, SW ¼ of section 8 traveling southeast through T2s, R3lw, NW ¼ of section 17 circling back to private land.
Mud Springs	Trick tank and trough	Trick tank and trough with less than a one-acre foot print), with a collection apron, storage tank, pipeline, and trough to collect and hold water, surrounded by up to 0.5 miles of fence. Livestock would use the new trick tanks during the growing seasons	T2S, R31E, Middle of section 15
Roan Cow	Trick tank and trough	Trick tank and trough with less than a one-acre foot print), with a collection apron, storage tank, pipeline, and trough to collect and hold water, surrounded by up to 0.5 miles of fence. Livestock would use the new trick tanks during the growing seasons	T1S, R31E, NE ¼ of section 34

Adaptive Management and Monitoring

The chosen alternative includes a framework to enable the application of adaptive management principles. Adaptive management is designed to provide sufficient flexibility to allow management to address changes in climatic conditions, seasonal fluctuations in forage production, and other dynamic influences on the ecosystem in order to effectively make progress toward or maintain desired conditions of the rangeland and other resources.

Under the adaptive management approach, regular/annual monitoring of short-term indicators may suggest the need for administrative changes in livestock management. The need for management changes would be based on the magnitude and occurrence of deviations from proposed guidelines, or due to a lack of progress toward desired resource conditions. The timing of such management changes are to be based on the need for the change, with some adjustments to management practices potentially being more urgent than others. Annual operating

instructions and the allotment management plan may be modified as appropriate to adapt management within the param-eters of this proposed action.

Management Evaluation Point: *The "If" Statement*	Adaptive Management Response Options: *The "Then" Statement*
For all pastures	
If allowable use (grazing utilization) is reached before the planned season of use is reached	Then move livestock to another pasture.
For Southeast and Southwest pastures	
If livestock herding is not effective in distributing livestock away from the Big Tank Series *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then erect one mile of fence around the Big Tank Series and Salt Ground Tank.
If, after the tanks are fenced, the allowable use levels are exceeded in the southwest pasture (for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)	Then erect a four mile fence to physically divide the southwest and southeast pastures OR reduce the duration of use in SW and SE pastures OR adjust livestock numbers downward, if it is not feasible to build the fence due to funding availability or personnel
Little Pasture	
If incidental use levels are exceeded *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then 0.88 mile fence would be constructed to divide the pasture into two small pastures. The fence would provide the ability to rest portions of the pasture
If incidental use levels are exceeded after the pasture is split. *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then exclude the portion with very poor range condition from livestock use.
If incidental use levels are still exceeded after the pasture is split and portions are excluded. *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Rest the entire pasture by excluding it from use.
Horse Pasture	

If allowable use levels are exceeded *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then erect up to one mile of fence to divide the pasture into two pastures. Remove livestock to provide rest to the pasture.
If allowable use levels are exceeded after the pasture is split into two pastures *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then exclude the portion with very poor range condition from livestock use.
If allowable use levels are exceeded after a portion is excluded from use *(for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years)*	Then exclude the entire pasture from livestock use.

Implementation monitoring would occur at the end of the growing season within each of the main grazing pastures by measuring grazing utilization. Utilization is defined as the proportion or degree of current year's forage production that is consumed or destroyed by animals. Utilization is measured at the end of the growing season when the total annual production can be accounted for, and thus the effects of grazing in the whole management unit can be assessed. Utilization and intensity measurements would be taken in key areas which reflect grazing effects within an entire pasture. Utilization guidelines are not intended as inflexible limits. Utilization measure-ments can indicate the need for management changes prior to this need being identified through long-term monitoring and are used in conjunction with additional information to determine stocking levels. This grazing system is designed to promote flexibility in the grazing program and to buffer the adverse effects of drought. Utilization data would be used along with actual-use, climate and trend data to determine stocking levels and pasture rotations for future years.

Long-term effectiveness monitoring determines if management practices are moving the allotment toward desired conditions and management objectives. Effectiveness monitoring may include measurements of attributes such as plant composition, ground cover, frequency, and other indicators. They would be monitored once every five to ten years, and at least one monitoring site per pasture is to be used as a key area. If monitoring indicates that progress toward desired conditions are not being achieved on the allotment, management would be modified in cooperation with the permittee. Modifications may include adjustments in livestock numbers, timing, intensity and/or duration of grazing. In addition to the management evaluation points, adaptive management would be triggered when allowable use or incidental use levels are exceeded for two consecutive years or in any two out of five years.

Livestock Distribution Aids and Animal Husbandry

Salt or supplement will be placed at least ¼ mile from all water sources and riparian areas, away from roads, high-use recreation areas, or other known livestock concentration areas except for land and resource treatment purposes. Salt or supplement should be placed and moved to less utilized areas. No salting will occur within or adjacent to identified heritage resources.

Corrals and traps are for sorting cattle and animal husbandry purposes and by definition are intended to be used as needed throughout the year but for short durations of time. Using trucks and trailers for loading and transporting livestock is only approved in areas outside of the Blue Range Primitive Area.

Feeding of hay or other feed is limited to feeding livestock temporarily confined to corrals and holding facilities or in emergency situations as approved by the Line Officer. Only weed free forage is allowed.

Annual Operating Instructions

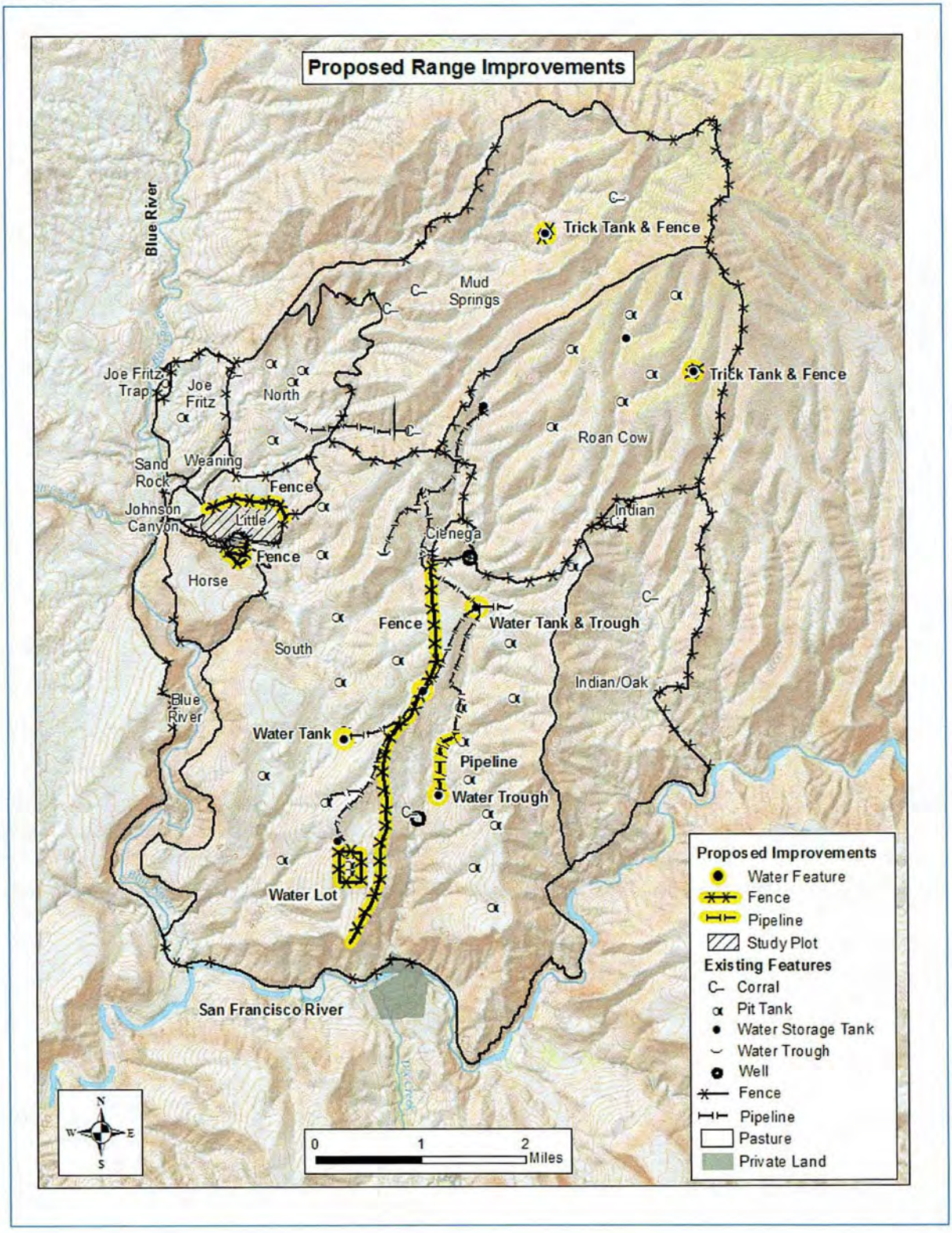
On an annual basis, the Forest Service personnel and permittees will jointly prepare annual operating instructions prior to each grazing year. Annual operating instructions authorize the actual season of use and number of livestock that will use the allotment for that given year, up to the permitted numbers. They also disclose the planned sequence of pastures moves, improvements to construct or maintain, utilization levels and other guidelines. Since livestock numbers are anticipated to fluctuate on a year-to-year basis using adaptive management, a reduced level of grazing for resource protection will be within permitted numbers and non-use agreements will not be necessary.

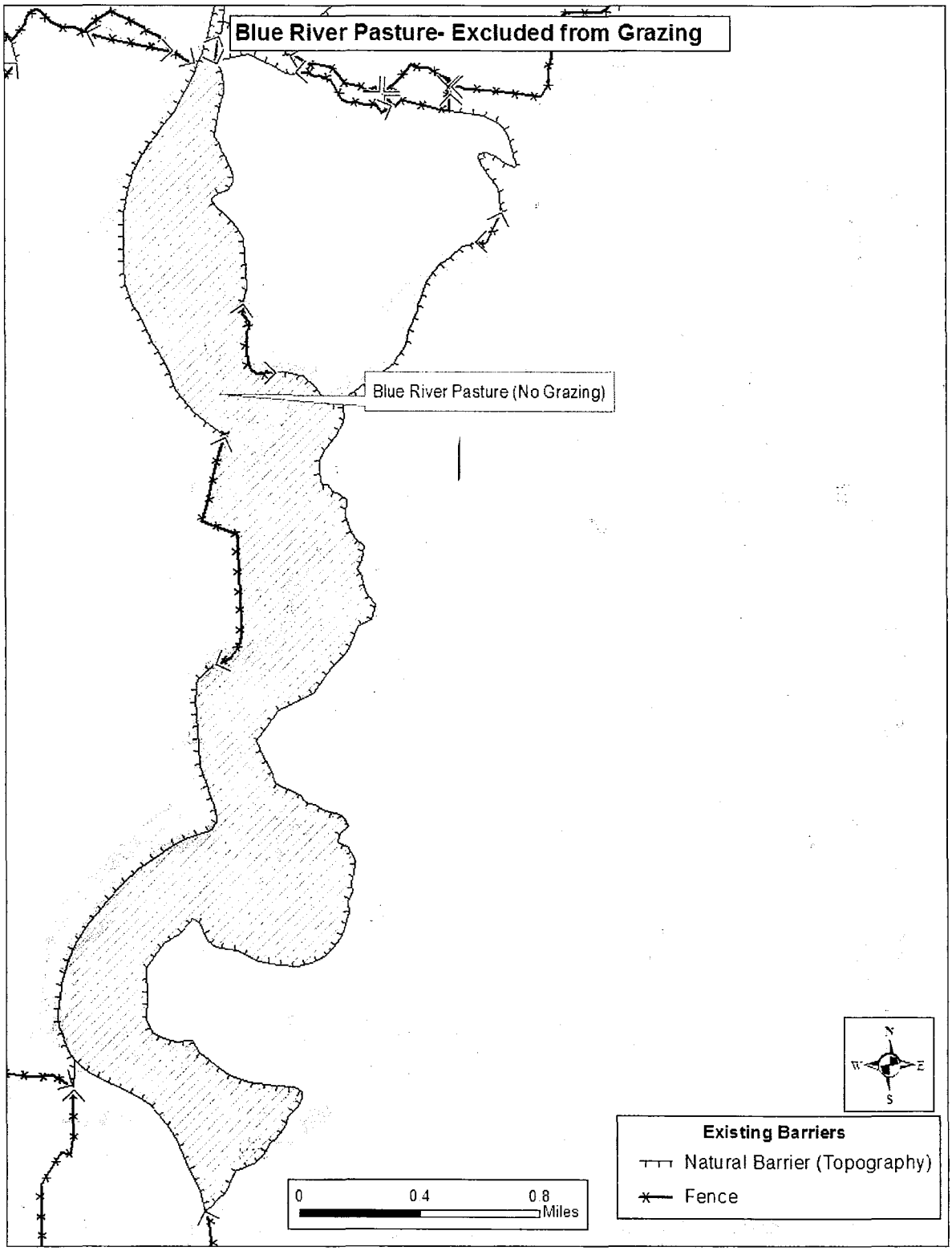
Range improvements will be maintained by the permittee. Livestock will not be placed on the allotment or moved into pastures if range improvement maintenance requirements are not met. Forest Officers will periodically inspect assigned improvements for compliance with maintenance standards. Failure to properly maintain range improvements may be cause for suspension or cancellation action to be taken against Term Grazing Permit privileges.

A permit modification will be prepared for new range improvements and/or reconstruction. Normal fence and water system maintenance does not require prior approval. Stock tanks need to be surveyed by a Wildlife Biologist prior to being cleaned or repaired.

Existing improvements with permittee maintenance responsibilities are illustrated and highlighted on the allotment map and the permit.

Maps


Proposed Range Improvements
Blue River
Trick Tank & Fence
Mud Springs
Joe Fritz Trap
Joe Fritz
North
Trick Tank & Fence
Roan Cow
Sand Rock
Weaning
Fence
Johnson Canyon
Little
Fence
Cienega
Indian
Horse
Fence
Water Tank & Trough
South
Indian/Oak
Blue River
Water Tank
Pipeline
Water Trough
Water Lot
San Francisco River
Proposed Improvements
Water Feature
Fence
Pipeline
Study Plot
Existing Features
Corral
Pit Tank
Water Storage Tank
Water Trough
Well
Fence
Pipeline
Pasture
Private Land
N
W
E
S
0
1
2
Miles


Blue River Pasture- Excluded from Grazing
Blue River Pasture (No Grazing)
N
W
E
S
Existing Barriers
Natural Barrier (Topography)
Fence
0
0.4
0.8
Miles