

DECISION MEMO
For
Stansbury Livestock Grazing Allotments

Tooele County, Utah
Salt Lake Ranger District
Wasatch-Cache National Forest

BACKGROUND

The Salt Lake Ranger District proposes to reauthorize livestock grazing on 42,560 acres of Forest Service lands on six allotments located within the Salt Lake Ranger District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Livestock grazing would be reauthorized using current Forest Plan standards and guidelines and desired conditions to manage livestock use. It is expected that this direction will maintain these rangelands at current desired conditions or continue to move them towards desired conditions. This proposal recognizes the continuing need for forage production from Forest Service administered lands as identified in the Forest Plan.

The rangelands under consideration in this review include the Black Bunch, Box Elder, North Grantsville, South Grantsville, Rush Valley, Skull Valley North, and Skull Valley South Allotments. The allotments listed are located in the Stansbury Mountains within Tooele County, Utah.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

The 2006 Range Technical Report (available in the project file) for the Stansbury allotments summarizes long-term trend and project monitoring data. The report concludes that current management is meeting or is satisfactorily moving Forest resources toward desired conditions and Forest Plan objectives. The desired conditions, standards and guidelines, and objectives were included in the scoping document.

I have decided to reauthorize grazing allotments on six of the allotments: Black Bunch, Box Elder, North Grantsville, South Grantsville, Rush Valley, and Skull Valley South.

I will not reauthorize the Skull Valley North allotment at this time. The Forest Archeologist, working with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), has identified one prehistoric site in the Skull Valley North allotment that could be affected by grazing. I may reauthorize grazing on the Skull Valley North allotment in the future once the Forest Archeologist and SHPO develop a management and mitigation plan for the prehistoric site. If I decide to reauthorize grazing in the Skull Valley North allotment, I will publish a new decision memo.

Management direction will be incorporated in revised Allotment Management Plans and in existing livestock grazing permits. Minor clarifications to existing management direction may derive from this decision, provided that the decision continues current management in principle and practice.

The lands within this allotment have demonstrated success in meeting or satisfactorily moving Forest resources toward desired conditions and achieving site-specific desired ecological objectives. Livestock are currently grazing on rangelands within these allotments and desired condition is to continue livestock grazing as directed by the Forest Plan while maintaining or moving existing resource conditions toward desired conditions.

The Wasatch-Cache National Forest's adaptive management strategy, which includes monitoring guidelines to determine condition and trend, will be implemented through Allotment Management Plans, annual operating plans, and existing permits.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures, which are part of my decision, are required on National Forest System lands and will be incorporated in the annual operating plans for these allotments.

1. Complete actions identified in the Water Resources and Soils Specialist Reports, specifically:
 - Fence specified spring areas.
 - Move water troughs away from indicated water sources.
 - Fence, rip, and reseed bare areas noted in Davenport and North Willow Canyons.
 - Move salt blocks away from bare areas, for example in the Mud Spring area.
2. Provide escape ramps (e.g., floating plywood platform) in all water troughs for birds and small mammals.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a scoping period from July 13th to August 11th, 2006. It was sent directly to organizations, Native American tribes and individuals. It was available on the Wasatch Cache National Forest (WCNF) website at www.fs.fed.us/r4/wcnf/projects/proposed. Additionally, it was available for review at the Salt Lake District Office. As a result of scoping, one comment letter was received. The commenter raised issues about 1) impacts of grazing on threatened, endangered, or sensitive species, soils, and water quality, 2) Forest Service authority to Categorically Exclude the project, and 3) general comments on the potential negative impacts of grazing. All of these issues are addressed as part of this decision or are included in the project file. Documentation of public scoping is in the project file and available for review through the Salt Lake Ranger District.

REASON FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

Forest Service resource specialists have visited these sites, completed a biological evaluation and assessment and have determined that the environmental effects will be minor. Upon reviewing the analysis I have determined that all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts have been incorporated into this decision. There were

no adverse affects identified on resource values listed under the extraordinary circumstances listed below.

- a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing of proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.** A Biological Assessment / Evaluation (BA/BE) was completed and it was determined that there would be “no effect” on any Federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed plant or animal species. There are four (4) Forest Service sensitive species identified in the BA/BE that may be impacted by this project: Northern Goshawk, Peregrine falcon, Three-toed woodpecker, and Greater Sage Grouse. The BA/BE determined that the project may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trends towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.
- b. Flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.** The Forest Hydroglist completed a Water Resources report. There are no municipal watersheds or flood plains in the Stansbury allotment areas. The Hydrologist identified impacts on wetlands from dispersed recreational use and grazing. The hydrologist determined that the mitigation measures described above would mitigate these adverse effects.
- c. Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas.** The Black Bunch, Box Elder, Rush Valley, and South Grantsville allotments lie partially within The Deseret Peak Wilderness. The Forest Plan allows grazing in Wilderness as long as standards and guidelines are met (Chapter 4-63).
- d. Inventoried Roadless Area.** The project is within an inventoried roadless area. The Stansbury Mountains Roadless Areas occur within the allotments. However, no new road construction or timber harvest will occur as part of this decision.
- e. Research Natural Areas.** N/A
- f. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.** The Forest Archeologist, working with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office, identified 27 archeological and historic resources in the project area. They determined that the continued livestock grazing would have no effect on American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites and documentation is included in the project file.
- g. Archeological sites, historic properties or areas.** Same as above.

Based upon the findings described herein, I have determined that these actions are consistent with the types of actions described in Section 339 of the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-447). This legislation provides that certain decisions to authorize allotment grazing shall be categorical excluded (CE) from documentation in environmental assessments and environmental impact statements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The full text follows:

SEC. 339. For fiscal years 2005 through 2007, a decision made by the Secretary of Agriculture to authorize grazing on an allotment shall be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) if: (1) the decision continues current grazing management; (2) monitoring indicates that current grazing management is meeting, or satisfactorily moving toward, objectives in the land and resource management plan, as determined by the Secretary; and (3) the decision is consistent with agency policy concerning extraordinary circumstances. The total number of allotments that may be categorically excluded under this section may not exceed 900.

All three conditions for application of this authority have been met:

1. There are no changes to the current grazing management on these allotments.
2. The Range Technical Report indicates that current grazing is meeting or moving towards desired conditions and objectives in the Forest Plan.
3. As noted above, a BA/BE was prepared as well as specialist reports from the Forest Hydrologist and Archeologist. There were no adverse effects to extraordinary circumstances identified in these reports.

As such, this is a decision which has been categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. Based on past experience with similar management activities, and upon the environmental analysis that has been conducted of this project, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

I have reviewed the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The actions in this project comply fully with the goals of the Forest Plan, the "Management Area Direction" and the "Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines" (See Chapter IV of the Forest Plan).

The livestock grazing allotments are mostly within management prescriptions that emphasize rangeland vegetation management multiple resource use (6.1) and livestock forage (6.2). The other management prescriptions within the allotments are: 1.3 (Existing Wilderness), 2.6 (Undeveloped Areas), 4.3 (Backcountry Motorized Emphasis), and 4.4 (Motorized Recreation Emphasis) which all allow livestock grazing to meet desired conditions. The actions in this project are consistent with the types of activities permitted under the 6.1, 6.2, 1.3, 2.6, 4.3, and 4.4 Management Prescriptions and comply fully with the goals of the Forest Plan, the "Stansbury Management Area Direction" and the "Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines" (See Chapter IV of the Forest Plan).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f) is not subject to appeal. The proposal is not one of the activities subject to appeal under the 215 rules as clarified on October 19, 2005 by the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California in Earth Island Institute

v. Ruthenbeck. This decision is not an authorization to proceed. Once all conditions and mitigation measures have been met, I will reauthorize the grazing permits on the six allotments.

CONTACT PERSON

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/s/ Loren M. Kroenke
LOREN M. KROENKE
District Ranger

September 28, 2006
Date

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