



2015 Cow Creek Allotment NMFS Monitoring Report

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1. Overview of proposed action and actual management (e.g., livestock numbers, on-off dates for each Unit, etc.).

The Cow Creek Allotment is currently permitted for 295 cow/calf pairs from June 1 to October 10. It is managed under a three unit rest rotation system, with each unit receiving rest one in three years. Entry into the units is staggered such that entry occurs in a different unit every year. The allotment consists of the Cow Creek, North Fork Cow Creek, and Allison Creek units.

Table 1. Permitted Use

Permittee	No. and Class	Permit Type	Season of Use	Head Months
Hubert Miller	180 Cow/Calf	Term	06/01 – 10/10	781
Stan & Trish Downton	115 Cow/Calf	Term	06/01 – 10/10	499

Table 2. Authorized Use for 2015

Permittee	No. and Class	Permit Type	Season of Use	Head Months
Hubert Miller	170 Cow/Calf	Term	06/01-09/20	626
Stan & Trish Downton	35 Cow/Calf 80 yearlings	Term	06/20-09/20	423

Table 3. Unit Rotation for 2015

Unit	Number	On-Date	Off-Date
Cow Creek	Trailing	06/01	06/01
Allison	285	06/01	07/31
North Fork Cow Creek	Rest/Trail	Rest/Trail	
Cow Creek	285	08/01	09/20



Table 4. Actual use for 2015 season

Unit	Number	On-Date	Off-Date
Cow Creek	56 Cow/Calf ²	Trailing to Allison Creek 06/18	Trailing to Allison Creek 06/19
	50 Yearlings ²	06/18	06/19
	2 bulls ²	06/18	06/19
Allison Creek	170 Cow/Calf ¹	06/01	07/20
	56 Cow/Calf ²	06/19	08/04
	50 Yearlings ²	06/19	08/04
	2 bulls ²	06/19	08/04
Cow Creek	170 Cow/Calf ¹	07/20	09/21
	56 Cow/Calf ²	08/04	09/23
	50 Yearlings ²	08/04	09/23
	2 bulls ²	08/04	09/23
North Fork Cow Creek	0	Rest/Trail	0

¹ Miller, Hubert Use Numbers; ²Dowton, Stan & Trish Use Numbers

- Results from all implementation and effectiveness monitoring identified as part of the proposed action and this Opinion (term and condition 1), including required annual use indicator monitoring (i.e., stubble height, riparian shrub utilization, streambank alteration), photo point monitoring, seral condition, bank stability, water temperature, sediment, and W:D.**

Implementation

Table 5. 2015 End of the Season Monitoring Results.

Unit-Creek	Monitoring Attribute	Standard for 2015	2015 End of Season Results
Allison Creek	Greenline Stubble Height	≥ 4"	7"
	Woody Browse	< 30%	30%
	Bank Alteration	< 20%	6%
Cow Creek (Aspen Monitoring)	Woody Browse	< 30%	80%
North Fork Cow Creek	Greenline Stubble Height	Rested Trailing only	Livestock use observed in the North Fork Unit appears to be more than would occur from trailing. (Stubble height measured at Mud Springs was 2").
	Woody Browse	Rested Trailing only	
	Bank Alteration	Rested Trailing only	

Effectiveness

No effectiveness monitoring was conducted on the Cow Creek Allotment in 2015.



3. Discussion of any unauthorized use and/or any maintenance issues related to fences or water developments.

No unauthorized use or maintenance issues were observed in 2015.

4. Brief review of Allotment compliance with established annual use indicators and the terms and conditions from this Opinion including a discussion on specific successes and failures.

Failures

Both permittees failed to meet woody browse standards on Cow Creek. When end of season monitoring was measured, it appeared that livestock were either left in the unit too long or some stragglers may have been left behind in the Cow Creek unit when livestock were moved. Livestock use observed in the North Fork Unit appeared to be more than would occur from trailing, which indicates that there may have been livestock lost or left behind. Permittees left the Cow Creek unit two weeks early to avoid exceeding standards, but failed to monitor their livestock use and specific move triggers before utilization standards were exceeded. Also, when trailing home, they may have either lost and or left cows behind, which resulted in the exceedance of the browse use standard in Cow Creek.

The permittees were issued a Notice of Non-Compliance with remedies to address violations of their term grazing permit and opportunity come into compliance in 2016 or face permit suspension or cancellation procedures.

Successes

Permittees Dowton and Miller continue to be active, participating stewards of the allotment, in conjunction with the Forest Service, to improve grazing strategies. All range improvement maintenance was completed and satisfactory, and use standards were not exceeded in Allison Creek. Permittees left the Cow Creek unit two weeks early as an attempt to avoid exceeding grazing use standards.

5. Any relevant information that becomes available regarding Snake River Basin steelhead or spring/summer Chinook salmon habitat trends and/or spawning and rearing locations that would modify the assumptions made in this Opinion or result in effects not considered.

No additional information became available in 2015.

6. A clear description of compliance with the terms and conditions contained in this incidental take statement.

1. To implement RPM #1, the SCNF shall ensure that:



- a. The proposed action, including all described conservation measures, monitoring, and adaptive management processes have been implemented as described in the BA and proposed action section of this Opinion.

Yes.

- b. NMFS has been provided written notice of the annual use indicators that are applied in each of the three Units after they were established.

See the above 2015 End of the Season Monitoring Results table for standards applied to each unit.

- c. The Allotment permittees or their employees have received training to appropriately implement the move triggers identified in the proposed action.

Yes.

- d. Annual meetings were conducted with the permittees to discuss specific actions necessary to minimize livestock use in areas believed to be contributing excess sediment to action area streams.

The SCNF and the permittees continue to consider methods such as, but not limited to: temporary electric fencing, permanent fencing, increased riding, and avoidance to allow adequate habitat recovery in identified 'hot spots'.

- e. Riders took all practicable measures to keep cattle on existing roadways and trails during trailing operations between Units and on/off the Allotment.

No known infractions in 2015 were witnessed. Livestock use observed in the North Fork Unit appeared to be more than would occur from trailing, which indicates that there may have been livestock lost or left behind.

- f. All enclosures, drift fences, and water developments on the Allotment were properly maintained and functioned as intended.

Yes.

- g. Turnout dates, move triggers, and annual use indicators, as well as responsible parties, were outlined in the AOI to the permittee.

Yes. Permittees moved livestock earlier than permitted dates to avoid exceeding utilization standards in Cow Creek, but failed to monitor their livestock use and specific move triggers before utilization standards were exceeded.



2. To implement RPM #2 (monitoring and reporting), the SCNF shall ensure that:

- a. Each Allotment Unit's DMA or MIM site was monitored to determine compliance with all identified annual use indicators in the proposed action or developed following baseline conditions evaluations scheduled for the 2015 field season.

Two sites were monitored for annual use. The woody browse use standard was exceeded at the Cow Creek monitoring site for end-of-season annual use.

- b. An end-of-year report has been sent to NMFS.

Yes.

7. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.

The permittees were issued a Notice of Non-Compliance (NONC) for being out of compliance with the terms of their grazing permit. To remedy the NONC for the 2016-2019 grazing seasons, the permittees must comply with the following conditions:

- Meet all use standards- greenline stubble height, bank alteration, and woody browse use. Move livestock to the next unit or off the allotment prior to exceeding any use standard.
- Ensure all trailing is active, with riders herding livestock until the appropriate unit is reached. All units will have all livestock removed within one day after moving to the next unit and one day after end of season trailing has occurred.