



2016 Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment NMFS Monitoring Report

Prepared by Salmon Challis National Forest Range and Fisheries Personnel

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

The Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment is currently permitted for 1,225 cow/calf pairs and 38 horses from June 1 to October 31. 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.

A 25 percent suspension for a reduced season of authorized use of the term grazing privilege was in place for the 2013 and 2014 grazing seasons. On National Forest System Lands, the season of use while under suspension was from June 15 to October 7. Permittees were advised that late entry onto the allotment would not authorize permittees to stay past October 7. If no further violations related to the 2012 Suspension Letter occurred, the suspended season would be restored in the 2015 grazing season.

The Morgan Creek- Prairie Basin permittees (Delbert Hughes, Jim Dowton, Chamberlain Ranch, Jim Martiny, and Ben O’Neal) had no further violations in 2013 and 2014, and because of this they were authorized to graze full season and full numbers in 2015. The Jones Estate’s horse portion of their term grazing permit is under suspension until 2017.

Table 1. Permitted Use

| Permittee | No. and Class | Permit Type | Season of Use | Head Months |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Delbert Hughes | 416 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 2,093 |
| Jim Dowton | 194 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 976 |
| Chamberlain Ranch | 299 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 1,504 |
| Jim Martiny | 180 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 905 |
| Ben O’Neal | 104 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 523 |
| Jones Estate | 32 cow/calf | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 161 |
| Jones Estate ^A | 38 horses | Term | 06/01-10/31 | 257 |

^AJones Estate is under full suspension for their remaining numbers of 38 horses for the 2015 and 2016 grazing seasons.



Table 2. Authorized Use for 2015

| Permittee | No. and Class | Permit Type | Season of Use | Head Months |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Delbert Hughes | 180 cow/calf | Term | 06/01 – 10/31 | 905 |
| Jim Downton | 0 cow/calf | Term | non-use | non-use |
| Chamberlain Ranch | 299 cow/calf | Term | 06/01 – 10/31 | 1,504 |
| Jim Martiny | 180 cow/calf | Term | 06/01 – 10/31 | 905 |
| Ben O’Neal | 104 cow/calf | Term | 06/01 – 10/31 | 523 |
| Jones Estate | 0 cow/calf | Term | non-use | non-use |
| Jones Estate | 0 horses | Term | Not authorized | Not authorized |

Table 3. Unit Rotation for 2015

| Unit | Number | On-Date | Off-Date |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| Unit 2 Morgan-Prairie (FS) | 763 cow/calf | 06/15 | 08/14 |
| Unit 1(FS) | 763 cow/calf | 08/15 | 10/07 |
| Unit 3 (FS) | | Rest | |

Table 4. Actual Use for 2015 Season

| Unit | Number | On-Date | Off-Date |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| Unit 2 Morgan-Prairie (FS) | 763 cow/calf | 06/15 | 08/26 |
| Unit 1(FS) | 763 cow/calf | 08/27 | 09/19 |
| Unit 3 (FS) | | Rest | |

- Date and location of any specific SCNF implementation monitoring data collected, including monitoring required under term and condition 1 above.**
See table 5.
- 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. End of Season Monitoring Results

| Unit – Creek and Date of Monitoring | Monitoring Attribute | Standard for 2015 | 2015 End of Season Results |
|---|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Unit 1 – West Fork Morgan Creek & Little West Fork Morgan Creek 10/28/2015 | Greenline stubble | ≥4 in | West Fork- 9 in Little West Fork- 14 in |
| | Bank alteration | ≤15% | West Fork- 2% Little West Fork- 12% |
| | Browse Use | ≤30% | West Fork- 17% Little West Fork- 37% |



| Unit – Creek and Date of Monitoring | Monitoring Attribute | Standard for 2015 | 2015 End of Season Results |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Unit 1 – Van Horn Creek 10/17/15 Lick and Trail Creeks 10/22/15 | Greenline stubble | ≥5 in | Van Horn- 3 in Lick Creek- 7 in Trail Creek- 2 in |
| | Bank alteration | ≤10% | Van Horn- 16% Lick Creek- 11% Trail Creek- 20% |
| | Browse Use | ≤30% | Van Horn- 19% Lick Creek- 24% Trail Creek- 34% |
| Unit 2 (Morgan Creek) Morgan Creek at Annie Roonie 10/29/2015 Morgan Creek near Trail Creek 11/02/2015 | Greenline stubble | ≥4 in | Morgan Creek at Annie Roonie- 3 in Morgan Creek near Trail Creek- 7 in |
| | Bank alteration | ≤20% | Morgan Creek at Annie Roonie- 14% Morgan Creek near Trail Creek- 5% |
| | Browse Use | ≤30% | Morgan Creek at Annie Roonie- 30% Morgan Creek near Trail Creek- 22% |
| Unit 2 (Prairie Basin) Blue Fork of Silver Creek and Panther Creek (Johnly) 09/22/15 Opal Creek 09/15/15 | Greenline stubble | ≥4 in | Blue Fork of Silver Creek- 5 in Opal Creek- 3 in Panther Creek- 6 in |
| | Bank alteration | ≤20% | Blue Fork of Silver Creek- 17% Opal Creek- 29% Panther Creek- 11% |
| | Browse Use | ≤30% | Blue Fork of Silver Creek- 29% Opal Creek- 32% Panther Creek- 13% |
| Unit 3- Corral Creek (Government Trail) & East Fork Corral Creek 10/27/15 | Greenline stubble | ≥6 in | East Fork Corral Creek- 12 in Corral Creek (Government Trail)- 8 in |
| | Bank alteration | ≤15% | East Fork Corral Creek- 22% Corral Creek (Government Trail)- 11% |
| | Browse Use | ≤30% | East Fork Corral Creek-74% Corral Creek (Government Trail)- 42% |

Red text indicates exceeded standards.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness monitoring was collected in the Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment at one site on the South Fork of Moyer Creek.

Table 6. Effectiveness Monitoring Results 2015

| Study | Location | Year | Greenline Ecological Status | Wetland Rating | Winward Greenline Stability Rating | Streambank Stability % | Greenline Width (m) | Shade Index |
|----------|------------------------|------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| MC-SFM-1 | South Fork Moyer Creek | 2015 | 77 | 74 | 6.89 | 89 | 3.26 | 0.21 |



Table 7. Effectiveness Monitoring Results 2014

| Study | Location | Year | Greenline Ecological Status | Wetland Rating | Winward Greenline Stability Rating | Streambank Stability % | Greenline Width (m) | Shade Index |
|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| PBSC2 | Blue Fork Silver Creek | 2014 | 82 | 58 | 5.93 | 86 | 3.46 | 0.11 |
| MCGL1 | Annie Rooney | 2014 | 49 | 55 | 4.69 | 29 | 4.74 | 0.03 |
| MCGL2 | Morgan Creek | 2014 | 83 | 79 | 6.99 | 99 | 4.57 | 0.19 |
| MCGL3 | Morgan Creek | 2014 | 86 | 75 | 7.13 | 95 | 5.96 | 0.08 |
| MCGL5 | Morgan Creek | 2014 | 89 | 81 | 7.34 | 86 | 2.45 | 0.18 |
| MCGL8 | Van Horn Creek | 2014 | 73 | 66 | 6.39 | 83 | 3.8 | 0.19 |
| MCGL9 | Trail Creek | 2014 | 71 | 64 | 6.46 | 88 | 2.49 | 0.11 |
| MCGL10 | Lick Creek | 2014 | 65 | 60 | 5.74 | 76 | 2.48 | 0.11 |
| MCGL13 | Little West Fork Morgan Creek | 2014 | 54 | 60 | 5.57 | 76 | 1.89 | 0.17 |
| MCGL15 | Corral Creek | 2014 | 66 | 66 | 5.79 | 88 | 3.14 | 0.17 |

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

Permitted Morgan Prairie Basin Livestock

Livestock were to be moved to Unit 1 from Unit 2 (Prairie Basin) no later than August 14, 2015, to avoid potential impacts to spawning bull trout and Chinook salmon and bull trout and Chinook salmon redds within the areas of Unit 2 (Prairie Basin).

On August 23, 2015, an allotment inspection on the Unit 2 (Prairie Basin) found approximately 100 to 125 cow/calf pairs along Panther Creek, moving from Opal Creek to Morgan Creek Summit, and another ten to twelve cow/calf pairs on Opal Creek.

On August 24, 2015, another forty-eight cow/calf pairs were counted moving from Opal Creek to Morgan Creek Summit.

Livestock were found in the Unit 2 (Prairie Basin) on August 23 and 24, 2015, nine and ten days past the date (August 14, 2015) that all livestock were to be moved to Unit 1. Use standards in the 2015 annual operating instructions were exceeded in multiple units.

Because of the non-compliance in 2015, the Morgan-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees were suspended 33% of season of use with a required off-date of September 15 during the 2016 and 2017 grazing seasons.



Unauthorized Livestock

The Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees reported that several private fences were not maintained and gates were left open, which resulted in unauthorized cattle not belonging to the permittees entering Unit 1 in Van Horn Creek and Unit 3, which was scheduled for rest in 2015, in Corral Creek. The permittees said there were multiple occasions during the 2015 season that cows were observed in Unit 1 in the Van Horn Creek watershed. The permittees removed the unauthorized cattle from Unit 1 back to private land.

The permittees also reported that the owner of the unauthorized livestock trailed another herd of unauthorized cattle from private land in Moyer Basin through Forest Service lands along Corral Creek to private land. This trailing occurred sometime in mid-September, but no specific dates were given by the permittees. Also the permittees reported feed was short at the private land in Corral Creek and the gates were left open for cows to access Forest Service lands.

5. Brief review of Allotment management and compliance successes and failures.

Failures

On various occasions during the 2015 season, unauthorized use occurred in Units 1 and 3 (a rested unit) due to lack of private property fence maintenance and private gates adjacent to Forest Service land being left open. The livestock trailing and use from an unauthorized user was not observed by the Forest Service.

On August 23, 2015, a Forest Service range specialist observed approximately 250 head of cattle in Prairie Basin Unit 2. The cattle were Morgan Creek -Prairie Basin Allotment permittees' livestock and it was ten days past the day all livestock were to be out of Unit 2 (August 14) and moved to Unit 1(August 15). On August 24, 2015 the Services were notified about this violation.

Successes

The Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees responded quickly once notified of their failure to move livestock in a timely manner from Prairie Basin Unit 2 and moved their livestock by August 26 (two days after notification) to Unit 1.

The Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees moved off of the Morgan-Prairie Basin Allotment on Forest Service lands 5 weeks early because of unauthorized use and as an attempt to avoid exceeding grazing use standards in Unit 1.

6. 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.

7. A clear description of compliance with the terms and conditions contained in this ITS.

Terms and Conditions

- 1a. All conservation measures, monitoring, and adaptive management processes were implemented as described in the BA.

Yes, with the exceptions of the failure to move livestock from Unit 2 to Unit 1 in a timely manner (Table 4) and exceeding annual use standards (Table 5). Unauthorized use by livestock not owned by permittees also occurred.

- 1b. The extent of incidental take is not exceeded by ensuring that streambank alteration levels along streams where Snake River Basin steelhead spawning is expected to occur (i.e., West Fork Morgan, Panther Creek, South Fork Moyer Creek, and Silver Creek) does not exceed the following levels at any time during the identified Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period for the action area (mid-March to July 7):

- (1) 10% in Units where streambank stability conditions are less than 75% of the identified RMO for that Unit;
- (2) 15% in Units where bank stability conditions are 75% to 99% of the identified RMO for that Unit;
- (3) 20% in Units where the bank stability RMO is being met.

Yes, see implementation monitoring table above for results (Table 5) and effectiveness (Tables 6 and 7).

- 1c. Each Unit with potential Snake River Basin steelhead redd trampling contains at least one DMA (i.e., West Fork Morgan, Panther Creek, Moyer Creek, South Fork Moyer Creek, and Silver Creek), located in an area where the risk of cattle trampling of redds is highest.

- (1) Definitions for DMA shall be the same as described in the SCNF's Allotment BA.

Yes.



1d. The proposed adaptive management process (Appendix A) is triggered if streambank alteration at the end of the Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period (July 7) in Units 1 and 2 is: (1) > 5% in where bank stability is less than 75% of the RMO; (2) >10% in Units where bank stability is 75% to 99% of the RMO; or (3) >15% where the bank stability RMO is being met.

(1) Once triggered, the adaptive management strategy shall be used to further reduce the potential for cattle/steelhead redd interactions, including but not limited to establishing or adjusting in-season move-triggers, season of use, cattle numbers, and/or implementation of additional minimization/ avoidance measures

Yes, Permittees moved off the allotment early due to the unauthorized use that occurred prior to the on-date and during their time in Unit 1.

1e. The Allotment permittee or their employees receive training to appropriately implement the move triggers identified in the proposed action.

Yes.

1f. Annual meetings are conducted with the permittee to discuss specific actions necessary to protect vulnerable spawning areas in stream reaches with the highest potential for cattle interaction with Snake River Basin steelhead spawning fish and/or redds (i.e., West Fork Morgan, Panther Creek, Moyer Creek, South Fork Moyer Creek, and Silver Creek).

Yes. Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees and their riders were frequently seen on the allotment, but failed to move cattle in time to avoid conflicts with spawning fish in Unit 2. Riders and permittees were quick to respond and moved all livestock to the next unit when notified.

1g. Frequent (twice per week) riding is implemented in the Units 1 and 2 during the Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period (June 1 to July 7). Intent of riding will be to reduce cattle use within and adjacent to potential Snake River Basin steelhead spawning habitats in these Units.

Yes.

1h. Riders take all practicable measures to keep cattle on established ford crossings during trailing operations between Units and on/off the Allotment.

Yes.

1i. All enclosures, drift fences, and water developments that reduce cattle use adjacent to streams with ESA-listed fish species are properly maintained and functioning as intended.



Yes.

- 1j. Turnout dates, move triggers, and end-point indicators, as well as responsible parties, are outlined in the grazing permit's AOI to the permittee.

Yes.

- 2a. DMAs were monitored annually in units utilized by livestock.

Yes.

- 2b. The end of the year report has been made available to NMFS.

Yes.

8. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.

The suspension of 33% of the Morgan Creek-Prairie Basin Allotment permittees' term grazing privilege should address future non-compliance problems. The permittees also agreed to notify the Forest Service of unauthorized use while it is occurring rather than waiting until the season is over.