

**2013 Cow Creek Allotment
NMFS Monitoring Report**

Prepared by Salmon Challis National Forest Range and Fisheries staff

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

Permitted Use

Grazing on this allotment will involve up to 295 cow/calf pairs under a rest rotation grazing system with grazing occurring anytime between June 1 and October 10.

Permittee	No. and Class	Permit Type	Season of Use	Head Months
Hubert & Sara Miller	180 Cow/Calf	Term	6/01 – 10/10	781
Stan & Trish Dowton	115 Cow/Calf	Term	6/01 – 10/10	499

Authorized Use for 2013

Permittee	No. and Class	Permit Type	Season of Use	Head Months
Hubert & Sara Miller	162 Cow/Calf	Term	6/01 – 10/10	703*
Stan & Trish Dowton	115 Cow/Calf	Term	6/15 – 10/10	446*

*90% of permitted numbers

Pasture Rotation

The allotment consists of the Cow Creek, North Fork Cow Creek, and Allison Creek units. Each pasture is rested one year in three.

Unit	Number	On-Date	Off-Date
North Fork Cow Creek (Miller only)	277	08/06	10/10
Allison Creek	277	06/01	08/05
Cow Creek (Dowton only)	115	Rest- No Trailing	

Actual use for 2013 season displayed below.

Pasture	Number	Season
Cow Creek	0	Rest
Allison Creek	160	6/1-7/15
North Fork Cow Creek	160	7/15-9/20

2. **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 1. 2013 End of the Season Monitoring Results.

Pasture – Creek	Monitoring Attribute	Standard for 2013	2013 End of Season Results
North Fork—North Fork Cow Creek	Greenline stubble	4”	4.7”
	Bank alteration	20%	14%
	Browse Use	30%	37.7% (not penalized because of significant elk presence in area)
Allison Creek—Allison Creek	Greenline stubble	4”	5.9”
	Bank alteration	20%	9%
	Browse Use	30%	47.3% (not penalized because of significant elk presence in area)
Cow Creek—South Fork Cow Creek	Greenline stubble	> 6”	NA

Pasture – Creek	Monitoring Attribute	Standard for 2013	2013 End of Season Results
(not used for trailing in 2013)	Bank alteration	≤ 10%	NA
	Browse Use	≤ 30%	NA

Effectiveness

No long term monitoring was conducted in 2013. However, an Aspen monitoring site was established in the main fork of Cow Creek in 2012 to help address permittee’s concern about monitoring accuracy, since no suitable MIM site can be established in the Main Fork of Cow Creek. The Aspen monitoring will occur once every 3-5 years. The SCNF attempted to install a MIM site on main Cow Creek in 2012, but no suitable site was found.

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

None

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: Permittee Miller failed to meet Woody Browse standards on the North Fork of Cow Creek and Allison Creek. Permittee was not penalized because of the abundance of elk sign in the area when End of Season monitoring was conducted in the fall of 2013. Miller cows were observed in the North Fork of Cow Creek pasture early. When monitoring was completed in October, all his cattle had been properly removed from the allotment. The MIM site on the North Fork of Cow Creek is displaying areas with vertical banks and blank sloughing; this should hopefully improve with better grazing management practices in this and future grazing seasons.

Successes: Permittee Downton elected non-use for permittee convenience in 2013 because of the restrictive trailing stipulations designed to protect the Cow Creek drainage from the excessive use it has seen when normal trailing was allowed. Therefore, Cow Creek saw little to no cattle presence this year and was truly allowed a “rest”. Permittee Miller turned out and passed standards for North Fork Cow and Allison Creeks on stubble height and alterations, an improvement over 2012 conditions.

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 2013.

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.
- 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 monitoring table for standards applied to each unit.

The extent of **incidental take** related to sediment production **was exceeded** as measured at the Cow Creek Unit's MIM site. See above monitoring table for exceeded standards.

- 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 2013

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

No known infractions in 2013

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

Yes

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 2013 field season.

Two MIM sites were monitored in 2013. Woody browse was exceeded on both sites but was most likely due to heavy elk presence in the area.

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

7. Any management recommendations for subsequent years.

Work with an interdisciplinary team and the permittees to review and establish better monitoring protocols for the Cow Creek Pasture. The current MIM site is located on a tributary reach of Cow Creek which contains no Steelhead Spawning or Designated Critical Habitat. Additionally, the site is located very near the trail livestock use to enter and exit the allotment, so is subject to excess use. A reliable upland monitoring protocol needs to be established if the Aspen monitoring proves to be insufficient. We will continue to rest Cow Creek pasture until a suitable monitoring protocol can be established that represents use more accurately.