

Term grazing permits are generally valid for 10 years from the date of issuance. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required when permits are issued (or re-issued). Section 504 (b) of Public Law 104-19 provides: *“Notwithstanding any other law, term grazing permits which expire or are waived before the NEPA analysis and decision pursuant to the schedule developed by individual Forest Service System units, shall be issued on the same terms and conditions and for the full term of the expired or waived permit. Upon completion of the scheduled NEPA analysis and decision for the allotment, the terms and conditions of existing grazing permits may be modified or re-issued, if necessary to conform to such NEPA analysis.”* Grazing on the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments is being continued in accordance with this direction.

Range vegetative conditions on parts of the allotments are not meeting desired conditions prescribed in the *2003 Revised Forest Plan, Wasatch-Cache National Forest* (Forest Plan). Ground cover is adequate on about 77% of the upland study sites. However, there is inadequate ground cover near most springs, ponds, and in riparian areas along Peggy Hollow, Sugar Pine and Silvia Hollow. Riparian conditions are good or improving along lower Wheeler Creek and within exclosures. Sagebrush stands have higher sagebrush densities than desired and lack diversity of age classes. Most aspen communities lack desired plant species diversity, having an abundance of undesirable forbs (such as cone flower) and a lack of grasses.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose is to authorize livestock (cattle) grazing in a manner that would meet or move towards the desired conditions defined in the Forest Plan, Wasatch-Cache National Forest (see Section 1.5). This analysis would comply with Section 504 of Public Law 104-19 to schedule and complete NEPA analyses on allotments where needed to authorize permitted grazing activity.

Grazing is a sustainable use of National Forest System (NFS) lands and is permissible through the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, as amended. The Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments lie within the Bear Management Area and contain lands considered capable and suited for domestic livestock grazing in the Forest Plan. (FEIS for the Forest Plan, pg. B9-2; Forest Plan, pg. 4-126) Continued domestic livestock grazing is consistent with the goals, objectives and guidelines of the Forest Plan.

It is Forest Service policy to make forage available to qualified livestock operators from lands suitable for grazing consistent with land management plans (FSM 2203.1; 36 CFR 222.2(c)).

It is Forest Service policy to continue contributions to the economic and social well being of people by providing opportunities for economic diversity and by promoting stability for communities that depend on the range resource for their livelihood. (FSM 2202.1)

The Forest Plan, which directs the management of lands encompassing the project area, has as one of its desired conditions to permit livestock grazing use within active allotments and to recognize the importance of permitted grazing on the national forest to local agricultural communities, maintenance of open space, and the western ranching lifestyle (pg. 4-126).

In order to meet the Forest Plan direction and provide livestock forage to the permittees, some changes in management of the allotments are warranted. Monitoring and inventory data indicates parts of the allotments are in satisfactory condition and moving towards Forest Plan desired conditions. However, there are several areas of resource concern (see Section 1.2) within the allotments. This indicates a need for some type of change in management of grazing use on the allotment.

1.4 Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to authorize continued grazing of cattle on the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments at a level and in a manner consistent with the direction in the Forest Plan (see Section 1.5), and other applicable laws and regulations. The proposal includes grazing management designed to improve unacceptable resource conditions, where they exist on the allotment, and maintain or move vegetation and watershed conditions toward desired conditions (see Section 1.6).

The proposed action would employ an adaptive management strategy, which adjusts the timing, intensity, frequency and management of grazing on the allotment as needed to meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and that would continue to meet or satisfactorily move forest resources toward desired conditions and meet Forest Plan objectives. Monitoring would determine the need and frequency for administrative adjustments in the timing, intensity, frequency, and/or management of grazing.

More specifically, the proposed action would employ an adaptive management strategy as described above and incorporate the following parameters designed to allow for improved range conditions on both upland and riparian sites:

Grazing Season

The specific grazing season would vary from year to year, but would generally fall between July 1st and September 15th. Turn out would not occur before *range readiness*—that point in the plant growth cycle at which grazing may begin without permanent damage to vegetation or soil. The grazing season would generally end before the start of the rifle deer and elk hunting season. Annual adjustments would normally be authorized by the District Ranger in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI's).

Grazing Strategy

Livestock grazing would incorporate a grazing management system, such as deferred grazing and/or other adaptive management strategies (see section on the following page) that ensures the time and timing of grazing use is altered on an annual basis. Grazing on about two-thirds of the allotment would be deferred annually until after seed ripe.

Intensity

The intensity of grazing (utilization) would be according to grazing utilization standards and guidelines described in the Forest Plan. The applicable standards for grazing use under the proposed action would be as described in Section 1.5.

Some areas near water in the allotments exhibit signs of use in excess of the Forest Plan standards, indicating a need for better cattle control. Implementation of the proposed action would require cattle to be moved out of riparian areas before the 5-inch stubble height is reached. In addition, upland, aspen and riparian areas (away from the greenline) identified as being in unsatisfactory condition are restricted to 30-40% utilization.

Annual forage utilization is measured by averaging the use of key species in key areas based on the measurement of typically 50 to 100 individual plants. Key areas are defined as “a relatively small portion of rangeland which because of its location, grazing or browsing value and/or use, serves as a monitoring and evaluation site” (FSH 2209.21). The proposed action identifies the following “key areas” (at a minimum) to be monitored for annual utilization and long-term trend:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Sugar Pine | 4) Wheeler Creek |
| 2) Peggy Hollow | 5) Hidden Springs |
| 3) Peggy Hollow Bench | 6) Ranger Hollow |

Frequency

The frequency of grazing any certain area will be one time per season. Cattle would not be allowed to re-graze either upland or riparian sites where utilization had already been met. This means that cattle would be managed to ensure that grazing of re-growth of native perennial grass species during the same grazing season does not occur.

Adaptive management strategies

Implementation of the proposed action would require a more intensive level of grazing management than is currently practiced. Other adaptive management strategies to achieve the objectives of the proposed action include:

- Utilizing temporary electric fencing
- Increased herding
- Salting
- Adjusting permitted number of livestock
- Adjusting the grazing season duration
- Deferring turn on of livestock
- Constructing short drift or protection fences*
- Developing alternative watering sites*
- Vegetation manipulation projects*

*Requires additional environmental analysis

Monitoring

Monitoring is a critical element of the proposed action and adaptive management strategy. The following monitoring activities would be conducted to indicate when a change in management is necessary.

1. Annual short-term monitoring will be conducted on a regular basis to monitor implementation of Forest Plan standards (see Section 1.5). These standards serve as triggers for moving livestock. They also indicate adjustments that may be needed related to season length or stocking rate.
2. Riparian systems monitoring using the Multiple Indicator Monitoring System (MIMS) will be conducted in three years, then every 5-10 years afterward. If monitoring indicates that degraded riparian areas have not improved in condition (using indicators such as green line composition and cover, channel width, vegetation diversity and structure) then an alternative management strategy will be implemented.
3. Long-term vegetation monitoring should be conducted on a regular year cycle. Monitoring will be conducted in the key areas listed previously. Additional or alternative key areas may be determined through field assessment. If this monitoring indicates upland sites are not moving toward desired conditions (as indicated by any increase in species diversity or ground cover), an alternative management strategy, such as increasing the time of deferment or reduced stocking, will be implemented.

1.5 Forest Plan Direction

The Forest Plan sets forth management direction for managing the land and resources of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, and among other things, describes management goals and objectives, resource protection methods, and desired resource conditions. The Forest Plan is the result of programmatic analysis, which is addressed in the FEIS for the Revised Forest Plan. The 2008 National Forest Management Act regulations at 36 CFR 219 became effective on April 21, 2008.

The Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments environmental analysis is a project-level analysis; its scope is confined to addressing the significant issues and possible environmental consequences of the project. Where appropriate, this analysis will tier to the Forest Plan FEIS, as encouraged by 40 CFR 1502.20.

The Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments are within the Bear Management Area as defined in the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan defines Management Prescriptions as “management practices and intensity selected and scheduled for application on a specific area to attain multiple use and other goals and objectives.” Management Prescriptions Categories provide a general sense of the management or treatment of the land intended to result in a particular condition being achieved or set of values being restored or maintained. These Categories are not intended to stand alone. They are just one part of

the total management direction that includes goals, objectives, desired future conditions, standards and guidelines, and monitoring requirements. The entire management direction package for an area must be considered, not just the prescription. Where an activity is allowed within a prescription, it must be done so within the parameters established by all the above. (See Forest Plan, page 4-58). The Forest Plan management prescription allocations within which the allotment is located include Management Prescriptions 3.1W (Watershed Emphasis) and 4.4 (Dispersed Motorized Emphasis). Within these management prescriptions, livestock grazing is allowed on open allotments to meet site-specifically defined desired conditions.

Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines

Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan contains Forest-wide as well as area-specific management direction. The Revised Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines pertinent to the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments are summarized below.

Revised Forest Plan Standards that apply to this project.
(S4) Place new sources of chemical and pathogenic pollutants where such pollutants will not reach surface or ground water.
(S7) Allow management activities to result in no less than 85% of potential ground cover for each vegetation cover type. (See Forest Plan, Appendix VII for potential ground cover values by cover type).
(S24) As a tool to achieve desired conditions of the land, maximum forage utilization standards for vegetation types in satisfactory condition using traditional grazing systems (rest rotation, deferred rotation, season long) are shown in table S24 of the revised Forest Plan.
(S25) As a tool to achieve desired conditions of riparian areas, maximum forage utilization standards (stubble height) for low to mid elevation greenline species apply.
(S26) For all rangelands, including big game winter range and riparian areas, permit no more than 50% of the current year's growth on woody vegetation to be browsed during one growth cycle.
Revised Forest Plan Guidelines that apply to this project.
(G3) Proposed actions analyzed under NEPA should adhere to the State Nonpoint Source Management Plan to best achieve consistency with both Sections 313 and 319 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.
(G4) At the end of an activity, allow no more than 15% of an activity area to have detrimental soil displacement, puddling, compaction and/or to be severely burned.
(G9) Avoid soil disturbing activities (those that remove surface organic matter exposing mineral soil) on steep, erosive, and unstable slopes, and in riparian, wetlands, floodplains, wet meadows, and alpine areas.
(G11) Use Best Management Practices and Soil and Water Conservation Practices during project level assessment and implementation to ensure maintenance of soil productivity, minimization of sediment discharge into streams, lakes and wetlands to protect of designated beneficial uses.
(G12) Locate new actions (such as incident bases, fire suppression camps, staging areas, livestock handling facilities, recreation facilities, roads and improvements including trails) outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. If the only suitable location for such actions is within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, sites will be located to minimize resource impacts.
(G14) Manage vegetation for properly functioning condition at the landscape scale. Desired structure and pattern for cover types of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest are listed in the Revised Forest Plan on page 4-39 to 4-40 ...
(G15) In goshawk habitat, design all management activities to maintain, restore, or protect desired goshawk and goshawk prey habitats including foraging, nesting, and movement.

(G71) As a tool to achieve rehabilitation of upland, aspen, and riparian communities away from the greenline that are not meeting or moving toward objectives, maximum allowed forage utilization will be 30-40%.
(G72) Modify grazing practices that prevent attainment of desired future conditions for vegetation and/or aquatic resources.
(G75) Annual operating instructions (and/or Allotment Management Plans) should be evaluated and additional site-specific objectives defined if needed for any or all of the following five parameters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stubble height on selected key species on the greenline - Stubble height on selected key species and/or the amount of bare ground within the riparian zone but away from the greenline - Riparian woody browse utilization - Stream bank trampling on key reaches - Stubble height and/or incidence of use on key species in the uplands.

Forest Plan Utilization Standards applicable to this project.		
Type	Condition (Standard/Guideline)	Percent Utilization or Stubble Height at End of Growing Season
Uplands, aspen, riparian Class 1 (away from greenline)	Satisfactory Condition (S24)	50% use
Uplands, aspen, riparian Class 1 (away from greenline)	Unsatisfactory Condition (G71)	30-40% use
Riparian Class 1 (greenline stubble height)	All (S25)	No less than 5" stubble height
Woody species	All (S26)	50% current growth

Forest Plan Desired Future Conditions for Range/Livestock Grazing within the Bear Management Area:

Livestock grazing is a permitted use within active allotments. Grazing levels will be adjusted and managed with up-to-date Allotment Management Plans (AMPs). AMPs prescribing rest and deferred rotation grazing systems and riparian pastures are in place. These systems will help to improve and maintain plant vigor and composition, aquatic health and terrestrial habitat. Conflicts with other uses will be minimized consistent with the management direction package for each area. Riparian and upland vegetation will be at or moving toward desired composition that meets multiple resource goals described under watershed and biodiversity/viability desired future conditions. Management tools, including such things as fire use, mechanical treatments, herbicide treatments, and short duration/high intensity grazing, will be employed to improve range health and conditions. Springs and seeps will be protected from compaction. Structural improvements such as fences and water developments will be constructed or reconstructed and maintained, to improve animal distribution and control. Structural improvements that are not needed will be removed from the Forest. Active cooperation will be employed to manage grazing where forest lands are adjacent to lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Grazing permit holders will move livestock as needed to ensure riparian stubble height

requirements, upland utilization standards, and ground cover standards are met. Permit holders will share responsibility with the Forest Service for monitoring use, and will hold full responsibility for movement and control of livestock. Excess and unauthorized livestock use will be minimal. The number of term grazing permits will be reduced by the formation of grazing associations and the issuance of association permits instead of individual ones. The importance of permitted grazing on the national forest to local agricultural communities, maintenance of open space, and the western ranching lifestyle will be recognized.

1.6 Site-Specific Desired Conditions

The Forest Plan (G3.1W-2 and G4.4-2) provides that “Livestock grazing is allowed on open allotments to meet site specifically defined desired conditions.” In accordance with this direction, the interdisciplinary team (ID Team) has refined the Management Area DFCs to be more specific to the area encompassed by the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments. These are described below:

- **Fish Habitat** - Aquatic habitats will be managed to maintain cool, clear water and well-vegetated stream banks for cover and bank stability. Cool water temperatures will be preserved through well-vegetated banks. Instream flows and cover, in the form of deep pools and structures such as boulders and logs, will be maintained and their value recognized. Natural reproduction of fish will be aided through minimizing sediment input from grazing, roads and trails.
- **Amphibians and Invertebrates Habitat** - Marshy edges of ponds, lakes, and springs will be protected to allow for the development of in-water and riparian vegetation. Soil around water bodies will not be detrimentally compacted and will allow for burrowing and over wintering of amphibians.
- **Recreation** - Summer backcountry recreation uses focus on non-motorized recreation in harmony with the natural setting. Camping areas are managed to be sustainable within the limits of the watershed health and resource protection minimizing affects on water quality and riparian resources. High value camping areas are free from cattle and their impacts, but cattle may be seen in the distance away from popular campsites and trails. Visitors experience a natural appearing landscape, with little development except what is needed for resource protection or safety. Visitors are satisfied with their experiences which meet or exceed their expectations.
- **Rangeland Management** - Livestock grazing is a permitted use within active allotments. Grazing levels will be adjusted and managed with an up-to-date AMP. An AMP will be in place that prescribes grazing systems and establishes pastures that ensure the time and timing of grazing is altered annually. These systems will help improve and maintain plant vigor and composition, aquatic health and terrestrial habitat. Conflicts with other uses will be minimized consistent with management direction for the area. Riparian and upland vegetation will be at or moving toward desired composition that meets multiple resource goals and is described under watershed and biodiversity/viability desired future conditions. Management tools

including such things as fire use, mechanical treatments, herbicide treatments, and short duration/high intensity grazing, will be employed to improve range health and conditions. Springs and seeps will be protected from compaction. Structural improvements such as fences and water developments will be constructed or reconstructed and maintained, to improve animal distribution and control. Structural improvements that are not needed will be removed from the Forest.

Grazing permit holders will move livestock as needed to meet management objectives for the ground using appropriate range management standards and guidelines as a tool. Ongoing ecosystem monitoring will be used to refine standards where objectives are not being met. Permit holders will share responsibility with the Forest Service for monitoring use and will hold full responsibility for movement and control of livestock. Excess and unauthorized livestock use will be minimal. The importance of permitted grazing on the National Forest to local agricultural communities, maintenance of open space, and the western ranching lifestyle will be recognized.

- **Rangeland Vegetation** - Below are the desired conditions for rangeland vegetation types found within the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments.

Aspen - Potential ground cover in all aspen communities approaches 100%. Thus, in applying the Forest Plan ground cover standard, a minimum ground cover of 85% is desired for all aspen stands. The understory would have at least 10% cover of tall forb species, including such species as horse-nettle, aster, western larkspur, showy stickseed, cow parsnip, bluebells, western sweet-cicely, groundsel, and western valerian, and others.

Sagebrush - The majority of this type is composed of mountain big sagebrush communities. Desired conditions for this type include a wide variety of sagebrush canopy closures with a maximum of approximately 30-35%. The desired associated grass species would include bluebunch wheatgrass and/or slender wheatgrass as the dominant grasses, and scattered communities with sheep fescue as a component of the undergrowth. Desired forbs would include such species as lupine, beardtongue, glandular cinquefoil, slender cinquefoil, and sticky geranium. The range of potential ground cover for the mountain big sagebrush cover type is 81 to 96%, with a minimum of 69% (85% x 81%) (Forest Plan Appendix VII).

Mountain Brush – This vegetation type is a minor component of the allotment. Based on a potential ground cover of 92% for the snowberry vegetation type in the Forest Plan, the desired ground cover for the mountain brush type would be 78% (85% x 92%). Species composition would include a variety of shrubs such as snowberry, serviceberry, chokecherry, and elderberry.

- **Soil and Water** - Watersheds will be properly functioning with adequate ground cover to prevent soil erosion, and provide infiltration and moisture holding for storage and release of water to streams and aquifers. Spring sources and associated bogs and

wetlands will be protected from excessive use and have been restored to proper functioning. Riparian areas will be properly functioning with adequate deep-rooted vegetation or armoring along banks to allow for sediment filtering and erosion prevention. Riparian areas will be protected from overuse and trampling from livestock grazing and recreation uses. In the Woodruff and Sugar Pine drainages, soil erosion is reduced and ground cover and stream flow is increased. Potential for improvement of riparian condition and health is evident in Sugar Pine Canyon, where fencing is used to exclude livestock from portions of the riparian area.

- **Wildlife** – Restoration and/or maintenance of a healthy and sustainable, broad scale, north-south wildlife corridor within this management area will be a priority in all management decisions Big game winter ranges, generally below 7,000 feet and located along the forest boundaries, will be maintained and enhanced. Sagebrush and other mountain brush age classes will be maintained in a higher proportion of older age classes than elsewhere to provide browse above snow.

1.7 Decision to be Made

The Ogden District Ranger, as the Responsible Official, will decide whether or not to authorize grazing on the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments and if so, under what conditions (design features, mitigation, monitoring). If continued grazing is authorized, an AMP will be developed to incorporate and implement the decision. The AMP will be completed and approved as soon as practical and without further NEPA documentation.

1.8 Preliminary Issues

The ID Team identified the following preliminary issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis. These issues will be revised as appropriate based on the results of scoping and will be used to guide the formulation of alternatives and provided a framework for the effects analysis to be documented in the environmental analysis.

- Cattle grazing in uplands can cause ineffective ground cover resulting in accelerated soil erosion and degradation of soil quality.
- Cattle grazing can cause changes in plant composition and plant community structure, including potentially affecting threatened, endangered, or Forest Service sensitive species.
- Cattle grazing and trampling in riparian areas can reduce vegetative cover, decrease bank stability, and increase sedimentation which can cause changes in channel morphology, decrease water quality, and alter fish habitat.
- Cattle grazing can decrease cover and forage used by a variety of wildlife species. Potentially affected species include USFWS-listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate species; Forest Service Sensitive species; Wasatch-Cache

National Forest Management Indicator Species (MIS), migratory birds, and general species of local concern.

Chapter 2 – Preliminary Alternatives

Subsection 1502.14 of the NEPA regulations require that agencies should “vigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives” to the proposed action. The alternatives should achieve the same or similar purpose as the proposed action and should address issues raised and include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action. Alternatives that would not be reasonable, either because they do not meet the purpose and need or because of other considerations, may be eliminated from detailed study.

The following are preliminary alternatives to the Proposed Action described previously (see Section 1.4). There may be other alternatives developed during the analysis.

2.1 No Action (No Grazing): The “no action” alternative is included to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act [40 CFR 1502.14 (d)] and the Grazing Permit Administration Handbook, FSH 2209.13, Chapter 90, Section 92.31 which stipulates that “in addition to the proposed action, the no action alternative shall always be fully developed and analyzed in detail.” “No action” is synonymous with “no grazing” and means that livestock grazing would not be authorized within the project area.

Under this alternative, livestock would no longer be permitted to graze on the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments. This pertains to sheep and cattle. If this alternative were selected, grazing would not be authorized after a two-year notification to the permittee from the date the decision is made. Non-permitted recreational horse use would still occur.

2.2 Current Management: Under this alternative, no changes would be made to the current grazing management on the Woodruff and Dairy Ridge Allotments. The allotments would continue to be managed in accordance the direction of the Forest Plan standards and guidelines described in Section 1.5 of this document. The applicable standards for grazing use are the same as under the proposed action.

This alternative would continue the current level of permitted grazing and the current management of the allotments. The permitted number of livestock and grazing season would be as has been authorized for the past few years:

Woodruff Allotment is managed in conjunction with the Dairy Ridge Allotment. These allotments are managed together as a 3-pasture deferred rotation. The authorized grazing use on Woodruff is for 554 cattle with a grazing season from July 1 to September 15. The authorized use on Dairy Ridge is for 150 cattle from July 1 to August 20.