United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District

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Evanston, WY 82931
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Mountain View, WY 82939
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File Code: 1950-1
Date: August 19, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

The Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest proposes to continue to authorize livestock (sheep) grazing on the Stillwater Sheep and Goat (S&G) Allotment using adaptive management in a manner that continues to meet or move toward desired conditions identified in the 2003 Revised Forest Plan. This proposal involves following current Revised Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and implementing grazing management strategies that use current range management concepts and technology to control the time, intensity, and frequency of grazing using a variety of management practices. The allotment is located in Summit County, Utah. Refer to the enclosed Notice of Proposed Action for more details.

The Forest Service developed two alternatives, including: Alternative 1 – Proposed Action and Alternative 2 – No Grazing. In Alternative 1, the Forest Service is proposing to continue to authorize grazing on the Stillwater S&G allotment. In Alternative 2, permitted livestock grazing would be eliminated on the allotment two years after a notice to the permittee is issued.

Anyone providing comments or otherwise expressing interest in the proposed action by the close of the comment period specified in 36 CFR 215.6 will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations. The comment period will end 30 days following publication of the legal notice in the *Uinta County Herald* which is the Newspaper of Record.

Comments can be sent the following ways:

- By mail: Stillwater S&G Allotment, Attn: Stephen M. Ryberg, P.O. Box 1880, Evanston, WY 82931.
- Hand delivered: Monday through Friday 8:00 to 4:30 to 1565 Highway 150, Suite A located in Evanston, Wyoming.
- By fax: 307-789-8639
- By email: comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-evanston-mtnview@fs.fed.us.

Following a review of comments received, the Forest Service anticipates an Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact will be issued in September 2009.

If you have any questions, please contact Amy Barker, Environmental Coordinator at 307-789-3194 or Justin McConkey, Rangeland Management Specialist at 307-782-2401. The Notice of Proposed Action will also be available on the web at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/uwc/projects/wcnf/proposed/index.shtml

Sincerely,

/s/ Stephen M. Ryberg
STEPHEN M. RYBERG
District Ranger

Comments Due: 30 days from the legal notice publication in the *Uinta County Herald*	**Notice of Proposed Action** **Stillwater Sheep and Goat (S&G) Allotment**	USDA Forest Service Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District Summit County, Utah Townships 1 and 2 North, Range 10 East, Salt Lake Meridian and Township 1 South, Range 10 East, Uintah Meridian

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

Responsible Official:
Stephen M. Ryberg
Evanston-Mountain View District Ranger
1565 Highway 150, Suite A
Evanston, Wyoming 82930

For More Information Contact:
Justin McConkey, Rangeland Management Specialist
Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District
321 Highway 414
P.O. Box 129
Mountain View, Wyoming 82939
Phone: 307-782-2401

Where to Send Comments: Anyone providing comments or otherwise expressing interest in the proposed action by the close of the comment period specified in 36 CFR 215.6 will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations. The comment period will end 30 days following publication of the legal notice in the *Uinta County Herald* which is the Newspaper of Record.

You can mail written comments on the Notice of Proposed Action to the following address: Stillwater S&G Allotment, Attn: Stephen M. Ryberg, P.O. Box 1880, Evanston, WY 82931. Comments can also be hand delivered Monday through Friday 8:00 to 4:30 at the following address: 1565 Highway 150, Suite A located in Evanston, Wyoming. Comments may also be submitted via fax to 307-789-8639 or electronically by email to: comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-evanston-mtnview@fs.fed.us. Following a review of comments received, the Forest Service anticipates an Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact will be issued in September 2009.

A. Background

The Stillwater Sheep and Goat (S&G) Allotment is located on the north slope of the Uinta Mountains. The elevation of the allotment varies from just under 9,000 feet near Lily Lake on the northern end to nearly 12,000 feet along the Uinta crest at Kletting and Hayden Peaks. It is located in Summit County, Utah and is approximately 26,700 acres. See Vicinity Map located at the end of this document.

Livestock grazing has been permitted on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest since shortly after establishment beginning in 1906. Domestic livestock grazing on the National Forest has occurred continuously since that time. The regulation of grazing has increased over time. The Forest Service, with the grazing permittees, has developed annual grazing plans for the Stillwater Allotment since the 1940's. Allotment boundaries, livestock numbers, seasons of use, and grazing management practices have been adjusted many times since domestic livestock grazing has been authorized.

Term grazing permits are generally valid for 10 years from the date of issuance. Section 504(a) of the Rescission Act of 1995 requires each National Forest System unit to establish and adhere to a schedule for the completion of environmental analysis and decisions on all allotments within the National Forest. 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 Stillwater Allotment is being continued in accordance with this direction.

B. Purpose and Need for Action

Recent resource information collected by specialists shows that the current level of livestock management is meeting or moving toward desired condition objectives identified in the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan (Revised Forest Plan) for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2003a). Management is consistent with Revised Forest Plan Standards, Guidelines, Goals, and Objectives. The purpose and need is to authorize livestock (sheep) grazing in a manner that continues to 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 Stillwater Allotment lies within the Western Uintas 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 proving 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).

C. Alternatives Considered in Detail Including the Proposed Action

The Forest Service developed two alternatives, including: Alternative 1 – Proposed Action and Alternative 2 – No Grazing. The Proposed Action, Alternative 1, addresses the purpose and need to continue meeting or move resources towards desired future condition. The National Environmental Policy Act requires examination of a "no action" alternative. The no action alternative can be interpreted to be no grazing, as in Alternative 2. The alternatives were developed to address and define issues identified by the interdisciplinary team, through public scoping, and through consultation with specialists from the Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

1. Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

The action proposed by the Forest Service is to continue to authorize grazing on the Stillwater S&G allotment through issuance of a term grazing permit. A new AMP would be developed to incorporate and implement design criteria, mitigation, and monitoring associated with this alternative. The AMP will be completed and approved as soon as practical and without further NEPA documentation.

The proposed action incorporates an adaptive management strategy which adjusts the timing, intensity, frequency, and management of grazing on the allotment as needed to meet Forest Plan direction, and that would continue to meet or move resources toward desired conditions and meet Forest Plan objectives. The adaptive management strategies applied will be the best scientifically based management practices available, designed to perpetuate healthy rangeland conditions or improve rangeland health. Current best management practices consist of: 1) controlling the intensity of grazing by managing the duration of grazing, 2) varying the time of grazing, and 3) providing rangeland vegetation the opportunity to either grow before grazing or regrow after grazing.

Adaptive management strategies will be based on annual and long-term monitoring. Vegetation response to grazing use and other environmental factors affecting a plants ability to grow and/or regrow will be evaluated each year and used as an aid in planning the following year's livestock use. The specific manner in which livestock grazing will occur on the allotment will be based on management direction in the AMP, and possible additional adaptive management direction developed each year at an annual planning meeting in the winter or spring. The specific grazing strategy developed at the annual meeting will be incorporated into yearly Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the allotment.

Objectives

Desired condition for the management area applicable to the Stillwater S&G Allotment is found in the Forest Plan as follows: Western Uintas Management Area (pages 4-176 through 4-190). In accordance with direction in the Forest Plan (see Forest Plan Appendix X-5), the interdisciplinary team (ID Team) has reviewed and in some cases refined or supplemented the Forest Plan prescribed DFC to be more specific to the project area and the proposed action. The refinements/supplements are consistent with the Forest Plan prescribed DFCs, and are outlined in the Table 1.

Table 1: Additional Site-Specific Desired Conditions.

Resource Ecosystem Community Type	Applicable Component of the Forest Plan Prescribed Desired Future Condition	Additional Site-Specific Desired Condition
Soil productivity	Most soils have at least minimal protective ground cover. Soils have adequate physical properties for vegetative growth and soil-hydrologic function. Degradation of soil quality and loss of soil productivity is prevented. Soil productivity, quality, and function are restored where adversely impaired and contributing to an overall decline in watershed condition.	Soils will be managed to ensure that abiotic characteristics are functioning properly, such as the maintenance of the A-horizon, and the absence of pedestaling, rills, gullies, sheet erosion or soil deposition. Additionally, riparian soils will be managed to ensure that erosion deposition is occurring at acceptable levels, relative to the site, to allow for stream channel stabilization.

Resource Ecosystem Community Type	Applicable Component of the Forest Plan Prescribed Desired Future Condition	Additional Site-Specific Desired Condition
		Minimal protective ground cover is defined by Forest Plan standard S7 as at least 85% of potential. The Forest Plan (p. VII-1) identifies the following minimum ground covers (85% of potential) for some of the vegetative types in the project area: • 83-85% in alpine, upland turf & meadow (Tufted Hairgrass) • 77-83% in aspen • 68-85% in Uinta alpine upland turf & meadow • 28-72% Uinta Alpine erosional surface (shale) Applying the direction above, the ID team determined that for this allotment the desired condition is to maintain current ground cover levels, with at least the following average ground covers (% of potential) in vegetation communities impacted by livestock grazing: • 83% in alpine, upland turf & meadow (Tufted Hairgrass) • 77% in aspen • 68% in Uinta alpine upland turf & meadow • 28% Uinta Alpine erosional surface (shale)
Riparian Areas, Springs, Wetlands and Aquatic Habitats	Riparian areas have a range of vegetative structural stages that are at or moving toward properly functioning condition, provide a transitional zone between upland terrestrial habitats and aquatic habitats, and have the features necessary to promote stable stream channels and diverse habitat conditions. Desirable riparian vegetation occupies the historical floodplain. Riparian areas provide for fish, wildlife, and water quality requirements. 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. Spring sources and associated wetlands in the Western Uintas Management Area will be protected from excessive use and will be restored to proper functioning. Riparian areas will be protected from overuse and trampling from livestock grazing and recreation uses. Spring sources will be fenced and provide water for livestock.	Maintain or improve riparian areas to provide for healthy conditions with an upward/static trend, by maintaining Properly Functioning Conditions (PFC) on all streams. Class I riparian areas within the project area listed in the Forest Plan are: East Fork Bear River, Hayden Fork, Main Fork, Ostler Fork and Stillwater Fork. (USFS 2003, LRMP p. VII-6) In addition to the riparian areas identified in the Forest Plan and listed above, in accordance with Forest Plan direction (p. VII-3) the ID Team has identified the following Class I riparian areas: Bear River, the streams below Ryder Lake and McPheters Lake to the confluence with Stillwater Fork, and the stream below Kermsuh Lake to the confluence with Stillwater Fork. No Class II riparian areas were listed in the Forest Plan for the project area (USFS 2003, p. VII-7). In accordance with Forest Plan direction (p. VII-3), the ID Team has identified the following Class II riparian areas: streams in West Basin with perennial flow and not identified as Class I, stream reach above

Resource Ecosystem Community Type	Applicable Component of the Forest Plan Prescribed Desired Future Condition	Additional Site-Specific Desired Condition
		McPheters Lake, and stream reach above Ryder Lake. All riparian areas not identified above as Class I or II are Class III riparian areas. Riparian areas will have adequate deep-rooted vegetation or armoring along banks to allow for sediment filtering and erosion prevention. Proper function of wetlands and riparian areas associated with springs will be maintained to meet or exceed conditions outlined in Forest Plan standards and guidelines S24, S25, S26, G4 and G7. (See Mitigation and Management Requirements Section below). Undisturbed stream banks exist on at least 80% of Class I riparian areas. Pool-riffle ratios are approximately 1:1 in fish-bearing streams. Water temperatures in fish-bearing streams are not to exceed 20°C.
Upland vegetation	Maintain upland (sagebrush, mountain brush, grassland) plant communities are dominated by desired perennial grasses, forbs, and have a range of shrub cover. Associated herbaceous and woody vegetation provides for plant communities that are diverse in seral status and structure and provide food and habitat for wildlife, forage for livestock, and a variety of recreational opportunities and aesthetic values.	Maintain or improve rangelands to provide for healthy conditions with an upward/static trend by ensuring that species composition is dominated by native perennial vegetation and desirable native plant species with high to moderate erosion control potentials relative to the site. Ground cover is maintained at 85% of its potential range for each vegetation cover type as defined above.
Riparian vegetation	Riparian areas have a mix of seral and climax vegetation that is at or approaching PFC. Trees, willows, dogwood, birch, alder, sedges, rushes and hydric grasses, depending on stream substrate, gradient, and elevation, dominate riparian areas. These areas provide healthy self-perpetuating plant communities. Riparian plant habitats and rare riparian species will be protected from trampling and overuse by livestock grazing and recreational uses.	Streams and riparian areas will be managed to ensure that healthy ground cover exists relative to the site, with Class 1 riparian areas maintaining 70% or more late-seral vegetation communities, Class 2 riparian areas maintaining 60% or more late-seral vegetation communities, and Class 3 riparian areas maintaining 40% or more late-seral vegetation communities and that the health and age structure of the vegetation is at acceptable levels for the site.
Livestock Management	Livestock grazing is a permitted use. 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 will be in place. 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	For riparian areas, adequate vegetative cover (as defined by the heights prescribed in Forest Plan standards S24 and S25) provide filtering of runoff, protection of the soil, and habitat for wildlife in riparian areas. Riparian shrub and trees are perpetuated by retaining at least 50% of annual growth of these plants (i.e., as provided for in Forest Plan standard S26). (See Mitigation and Management Requirements Section below).

Resource Ecosystem Community Type	Applicable Component of the Forest Plan Prescribed Desired Future Condition	Additional Site-Specific Desired Condition
	management objectives for the ground. Ongoing ecosystem monitoring will be used to refine standards. 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 grazing agreements instead of individual permits.	Grazing levels will be adjusted and managed with an up-to-date Allotment Management Plan (AMP) that prescribes grazing systems and establishes management that ensures the time and timing of grazing is altered annually. When and/or if needed, structural improvements such as fences and water developments will be constructed or reconstructed and maintained, to improve animal distribution and control.

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 maintain or allow for improved range conditions on both upland and riparian sites:

Annual Meetings

The intent of the annual meeting is to determine how livestock grazing will occur on the allotment for that year. The specific items to be covered are: 1) livestock class 2) livestock numbers, 3) grazing season, 4) unit sequence, 5) livestock distribution, 6) time of grazing, 7) range improvements, and 8) mitigation measures for other uses. These items will be developed into an Annual Letter of Instruction. The planning process will be based on current best management practices. Currently, these practices include time controlled grazing, which limits the duration of grazing which controls the intensity of grazing, and varies the timing of grazing and provides opportunities for plant growth before grazing or regrowth after grazing. Grazing impacts will be monitored and evaluated. Evaluations will include the previous years grazing, the amount of forage present, rate of plant growth, animal performance, wildlife needs, and mitigation measures for other uses. Identification of noxious weeds and any new populations of noxious weeds will also be discussed at the annual meeting.

Livestock Kind and Class

Kind and class of livestock will be based in accordance with the term grazing permit. The kind of livestock listed on the term grazing permit is sheep and the class of livestock is ewe/lamb pairs. Class may be modified to accommodate the permittee, and/or to improve resource conditions or to accomplish a specific resource objective. This may include substituting yearling sheep for ewe/lamb pairs to improve distribution and overall utilization. The effects of any adjustments to livestock class will be monitored and evaluated. If long-term or yearly monitoring determines that resource objectives are not being met, then livestock class will be modified, or another adaptive management strategy implemented to ensure that resource objectives are met.

Livestock Numbers

Livestock numbers will be based on the current permitted numbers, as listed on the term grazing permit. The Stillwater allotment is permitted for 1,200 ewe/lamb pairs. Livestock numbers may be adjusted due to resource conditions. This may include reductions due to drought, to accomplish specific vegetation treatments, or to improve resource conditions and management. Livestock numbers may also be adjusted to reflect changes, such as changes in areas grazed within the allotment. The effects of any adjustments to livestock numbers will be monitored and evaluated. If long-term or yearly monitoring determines that resource objectives are not being met, then livestock numbers will be modified and/or other adaptive

management strategies implemented to ensure that resource objectives are met.

Grazing Season

The grazing season will be the season of use listed on the term grazing permit. This season is from July 11th to September 10th. The grazing season may be adjusted due to resource conditions. This may include: reductions due to drought, to accomplish specific vegetation treatments, or to improve resource conditions and management. The grazing season may also be adjusted to reflect changes of areas grazed. Any adjustments to the grazing season will be monitored and evaluated. If long-term or yearly monitoring determines that resource objectives are not being met, then the grazing season will be modified to ensure that resource objectives are met.

Unit Sequence

Currently, the allotment uses a rest rotation grazing strategy that consists of following plant growth and development during the growing season. This usually involves starting in a low elevation unit, moving to the high elevation units, and then back down to the remaining low elevation units. The grazing strategy typically moves in a clockwise or counter-clockwise rotation. One year, the grazing strategy moves clockwise, the next year, it is counter-clockwise. The purpose of the clockwise/counter-clockwise rotation is to graze the different units at a different time of the year. Varying the time of year a plant is grazed provides some plants the opportunity to complete their growth cycle prior to grazing. Plants grazed early in the season are given the opportunity to regrow and complete their growth cycle after grazing. This type of system also allows certain units to be rested for the entire season. Within the allotment, this has resulted in grazing upper elevations, inside the High Uintas Wilderness boundary, six times in the past twenty years. This type of use provides for minimal resource conflicts with other uses in the wilderness, while providing longer periods of rest in the wilderness, and periodic periods of rest in the lower units. These periods of rest can provide plants the opportunity to maximize yearly vegetative production. Conversely, prolonged periods of rest can result in a build up in organic matter which can negatively effect the nutrient cycle in the soil. The current rest rotation grazing strategy allows for the periodic rest of lower elevation units while providing additional periods of rest in the upper elevation units. By utilizing a grazing strategy that incorporates both periods of rest and proper use, rangeland health and productivity can be optimized throughout the entire allotment. The unit sequence may be adjusted due to resource conditions. This may include: deferred use due to drought, to accomplish specific vegetation treatments, or to improve resource conditions and management. The unit sequence will be determined at the annual meeting. Any adjustments to unit sequence will be monitored and evaluated. If long-term or yearly monitoring determines that resource objectives are not being met, then the unit sequence will be modified to ensure that resource objectives are met.

Livestock Distribution

Livestock distribution will be optimized by moving livestock through the allotment as a single herd, limiting the size of an area grazed at any one time. Managing livestock as a single herd will force animals to use areas they would normally not use. The use of a herder, temporary electric fence, permanent barbed-wire fence, and existing topography as boundaries are examples of techniques used to limit areas grazed by livestock at any one time. The placement of watering structures and salt, in areas under utilized by livestock, are examples of techniques used to improve overall grazing distribution. All of these techniques are designed to cause livestock to graze the coarse less palatable forage they would normally not graze. Removing this coarse less-palatable forage allows plants the ability to produce more palatable forage in the form of regrowth during that same growing season or growth the following growing season. Increasing the availability of fresh, more palatable forage in lightly used or unused areas will improve grazing distribution for both wildlife and livestock. Improving distribution and limiting the duration of grazing will prevent over-grazing of preferred grazing sites. This will result in enhanced long-term health of forage producing plant communities on the allotment.

Time of Grazing

The time in each unit will essentially depend on the current growth rate of forage plants. Time in each unit will be estimated at the annual meeting based on unit capacity and past use. Actual time in each unit will

depend on actual plant growth conditions. Livestock will be moved into the next unit when forage plants begin to regrow after being grazed by livestock and livestock are able to start grazing the regrowth. Units will be grazed once during the calendar year. Grazing intensity should be classified as moderate and not exceed utilization standards described in the Revised Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2003a, pages 4-51 to 4-52).

Range Improvements

This alternative includes the maintenance of all existing range improvements, i.e., spring developments, stock ponds, fences and stock trails, on the allotment. Maintenance of existing range improvements will continue to be performed by the term grazing permit holder, as specified in their term grazing permit. This alternative also includes the reconstruction of range improvements on the allotment. A range improvement structure will be reconstructed when it is determined that the structure is no longer functional, but still needed. During the reconstruction or maintenance of range improvements, ground disturbance and seed areas that are disturbed should be kept to a minimum. Native plant species that provide forage or cover to wildlife, protect soil, and prevent noxious weed infestations should be used. These activities will be discussed at each annual meeting.

Currently, there are no new or reconstructed range improvements projects scheduled or made part of this alternative. However, additional range improvements may be identified in the future in order to continue implementing best management practices. If additional improvements are needed, (such as water developments or drift fences), over the course of this allotment management plan, the appropriate NEPA documentation and decision will be completed prior to construction. This alternative is designed to fully implement Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

Mitigation and Management Requirements

Mitigation measures, Best Management Practices (BMPs), and Forest-wide standards and guidelines included in all action alternatives are listed below. Research and information substantiating these requirements are found in the Forest Plan and FEIS (USFS 2003).

Management Requirements

The Forest Plan (USFS 2003, p. 4-36 thru 4-56 and 4-58 thru 4-78) contains standards and guidelines (see LRMP, p. 3-36 for definition of these two terms) including some applicable to livestock grazing. Those pertinent to the project area and this environmental analysis are summarized in the following Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Forest Plan (LRMP) Standards (S) that apply to this project.

(S4) Place new sources of chemical and pathogenic pollutants where such pollutants will not reach surface or ground water. (LRMP, p. 4-36)

(S7) Allow management activities to result in no less than 85% of potential ground cover for each vegetation cover type. (LRMP, p. 4-37). (See LRMP, 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 as follows:

Table S24: Percent utilization of key grass or grass like vegetation, by vegetation type, for rangelands in satisfactory condition.

Vegetation Type	Condition	Percent Utilization of Key Grasses or Grass-Like
Upland and Aspen	Satisfactory	50%
Crested Wheatgrass	Satisfactory	60%
Riparian* Class I	Satisfactory	50%
Riparian* Class II & III	Satisfactory	60%

* Riparian, away from greenline

(S25) As a tool to achieve desired conditions of riparian areas, maximum forage utilization standards (stubble height) for low to mid elevation *greenline* species in Class I, II, and III riparian areas (see Appendix VII) in satisfactory condition are as follows: (Key species being grazed include water sedge, Nebraska sedge, and and/or wooly sedge.)

Table S25: Greenline stubble height at the end of the growing season, by riparian class, for rangeland satisfactory condition.

Vegetation Type	Condition	Greenline Stubble Height at End of Growing Season
Riparian Class I	Satisfactory	No less than 5"
Riparian Class II	Satisfactory	No less than 4"
Riparian Class III	Satisfactory	No less than 3"

(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 (i.e., when use has reached 50% allow no additional livestock use). (LRMP, p. 4-52)

Table 3: Wasatch-Cache National Forest Guidelines (G) 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. (LRMP, p. 4-37)

(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. (LRMP, p. 4-37)

(G7) Manage Class 1 Riparian Area Greenlines for 70% or more late-seral vegetation communities as described in Intermountain Region Integrated Riparian Evaluation Guide (USFS, 1992). Manage Class 2 Riparian Area Greenlines for 60% or more late-seral vegetation communities. Manage Class 3 Riparian Area Greenlines for 40% or more late-seral vegetation communities. (LRMP, p. 4-37)

(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. (LRMP, p. 4-38)

(G11) Use Best Management Practices & Soil & Water Conservation Practices during project assessment/ implementation to ensure maintenance of soil productivity, minimization of sediment discharge into streams, lakes and wetlands to protect designated beneficial uses (LRMP 4-38)

(G12) Locate new actions (such as incident bases, fire suppression camps, staging areas, livestock handling facilities, recreation facilities, roads and improvements) 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 (LRMP, p. 4-38)

(G14) Manage vegetation for properly functioning condition at the landscape scale. Desired structure and pattern for cover types of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (from USFS 1996) … are as follows … (USFS 2003, LRMP p. 4-39 thru 4-42)*

Table G14. Desired Structure and Pattern for Cover Types.

Cover Type	Landscape Structure	Landscape Patterns
Aspen	Balanced Range: Grass/Forb and Seedling/Sapling = 40 % Young, Mid Aged and Mature forests = 30% Old Forests = 30% Stand Density Index > 300 and Basal Area < 140.	Patterns are within historical ranges. Pattern sizes, shapes and corridors are maintaining processes. The role of fire is to influence distribution of structural classes and patterns across landscapes.

Mountain Mahogany	Balanced Range: Grass/Forb about 10-20% Early Mid, and Late Seral about 20-40%	20-40% of acres are in mid-seral or later structural stages in patches of >25 acres. Pattern is more or less heterogeneous mosaic of structural classes.
Tall Shrub (Mountain Brush)	Multiple vegetation layers with alternating vertical dominance.	Acreages and dispersion within historical ranges.
Sagebrush(Big)/Grassland	Balanced range of structural stages. 40% of area with 15% or more crown cover (as measured by line intercept method).	Patterns are within the historical range.
Riparian	Amount and type of vegetation types present that maintain riparian-dependent resources and provide a high rate of recovery following disturbance.	Plant community type compositions and accompanying riparian ecosystem functions maintain proper ground water recharge, storage, delivery, water tables, channel morphology and bank stability.

*Guideline direction for some cover types are not shown here as they are not applicable in this project area.

Annual and Long-term Monitoring

Monitoring is used to evaluate whether the prescribed management is meeting the objectives. The amount of canopy cover and composition of the vegetation present are examples of indicators that are used in long-term monitoring. Established long-term monitoring points in riparian and upland locations will be re-evaluated every five to ten years, or as needed, to analyze the effectiveness of the proposed management strategy (Specifically 16-4, 6-18, 16-30, 16-30C & 26-1). In addition to the long term monitoring points, the short term or annual effects of grazing will be evaluated every year. If monitoring determines that livestock grazing is not allowing the objectives to be met, then the management actions will be adjusted as described above in the proposed action.

The Grazing Response Index (GRI) is designed to evaluate the number of times a unit is defoliated during the growing season (frequency of grazing), the degree of use a unit receives during the growing season (intensity of grazing), and the amount of time available for the unit to grow or regrow during the growing season (opportunity). The GRI can be used to help plan the next year's grazing strategy. The GRI may be incorporated into the annual letter of instruction and used to evaluate the short-term or previous year's effects of grazing. If the GRI evaluation indicates negative impacts from that year's strategy, then adjustments will be made to eliminate the negative impacts the following year. Possible adjustments include; reducing the duration of grazing or the number of grazing animals or altering the time of grazing. Monitoring for the year will be discussed at each annual meeting. At that time, the specific monitoring for the year will be decided, as well as when it will be done and who will do it. Since monitoring offers the opportunity to educate as well as learn, the Forest Service will offer to include the permittee in monitoring efforts. These opportunities will be discussed at each annual meeting. If monitoring determines that the objectives are not being met, then the management actions will be adjusted.

2. Alternative 2 – No Grazing

Under this alternative, permitted livestock grazing would be eliminated on the allotment. The permittee would be given two years advance notice of cancellation of the permit as provided for under 36 CFR 222.4(a)(1) (USDA Forest Service 2002**)**. Existing range improvements would be removed at Forest Service expense. The exception to this would be fences on the National Forest boundary which are privately owned and actually located on the private land side of the boundary. Livestock driveways and trails would not be maintained. Developed springs would be retained for wildlife use and would be

maintained at Forest Service expense. The grazing permittee would be reimbursed for his portion of range improvements per 36 CFR 222.6(a) (USDA Forest Service 2002).

D. Alternatives Eliminated From Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14).

An alternative to eliminate grazing in the High Uintas Wilderness on this allotment was considered, but dismissed from detailed study.

The presence of livestock grazing within wilderness areas is addressed in Section 4(d)(4)(2) of the Wilderness Act which states: "the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture." Forest Service regulation (36 CFR 393.7) also states that grazing in wilderness areas will be controlled under the general regulations governing the grazing of livestock on National Forests.

The Utah Wilderness Act of 1984 designated the High Uintas Wilderness. The Utah Wilderness Act incorporated Section 108 of the Colorado Wilderness Act which included House Committee Report Language stating: "...there shall be no curtailment of grazing permits or privileges in an area simply because it is designated as wilderness." Grazing is a historical use in the High Uintas Wilderness. In addition, Section 303 of the Utah Wilderness Act of 1984 noted that recreation conflicts alone would not be the determining factor in the removal of livestock from those newly established Wilderness Areas…"

In addition, capability and suitability of lands for livestock grazing was considered in development of the 2003 Revised Forest Plan. The Forest Plan recognized that grazing in wilderness was occurring and determined that this was acceptable (Forest Plan, p. 4-64).

This alternative was dismissed from detailed study because existing resource conditions are meeting or moving toward the desired condition objectives.

E. Decision Framework

Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the Evanston-Mountain View District Ranger will decide whether or not to continue permitting livestock grazing on the allotment and if so, under what conditions (i.e., design features, mitigation, monitoring). If livestock grazing is authorized, an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) will be developed to incorporate and implement this decision. Following a decision, the AMP will be completed and approved and is based on the NEPA documentation for this project.

F. Public Involvement

The Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District initiated scoping for this project on December 5, 2008. A scoping letter was mailed to approximately 77 individuals, summer home owners, groups, public land agencies, and government entities. The scoping letter was also posted on the Web at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/uwc/projects/wcnf/proposed/index.shtml. On December 8, 2008 a news release was provided to the *Uinta County Herald*. The project was also identified in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest which is also posted on the Forest Service Web site at: http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/. Four comment letters were received in response to scoping. A copy of the 2008 scoping letter and mailing list are in the official project file, which is available for review at the Evanston-Mountain View Ranger District Office in Mountain View, Wyoming.

G. Forest Plan Direction

The 2003 Revised 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 Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003a). This environmental analysis incorporates applicable direction from the Revised Forest Plan.

The Stillwater S&G Allotment Proposed Action is a project-level analysis; its scope is confined to addressing the significant issues and possible environmental consequences of the project. Where appropriate, the Stillwater S&G Allotment Proposed Action tiers to the Forest Plan FEIS, as encouraged by 40 CFR 1502.20.

Chapter 4 of the Revised Forest Plan contains Forest-wide as well as area-specific management direction (USDA Forest Service 2003). The Revised Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines pertinent to this analysis are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

The Forest Plan divides National Forest System lands into management areas based on resource needs and opportunities. The Stillwater Allotment is within the Western Uintas Management Area.

The allotment is located within the following Management Prescriptions: 1.2 (Wilderness - Opportunity Class II), 1.3 (Wilderness - Opportunity Class III), 2.5 (Scenic Byways), 3.1a (Aquatic Habitat Emphasis), 3.2d (Terrestrial Habitat Emphasis – Developed), 4.1 (Backcountry Non-Motorized 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. In the 3.1A management prescription, grazing is allowed with a more restrictive utilization standard for Riparian Class 1 (Revised Forest Plan, pages 4-65 to 4-73).

H. Issues

Issues to Be Analyzed in Depth

Following the scoping period (December to January 2009), the Interdisciplinary Team reviewed the comments received and identified four key issues. Issues analyzed in depth were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. Those issues and associated indicators that were determined to be analyzed in depth in the evaluation of the alternatives are: 1) Rangeland Health, 2) Aquatic and Riparian Conditions, 3) Wildlife Habitat, and 4) Recreation / Wilderness. Refer to the project record for additional information on these issues.

Issue 1. Rangeland Health - Livestock grazing can cause changes in rangeland plant composition, plant community structure, and ground cover, and affect rangeland health and productivity.

Rangeland health is defined by the National Academy of Sciences as "the degree to which the integrity of the soil and ecological processes of rangeland ecosystems are sustained and/or the degree of integrity of the soil and ecological processes that are most important in sustaining the capacity of rangelands to satisfy values and produce commodities." The Revised Forest Plan established the following direction for managing rangelands; "Manage rangeland ecosystems so they support vegetation with adequate ground cover to protect watersheds and plant communities with desired species composition, structure and function dominated by desired perennial grasses and forbs, with a range of shrub cover (USDA Forest Service 2003a, page 4-32)."

Grazing by herbivores can have significant effects on rangeland health and productivity. The frequency of

grazing, the intensity of grazing, and the opportunity for plants to grow before grazing or regrow following grazing are factors that affect rangeland health and productivity. Grazing that occurs over too long a period of time or that allows plants to be too severely grazed or that does not allow for plants to grow before grazing or regrow after grazing during the growing season will negatively impact range plants. Conversely, plants that are never grazed, especially grasses, may become coarse and overgrown. This may cause several things to happen. Plants will begin to grow at a later date, as the plant growth points are covered up by dead plant material. For some species of bunchgrasses over time this could result in senescence of the plant. Lack of grazing will also cause grasses to become unpalatable to herbivores, as there is a larger percentage of woody material in the plant.

Properly managed grazing will account for the needs of the plants as well as the needs of the herbivores. Properly managed grazing will also allow for rare plant species and native plant species to reproduce, grow, and regrow in their natural habitats.

- *Indicator used to compare alternatives:* A qualitative estimate of the effects on range condition and trend which includes plant composition and ground cover.

Issue 2. Aquatic and Riparian Conditions - Livestock grazing can cause trampled streambanks and altered riparian plant composition and community structure, and affect riparian conditions, stream function, and water and fisheries resources.

Livestock grazing can have significant effects on riparian conditions and water resources. As with upland rangeland areas, the frequency of grazing, intensity of grazing, and the opportunity for plants to grow before grazing or regrow after grazing are factors that affect the impacts of grazing on riparian vegetation. In addition to indirect effects, grazing can directly affect stream bank conditions. While grazing impacts riparian vegetation as described, it can also physically affect the stream banks proper. Livestock can physically trample and cause bank failure affecting instream habitat. While the geology of the area affects stream bank stability, in general, the longer the time period livestock graze along a stream, the greater the chances that bank damage will occur.

- *Indicators used to compare alternatives:*
  - A qualitative estimate of the effects on riparian vegetation composition, trend and community structure.
  - A qualitative estimate of the effects on stream conditions including streambank stability and water quality.
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on fish habitat conditions and on fish populations and trends (including aquatic Threatened, Endangered and Forest Service Sensitive species, and on aquatic Management Indicator Species).

Issue 3. Wildlife Habitat - Livestock grazing can cause changes in plant composition and structure, and disturb wildlife, and affect wildlife habitat conditions and populations.

The Stillwater S&G Allotment provides habitat for numerous species of wildlife. The key habitats for wildlife that could be affected by livestock grazing on the allotments are aspen, grasslands, shrublands, and riparian areas. These habitat types are utilized by the Management Indicator Species (MIS) (i.e., northern goshawk, beaver, and snowshoe hare), migratory birds and Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive Species (TES).

Management indicator species (MIS) are species selected because changes in their numbers are believed to indicate the effects of management activities on a range of species. One of the factors considered when selecting MIS is their close tie to the communities they represent. Management indicator species for the key terrestrial wildlife habitats on the allotment could be affected by livestock grazing. Livestock grazing

can affect their distribution and habitat on the allotment through competition for available forage. Grazing has the potential to impact future stands of aspen and willow components that supply important forage and building materials utilized by beaver. The goshawk preys on large-to-medium-sized birds and mammals, which it captures on the ground, in trees, or in the air. Specific habitat attributes used by these prey species include herbaceous and shrubby understories that can be affected by livestock grazing. Conversely, livestock grazing can stimulate regrowth and provide more palatable nutritious forage and have a positive effect for some small mammals, such as the snowshoe hare.

- *Indicators used to compare alternatives:*
  - A qualitative assessment of the amount and kind of forage available for wildlife in key habitats.
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on habitats and the viability threatened, endangered, species of concern, and Forest Service sensitive species of wildlife potentially present in the allotment.
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on habitats and population trends of Management Indicator Species (MIS) on the allotment.
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on wildlife distribution patterns.

Issue 4. Recreation/Wilderness - Livestock grazing can disturb recreation visitors and cause changes in ecological conditions, and affect recreational and wilderness experiences.

Within the Stillwater allotment there are many recreation opportunities including several developed facilities. Beginning in mid-July, August, and the first two weeks in September, recreationists may encounter livestock on the allotment. Livestock grazing can displace visitors and make popular hiking trails, fishing spots, and campsites undesirable.

About 12,000 acres of the Allotment is within Wilderness. The presence of livestock in the wilderness can also alter an individual's wilderness experience.

- *Indicators used to compare alternatives:*
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on recreation users.
  - A qualitative assessment of the effects on roadless and wilderness characteristics.

Issues Eliminated from Detailed Study

Some issues were eliminated from detailed study because they were: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council for Environmental Quality NEPA regulations require this delineation in 40 CFR Sec. 1501.7, "…identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (40 CFR 1506.3)…" The following topics were eliminated from detailed study, and are discussed briefly below to add to the overall understanding of the project:

Open Space Provided by Grazing

The ranching family permitted on the Stillwater allotment owns a total of approximately 8,000 acres in Uinta County, Wyoming that is used as part of the ranching operation. In addition to this deeded land, the ranch leases an additional 15,000 acres of private land in Uinta County for grazing. These deeded and leased lands provide a combined total of 23,000 acres of undeveloped open space in Uinta County. There are 716,738 acres of privately owned lands in Uinta County (University of Wyoming, Department of Geography and Recreation). The 23,000 acres of deeded and leased land tied to this ranch represents 3% of the total private lands owned in Uinta County. This undeveloped open space provides wildlife habitat in the lower elevations, below the National Forest, in Uinta County.

In 2002 the University of Wyoming, Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with Uinta County, conducted a survey of residents in and around Uinta County. This survey was conducted in order to determine resident and landowner preferences for rural land use. Of those individuals surveyed, 84% felt that undeveloped open space in Uinta County was an important characteristic to conserve (Mcleod et al. 2002).

Economic Effects to Permittee

The elimination of livestock grazing on the allotment would negatively impact the financial well being of the permittee. The ranch would be forced to find alternate summer range for its livestock. In 2008, the National Forest rate per animal unit month was $0.27 for a ewe/lamb pair. On average, private land rates are approximately $3.00 per animal unit month. Assuming the ranch could find private land pasture in the summer, they would experience a significant increase in the amount they would pay per animal unit month.

Heritage Resources

Heritage resources are both the physical remains of, and knowledge about, past human activity on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. They include archaeological sites, artifacts, historic document collections, rock art, Forest administrative buildings, traditional plant gathering and ceremonial places, and human-altered landscapes (including tie-hacking and mining districts). Heritage resources are managed within the context of overall Forest management for the long-term benefit of all Americans.

Native American groups have occupied the Uinta Mountains, and adjoining areas, for at least 14,000 years. The period of occupation is subdivided into several stages. The major subdivisions are: Paleo-Indian (14,000(+) to 8,500 B.C.); Archaic (8,500 B.C. to 1,550 B.C.); Fremont occupations/influence and Archaic continuation (1,550 B.C. to 700 B.C.); Archaic (700 B.C. to 400 B.C.); Protohistoric and Historic Period (400 B.C. to circa 1930). Archaeological materials associated with the Native American occupation of the Uinta Mountains consist of surface and buried deposits indicative of Native American cultures, in open air sites and rockshelter contexts.

Historic resources in the study area are most commonly associated with logging activities. Historic logging took place in two phases. An early phase, dating between the late 1860's to 1911, was characterized by small groups of independent loggers. Many of these men were engaged in the production of railroad ties and were often referred to as "tie-hackers." The second phase of logging ran from 1912 through the 1930's, when the Standard Timber Company organized logging camps and turned the logging operation into a corporately run enterprise. Remnants of logging cabins, roads, flumes, and other associated features can be found throughout the north slope of the Uinta Mountains. Agriculture uses such as stock raising would have also been prevalent in and around the Uinta Mountains with the arrival of homesteaders in the late 1800's.

In compliance with 36 CFR 800, and the National Historic Preservation Act, The USDA Forest Service, in consultation with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (Dykmann 2008), has made the determination that continued grazing in this area will not adversely effect historic properties as per 36 CFR 800.5(b).

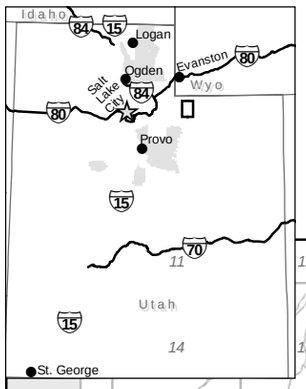
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

Evanston/Mountain View District

Stillwater Allotment

General Area Map

June 2009



Stillwater Campground

Wolverine Trailhead

Christmas Meadows Campground

Hayden Fork Campground

Stillwater Fork

Christmas Meadows

Ostler Fork

T1 N R10 E

T1 S R10 E

T4 N R8 W

T4 N R9 W

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Legend

Transportation Route

- Road Open to All Vehicles (Seasonal)
- Road Open to All Vehicles (Yearlong)
- Roads Open to Highway Legal Vehicles Only (Seasonal)
- Roads Open to Highway Legal Vehicles Only (Yearlong)
- Special Designation (Seasonal)
- Interstate
- State or US Highway
- Other
- Trail

Allotment Boundary

Township/ Sections

Ownership

PVT

UWCNF

Stream

- Artificial Path
- Intermittent
- Perennial