

Livestock Grazing Specialist Report

Motorized Travel Plan
Dixie National Forest

Prepared by Lucretia Y Smith
TEAMS Botanist

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by Brian Monroe, Rangeland Management Specialist, Dixie National Forest

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Chapter 3: Affected Environment

Introduction

Access to National Forest System lands by livestock permittees could be affected by the Dixie National Forest Motorized Travel Plan. Permittees holding grazing permits are concerned about motorized access to range improvements within their allotments such as fences, troughs, and corrals, access to locations for sheep herder camps, and access for livestock management. Motorized access for grazing permittees is authorized by provisions incorporated into each grazing permit. This authorization process would not be changed with this decision.

There are 104 grazing allotments on the Dixie National Forest (81 cattle and 23 sheep allotments). Approximately 18,000 head of cattle and their calves, and 11,000 head of sheep and their lambs are permitted on the Forest (USDA 2006). In addition to domestic livestock grazing, the North Hills Wild Horse herd northwest of Enterprise on the Pine Valley Ranger District is managed for an appropriate management level of 50 horses (USDA 1986, p IV-21).

Analysis Area and Methods

The analysis area is the Dixie National Forest including the Teasdale portion of the Fremont River Ranger District, which is administered by the Fishlake National Forest. The Dixie National Forest is comprised of the Pine Valley, Cedar City, Powell and Escalante Ranger Districts. This section presents current access conditions for range administration and livestock permittee access to Forest areas.

General Management Direction for Livestock Grazing

Objectives of the range management program for the National Forests and National Grasslands as stated in the Forest Service Manual are:

1. To manage range vegetation to protect basic soil and water resources, provide for ecological diversity, improve or maintain environmental quality, and meet public needs for interrelated resource uses,
2. To integrate management of range vegetation with other resource programs to achieve multiple use objectives contained in Forest Land and Resource Management Plans,
3. To provide for livestock forage, wildlife food and habitat, outdoor recreation, and other resource values dependent on range vegetation,
4. To contribute to the economic and social well-being of people by providing opportunities for economic diversity and by promoting stability for communities that depends on range resources for their livelihood, and
5. To provide expertise on range ecology, botany, and management of grazing animals.

The management direction for livestock grazing is described in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Dixie National Forest (USDA 1986). General Forest direction of grazing management will not be affected by this decision as this is a programmatic environmental impact statement for the motorized transportation system. Provisions in Term

Grazing Permits will continue to permit travel as needed by permittees. Noxious weeds will continue to be managed as per Forest and National direction.

Existing Conditions

Livestock grazing has been an historic and traditional use of the Dixie National Forest for over 100 years. Livestock forage is an important Forest product and many permittees use this forage to meet at least part of their year-round grazing needs.

Grazing on the National Forest is authorized by Congress and is a significant use on the Dixie National Forest. Presently about 263 grazing permittees are authorized to graze their livestock on 104 grazing allotments. About 769,000 acres (41%) of the Dixie National Forest are suitable for grazing cattle and sheep as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Suitable Grazing Area by District.

Area	Suitable Acres	Percent of Area
Cedar City	149,929	42%
Escalante	184,805	43%
Pine Valley	169,719	37%
Powell	135,344	35%
Teasdale	129,158	51%
Forest-wide	768,955	41%

According to the 2006 Annual Statistical Grazing Report, approximately 18,000 cattle and 11,000 sheep are permitted to graze the Forest during the period from about mid-May to mid-October (USDA 2006). To facilitate livestock management on the allotments, structural range improvements have been constructed and are assigned for maintenance by the permittees. An inventory of these improvements is described in Table 2 below. These numbers were calculated using the Forest's Geographic Information System (GIS) data.

Table 2. Range Improvements on the Dixie National Forest.

Improvement Type	Number of Existing Improvements
Miles of fence	895
Number of corrals	49
Miles of water pipeline	205
Water developments	267
Water storage units	1,208

Livestock grazing permittees are required to maintain all existing structural range improvements and to manage their allotments in accordance with the terms and conditions of their grazing permits. Administrative roads (Operational Maintenance Level 1 roads) within allotments can be authorized for permittee use by local District Rangers through each Term Grazing Permit. This use is only for administrative purposes directly associated with the management of the grazing permit.

The primary suitable rangeland in the analysis area consists of riparian zones, meadows, sagebrush-grass and mountain brush communities, open ponderosa pine stands, and some aspen communities. Cattle allotments are divided into multiple pastures and employ deferred rotation systems. Sheep are managed with once-over light grazing use and are rotated on an annual basis. Herder camps are established at various locations each year and are frequently moved as the sheep trail across the grazing units.

Livestock harassment and vandalism have been a concern to the Forest Service and its grazing permittees. There have been multiple incidents reported to employees in 2008 alone, including fences cut, gates left down, and livestock being chased by ATV across country. This has happened in areas open to cross-country travel and in areas already closed to cross-country travel by previous decisions. Tickets have been written to violators for vandalism of federal property related to grazing permit administration. This is an issue regarding enforcement of laws and regulation that already exist.

Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences

Introduction

Access to National Forest System lands by livestock permittees could be affected by the Dixie National Forest Motorized Travel Plan. Permittees holding grazing permits are concerned about motorized access to facilities within their allotments such as fences, troughs, and livestock handling facilities, and locations for sheep herder camps. Motorized access is authorized via individual range permit. This authorization process would not be changed with this decision.

Analysis Area

The analysis area is the Dixie National Forest including the Teasdale portion of the Fremont River Ranger District, which is administered by the Fishlake National Forest. The Dixie National Forest is comprised of the Pine Valley, Cedar City, Powell and Escalante Ranger Districts.

Analysis Methods

Site-specific Monitoring

No new or additional monitoring would be developed or implemented with this project. Existing monitoring techniques, protocols, priorities, procedures, etc., that are currently in place for managing livestock grazing activities will be used.

Analysis

Analysis was conducted using GIS data to determine if any designations would affect range resource and the management associated with livestock grazing.

Direct and Indirect Effects Common to All Alternatives

Livestock grazing activities, whether affecting the livestock themselves or the permittee, are not expected to be affected by implementing any of the travel management alternatives. As previously mentioned, permittees may be allowed motorized access to maintain or develop range improvements assigned in their grazing permits or for other authorized administrative activities.

No direct or indirect effects are anticipated under any of the alternatives as motorized access is and can be authorized through the grazing permit regardless of the configuration of the Forest's motorized travel system.

Cumulative Effects Common to All Alternatives

This project would not contribute to the cumulative effects on the range resources within the Dixie National Forest.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There would not be any irretrievable or irreversible commitment to the range resource under any alternatives.

Conclusions

Livestock grazing within the project area would not be adversely or positively affected by this project.

References

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. 1986. Land and resource management plan for the Dixie National Forest.

———. 2006. 2006 grazing statistical report, Dixie National Forest.