Allotment Management Plan

Antelope Hills Grazing Allotment

USDA Forest Service

Chino Valley Ranger District

Prescott National Forest

Yavapai County, Arizona

Introduction

The 14,397 acre Antelope Hills Allotment is located approximately 20 miles east of Chino Valley on the lower north slopes of Woodchute Mountain. The allotment contains nearly 15 miles of the Verde River, including a ¼ mile on private land. Elevations on the allotment range from 3,500 ft. at the Verde River just above Clarkdale to 5,424 ft. north of Baker's Pass on Woodchute Mountain.

Alluvial fans along the east side of the allotment are comprised of mesquite, catclaw and crucifixion thorn shrubs with an understory of grama grass mixed with tobosa. Pinyon-juniper woodlands occur across a majority of the allotment. Diversity and cover of herbaceous understory grasses varies across the allotment and is a function of the woody species canopy cover, soil characteristics, and disturbance factors including drought. A narrow band of riparian vegetation is found along the Verde River.

Approximately 7,774 acres (54%) of the allotment is considered capable of supporting grazing and of those acres, 6,608 acres are in satisfactory Rangeland Management Status (RMS). Most of the unsatisfactory status acres are indicated by downward trend in areas easily accessed from the limited stock-water sources.

This Allotment Management Plan implements the decision (supported by the Chino Grazing Project Environmental Assessment) made by the Chino Valley District Ranger on February 2, 2004.

Objectives

- Maintain the current diversity in understory species composition and vegetative ground cover on the 6,608 capable acres currently in satisfactory RMS.
- Decrease the amount of bare soil by increasing the perennial grass basal area and litter on the 1,166 capable acres that are in unsatisfactory RMS.
- Improve the allotment's soil function to enhance watershed conditions.
- Ensure that structural improvements distribute livestock throughout the acres capable of supporting livestock grazing.

Grazing Management

A. Permitted Numbers, Season of Use, and Head Months

# of Livestock	Season of Use	Head Months
78-100 cattle (cow/calf)	1/1 – 12/31 (variable season with other lands such that FS lands receive less than 52 weeks of grazing annually)	936 - 1,200

The period of grazing and the stocking numbers on NFS lands will be determined by monitoring and be designated in the Annual Operating Instructions and authorized on the annual grazing application and finalized by the payment of the Bill for Collection grazing fees.

The current term permitted cow/calf animal months of 936 will be the top number annually authorized until there are sufficient water developments in place to apply the management direction identified in below.

B. Grazing management and Allowable Use

Grazing Management

Apply a three pasture deferred rotation to two fenced pastures (Bakers Pass and Pocket) and four upland grazing areas in the antelope Hills Pasture by:

1) Strategically locating livestock and control access to water so as to provide deferment of the grazing areas, and
2) Designate the periods of use and periods of non- use in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) so as to identify what areas are being seasonally deferred from grazing.

AOI will be prepared each year in cooperation with the permittee to allow for consideration of current allotment conditions, resource conditions, and livestock management objectives. This AOI will detail the current season's grazing schedule, the stocking level, the improvement maintenance needs, and the allowable use levels on key forage and browse species.

Application of standard management practices such as salting, herding, and controlling access to water will be applied by the grazing permittee. These standards will achieve proper livestock distribution or lessen the grazing impact on areas which are sensitive or are natural concentration areas.

Protein, salt and other supplements will not be placed within ¼ mile of water or any identified sensitive plant population. New improvements (e.g. pipelines, troughs, tanks or fences) will be designed to avoid adverse impacts to any sensitive plant populations.

All new or reconstructed water developments will include wildlife access and escape ramps.

Cooperation of the permittee will be sought to make stock water supplies available for wildlife needs during critical periods, if water is available at the sources (e.g. storage tank).

The Verde River corridor will be closed to livestock grazing until such time as riparian research develops sustainable periods of grazing use and utilization levels for this riparian plant community.

Livestock will not graze pastures within ¼ mile of the Tower or other bald eagle nest site when eggs and/or chicks (less than 3 weeks old) are present in the nest.

No round-ups, drives, or construction activities (e.g. fence building) will occur within ¼ mile of any bald eagle nest site during nesting season – December through June.

The permittee will ensure that structural range improvement maintenance is completed to standard; that livestock do not enter the allotment or a pasture prior to the approved entry date; that livestock are removed from pastures and the allotment as specified in the AOI; that livestock do not reenter pastures that either have already been grazed, or that are planned for rest.

Allowable Use

Site	Use of Herbaceous Plants	Use of Shrubs
Upland sites with soils not derived from sandstone	40% on key forage plants in key areas at the time livestock are moved from the pasture	40% of leaders
Upland sites with soils derived from sandstone	30% on key forage plants in key areas at the time livestock are moved from the pasture	40% of leaders

Both herbaceous plant utilization levels above represent the percentage of last season's growth, if grazed during the dormant season, or the percentage of the current season's growth, to date, if grazed during a growing period (relative or seasonal utilization).

C. Rangeland Improvement Program

1) Five (5) miles of overland pipeline with five drinkers and
2) Ten collection/storage structures with drinkers will be installed as located on the ground and approved by the Forest Officer in Charge. (**See attached map for approximate locations**).

D. Maintenance Responsibility

Existing improvements are shown on the allotment map and range improvement inventory sheets of the permit.

All maintenance must be done annually whether the allotment is actually grazed or not.

Maintenance must occur throughout the season and cannot be a one-time action.

Damage resulting from big game, wind, other acts of nature, or human caused actions, must be repaired in a timely manner so as to ensure the integrity of the structures.

E. Drought Management

Perennial grasses and major browse species need deferment/rest in order to provide time to recover from drought induced stress.

Move cattle when utilization in pastures I met. If removal of livestock is necessary, they may be authorized to return to the allotment once conditions improve; meaning sufficient recovery from the effects of drought stress has occurred and there has been enough herbaceous production to support livestock numbers. Potential return of livestock will be evaluated no earlier than the summer growing season.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A. Implementation (Compliance) Monitoring

Periodic field checks will be conducted by the Forest Officer and/or the grazing permittee to measure forage use within key areas to determine if allowable use levels are being reached and determine any needed pasture movements.

- Key areas for the allotment and individual pastures will be determined in the near future by the Forest Service in conjunction with the grazing permittee. ***Key Areas are a relatively small portion of a range, selected because of their location, use, or grazing value as a monitoring point for grazing use. It is assumed that key areas, when properly selected, reflect the over-all acceptability of current management over the range and serve as a representative indicator sample of range conditions, trend and degree of grazing use.***

(Monitoring of allowable use on key forage species in key areas is the joint responsibility of the Forest Service and the permittee. Although the Forest Service will make every effort to assist the permittee in ensuring compliance with standards, the permittee has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the allowable use standards are met).

Periodic field checks will be conducted by the Forest Officer to assess vegetation health and trends as well as soil function to identify needed adjustments in season of use and/or livestock numbers.

Field Checks will include informal inspections, formal inspections, and permittee compliance monitoring.

Informal Inspections

Informal inspections conducted by the Forest Officer will be made as the opportunity arises, such as when the Forest Officer is working in the area or in passing through the allotment

The permittee will be notified by telephone of any significant observations needing immediate attention. Significant observations will be documented in writing by the Forest Officer and a copy of the inspection notes will be sent to the permittee in a timely manner.

Formal Inspections

Formal inspections conducted by the Forest Officer will be made as time and competing duties allow. The permittee will be requested to accompany the Forest Officer during the inspections. Significant findings from these inspections will be documented in a letter or inspection report sent to the permittee in a timely manner.

Permittee Compliance Monitoring

The grazing permittee will:

- Monitor grazing compliance on the allotment continuously throughout the grazing season.
- Document all findings through notes, photographs, or other means decipherable by the Forest Officer
- Share compliance monitoring information with the Forest Officer, and
- Coordinate with the Forest Officer to resolve any problems that arise.

B. Effectiveness Monitoring

The permittee is encouraged to participate in any effectiveness (e.g. long term condition and trend) monitoring and evaluation conducted on the allotment.

Permittee

Agreed to by: _____

, Permittee Date

Forest Officer

Approved by: _____

, District Ranger Date

Attachment 1

