Allotment Management Plan

Dugas

USDA Forest Service

Verde Ranger District, Prescott National Forest

Yavapai County, Arizona

Introduction

The Dugas project area is situated along the southwest boundary of the forest around the small unincorporated community of Dugas and involves approximately 9259 acres of Prescott Forest lands (see Map). While there is private land within the analysis area, the Proposed Action is limited to activities on the National Forest System lands.

This Allotment Management Plan (AMP) implements the decision (supported by the DRT Livestock Grazing Project Environmental Assessment) made by the Verde District Ranger on September 28, 2007, and supersedes the previous AMP signed on 8/12/2009.

Objectives

- Increase or maintain VGC and perennial grass composition and cover in pinyon/juniper woodlands, desert shrub/grassland, and chaparral communities to the extent attainable with the existing tree/shrub canopy.
- Improve soil function to enhance soil conditions.
- Allow riparian vegetation to reach or move towards potential.
- Allow channel profiles to return to appropriate dimensions for site morphology and channel functions.

Grazing Management

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

Permittee	Permit Type	# of Livestock	Season of Use	Head Months
Dugas Ranch	Term (10 years)	140 – 185 cattle (cow / calf) 8 horses	Year-long (3/01 – 2/28)	1776-2316

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

B. Grazing Management and Allowable Use

Grazing Management

Management on the Dugas Allotment would continue to use a 5 pasture deferred/rest rotation grazing system permitting up to 2316 head months of use. Livestock use in pastures would be rotated annually so that pastures would not be used during the same season every year with the exception of the Brown Springs Pasture, which would be used only in the winter season each year to aid in protection of riparian habitat. Grazing management on the Yellowjacket, Larkspur/Reno, and Cottonwood pastures generally would not receive use during antelope fawning but if used an average 8 inch stubble height on tobosa grass would be left for hiding cover for pronghorn fawns.

Annual Operating Instructions will be prepared each year in cooperation with the permittee to allow for consideration of current allotment conditions and management objectives. This AOI will detail the current season's grazing schedule, the stocking level, the improvement maintenance needs, needed improvements, 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 to achieve proper distribution or lessen the impact on areas which are sensitive or are natural concentration areas will be applied by the permittee.

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 such populations.

All new or reconstructed fencing will be built to accommodate wildlife passage using a 4-strand fence with a smooth bottom wire 18 inches off the ground and a total fence height of 42 inches or less. Interior fencing will have a total height of 42 inches or less and use 3-strands of wire with a smooth bottom wire 22 inches off the ground and 12 inches between top and next lower wire.

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 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; and that livestock do not enter or re-enter 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	35% in pastures used during the growing season (sufficient re-growth and plant recovery of grazed herbaceous forage plants is expected prior to the end of the growing season). Use in pastures during slow growth and the dormant season will be 50% (little to no re-growth of grazed herbaceous forage plants is expected prior to the end of the grazing season)	50% of available leaders
Riparian	40% of current year's growth	20% of current year's growth

The 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***

- Maintaining a stubble height of 8 inches on tobosa grass in the Cottonwood, Yellowjacket, and Larkspur/Reno pastures for pronghorn fawning cover.

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.

All maintenance of exterior fences must be completed prior to turn on each year. *(It is the responsibility of the permittee to ensure that the necessary coordination occurs between adjacent allotments to ensure maintenance is completed in a timely manner).*

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 is 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 to determine if allowable use levels are being reached and determine any needed pasture movements.

(*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 is 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 with an attempt to inspect each of the pastures. 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 permittee will:

- Monitor the allotment continuously throughout the grazing season to determine current resource conditions and to ensure the terms of the permit are being met.

- Document all findings through notes, photographs, or other means decipherable by the Forest Officer
- Share 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 Review / Agreement

Reviewed by/ agreed to Trudy Berkomayer (Permittee) Date 1-20-2023

Forest Officer Approval

Approved By Todd Willard (Todd Willard, Verde District Ranger) Date 1/20/2023

Dugas Allotment Key Areas

