Buckhorn Grazing Allotment

2/9/15

BRADSHAW

~~Chino Valley~~ Ranger District

Prescott National Forest

Prepared by: Jake Russell **Date:** 12/1/14

Agreed to/Reviewed by: [redacted] Date: 1/2/15

Permittee

Approved by: _____ Date: 2/9/15

District Ranger

Allotment Management Plan
Buckhorn
USDA Forest Service
Bradshaw Ranger District, Prescott National Forest Service
Yavapai County, Arizona

Introduction

This Allotment Management Plan (AMP) is a direct result of the Environmental Assessment and subsequent Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI).

The Buckhorn Allotment is located on the Bradshaw Ranger District of the Prescott National Forest (PNF), an area of approximately 297 acres. The allotment is located in the northwestern portion of the District, approximately 20 miles west of Prescott, Arizona. The Buckhorn Allotment borders the Arizona State Land Department Buckhorn Grazing Lease on the west and private land to the south. North and east sides of the allotment are bordered by National Forest System lands.

Average elevation of the allotment is 4,500 feet and the average annual precipitation is approximately 18 inches. Precipitation is bi-modal with monsoon events occurring during the summer and a second period of precipitation occurring during the winter season. The prominent ecotype on the allotment is pinion-juniper with some tobosa-grass-dominated mesa tops. There are no riparian areas identified on the allotment. Slope gradients are gently sloping to moderately steep. Major land formations include lowland and elevated plains with some hill features.

Desired Condition & Resource Objectives

The desired conditions and resource objectives for resources and infrastructure on this grazing allotment, based on the Forest Plan and the work of the Interdisciplinary Analysis Team, include:

- rangeland management that can respond to local or national demands for livestock production while maintaining air, soil and water resources at or above minimum local, State, or Federal standards (Forest Plan, pg. 11);
- range administration that provides for the maintenance of satisfactory rangeland management status with a static or upward apparent trend;
- management of the grazing operations using a system that is responsive to changing climatic or environmental conditions;
- the maintenance of vegetation with mid- to high similarity to the potential natural plant community (PNC) providing for ecological functionality and resiliency following disturbance while sustaining long-term productivity of the land;
- the installation and maintenance of structural improvements that enhance management control and flexibility and allow for effective distribution of forage use;
- the maintenance of soils in satisfactory condition over the long-term with improvement shown in areas departing from satisfactory condition where livestock grazing is affecting the condition;
- protection and preservation of important historic and cultural sites; and

- the maintenance of suitable habitats for Management Indicator Species, Migratory Bird Treaty Act species, Federally listed Threatened and Endangered species, Forest Service Sensitive species, and for indigenous plant and animal species.

Grazing Management

Permitted numbers, Season of Use and Animal Months

Permittee	Permit Type	# of Livestock	Season of Use	Animal Months
Indian Rock Land & Cattle LLC	Term (10 years)	Up to 5 Cow/calf pairs	Year long	60 Animal- Unit-Months

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

Adaptive management is designed to provide sufficient flexibility to allow livestock management to address changes in climatic conditions, seasonal fluctuations in forage production, and other dynamic influences on the ecosystem in order to effectively make progress toward or maintain desired conditions of the rangeland and other resources. Adaptive management will also include the implementation of resource protection measures.

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.

Allowable Use

Grazing intensity guidelines will be applied across the allotment to provide rangeland managers with information needed to adapt management through adjustments, as may be needed, on an annual basis. Examples of appropriate grazing intensity and forage use guidelines for areas of the allotment that are generally described to be in satisfactory condition include:

1. Conservative grazing intensity (31-40% use) on key herbaceous species during the spring and summer growing periods (typically April 1 to September 30);
2. Moderate grazing intensity (41-50% use) on key herbaceous species during the dormant season;
3. Moderate grazing intensity (50-60% leaders browsed) on key upland woody species;

In the event that the above resource protection measures do not accomplish site-specific resource objectives, additional optional measures may be implemented. These optional measures will be designed to address site-specific resource concerns and may include, but are not limited to, such things as temporary fencing, electric fencing, reconstruction of non-functional improvements, and construction of new improvements such as drift fences.

Site-specific Measures

The following measures will be applied in areas of concern where current conditions are not meeting desired conditions, and management objectives have been established to measure progress towards meeting desired resource conditions:

1. a light grazing intensity guideline (0-30% use) during the *growing season* at impaired soils (TES 427), and unsatisfactory RMS areas with a static trend; and
2. a conservative grazing intensity guideline (31-40% use) during the *dormant season* at impaired soils (TES 427) and unsatisfactory RMS areas with a static trend;
3. incidental use only, regardless of season, at unsatisfactory soil sites (TES 477) and unsatisfactory RMS areas with a downward trend (TES 427 and 477).

Site-specific guidelines to address resource concerns within critical soils and vegetation areas are identified as follows:

4. maintain the south forest boundary fence on Buckhorn Mesa and close the access gate between Buckhorn tanks and the Buckhorn allotment to disrupt livestock concentration patterns.

In the event that the above resource protection measures do not accomplish site-specific resource objectives, additional optional measures may be implemented. These optional measures will be designed to address site-specific resource concerns and may include, but are not limited to, such things as temporary fencing, electric fencing, drift fences, additional livestock exclosures, temporary pipelines and water troughs.

Rangeland Improvement Program

Construction of New Range Improvements

Construction of the following new structural improvement that has been developed to address resource concerns and are intended to aid in the achievement or maintenance of desired resource conditions by improving livestock distribution have been approved. Monitoring may indicate that the improvement is not necessary; however, if the improvement is not implemented, the upper limit of permitted livestock numbers may not be achievable on a sustained basis.

1. Construct approximately ½ mile of west forest boundary fence on Buckhorn Mesa.

Maintenance Responsibility

The Term Grazing Permit includes a list of all improvements which the permittee will continue to maintain at a level that effectively provides for their intended uses and purposes. Range improvements will be inspected periodically during the term of the permit to document condition. 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).

AOI will identify range improvements in need of maintenance. Existing improvements may be replaced when their conditions warrant.

Access to Improvements:

Authorization for cross-country motorized travel is provided for the permittee to administer the livestock operation and maintain improvements under the terms and conditions of the Term Grazing Permit.

Annual authorization for actions implementing management direction in the AMP will be included in the AOI , such as a description of the anticipated level of cross- county travel, travel needed for improvement maintenance, new improvement construction, or reconstruction of existing improvements.
All authorizations for cross-country motorized travel are subject to existing regulations intended to protect natural and/or heritage resources. Cross-country travel is not allowed when such travel would cause unacceptable resource damage.

Drought Management
When rested or deferred, if adequate precipitation is not received, recovery may not be adequate for livestock use. If complete 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
Implementation Monitoring
This monitoring will be conducted on an annual basis and will include such things as livestock actual use (# of head, # of months) and scheduled and unscheduled inspections to ensure that all livestock and grazing management measures stipulated in the permit, AMP, and AOI are being implemented (e.g. cattle numbers, maintenance of improvements, mitigation measures).

Periodic Monitoring of Short-term Indicators of Resource Conditions
Short-term indicators of resource conditions such as forage utilization, residual forage, species composition, plant cover, frequency or density, and/or vegetative ground cover will be monitored on the allotment at key areas and at areas identified with site-specific resource concerns. Methods will include generally accepted monitoring protocols.

The purpose of periodic monitoring of short-term indicators is to determine:
1. If individual plants have had an opportunity to recover, grow, and reproduce following grazing impacts.
2. If sufficient residual forage remains at the end of the growing season to provide for other resource values or requirements such as soil productivity, wildlife habitat, and dormant season use.
3. If maintenance or improvement of range¬¬land conditions are indicated.
4. If management adjustments are warranted for the following season to provide for the physiological needs of primary forage species and other resources identified as concerns.
5. If soils are maintaining or moving toward desired conditions.
6. If critical areas are moving toward desired conditions.

Meeting guidelines established for short-term indicators is not a management objective; rather, guidelines are one of the indicators or tools managers use to guide management. These point-in-time monitoring measurements provide information about current resource conditions and apparent trend. When and where resource condition-indicators on an allotment are obviously better than those called for under management guidelines, actual measurements may or may not be recorded every year for all key areas; however, at a minimum, observed general forage conditions at the end of each growing season will be documented in the allotment file by range-land managers. Grazing intensity guidelines may be revised upward or downward as conditions warrant and as monitoring indicates the status of progress toward desired conditions.

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 the allotment.
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.

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. This type of monitoring evaluates the success of management in achieving the desired objectives within key and critical areas or on permanent transects at an interval of 10 years or less. Effectiveness monitoring may also be conducted if data and observations from implementation monitoring indicate a need.
Both qualitative and quantitative monitoring methods will be used in accordance with Interagency Technical References, the Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Management Training Guide, and the Region 3 Allotment Analysis Handbook.