

Allotment Management Plan

Muldoon

**Chino Valley Ranger District,
Prescott National Forest
USDA Forest Service
Yavapai County, Arizona**

Introduction

The 22,452 acre Muldoon Allotment is located approximately 10 miles east of Chino Valley between the Upper Verde River and the lower slopes of Woodchute Mountain. The allotment contains nearly 4 miles of the Verde River. Elevations on the allotment range from 4180 ft. at the Verde River to 6300 ft on the northwest flank of Woodchute Mountain. Adjacent to the allotment are nearly 13,000 acres of Arizona State lands which together with the Muldoon Allotment, have been one ranch operation for approximately 50 years.

Pinyon-juniper woodlands are found on a majority of the allotment with some inclusions of grasslands and the generally narrow band of riparian vegetation bordering the Verde River.

17,288 acres (77% of the allotment) are considered capable of supporting grazing. Of those acres, approximately 75% or 12,966 acres are in satisfactory Rangeland Management Status (RMS).

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 both the current diversity in understory species composition and vegetative ground cover on the 12,966 capable acres currently in satisfactory RMS.

Increase the diversity of perennial grass species and vegetative ground cover on grasslands of alluvial soils and open canopied pinyon-juniper communities that are currently in unsatisfactory RMS (4322 acres).

Improve soil function to enhance soil conditions.

Ensure that structural improvements distribute livestock throughout the acres capable of supporting livestock grazing and facilitate rotation of pastures by the mid-point of the permit term.

Grazing Management

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

Permittee	Permit Type	# of Livestock	Season of Use	Head Months
James and Carol Ann Fletcher	Term (10 years)	131 -170 cow/ calf pairs	Variable - mixed with State lands between 01/01 - 12/31	1572 - 2040

Livestock authorized for Arizona State lands and National Forest lands will be combined into a single herd that grazes NFS lands for a portion of the year and State Lands for the remaining portion of the year. The total head months grazed on National Forest will not exceed 2040 each year.

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

Apply deferred rotation in all NFS pastures in conjunction with the four pastures on Arizona State Land.

Grazing duration will be evaluated based on keeping within allowable utilization levels. There are two distinct allowable forage utilization levels. Forage utilization will not exceed 40% in key areas on key forage species at the time livestock are moved from the pasture. On alluvial grasslands not in upward trend, forage utilization will not exceed 30% in key areas on key forage species at the time livestock are moved from the pasture. On these grassland sites grazing durations may be governed by the amount of litter, a component of the Rangeland Health Inspections.

For both forage utilization levels, this represents the percentage of last season's growth if grazed during the dormant season, or it represents the percentage, to date, of current season's growth if grazed during a growing period. Forty percent of leaders on shrubs may be browsed. The length of the grazing season will depend on permittee use of BMPs (EA Appendix 3), and additional practices, to distribute livestock use out from areas traditionally used.

The annual authorization will be adjusted, based on how the range has been utilized the previous grazing period, along with short-term indicators of Rangeland Health.

Pasture moves, in and out, will be based on a standard of maintaining an average 9" stubble height within one mile of King Tank during April and May each year.

The Verde River corridor will not be used for grazing.

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 season's grazing schedule, the stocking level, maintenance needs, needed improvements, and allowable use levels of 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.

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).

No round-ups, drives, or construction activities (e.g. fence building) will occur within 1/4 mile of any bald eagle nest site when eggs and/or young 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 1/4 mile of any bald eagle roost site during roosting December through March.

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/or the allotment as specified in the AOI; that livestock do not enter or re-enter pastures that either have already been grazed, or that are planned for rest.

Allowable Use

The herbaceous plant utilization levels below 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).

Allowable Use Table

Site	Use of Herbaceous Plants	Use of Shrubs
Upland sites, other than grasslands on alluvial soils	40% on key forage plants in key areas at the time livestock are moved from the pasture	40% of leaders
Grasslands on alluvial soils	30% on key forage plants	

C. Rangeland Improvement Program

First, seven (7) miles of fence to create pastures containing similar vegetation types and two (2) enclosures for range monitoring of alluvial grasslands will be installed as located on the ground by the Forest Officer.

Then, two (2) wells with accompanying storage tanks, seven (7) miles of pipeline and ten (10) drinkers will be installed as located on the ground and approved by the Forest Officer. **(See attached map for approximate locations and attached list for proposed completion dates).**

D. Maintenance Responsibility

Existing improvements are shown on the allotment map and range improvement inventory sheets of the Muldoon Allotment Term Grazing 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" (allotment entry) 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 rest in order to provide time to recover from drought induced stress.

Move cattle when utilization in pastures is met. If removal is necessary, livestock 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 grazing compliance on 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 that are 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


James and Carol Ann Fletcher, Muldoon Permittees

Date 11-13-09

Forest Officer Approval

Approved By


Linda Jackson, Chino Valley District Ranger

Date 11-13-09