



RECEIVED
D.C.N.R.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

2000 FEB -3 AM 11:28
Carson City Field Office
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, Nevada 89701
775-885-6000
<http://www.nv.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To:
4130
(NV-032)

Dear Interested Public:

FEB 2 2000

About two months ago, you received a copy of the Final Lahontan Allotment Evaluation and Environmental Assessment and Proposed Lahontan Allotment Grazing Decision/Decision Record/Finding of No Significant Impact. It was provided as a "Proposed" decision subject to protest as specified in the Proposed Decision dated December 9, 1999. The protest period has ended and no protests were received. Therefore, the "Proposed" decision will constitute my Final Decision.

In accordance with 43 CFR §4160.4 and 43 CFR §4.470, if you wish to appeal this final decision, you are allowed 30 days from receipt of this final decision to file such appeal with the Assistant Manager, Renewable Resources, Carson City Field Office, 5665 Morgan Mill Road, Carson City, Nevada 89701. The appeal should state the reasons, clearly and concisely why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error (§4160.4).

In accordance with 43 CFR §4.21, within 30 days of receipt of this decision any person has the right to file a petition for stay (suspension) of the decision together with their appeal to the authorized officer listed above.. The appellant has the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted and show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties, if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and;
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If you have any questions concerning the Lahontan Allotment Grazing Decision, please contact John Axtell of my staff, at (775) 885-6146.

Sincerely

Daniel Jacquet
Assistant manager, Renewable Resources
Carson City Field Office

12/9/99



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Carson City Field Office
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, Nevada 89701
775-885-6000
<http://www.nv.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To
4130
(NV-032)
CF-273518

DEC - 9 1999

RECEIVED
D. C. N. R.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
1999 DEC 9 11:20

Dear Interested Public:

Enclosed is a copy of the Final Lahontan Allotment Evaluation and Environmental Assessment. In addition the Proposed Lahontan Allotment Grazing Decision/Decision Record/Finding of No Significant Impact is also enclosed. On August 19, 1998, you were sent the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation, on which we received one comment.

If you have any questions concerning the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation, Environmental Assessment or Proposed Grazing Decision, please contact John Axtell of my staff at (775) 885-6146.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jacquet
Assistant Manager, Renewable Resources
Carson City Field Office

3 Enclosures:

1. Final Lahontan Allotment Evaluation (13 pp)
2. Lahontan Allotment Environmental Assessment (13 pp)
3. Lahontan Allotment Proposed Grazing Decision/Decision Record. (4 pp).

PROPOSED LAHONTAN ALLOTMENT
GRAZING DECISION/DECISION RECORD/
Finding Of No Significant Impact
EA-NV-030-99040

The Record of Decision for the Lahontan Environmental Impact Statement and the Resource Management Plan (RMP) was issued on September 3, 1985. These documents established the multiple use goals and objectives which guide management of public land in the Lahontan Allotment. The Lahontan Rangeland Program Summary Update (RPS), issued in December 1989, identified allotment specific objectives for the Lahontan Allotment.

As identified in the Lahontan RMP and Lahontan RPS, monitoring has been conducted on the Lahontan Allotment to determine if existing multiple uses for the allotment were consistent with the attainment of the objectives established by the RMP. An allotment evaluation was sent out for public review in (August, 1998) Data has been analyzed through the allotment evaluation process to determine if changes in existing management are required in order to meet specific multiple use objectives for this allotment along with meeting the Standards and Guidelines developed by the Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council.

Through consultation, coordination and cooperation (CCC), input from State agencies responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public has been considered. Based on the evaluation of the monitoring data, technical recommendations contained within the allotment evaluation, and the beneficial input provided through the CCC process, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action of the Environmental Assessment.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT DECISION

Specifically, decisions relating to the grazing of livestock on public land in the Lahontan Allotment and brought forth as the Proposed Action in the Environmental Assessment are as follows:

- a. In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3-1(a), livestock grazing use will be maintained at 1,155 AUMs.
- b. In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3-1(a), the existing period of use from November 1st to March 31th will be maintained.
- c. In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3-2, Utilization levels for key shrubs and grasses will be maintained at or below 45% and 55% respectively.
- d. In accordance with 43 CFR §4120.3-1(a) existing wells will be maintained and used so that livestock use will be distributed evenly over the allotment.

RATIONALE

The proposed action will maintain the range, allow for multiple uses of the public lands including livestock grazing, meet Standards and Guidelines and achieve specific objectives set for the Lahontan Allotment in the RPS (1989)

The EA including the explanation and resolution of any potential significant environmental impacts has been reviewed. It has been determined that the Proposed Action with the stipulation measures described in the Grazing Decision will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required on the Proposed Action. Furthermore, the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved land use plan.

The rationale for the Proposed Actions listed above are as follows:

- a. By grazing 1,155 AUM's, of cattle, the overall use on key grass species will be maintained at or below the 55% use level, and at or below the 45% use level on shrubs therefore, adverse effects associated with grazing the vegetative community will be avoided.
- b. By maintaining the wild horse population at the level identified in the Multiple Use Decision and the Lahontan Herd Management Area Plan, the areas in heavy and severe use condition class will be reduced to a moderate use level.
- c. By maintaining and using existing wells the livestock will be more evenly distributed over the allotment, avoiding excess vegetative use.
- d. By grazing the allotment between November 1, and March 31, a period when the vegetation is dormant, adverse effects of grazing will be avoided.

AUTHORITY

Authority for the Livestock Decisions for the Lahontan Allotment is listed below. These citations are found in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

§4100.0-8 "The authorized officer shall manage livestock grazing on public lands under the principle of multiple use and sustained yield, and in accordance with applicable land use plans. Land use plans shall establish allowable resource uses (either singly or in combination), related levels of production or use to be maintained, areas of use, and resource condition goals and objectives to be obtained. The plans also set forth program constraints and general management practices needed to achieve management objectives. Livestock grazing activities and management actions approved by the authorized officer shall be in conformance with the land use plan as defined at 43 CFR §1601.05(b)."

- §4110.3 “The authorized officer shall periodically review the permitted use specified in a grazing permit or lease and shall make changes in the permitted use as needed to manage, maintain or improve rangeland productivity, to assist in restoring ecosystems to properly functioning condition, to conform with land use plans or activity plans, or to comply with the provisions of subpart §4180 of this part. These changes must be supported by monitoring, field observations, ecological site inventory or other data, acceptable to the authorized officer.”
- §4120.3-2(a) States in pertinent part: “(a) The BLM may enter into a cooperative range improvement agreement with any person, organization, or other government entity for the installation, use, maintenance, and/or modification of range improvements or rangeland developments to achieve management or resource condition objectives...”
- §4120.2(4)(c) “The authorized officer shall provide opportunity for public participation in the planning and environmental analysis of proposed plans affecting the administration of grazing and shall give public notice concerning the availability of environmental documents prepared as a part of the development of such plans, prior to implementing the plans. The decision document following the environmental analysis shall be considered the proposed decision for the purposes of subpart 4160 of this part.”
- §4130.3 “Livestock grazing permits and leases shall contain terms and conditions determined by the authorized officer to be appropriate to achieve the management and resource condition objectives for the public lands and other lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and to ensure conformance with the provisions of subpart §4180 of this part.”
- §4130.3-1(a) “The authorized officer shall specify the kind and number of livestock, the period(s) of use, the allotment(s) to be used, and the amount of use , in animal unit months, for every grazing permit or lease. The authorized livestock grazing use shall not exceed the livestock carrying capacity of the allotment.”
- §4130.3-2 “Permits and leases shall incorporate terms and conditions that ensure conformance with subpart §4180 of this part.”
- §4130.3-2 States in pertinent part: that “The authorized officer may specify in grazing permits or leases other terms and conditions which will assist in achieving management objectives, provide for proper range management or assist in the orderly administration of the public rangelands...”
- §4180.2 The standards for rangeland health on which management will be based (in accordance to §4180.2) are:

STANDARD 1. SOILS

Soil processes will be appropriate to soils types, climate and land form.

STANDARD 2. RIPARIAN/WETLANDS

Riparian/wetland systems are in properly functioning condition.

STANDARD 3. WATER QUALITY

Water quality in Nevada and California State Law shall be achieved or maintained.

STANDARD 4. PLANT AND ANIMAL HABITAT

Populations and communities of native plant species and habitats for native animal species are healthy, productive and diverse.

STANDARD 5. SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES HABITAT

Habitat conditions meet the life cycle corridors for wildlife and minimal habitat fragmentation.

GUIDANCE

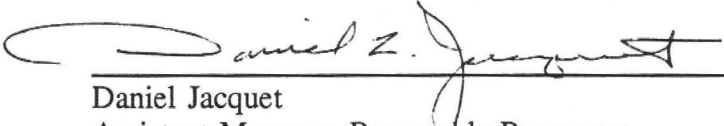
NAC 445A.120, Applicability

NAC 445A.123, Standards applicable to all waters.

Sierra Front, Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council, Standards and Guidelines as approved by the Secretary of the Interior on February 12, 1997.

PROTEST:

In accordance with 43 CFR §4160.2, if you wish to protest this proposed decision, you are allowed 15 days from the receipt of this decision to file such protest with the Assistant Manager, Renewable Resources, Carson City Field Office, 5665 Morgan Mill Road, Carson City, Nevada 89701. The protest should state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why you think the decision is in error (§4160.2). Subsequent to the protest period (15 days from the receipt of the Proposed Decision), a final decision will be issued.



Daniel Jacquet
Assistant Manager, Renewable Resources
Carson City Field Office

12/9/89
Date

LAHONTAN ALLOTMENT EVALUATION

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Allotment Name & Number: Lahontan - 3036
- B. Permittees: Harriman and Son; Kent Bros; Gary Snow
- C. Evaluation Period: 1994 - 1998
- D. Selective Management Category & Priority: M, no priority assigned
- E. Standards and Guidelines: This plan will implement the Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Area Standards and Guidelines (1997)

II. Initial Stocking Level

A. Livestock Use

1. Adjudicated AUM's:

a. Total Preference:

1,155 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) cattle
Harriman and Son 375 AUMs.
Kent Bros. -- No preference, EOU only (75 AUMs when authorized)
Gary Snow - 780 AUMs TNR.

b. Suspended:

0

c. Active:

1,155 cattle

d. Exchange of use (Kent Bros.):

75 AUMs

2. Season of Use:

November 1 to March 31.

3. Kind and Class of Livestock:

Cow/Calf.

4. Percent Federal Range/Exchange of Use:

100% Federal Range/75 AUMs

B. Wild Horse and Burro Use:

1. Population:

The entire Lahontan Herd Management Area (HMA) is within the allotment, the HMA comprises 21% of the Allotment. There are no wild burros within the allotment. Approximately 80 wild horses are estimated to occur within the allotment.

2. Herd Management Area:

The appropriate management level (AML) for the Lahontan HMA was set through the Multiple Use Decision processes in 1993, and has a range of 7- 10 horses.

C. Wildlife Use:

1. Species:

Low numbers of mule deer and a variety of non game small mammals, birds and reptiles.

2. Key or Critical Management Areas:

None

III. Allotment Profile:

A. Description:

The Lahontan Allotment is within the Fort Churchill Planning Unit, approximately 8 miles south west of Fallon, NV. Elevations vary from 4,000 to 5,500 feet (Map 1).

B. Acreage:

1. Total:

77,220 acres

2. Pastures:

None

C. Allotment Specific Objectives:

Lahontan Resource Management Plan and Final EIS Nov. 8, 1984.

1. Land Use Plan (LUP) Objectives:

a. Short Term:

Develop AMPs/grazing systems on category I allotments and grazing systems as needed on category M and C allotments to improve condition, provide for proper utilization within key areas, achieve better livestock distribution to obtain more uniform utilization, and provide an increase in available forage and water for livestock, wild horses and wildlife.

Continue existing rangeland monitoring studies, and establish new studies as recommended by the 1981 Nevada Range Monitoring Procedures, to determine if management objectives are being reached and what adjustments in livestock use, wildlife reasonable numbers, and wild horse numbers are necessary.

When reasonable numbers of mule deer are attained, these numbers may be adjusted based on joint monitoring studies by NDOW and BLM.

Conduct wild horse gathering as necessary to maintain the herd at the AML of 7 to 10 head (1993 MUD).

Develop range improvements to protect and improve mule deer, sage grouse, bighorn sheep, fisheries and riparian habitat, and to improve livestock and wild horse distribution and vegetation utilization.

b. Long Term:

In the long-term, the range monitoring program would provide data on which to base future adjustments in livestock, wildlife reasonable numbers, and wild horse use, and to identify additional range improvements. All future adjustments and improvements would be designed to achieve the objectives of this alternative.

The initial assignment of allotments into the categories of "maintain", "improve", and "custodial" will be evaluated periodically. These evaluations will assure that the management objectives are being reached and that AMPs and range improvements will be initiated for those allotments requiring more intensive management.

Providing forage for reasonable numbers (3,201 AUMs; planning area wide) of big game would be a long term objective.

It is anticipated that additional Habitat Management Plans will be prepared and implemented in the long term.

2. RPS Objectives (Lahontan RPS Update Dec. 1989):

a. Short Term:

Utilization levels are not to exceed 55 percent on identified key species, Indian ricegrass (Oryzopsis hymenoides; Orhy), needle and threadgrass (Stipa comata; Stco) and 45% on winter fat (Eurotia lanata); Eula). Initially allow 1,155 AUMs of livestock use.

b. Long Term:

1. Maintain existing ecological condition and trend.
2. Maintain or improve wild horse habitat consistent with wildlife and livestock objectives. Maintain or improve free roaming behavior of wild horses by protecting or enhancing wild horse home ranges. Maintain or improve wild horse habitat by assuring that all waters remain open to use by wild horse. Initially provide approximately 504 AUMs of forage for approximately 42 head of wild horses.

Through the Multiple Use Decision Process (May, 1991) the AML was decreased to a range of 7 to 10 head.

3. Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E):

There are no known T&E plants within the allotment. Wintering bald eagles, an endangered species, utilize cottonwood trees on lands administered by the State Parks Department which are adjacent to BLM administered land.

D. Key Species Identification:

1. Upland:

Indian Ricegrass (Oryzopsis hymenoides)
Needle and threadgrass (Stipa comata)
Winter fat (Eurotia Lanata)

Bottlebrush squirreltail (Sitanion hystrix)
Spiny hopsage (Tetradymia spinosa)

2. Riparian Areas:

None

IV. Management Evaluation:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this evaluation is to summarize the base data to determine whether or not Activity Plan Objectives are being met. Further base data will aid in making technical recommendations for those objectives which are not being met and to provide a basis for making any future decisions regarding authorized use.

B. Summary of Studies Data:

1. Actual Use:

Livestock use is from November 1 through March 31, wild horse use is yearlong (table 1).

Table 1. Actual Use/ Annual Precipitation

Yr.	AUMs Actual Use Cattle	AUMs Actual Use Wild Horses*	% Horse use, AUMs	Total AUMs	% Use	Annual Precipitation
76	1,984	144	07%	2,128	61%	3.99"
77	1,787	180	09%	1,967	60%	4.95"
78	2,375	228	11%	2,603	46%	6.85"
79	2,775	288	09%	3,063	28%	7.06"
80	2,800	360	11%	3,160	63%	5.76"
81	1,236	444	26%	1,680	25%	4.22"
82	1,323	504	28%	1,827	21%	8.73"
83	1,550	665	30%	2,215	23%	10.92"
84	1,354	878	39%	2,232	28%	4.57"
85	1,573	1,159	42%	2,732	40%	6.10"
86	1,504	1,560	51%	3,064		4.19"
87	473	1,716	92%	2,139	17%	4.23"
88	75	2,064	96%	2,139		3.15"
89	75	2,220	97%	2,295	47%	5.14"
90	197	2,400	92%	2,597		3.18"
91	250	2,212	90%	2,462		5.27"
92	1037	1,200	54%	2,237	24%	N/A
93	234	1,344	85%	1,578	20%	N/A
94	302	516	63%	818	19%	4.74"
95	462	852	65%	1,314	13%	7.28"
96	780	600	43%	1,380	39%	N/A
97	780	696	47%	1,476	39%	N/A
98	740	969	48%	1,436	38%	N/A

* Wild horse numbers were obtained by aerial censuses.

2. Wild Horse & Burro:

In 1993 a Multiple Use Decision was issued for the Lahontan Allotment and set the AML for wild horses at 112 AUMs. Currently 960 AUMs of forage are being consumed by horses which has resulted in excessive vegetative use in certain areas.

3. Precipitation:

The closest weather station is at the Lahontan Dam, which is located at the north edge of the allotment. Precipitation data is collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and is provided by the Western Region Climate Center (table 1).

4. Utilization:

a. Key Area:

Utilization is read on the key area yearly and every 3 years allotment wide.

b. Use Pattern Mapping:

The 1998 use pattern map showed that 64% of the allotment is receiving slight, light or moderate use, 36% of the allotment is receiving heavy use (use pattern map, attached).

c. Noxious Weeds:

This allotment was inventoried for noxious weeds, no noxious weeds have been identified.

5. Trend:

Two Key Area frequency transects have been established on this allotment one in 1984 and the other in 1991:

Key Area #1 1984 Indian ricegrass = at the 30% frequency level
1998 " " = at the 11% frequency level

Key Area #2 1991 Indian ricegrass = at the 54% frequency level
1998 Indian ricegrass = at the 32% frequency level

The decrease on both transects is statistically significant. Both transects are located within the HMA, during the late 1980's and early 1990's the horse population was 20 times greater than the management level.

6. Ecological Condition:

<u>Early Seral</u>	<u>Mid Seral</u>	<u>Late Seral</u>	<u>Potential Natural Community</u>
14%	54%	32%	<1%
6,719 acres	26,053 acres	14,763 acres	342 acres

The data for ecological status was collected in 1982.

7. Wildlife Habitat:

The allotment provides habitat for sparse populations of deer, rabbits, coyotes, and a variety of non-game birds, mammals and reptiles.

8. Riparian/Fisheries Habitat:

None within the allotment.

9. Wild Horse Habitat:

The allotment provides habitat for wild horses, with the Lahontan HMA comprising 21% of the Allotment.

10. T&E Species:

There are no known T&E species present on the allotment.

V. Conclusions:

RPS Objectives:

a. Short Term:

1. Utilization levels are not to exceed 55 percent on identified key species, Indian ricegrass, needle and threadgrass and 45% on winter fat .

Not Met

Several areas are receiving heavy use (66% utilization on 18,500 acres), and severe use (<600 acres). However, over all use on the allotment is moderate.

2. Initially allow 1,155 AUMs of livestock use.

Met

b. Long Term:

1. Maintain existing ecological condition and trend.

Not Met

The trend is down, due to a loss of Indian rice grass plants. These plants were pulled up by their roots during the early 1990's as a result of an over population of wild horses.

2. Maintain or improve wild horse habitat consistent with wildlife and livestock objectives.

Not Met

The trend is down, due to a loss of Indian rice grass plants. These plants were pulled up by their roots during the early 1990's as a result of an over population of wild horses.

3. Maintain or improve free roaming behavior of wild horses by protecting or enhancing wild horse home ranges.

Met

4. Maintain or improve wild horse habitat by assuring that all waters remain open to use by wild horse.

The HMA does not contain any water, the horses obtain water from the Lahontan Reservoir which is administered by the State Parks.

5. Initially provide approximately 504 AUMs of forage for approximately 42 head of wild horses.

Through the Multiple Use Decision Process (May, 1991) the AML was decreased to a range of 7 to 10 head.

Met

6. Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E):

There are no known T&E plants within the allotment. Wintering bald eagles, an endangered species, utilize cottonwood trees on lands administered by the State Parks Department which are adjacent to BLM administered land.

HMAP Objectives:

1. Improve the physical condition of the wild horses from fair to good or excellent.

Met

2. Maintain the free-roaming nature of the wild horses.

Met

3. Maintain the wild horses within the HMA.

Not Met

The wild horses are using areas outside of the HMA as all or part of their home range.

4. Allow no more than 55% total utilization on key plant grass species, Indian ricegrass and 40% on squirrel tail.

Not Met

VI. Technical Recommendations:

1. Reduce the Wild Horse Population Down to the Identified AML:

The heavy (4,480 acres) and severe use (<600 acres) in the north west portion of the allotment is attributed to use by wild horses outside of the herd management area and can be solved by reducing the wild horse numbers down to the levels identified in the Multiple Use Decision and the Herd Management Area Plan. Reducing the population to the AML will aid in obtaining objective 3 (Maintain the wild horses within the HMA).

Less than 600 acres received severe use, this was caused by grazing from wild horses outside of the HMA in an area not used by livestock. By managing wild horses at the AML the severe and heavy use caused by wild horses will be eliminated. Many of the wild horses are utilizing private lands and lands administered by the State Parks, therefore, a substantial portion of the AUM's consumed by the horses are on lands not administered by the BLM or grazed by livestock. Portions of the allotment are receiving heavy use, however, with improved livestock distribution utilization objectives would be met. The downward trend on Indian rice grass is attributed to wild horses pulling the plants up by the roots in the early 1990's, when the wild horse population was over 200 animals.

2. Improve Livestock Distribution:

With better distribution of livestock and managing wild horses within the AML this allotment can support 1,155 AUM's of livestock use. By repairing and using the wells on the eastern portion of

the allotment, livestock use can be shifted from areas receiving heavy use to areas receiving slight and light use.


VII. Consultations:

On August 19, 1998, the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation Summary, sections I (Introduction) through VI (Technical Recommendations) were sent to persons, agencies and organizations that have shown an interest in livestock and wild horse management within the Carson City Field Office area of administration. The purpose of this action was to solicit comments on the evaluation summary. Fifteen copies were sent to the Nevada State Clearinghouse for distribution among state agencies. In addition, the following persons, agencies and organizations were sent copies of the evaluation.

The Nature Conservancy, Jan Nachlinger
American Horse Protection Assoc.
Craig C. Downer
Karen A. Sussman
Johanna H. Wald
Resource Concepts, Inc.
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Carlos Mendoza
Animal Protection Institute, Nancy Whitaker
Dan Keiserman
Nevada Cattlemen's Assoc.
Rutgers School of Law in Newark
American Mustang and Burro, George Berrier
Fund for Animals
Commission for Preservation of Wild Horses, Catherine Barcomb
Roberta Royle
U.S. Humane Society
Office of Cong., Gibbons, Daniel Grimmer
Rebecca Kunow
National Mustang Assoc.
Museum of Natural History, Paul Clifford
Steven Fulstone
Dawn Lappin
Office of Senator Bryan, Tom Baker
Vanessa Kelling
Nevada Humane Society
Paula S. Askew
The Mule Deer Foundation
Region I Div. of Wildlife, Richard heap, Director
Office of Senator Reid, Mary Conelly
Michael Kirk
Kathy McCovey
Sharon Crook
Gary Snow
Harriman and Son
Carson River Ranch

IX. List of Preparers


Prepared by:



John Axtell
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist
Carson City Field Office


4 OCT 99
Date

Reviewed By:

for 

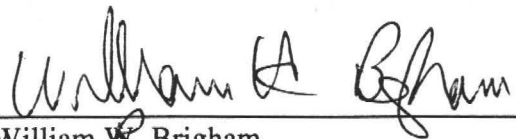
James Gianola
Senior Rangeland Management Specialist
Carson City Field Office

10/5/99
Date



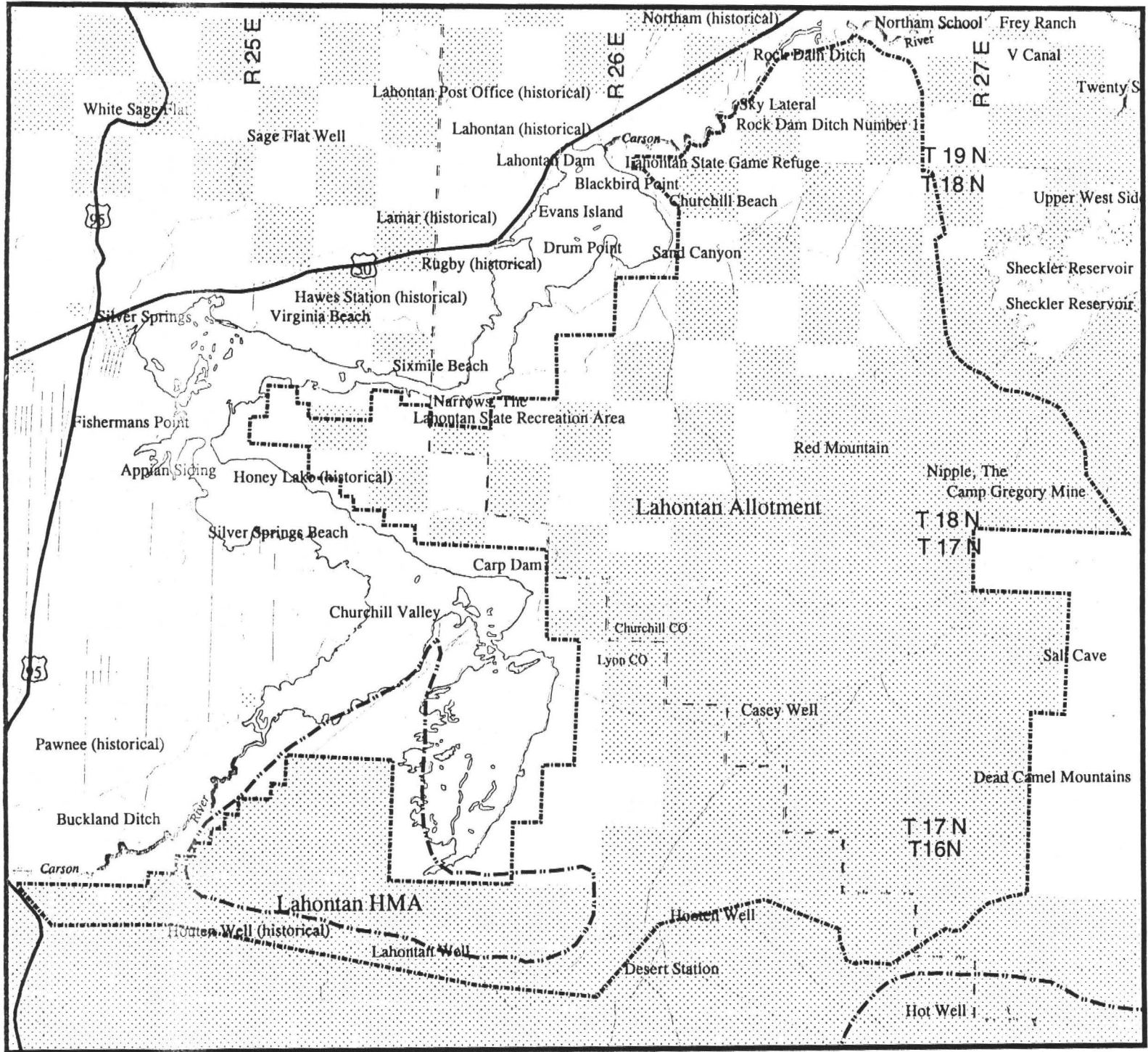
James deLaureal
Soil Scientist
Carson City Field Office

10/1/99
Date



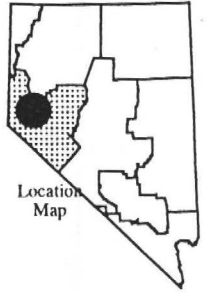
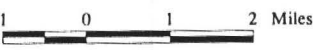
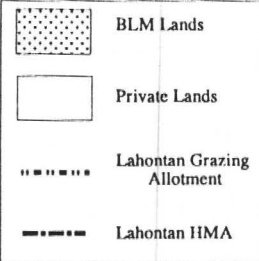
William W. Brigham
Wildlife Management Biologist
Carson City Field Office

4 OCT 99
Date



Lahontan HMA and Grazing Allotment

Legend



Environmental Assessment
Lahontan Allotment Evaluation

EA-NV-030-99040

April 28, 1999

U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Carson City Field Office
Renewable Resources
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, Nevada 89701

A. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE AND NEED

1. Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the impacts resulting from the use of the Lahontan Allotment for grazing purposes. It analyzes the impacts that are anticipated to result from the implementation of the proposed action, continuation of the current grazing system. This EA relies on and incorporates by reference a large portion of the recent (1998) Lahontan Allotment Evaluation which is attached to the EA for your convenience.

On February 12, 1997, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt approved the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health and Grazing Management to be applied to BLM public lands in the State of Nevada. These standards and guidelines were developed in consultation with the Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Nevada to help ensure that grazing use of these public lands result in productive and sustainable rangelands for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Standards and Guidelines are being implemented through two processes; (1) determination that the terms and conditions of the grazing permit are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines applicable to the allotment and (2) the allotment evaluation process to determine whether or not the current grazing system is expected to achieve the specific resource goals and objectives identified for the Lahontan Allotment in the applicable Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Rangeland Program Summary (RPS).

The EA references parts of the allotment evaluation and the standards and guidelines developed for the Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Area (the specific area that includes the Lahontan Allotment).

2. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is twofold; (1) Administer grazing and implement grazing practices on the Lahontan Allotment in a manner consistent with the attainment of site specific objectives for the allotment found in the Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP; 1984) and the Lahontan Rangeland Program Summary Update (RPS; 1989), and (2) Implement grazing practices that will ensure compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health and Grazing Management.

The need for the proposed action stems from society's demand for food products supplied, in part, by livestock utilizing BLM grazing allotments and BLM mandates to conduct grazing activities in an ecologically sound manner. Grazing use of the Lahontan Allotment as well as requirements to conduct grazing activities in a manner consistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield and in a ecologically sound manner are found in the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the recently adopted Standards and Guidelines for the Rangeland Health and Grazing management (1995), as well as various other federal laws and regulations.

3. Land Use and Plan Conformance Statement

The proposed action and alternatives described below are in conformance with the Lahontan Resource Management Plan, pages 2-11 - 2-12, Management Action/Decisions #1, 2 & 3 and the Lahontan Resource Management Plan Record of Decision and Management Decisions Summary, 1985, pages 18 - 21.

The following Land Use Plan and activity plan(s) apply to the geographic area of the proposed action and alternatives:

Final Lahontan Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, Lahontan Resource Area (1984), Lahontan Rangeland Program Summary Update (1989), Multiple sue Decision (1993) and the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation (1998) and Lahontan Grazing Decision (1999).

B. CHAPTER II - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

1. Proposed Action

- a. In the Lahontan Allotment 1,155 Animal Unit Months (AUM's) of cattle would be grazed between November 1 and March 31. The percent federal range is 100%.
- b. Maintain utilization not to exceed 55% on identified key perennial grasses and 45% for winter fat on key areas. There are no riparian areas within the Lahontan Allotment. The key species are identified on page 4 of the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation.
- c. Reduce wild horse numbers down to the levels identified in the Multiple Use Decision (1993) and the Lahontan Herd Management Area Plan, which will alleviate much of the heavy and severe use occurring in the allotment.
- d. Improve livestock distribution by repairing and using the existing wells on the eastern portion of the allotment. By using the existing wells livestock distribution would be improved, causing the livestock to use areas receiving slight use.
- e. Follow all short term recommendations in the Lahontan Resource Management Plan and Final EIS (1984) and RPS Update (1989).
- f. Issue a ten year grazing permit authorizing grazing use of the Lahontan Allotment.

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND NOT CARRIED FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS

a. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative was considered for the Lahontan Allotment. Under this alternative BLM would not issue a new 10 year grazing permit and livestock grazing would no loner be authorized on the Lahontan Allotment once the existing permit expires.

The decision to authorize grazing on the Lahontan Allotment was made in the Record of Decision (ROD; 1985) for the Lahontan Resource Management Plan (RMP; 1984). The ROD selected the Proposed Resource Management Plan presented in the Final Lahontan RMP and EIS. The selected alternative initially authorized livestock use at the three-year average licensed use level for the Resource Area (64,239 AUMs) and did not change preference (80,934 AUMs). The RMP and EIS evaluated 5 alternatives on the full range of resources and uses in the Resource Area. Grazing use of the Lahontan Allotment was specifically included in the proposed action of the RMP. This allotment was designated a category "M" allotment (Appendix B, page 7-3 of the draft RMP). Table 2 on page 7-38 of the draft Lahontan Resource Management Plan identifies the three year average use on the Lahontan Allotment (947 AUMs) with a preference of 1,155 AUMs. The record of decision states (page 3), "In the long-term, the range monitoring program will provide data on which to base future adjustments in livestock and wild horse use and to identify additional range improvements."

The RMP directed that a Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) be prepared to inform permittees and interested publics about the implementation of the rangeland management program. In this section it states "The Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) explains the procedure involved in establishing initial and subsequent levels of livestock grazing use." Thus the RMP delegates these specific decisions to the RPS.

The 1989 RPS specifically identifies grazing in the Lahontan Allotment at a level of 1,155 AUMs preference. It also sets management objectives for range condition, wild horses and specifies needed monitoring actions. The stated objectives for this allotment include: 1) Maintain existing ecological condition and trend and 2) Maintain utilization not to exceed 55% on identified key species on upland key areas.

The current allotment evaluation (1999) was conducted by a BLM interdisciplinary team and included scoping and review by interested parties including the general public. During this process, no new issues on the Lahontan Allotment were identified and no new information was discovered that would change previously established objectives or alter existing analytical documents. The evaluation considered impacts on a wide range of resources, including cultural resources, and other authorized uses resulting from livestock grazing use of the allotment. The evaluation also considered resources objectives for the allotment, progress toward these objectives as measured by monitoring data collected by BLM resource specialists and made specific technical recommendations in regards to needed changes in livestock management. The evaluation recommends no change in total AUMs or season of use and concludes resource objectives would be met with implementation of the technical recommendations.

In conclusion BLM finds the following: 1) grazing use of the Lahontan Allotment was specifically authorized in the 1985 Lahontan RMP, and ROD, 2) The RMP delegates decisions concerning changes in grazing use to the RPS, 3) The 1989 RPS sets specific objectives for the allotment, 4) Subsequent monitoring indicates progress toward established objectives is being made, 5) No new issues were identified or new information discovered during the current (1999) evaluation process that would change existing objectives or previous analysis, 6) The current (1999) evaluation recommends no change in numbers of livestock or change in season of use. For these reasons the BLM will not reconsider the decision to authorize grazing on the Lahontan Allotment made in the Lahontan RMP. This alternative will not be analyzed further.

C. CHAPTER II

I - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

1. Scoping and Issue Identification

On August 19, 1998, the draft Lahontan Allotment Evaluation was sent to the interested public for comments. Only the Department of Wildlife commented. They were concerned that portions of the allotment were sustaining heavy use. They also supported the reduction in horse numbers. The Bureau feels that by better distributing livestock and removing excess horses that the areas in heavy and severe use will improve to the moderate category.

Internal scoping was initiated in July of 1998. The Lahontan Evaluation was distributed to staff specialists for input and comment.

2. Proposed Action

Critical Elements of the Human Environment:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives in this EA: (specifically required by statute, regulation, executive order, etc.)

Determined By

Air Quality	James T. DeLarureal
Wetlands/Riparian	James T. DeLarureal
Noxious Weeds	James T. DeLarureal
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Terry F. Knight
Environmental Justice	Mike McQueen
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	John Axtell
Native American Religious Concerns	Gary C. Boyer
Paleontology	Gary C. Boyer
Wasts (hazardous or solid)	M. Bashir Sulahria
Water Quality	M. Bashir Sulahria
Flood Plains	M. Bashir Sulahria
Wild and Scenic River	Terry F. Knight
Wilderness	Terry F. Knight

Resources Present but not Affected: (other than critical elements)

Bureau specialists have further determined that the following resources, although present in the project area, are not affected by the proposed action:

Cultural Resources:

During Section 106 review a Class I literature search and a preliminary reconnaissance was conducted for this grazing allotment, no concerns were identified (CCFO-CR-99-222). For further details regarding the assessment of grazing impacts upon cultural resources refer to the Carson City Field Office's Protocols for Rangeland Activities in Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act per Washington Office IM No. 99-039 and Nevada State Office IM No. NV-99-021.

Description of Resources Present and Brought Forward for Analysis:**a. Livestock**

A total of 1,155 AUMs are currently authorized on the Lahontan Allotment. See page 1 of the Livestock use Section in the Lahontan Allotment Evaluation.

b. Wild Horses

The Lahontan Herd Management Area (HMA) is situated within the Lahontan Grazing Allotment. The Appropriate Management Level (AML) ranges between 7 and 10 horses. The present population is substantially over the AML with the majority of the horses using areas outside of the HMA including private lands.

c. Wildlife

Low numbers of mule deer and a variety of non game small mammals, birds and reptiles inhabit the allotment.

d. Soils

This grazing allotment is located at the southwestern edge of the Stillwater Marsh, a remnant of Lake Lahontan. It encompasses both lake sediments and associated shoreline geomorphology, as well as extrusive volcanic parent material (andesite and rhyolite). The present soils vary with landscape position, but can be generally described as follows:

The soils in the western portions of the allotment are generally derived from pleistocene lake sediments and subsequent alluvial and aeolian processes, and can be described as deep and somewhat poorly drained for the most part, with stratified, saline-alkali affected silty clays and sands making up the bulk of the 'playa' positions adjacent to the Carson River. These areas are bordered by dunal sands and other old shoreline features that are also deep, but are for the most part well drained. There are also sand sheets overlying some alkali soils. The upland areas are, for the most part, made up of shallow to very shallow, very rocky and somewhat clayey soils derived from volcanic materials. These areas are very droughty and receive less than six inches of precipitation per year. In the lower positions of these uplands there are areas of deep soils from aeolian sand.

e. Vegetation

Key upland species on the allotment include Indian ricegrass, needle and thread grass, winter fat and spiny hopsage.

f. Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no known threatened or endangered plants or animals occurring within the allotment.

g. Recreation

The allotment surrounds Lahontan Reservoir on the east and encompasses the Dead Camel Mountains. Several access points to the reservoir require passage through the allotment. Most recreational activity on the allotment consists of off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel. Portions of the Dead Camel Mountains and the area at the extreme south end of the allotment are used once or twice a year for OHV races conducted under a Special Recreation Permit. Recreational opportunities are limited and the level of recreational activity is low.

h. Visual Resources

The allotment is managed under both Class III and Class IV Visual Resource Management designations. In a Class III area, the objective is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Management activities may attract the attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. In a Class IV area, the objective is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the landscape. Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention, however, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities.

i. Grazing Use

The current grazing period is from November 1, through March 31.

3. Alternatives:

The description of the affected environment for the no action or other alternative would be the same as that for the proposed action.

The no action alternative is the current use. The critical elements are the same for the proposed action.

D. CHAPTER IV - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

1. Proposed Action

Environmental Impacts:

a. Livestock

Implementation of the proposed action would not change the number of livestock utilizing the allotment, authorized AUMs or the season of use.

b. Wild Horses

Implementation of the proposed action would not change the AML for horses. The available forage within the Lahontan HMA was divided between wild horses, livestock and wildlife in the Lahontan Allotment Multiple Use Decision, 1993.

c. Wildlife

Implementation of the proposed action would not affect the number of wildlife utilizing the allotment. Vegetation objectives serve to protect and create wildlife habitat.

d. Soils

Implementation of the Proposed Action will not change the present situation. There will continue to be some trailing and trampling of soils in watering and loafing areas, otherwise the impacts will be negligible.

e. Vegetation

The utilization level would remain the same as would the season of use. The vegetative community can sustain utilization levels below 55% on grasses and 45% on shrubs. By maintaining the vegetative use at or below 55% on grasses and 45% on shrubs, the vegetative community would be maintained in a healthy state.

f. Recreation

This allotment receives relatively little recreational use, with the primary use being OHV travel. Livestock grazing does not conflict with the types of recreational uses associated with this allotment, therefore, there would be no impacts to recreation resources or opportunities as a result of the proposed action.

g. Visual Resources

BLM Manual (8400 - Visual Resources Management) states in section 8400.06 A.4 that "...VRM objectives (classes) provide the visual management standards for the design and development of future projects and the rehabilitation of existing projects.". In section

8400.06 A.5., it states that "Visual design considerations shall be incorporated into all surface disturbing projects regardless of size or potential impact." (Emphasis added).

Allotment evaluations generally will not require VRM review. Any projects which might be proposed within the allotment would be analyzed for VRM considerations at the time the project specific EA is prepared. An evaluation activity, such as the proposed action will have no impacts on visual resources.

3. Mitigation Measures

a. Proposed Action

Since there are no adverse affects associated with the proposed action, mitigation measures are not needed.

b. No Action

Since there are no adverse affects associated with the no action alternative, mitigation measures would not be needed.

4. Residual Impacts

a. Proposed Action

There would be no residual impacts since the permittee has shifted the livestock use and the wild horses would be managed at the levels identified in the HMAP and MUD.

b. No Action

The no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action.

5. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts of grazing have been considered for the entire Field Office in the Lahontan, and Walker RMPs. All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

6. Monitoring

Range monitoring would continue for the allotment. The types of monitoring would include: quadratic frequency, photo points, utilization, use pattern maps, actual use reports, horse census and weather data.

CHAPTER V - CONSULTATION & COORDINATION

a. List of Preparers

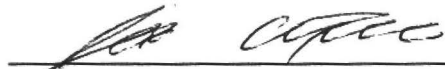
- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. John Axtell | Wild Horse and Burro Specialist |
| 2. James M. Gianola | Senior Rangeland management Specialist |
| 3. William R. Brigham | Wildlife Management Biologist |
| 4. Gary C. Bowyer | Historic Archaeologist |
| 5. James T. DeLaureal | Soil Scientist |
| 6. M. Bashir Sulahria | Hydrologist |
| 7. Terry F. Knight | Recreation Planner |
| 8. Mike McQueen | Environmental Coordinator |

b. Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted

The Nature Conservancy, Jan Nachlinger
American Horse Protection Assoc.
Craig C. Downer
Karen A. Sussman
Johanna H. Wald
Resource Concepts, Inc.
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Carlos Mendoza
Animal Protection Institute, Nancy Whitaker
Nevada Cattlemen's Assoc.
American Mustang and Burro, George Berrier
Fund for Animals
Commission for Preservation of Wild Horses, Catherine Barcomb
Roberta Royle
U.S. Humane Society
Office of Cong., Gibbons, Daniel Grimmer
Rebecca Kunow
National Mustang Assoc.
Museum of Natural History, Paul Clifford
Steven Fulstone
Dawn Lappin
Office of Senator Bryan, Tom Baker
Vanessa Kelling
Nevada Humane Society
Paula S. Askew
The Mule Deer Foundation
Region I Div. of Wildlife, Richard heap, Director
Office of Senator Reid, Mary Conelly
Michael Kirk
Kathy McCovey
Sharon Crook
Gary Snow
Harriman and Son
Carson River Ranch

VI. LIST OF PREPARERS:

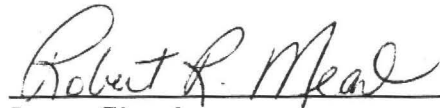
Prepared by:



John Axtell
Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

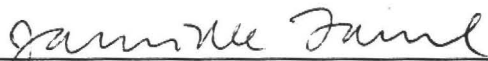
4 Oct 99
Date

Reviewed By:



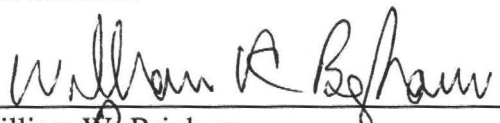
for James Gianola
Senior Rangeland Management Specialist

10/5/99
Date



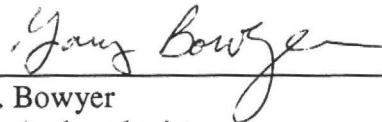
James deLaureal
Soil Scientist

10/4/99
Date




William R. Brigham
Wildlife Management Biologist

4 Oct 99
Date



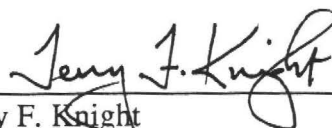
Gary C. Bowyer
Historic Archaeologist

10/4/99
Date



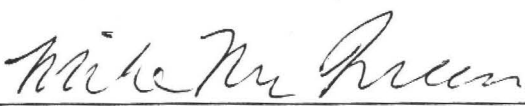
M. Bashir Sulahria
Hydrologist

10/4/99
Date



Terry F. Knight
Recreation Planner

10/4/99
Date



Mike McQueen
Environmental Coordinator

11-16-99
Date

F. APPENDICES OR ATTACHMENTS

Attached is the 1999 Lahontan Allotment Evaluation.

Lahontan HMA and Grazing Allotment

