

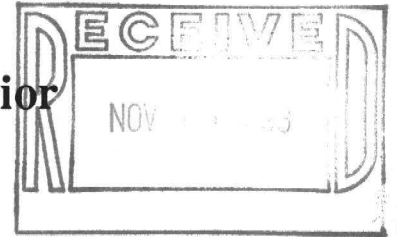
Gray Hills Allot. L 11/16/98



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Carson City Field Office  
5665 Morgan Mill Rd.  
Carson City, Nevada 89701  
(702) 885-6100



In Reply Refer To:  
4110  
(NV-03200)

NOV 16 1998

Dear Interested Public:

The Carson City Field Office is renewing the grazing permit in the Gray Hills Allotment (refer to enclosed map), currently held by ELW Ranches, Inc. There will be no changes in the total animal unit months of livestock grazing, kind of livestock, or seasons of use. These points were most recently addressed in the Gray Hills Allotment Evaluation submitted for public review in March 11, 1997, and the Multiple Use Decision for the Wassuk Herd Management Area dated August 6, 1997.

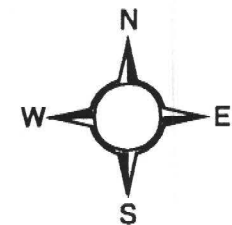
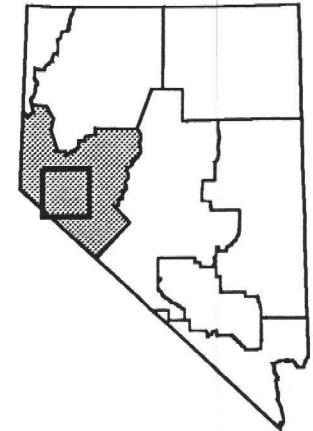
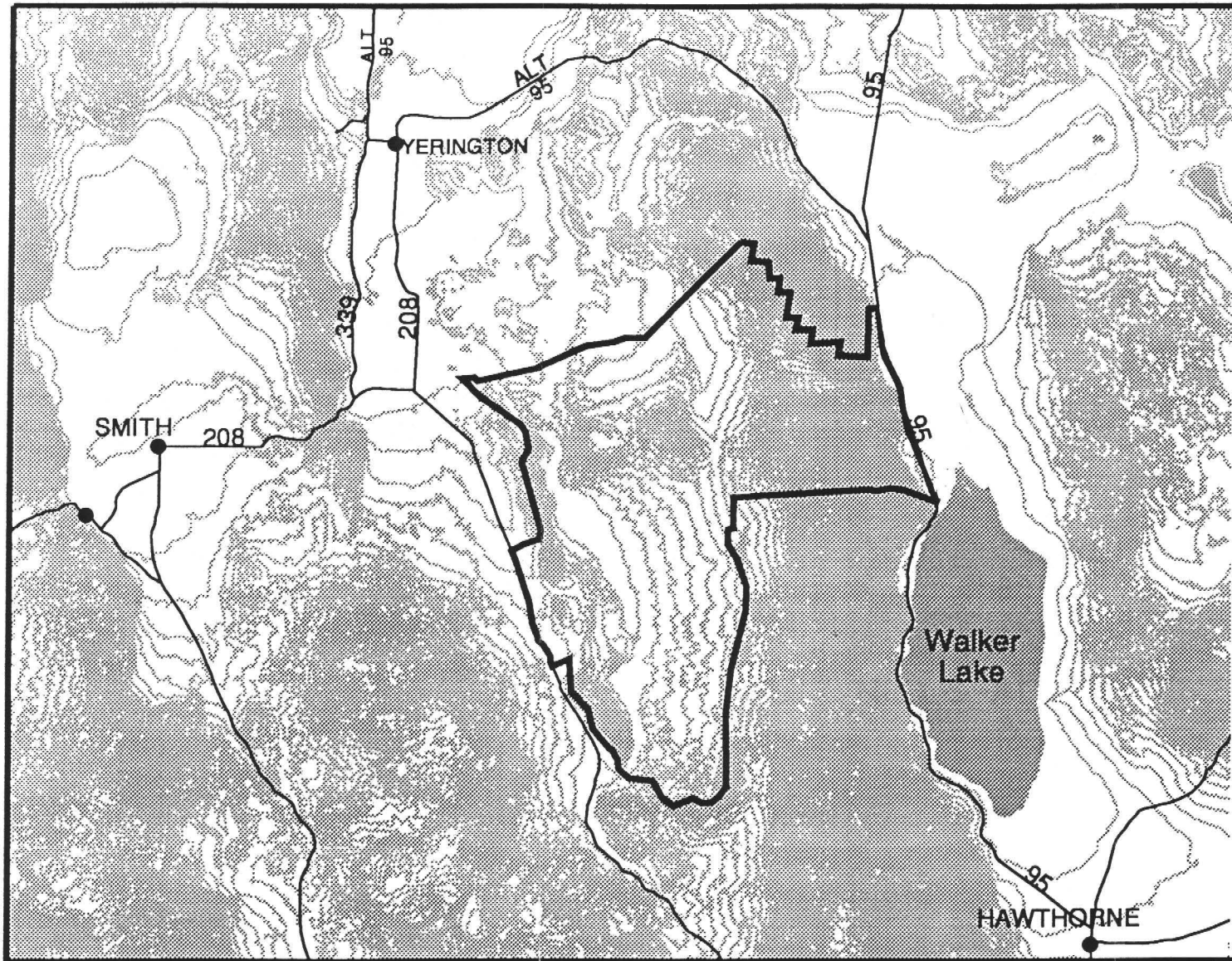
If you have any information related to this proposed action, please provide it by December 1, 1998.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Benson  
Rangeland Management Specialist  
Renewable Resources

1 Enclosure:

1. Map of the Gray Hills Allotment



## LOCATION OF THE GRAY HILLS ALLOTMENT

Map Date: November 16, 1998

Created by: Rich Benson

Map Projection: UTM, Zone 11, Datum NAD27

0 5 10 Miles



United States Department of the Interior  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 Carson City Field Office  
 5885 Morgan Mill Road  
 Carson City, NV 89701

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# WASSUK MULTIPLE USE DECISION

The Record of Decision for the Walker Environmental Impact Statement and the Resource Management Plan (RMP) was issued on June 6, 1986. These documents established the multiple use goals and objectives which guide management of public land on the Black Mountain, Butler Mountain, and Gray Hills Allotments, each of which comprise a portion of the Wassuk Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA). The Walker Rangeland Program Summary (RPS), issued in November 1989, identified allotment objectives specific to the three allotments.

As identified in the Walker RMP and Walker RPS, monitoring has been conducted on the three allotments to determine if existing multiple uses for the allotments were consistent with the attainment of the objectives established by the RMP. Allotment evaluations were sent out for public review in 1997.

The comments provided by the grazing permittees, State agencies responsible for managing resources within the area and the interested public have been evaluated along with monitoring data and the technical recommendations in the allotment evaluations resulting in the following specific management actions for each grazing allotment in the Wassuk HMA and for the Wassuk HMA itself. These selected management actions are presented as livestock grazing management decisions, wild horse management decisions and wildlife management decisions, wild horse management decisions and wildlife management decisions and together comprise the Wassuk Multiple Use Decision.

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## LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

### **I. BLACK MOUNTAIN ALLOTMENT**

- A. In accordance with 43 CFR **§4130.3-1 (a)**, maintain the total number of animal unit months of specified domestic sheep grazing at 900 AUMs. Period of use will be from October 1 to February 28.
- B. In accordance with 43 CFR **§4130.3-2**, closed herding will be applied to the greatest extent possible in order to modify the landscape to a more diverse, productive vegetative community that will benefit wildlife, wild horses, and livestock.
- C. In accordance with 43 CFR **§4130.3-2**, until the benefits of closed herding are realized, when there is insufficient snow present, water hauling shall continue to be used to endeavor to increase the frequency and density of grasses.

D. In accordance with *4130.3*, the grazing permit for the Black Mountain Allotment will be revised to incorporate the terms and conditions of this Multiple Use Decision.

## RATIONALE

Large portions of the allotment are seldom used due to poor water distribution, not forage availability. When snow is available, the entire allotment is accessible to sheep. Adequate browse is present to meet the sheep demand. Since horses do not readily utilize browse species, competition between these grazing animals is negligible.

The existing period of use is December 1 to February 28. Although early snows (prior to December 1) are rare, expanding the period of use to take advantage of such an event(s) would be beneficial. It provides the opportunity to more fully utilize the allotment while at the same time confining livestock use to the vegetation's dormant period. In addition it allows the opportunity to haul water in order to take advantage of forage conditions or objectives for improving forage conditions over a much wider time frame.

Although the allotment is dominated by low potential ecological sites, the benefits of intensive livestock management are becoming better understood. By using a closed herding technique, the vegetation is more evenly and fully utilized. Closed herding can be defined as keeping sheep in close proximity to one another so that it forces them to utilize a majority of the plants and result in individual plants having a portion of the vegetation component being placed upon the ground. This increases the rate of nutrient cycling by placing this material in contact with the soil and thereby exposing it to microbial activity. The sheep droppings are concentrated, trampled into the ground, providing a boost to the nutrient value of the soil. The placement of litter on the ground provides soil protection. It creates a cooler micro-climate that is more conducive to seedling establishment. It catches and holds soil particles in place. Overall, the water cycle is improved. Though there are other tools which could accomplish the same objective (prescribed burning, mechanical manipulation, etc.) this is the most efficient and economical means available.

An increase of perennial plants is expected due to their seed being worked into the soil with organic matter to produce seedlings. Otherwise, the solid surface becomes crusted and is impenetrable to both seed and plant litter (seeds do not germinate and survive, and litter dries up and is not broken down into the essential organic compounds). Also, an accumulation of dead material in grass plants will cause them to become unhealthy and eventually die out.

The expected increase in the grass component would favor wild horses. However, if successful in rehabilitating the watersheds that surround the dry springs, thereby creating a "water catchment", there is the possibility of returning flows to what are now ephemeral and intermittent springs. The increase in perennial water sources would benefit wildlife, wild horses, and livestock. The potential positive effects of implementing closed herding is in accord with the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health developed for the Sierra Front / Northwestern Great Basin Area.

## II. BUTLER MOUNTAIN ALLOTMENT

- A. In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3-1 (a), maintain the total number of animal unit months of specified domestic sheep grazing at 3040 AUMs. Period of use will be from November 1 to May 15.
- B. In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3-2, closed herding will be applied to the greatest extent possible in order to modify the landscape to a more diverse, productive vegetative community that will benefit wildlife, wild horses, and livestock.
- C. In accordance with 4130.3, the grazing permit for the Butler Mountain Allotment will be re-issued to incorporate the above terms and conditions of this Multiple Use Decision.

### RATIONALE

The existing period of use is December 16 to May 15. To provide more flexibility, expanding the season of use to take advantage of early snows would enhance the possibility of evening out the utilization. This provides opportunity to shift spring use to late fall/early winter, further reducing competition for green grasses. Overall, the majority of the allotment is being under utilized. Under the current situation, the areas of heaviest use are concentrated around the waters located on the alluvial fan comprising the eastern third of the allotment. Tank and Chipmunk Springs produce adequate amounts of water but they are located in the northern and southern parts of the allotment respectively. This leaves a major portion of the alluvial fan dry to a certain degree. Butler Springs is not producing an adequate amount of water. Development and protection of this spring will add another much needed water source in the central portion of the allotment. With additional water and expanded season of use to take advantage of snow, the probability of achieving a more uniform pattern of utilization is maximized.

Fluctuations in the frequency of perennial grass species is cyclic. The extent of these changes can be greatly influenced by continual spring grazing. During this time period, it is important to guard against plants be re-bitten. This situation, occurring year after year, results in the loss of plants.

The decline in the frequency of some key grass species is a concern while the increase in others are welcomed. Use levels have been for the most part acceptable at the key areas. An extremely low number of AUMs have been harvested by sheep during the evaluation period, resulting in low impacts to the ecosystem. Part of the solution would be the use of closed herding of the sheep (refer to "Rationale" under the Black Mountain Allotment for a discussion of closed herding).

### III. GRAY HILLS ALLOTMENT

The Rafter 7 Allotment Management Plan (hence forth referred to as the Gray Hills Allotment Management Plan), is modified to include the following:

- A. In accordance with §4130.3-1 (a), sheep will be authorized in any pasture during the normal dormancy period of key perennial forage species: August 15 to March 15.
- B. In accordance with §4130.3-1 (a), any pasture grazed between June 15 to August 15 (outside the normal dormancy period) will be followed by a year of rest. Dates in Decision A and B may vary from year to year based on field examinations by BLM Range Management Specialists.
- C. In accordance with §4130.3-1(a), no more than 920 AUMs of livestock use will be authorized inside the Wassuk HMA.
- D. In accordance with §4120.2(a), the Gray Hills Allotment Management Plan (AMP) will be amended to include the following pasture treatments. Exceptions to these treatments will be based upon on-the-ground coordination between BLM personnel and the permittee, and are subject to all other criteria in this decision.

**Normal Pasture Sequence Through Three-Year Cycle**

Pasture Number	Pasture Name	Treatments by Year		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1	Pinegrove	( -- Winter Grazing 1000 S (11/1 - 3/15) -- )		
2	Gray Hills	Summer 1000 S(6/15- 7/31)	Rest	Fall 1000 S(8/1 - 11/1)
3	Summit Springs	Fall 1000 S(8/1 - 11/1)	Summer 1000 S (6/15- 7/31)	Rest
4	Southeast	Rest	Fall 1000 (8/1 - 11/1)	Summer 1000 S(6/15-7/31)

These pasture treatments will result in the following stocking levels for sheep in the Gray Hills Allotment:

Summer Treatment - 1000 Sheep from 6/15 to 7/31 @ 100% Public Land	= 309 AUMs
Fall Treatment - 1000 Sheep from 8/1 to 10/31 @ 100% Public Land	= 605 AUMs
<u>Winter Treatment - 1000 Sheep from 11/1 to 3/15 @ 100% Public Land</u>	<u>= 894 AUMs</u>
TOTAL STOCKING LEVEL DURING ONE GRAZING SEASON	= 1,847 AUMs

- E. In accordance with §4130.8-1(e), actual use billing will be retained.
- F. In accordance with §4130.2(h) and §4130.3-1(c), the permittee will be required to either meet with Bureau personnel or submit an application every year prior to grazing. In the event that the permittee does not plan to graze, another permittee may be authorized to graze.
- G. In accordance with §4130.3-2 and §4710.4, the pipelines that provide water to troughs outside the Wassuk HMA will be turned off after livestock are removed from those pastures.
- H. In accordance with §4180.2(c), modify the Gray Hills AMP objectives to:
  - a. Maintain or increase vegetative cover;
  - b. Increase the composition of late seral perennial plant species.

### **RATIONALE**

The schedules of the Gray Hills AMP, which was approved by the Walker Resource Area Manager in 1982, established a four pasture, rest - rotation system in the Gray Hills Allotment. Pasture schedules were based on the growth stages of key forage plant species. The fall and winter schedule was established based on the dormancy period of Indian ricegrass. The summer use was intended to use livestock to work seed into the ground with organic matter in order to stimulate seedling development (refer to the Rationale for the Black Mountain Allotment Decisions). Since this may occur during the growth stages of some species, the summer treatment was followed by a year of rest.

Based on the calculations for the potential stocking level in the Gray Hills Allotment Evaluation, 920 AUMs of forage is present for livestock and 920 AUMs are present for wild horses within the portion of the Gray Hills Allotment that contributes to the Wassuk HMA.

Based on the analysis of monitoring data, there may be a conflict between the grazing season and the growth requirement of winterfat, which is in a downward trend in the Summit Springs pasture. Therefore, the off-date for the pasture system is adjusted to March 15.

As discussed under Black Mountain Allotment, there are certain advantages to other types of intensive livestock management such as closed herding. Therefore, flexibility is given to allow for more intensive management than merely following a prescribed pasture system.

Monitoring data suggested that intensive management may have greater advantages than complete rest from grazing animals. Therefore, the permittee will inform the BLM of plans to graze the allotment each year, either through grazing application or meeting with BLM personnel. If the permittee does not wish to graze the allotment, another permittee may be allowed to graze under the limitations of this Multiple Use Decision.

During the use pattern mapping in 1995, it was noticed that wild horses were being drawn outside the HMA due to water being piped to troughs outside the HMA. Therefore, water should be shut off when livestock are no longer grazing within a pasture. There is sufficient water inside the HMA to supply the appropriate management level of wild horses.

The Gray Hills AMP included the objective to increase Indian ricegrass. However, many of the ecological sites in Gray Hills Allotment do not include ricegrass as a major species in the late seral or potential natural community (PNC) seral stages. Therefore, the objective is changed to relate to ecological site potential.

### **AUTHORITY**

Authority for the Livestock Decisions for Black Mountain, Butler Mountain, and Gray Hills Allotments is found in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations unless otherwise stated.

- §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 1601.0-5(b)."
- §4120.2(a) States in pertinent part: "...The [allotment management] plan shall -
- (1) Include terms and conditions under §§ 4130.3 , 4130.3-1 , 4130.3-2 , 4130.3-3 , and subpart 4180;
  - (2) Prescribe the livestock grazing practices necessary to meet specific resource objectives;
  - (3) Specify the limits of flexibility, to be determined and granted on the basis of the operator's demonstrated stewardship, within which the permittee(s) or lessee(s) may adjust operations without prior approval of the authorized officer;
  - (4) Provide for monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of management actions in achieving the specific resource objectives of the plan."
- §4120.3-2(a) States in pertinent part: "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..."



- §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."
- §4130.3-1(c) "Permits and leases shall incorporate terms and conditions that ensure conformance with subpart 4180 of this part."
- §4130.3-2 States in pertinent part: "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..."
- §4130.3-3 "Following consultation, cooperation and coordination with the affected lessees or permittees, the State having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public, the authorized officer may modify terms and conditions of the permit or lease when the active grazing use or related management practices are not meeting the land use plan, allotment management plan or other activity plan, or management objectives, or is not in conformance with the provisions of subpart 4180. To the extent practical, the authorized officer shall provide to affected permittees or lessees, States having lands or responsibility for managing resources within the affected area, and the interested public an opportunity to review, comment and give input during the preparation of reports that evaluate monitoring and other data that are used as a basis for making decisions to increase or decrease grazing use, or to change the terms and conditions of a permit or lease."
- §4130.2(h) States in pertinent part: "...Forage made available as a result of temporary non-use may be made available to qualified applicants under §4130.6-2."
- §4130.6-2 "Nonrenewable grazing permits or leases may be issued on an annual basis to qualified applicants when forage is temporarily available, provided this use is consistent with multiple-use objectives and does not interfere with existing livestock operations on the public lands. The authorized officer shall consult, cooperate and coordinate with affected permittees or lessees, the State having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public prior to the issuance of nonrenewable grazing permits and leases."
- §4130.8-1(e) States in pertinent part: "Fees are due on due date specified on the grazing fee bill. Payment will be made prior to grazing use. Grazing use that occurs prior to payment of a bill, except where specified in an allotment management plan, is unauthorized and may be dealt with under subparts 4150 and 4170 of this part. If

allotment management plans provide for billing after the grazing season, fees will be based on actual grazing use and will be due upon issuance..."

§4180.1

"The authorized officer shall take appropriate action under subparts 4110, 4120, 4130, and 4160 of this part as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management needs to be modified to ensure that the following conditions exist.

(a) Watersheds are in, or are making significant progress toward, properly functioning physical condition, including their upland, riparian-wetland, and aquatic components; soil and plant conditions support infiltration, soil moisture storage, and the release of water that are in balance with climate and landform and maintain or improve water quality, water quantity, and timing and duration of flow.

(b) Ecological processes, including the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow, are maintained, or there is significant progress toward their attainment, in order to support healthy biotic populations and communities.

(c) Water quality complies with State water quality standards and achieves, or is making significant progress toward achieving, established BLM management objectives such as meeting wildlife needs.

(d) Habitats are, or are making significant progress toward being, restored or maintained for Federal threatened and endangered species, Federal Proposed, Category 1 and 2 Federal candidate and other special status species."

§4180.2 (b)

"The Bureau of Land Management State Director, in consultation with affected Bureau of Land Management resource advisory councils, shall develop and amend State or regional standards and guidelines. The Bureau of Land Management State Director will also coordinate with Indian tribes, other State and Federal land management agencies responsible for the management of lands and resources within the region or area under consideration, and the public in the development of State or regional standards and guidelines. Standards and guidelines developed by the Bureau of Land Management State Director must provide for conformance with the fundamentals of § 4180.1. State or regional standards or guidelines developed by the Bureau of Land Management State Director may not be implemented prior to their approval by the Secretary. Standards and guidelines made effective under paragraph (f) of this section may be modified by the Bureau of Land Management State Director, with approval of the Secretary, to address local ecosystems and management practices."

§4180.2(c)

"The authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines that are made effective under this section. Appropriate action means implementing actions pursuant to subparts 4110, 4120, 4130, and 4160 of this part that will result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines. Practices and activities subject to standards and guidelines include the development of grazing-related portions of activity plans, establishment of terms and conditions of permits, leases and other

grazing authorizations, and range improvement activities such as vegetation manipulation, fence construction and development of water."

§4710.4 States in pertinent part: "Management of wild horses and burros shall be undertaken with the objective of limiting the animals' distribution to herd areas."

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 soil 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.

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**WASSUK HERD MANAGEMENT AREA**  
**WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

A. In accordance with 43 CFR §4700.0-6(a), the potential stocking level for wild horses in the Wassuk HMA is 1,984 AUMs. This is distributed between the Black Mountain, Butler Mountain, and Gray Hills Allotments as follows:

Black Mountain Allotment	234 AUMs
Butler Mountain Allotment	830 AUMs
<u>Gray Hills Allotment</u>	<u>920 AUMs</u>
TOTAL	1,984 AUMs

B. In accordance to 43 CFR §4700.0-6(a), the Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Wassuk HMA is 165 wild horses. In order to maintain this AML, the wild horse population will be managed within a range of 109 to 165.

C. In accordance with 43 CFR §4720.1, selective removal of wild horses from specific areas within or outside the HMA may be conducted to meet the physiological requirements of the vegetation in that localized area.

D. The management of wild horses within the HMA will be in accordance with the Strategic Plan for Management of Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands (June 1992).

**RATIONALE**

The analysis of available monitoring data presented in the Black Mountain, Butler Mountain and Gray Hills Allotment Evaluations indicates that sufficient forage is available in the Wassuk HMA to support a maximum potential stocking level for wild horses of 1,984 AUMs. This is enough forage to support an AML of 165 wild horses yearlong.

Monitoring data has indicated that there is a conflict between early spring grazing and the physiological requirements of winterfat in the Summit Springs Pasture of the Gray Hills Allotment. Although the live-stock season of use has been changed to exclude use by livestock during this period, wild horses graze yearlong and are free to graze where they choose. This is an example of an area which may need selective removal of wild horses. This action would not affect the AML.

**AUTHORITY**

The authority for these decisions is contained in Sec. 3 (a) and (b) of the Wild-Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act (P.L. 92-195), as amended, and in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), which states:

§4700.0-6(a) "Wild horses and burros shall be managed as self-sustaining populations of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat."

- §4710.3-1 States in pertinent part: "Herd management areas shall be established for the maintenance of wild horse and burro herds. In delineating each herd management area, the authorized officer shall consider the appropriate management level for the herd, the habitat requirements of the animals, the relationship with other uses of the public and adjacent private lands, and the constraints contained in §4710.4...."
- §4720.1 States in pertinent part: "Upon examination of current information and a determination by the authorized officer that an excess of wild horses or burros exist, the authorized officer shall remove the excess animals immediately..."

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### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The previously listed livestock and wild horse decisions should have a beneficial effect on wildlife habitat. Other decisions relating to wildlife habitat within the Black Mountain, Butler Mountain and Gray Hills Allotments are as follows:

- A. In accordance with 43 CFR *§4180.1*, the long term management in the Butler Mountain Allotment be directed toward achieving an ecosystem containing a natural balance of pinyon-juniper woodland, and other ecological sites. Sites that are not natural woodlands and that have easy accessibility will be designated as public or commercial woodcutting areas. Where specific projects for enhancement of waters (spring rehabilitation) are recognized, selective cutting and the laying of the materials on the ground will be initiated. The majority of the area will be left in its current state.
- B. In accordance with 43 CFR *§4180.1*, the water source at Butler Spring and a portion of the surrounding area, specifically the steep embankments, will be fenced. The spring will be re-developed and water piped to troughs installed below the source.
- C. In accordance with 43 CFR *§4180.1*, pinyon-juniper woodlands in the upper watershed of Chipmunk Spring will be thinned. All of the downed trees will be limbed to the greatest practical extent and the limbs will be scattered on the ground. The trunks of the trees will be lain across the slope on which they were cut. The spring will be fenced.

### RATIONALE

There are approximately 11,677 acres of ecological sites that are dominated by pinyon-juniper in their potential natural community. Approximately 21,540 acres comprise the alluvial fan that is usable by livestock, wild horses, and mule deer, with some woodland encroachment. Approximately another 5,322 acres are classified as rock outcrop/rubble, and beach areas. This is a total of 38,539 acres or 82% of the area.

Removal of pinyon-juniper trees will provide increased edge effect for mule deer and also expand the forage base. The amount of moisture that is intercepted and the amount of groundwater

used on an annual basis would be available to recharge underground aquifers. This could potentially rehabilitate springs that are currently dry or have reduced water flows.

Butler Spring is classified as non-functional. The spring's potential to provide improved flow and create riparian habitat is considerable. A large event, whether it's a summer thunderstorm or heavy run-off from winter snowpack, could conceivably destroy the spring. There is no vegetation to impede the force of water and retain the soil.

Chipmunk Spring has been classified as functional at-risk. It is being unfavorably influenced by the woodland dominated watershed. Treatment of the upper watershed (i.e., thinning) would be a starting point to the establishment of a more dominant shrub/grass component. Laying limbs on the ground would provide soil protection and a catchment for snow and snowmelt. By retaining moisture longer and in greater amounts, the opportunity to have additional water percolate into the soil is enhanced. The end product could be an expanded riparian zone and a corresponding increase in water flow. These actions alone will go only so far in meeting these objectives. It will be necessary to follow this up with management that will maximize and sustain the improved ground cover and water catching capability.

### AUTHORITY

Authority for the Wildlife Decisions for Black Mountain, Butler Mountain, and Gray Hills Allotments is listed below. These citations are found in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

- §4180.1 "The authorized officer shall take appropriate action under subparts 4110, 4120, 4130, and 4160 of this part as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management needs to be modified to ensure that the following conditions exist.
- (a) Watersheds are in, or are making significant progress toward, properly functioning physical condition, including their upland, riparian-wetland, and aquatic components; soil and plant conditions support infiltration, soil moisture storage, and the release of water that are in balance with climate and landform and maintain or improve water quality, water quantity, and timing and duration of flow.
  - (b) Ecological processes, including the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow, are maintained, or there is significant progress toward their attainment, in order to support healthy biotic populations and communities.
  - (c) Water quality complies with State water quality standards and achieves, or is making significant progress toward achieving, established BLM management objectives such as meeting wildlife needs.
  - (d) Habitats are, or are making significant progress toward being, restored or maintained for Federal threatened and endangered species, Federal Proposed, Category 1 and 2 Federal candidate and other special status species."

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 soil 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.