



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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(NV-037)

MAR 11 1987

Ms. Rose Strickland
Sierra Club
Toiyabe Chapter
P.O. Box 8096
Reno, NV 89506

Dear Ms. Strickland:

Enclosed is the information you requested on the Pilot-Table Mountain Allotment. I believe most of your questions will be answered by reviewing the enclosed basic data.

A livestock grazing system has not been determined, however, as a minimum, the grazing system will provide rest from domestic livestock grazing in at least 1 of every 3 years. The initial riparian area protection will be the removal of approximately eight hundred head of wild horses scheduled for this fall. This horse removal combined with a grazing system and fall-winter livestock use should bring about an improvement on a majority of the riparian areas. Fencing or a change in management may be required to protect some riparian areas. Specific areas to be fenced or receive special management are to be determined. ?

Livestock-wildlife conflicts occur mainly on riparian areas in this allotment. Management for the improvement of riparian areas should alleviate livestock-wildlife conflicts. There is no key deer winter range in this allotment.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has proposed two big game reintroductions in the Pilot-Table Mountain Allotment. One is a proposal to release fifty antelope in the Sunrise Flat area. The other is a planned release of thirty desert bighorn sheep in Wild Horse Canyon in the Gabbs Valley Range. There are no known livestock conflicts with either of these reintroductions.

We would welcome your suggestions for general and specific objectives and definite grazing management schemes for this allotment. Please submit any recommendations or further comments by April 1, 1987, for consideration in the completion of the draft AMP.

Sincerely yours,

J. Matthiessen
John Matthiessen
Area Manager
Walker Resource Area

Enclosure:
As Stated

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location and Area

The Pilot-Table Mountain Allotment is located east of Hawthorne, Nevada. The allotment includes both the Gabbs Valley Range and the Pilot Mountains. Highway 95 is the western boundary and the Esmeralda-Mineral County and Nye-Mineral County lines are the southern and eastern allotment boundaries. A map of the allotment is included in Appendix A. This is the largest allotment in the resource area covering 527,669 acres. There are 512,449 acres of public land and 15,220 acres of private land.

Physical Data

1. Topography and Soils

The allotment is generally mountainous but includes several large valley bottoms. The elevations in the valley bottoms vary from 4200 to 4600 feet. The two highest peaks are Pilot Peak (9,187 feet) and Mt. Ferguson (8,407 feet).

The one major drainage, Finger Rock Wash, is located on the eastern side of the allotment.

Most of the soils in the allotment are classified as aridic with much of the area receiving less than eight inches of precipitation per year. At locations on the valley floors and alluvial fans, soils are usually deep and well drained and have varying amounts of coarse fragments in the soil profile. As a rule the lower positions on the alluvial fans and the areas adjacent to remnant Pleistocene lake beds are fine textured and contain less coarse fragments than do soils higher up on the fan piedmont. Soils adjacent to Pleistocene lake beds also have relatively high percentages of excess salts, including sodium, which affects soils structure and permeability and limits vegetative species composition. The aridic soils, which make up the majority of the allotment, are low in productivity and are unsuitable for rangeland seedings and other vegetation manipulations. There are some soils that fall in the xeric moisture regime but they are found only at the higher elevations and make up only a small percentage of the allotment.

Vegetation

The vegetation in the allotment is quite varied due to the extremes in elevation. The main vegetation zones in the area are salt-desert shrub, sagebrush-bunchgrass and pinyon-juniper woodland. There are several key forage species throughout the allotment. Indian Ricegrass, Oryzopsis hymenoides, is by far the main forage species. Other key forage species include Galleta,

grass, Hilaria jamesii; Needlegrass, STIPA sp.; Winterfat, Eurotia lanata; and Fourwing Saltbush, Atriplex canescens.

The main vegetative types, by acre, are as follows:

Sagebrush	- 117,863
Barren	- 15,373
Pinyon-Juniper	- 51,245
Saltbush	- 66,618
Greasewood	- 210,104
Winterfat	- 3,845
Desert Shrub	- 46,120
Annuals	- 1,281

Ten (10) vegetative trend plots were established in 1977. These trend plots have been photographed four times since 1977. Analysis of these plots indicate static or no apparent trend.

Allotment wide forage utilization studies were conducted four times between 1976 and 1984. They indicate that overall utilization has been light to moderate. Grazing use patterns vary within the allotment from severe to little or no use because of rough terrain or distance from water. Four key management areas were established in the allotment in 1985. Utilization studies conducted in 1986 indicated moderate use in the three areas monitoring livestock use. The fourth key area was established in a wild horse area and indicated heavy use.

Livestock

The current grazing preference in the Pilot-Table Mountain Allotment is 8185 AUM's of which 7,900 AUM's are active and 285 AUM's are suspended. These grazing privileges are based exclusively on water. The permittee's normal operation is to run 1,000 head from 16 October to 31 March. The cattle are then shipped to northern California, near Likely, for spring and summer grazing.

Wildlife

There is a wide variety of wildlife species within the allotment. Big game species include mule deer, bighorn sheep, and mountain lion. In 1984 the existing number of mule deer was estimated to be 306. Twenty-two bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the Pilot Mountain in 1983. Currently their population is estimated to be thirty. Upland game species include chukar, mountain and valley quail, morning dove, and cottontail rabbits. Some of the furbears are gray fox, kit fox, coyote, bobcat and badger. A variety of raptors nest and/or winter in the allotment. The distribution, abundance and diversity of wildlife species are influenced by available drinking water and vegetation zones, particularly riparian habitat.

Wild Horses

There is one herd area within the allotment. This area, the Pilot Mountain Wild Horse Herd Area, was last inventoried in September, 1984. The actual count in the Pilot Sub-unit was 631 and 450 in the

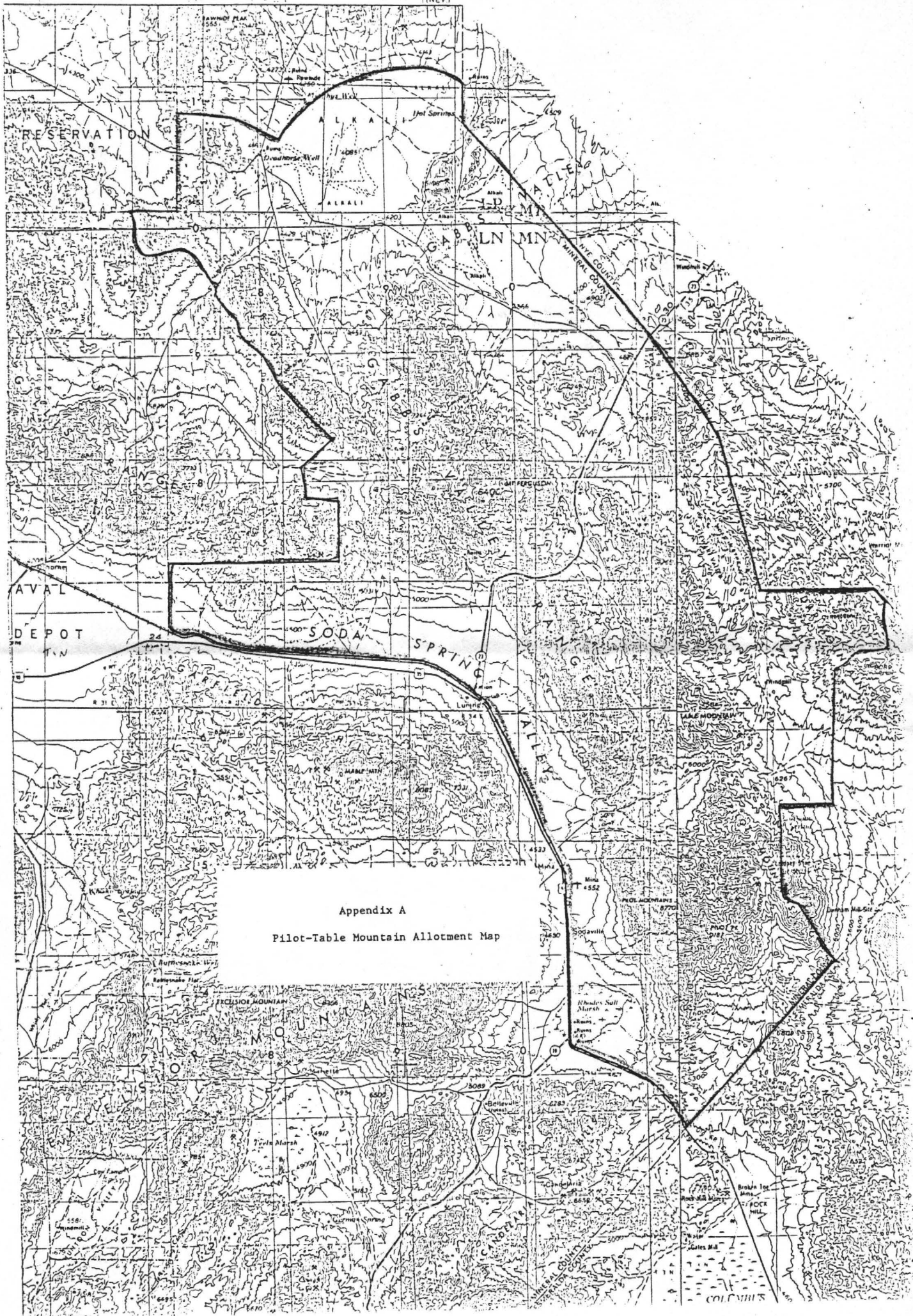
Gabbs Valley Range Sub-unit for a total of 1,081 head in the entire herd area. The appropriate management level identified in the Walker Resource Management Plan is 397 head of wild horses for the herd area. Any wild horses above this level are classified as excess animals, which require removal from public lands as funding permits.

Allotment Issues

The excessive numbers of wild horses in the allotment are a major problem and a road block to proper management. Wild horses are concentrated in two areas. The majority of these horses are located in the extreme southern portion of the allotment in the Pilot Mountains. The other area of concentration is between Wildhorse Canyon and Redrock Canyon in the Gabbs Valley Range. Besides the general over use of forage species by wild horse concentrations, there are specific concerns caused by their large numbers. In the Pilot Mountains, wild horses are currently encroaching on bighorn sheep habitat. This encroachment could threaten the survival of the small population of reintroduced bighorn sheep.

Throughout the areas of wild horse concentrations another concern is the degradation of riparian habitat. Livestock use has contributed to this problem but yearround grazing by horses, especially during spring and early summer, is more detrimental.

Uneven distribution of livestock grazing use in the past has caused areas of over use. There has also been some unauthorized trespass use in the southern part of the allotment.



Appendix A
Pilot-Table Mountain Allotment Map

Revue

most rec.

1. cc Fallin live permit
2. cc. final ESP.
3. mill → cc permit req.
4. admin. appeal procedures.
- 5.

(Research)

1. (gene pool)

- what is viable -

2. Free roaming

3.

