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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ELY DISTRICT OFFICE
HC33 BOX 150
ELY, NEVADA 89301-9408

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:
4403.3 (NV-047)

Commission for the Preservation
of Wild Horses
Stewart Facility
Capitol Complex
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Participant:

Enclosed for your information are the Management Action Selection Reports for the Six Mile, South Pancake, Becky Creek, and Fort Ruby Allotments. These reports are the final section of the allotment evaluation, and completes the monitoring evaluation process.

The Management Action Selection Reports address the primary concerns received from involved interests, lists the options considered during the evaluation, and identifies the management actions selected. The reports also describes the rationale as to why those actions were selected.

These reports are provided for your information only, and will be followed at a later date by a proposed multiple-use decision if indicated in the report. This decision will be issued to actually initiate the chosen actions on the ground, and will specify the procedures for protest and appeal. A copy of the decision will be provided to those individuals and/or organizations that have participated in the monitoring evaluation process. If no decision is required, the Management Action Selection Report will serve as documentation to the grazing file that current management is appropriate.

Sincerely,

for Gene L. Drais, Manager
Egan Resource Area

Enclosures
1. Six Mile (5 pp)
2. South Pancake (4 pp)
3. Becky Creek (4 pp)
4. Fort Ruby (3 pp)

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT
SIX MILE ALLOTMENT (0613), EGAN RESOURCE AREA
Dan Russell, Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The Six Mile Allotment evaluation was conducted in accordance with the direction set forth in Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 86-706, and is based on monitoring data collected between 1984 and 1989.

A limited amount of public comment was received pertaining to this allotment evaluation. Copies of the comment letters are located in the Six Mile allotment evaluation files in the Ely District office. All allotment-specific comments were considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. Some of the primary concerns expressed for Six Mile are addressed as follows:

One comment concerned the use of the Sneva Crop Yield Index. This index is not used to "correct" or "normalize" utilization data. The index is used to account for the affect of yearly climatic variations on annual forage yield, and therefore calculation of appropriate stocking levels. Since it is not feasible to adjust the numbers of all grazing animals (livestock, wildlife, and wild horses) on a yearly basis to respond to annual fluctuations in forage yield, an average carrying capacity is determined based on a "normal" year. The effects of precipitation on carrying capacity must be considered. After review of existing research on this subject, the Ely District chose the Sneva et al model as the most appropriate for this region. Authority to use the yield index is provided in BLM Technical Reference #4400-7 and Instruction Memorandum No. NV-89-468 and has been supported by a recent court ruling by an Administrative Law Judge in Oregon.

Another comment dealt with the possibility of allowing or encouraging the crested wheatgrass seedings to revert back to native vegetation. While this may allow vegetative and wildlife diversity to increase, this alternative will not be pursued for the following reasons:

1.) As a multiple use agency, the BLM must balance the needs of numerous resource users, which includes providing forage for domestic livestock. Crested wheatgrass seedings provide an irreplaceable component to overall ranching systems in this part of Nevada.

2.) Crested wheatgrass seedings allow a deferment of livestock use on native vegetation during the critical early spring growth period. In fact, most seedings within the district were established for that purpose - to provide spring forage. This deferment is important for the health and vigor of native forage species, as well as the wildlife species that depend on them.

3.) Since these seedings and the other range projects that support them (i.e. fences and waters) involved a significant investment when established, by both the BLM and grazing permittees, it is advantageous to maintain them or rehabilitate them when feasible.

It was also pointed out that there was an error in the number of sage grouse leks identified, and this was corrected from 2 to 5.

Also in regards to sage grouse, concerns were raised that excessive utilization and/or spring use would make forbs unavailable for sage grouse broods. As was pointed out in the evaluation summary, the areas on native range that have shown excessive use are primarily winterfat bottoms. These communities are not important brood habitat, and do not have a significant forb component. On the remaining black sage/big sage sites in the valley bottom, there is also a limited potential for forb production, with only 5-10% forb composition expected for the Potential Natural Community (climax). The Buster Mountain bench, suggested in the intensive management option for spring sheep use, does show more potential for forb production. However, the claim that spring sheep use, even at proper use levels, is necessarily detrimental to sage grouse is unsubstantiated. The early spring season of use (3/1 - 4/15) should also reduce impacts to forb production.

Conclusions of the evaluation were based on data collection and comments from the following sources:

1. Range, wildlife, wild horse, and riparian monitoring studies files compiled by the Egan Resource Area and Division of Resources.

2. Input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno Field Station, in a letter dated 6/27/90.

3. Input from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region II, in a letter dated 7/2/90.

4. Input from the N-4 Grazing Board, via a letter from Resource Concepts Inc., dated 7/16/90.

5. No input was received from the permittee, Mr. Dan Russell, although this input was solicited on several occasions.

B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on analysis of monitoring studies, six of the ten land use plan objectives identified for this allotment are not being met with current management practices. Therefore, additional management actions and/or adjustments in use are necessary. Overutilization of winterfat bottoms by horses and sheep, and overutilization of crested wheatgrass seedings by cattle are the current problems on the allotment. Although current ecological condition is acceptable, continued overuse will result in a decline in vegetative vigor and ultimately lowered condition.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Option 1 Reduce cattle preference (seedings) to 287 AUMs, reduce sheep preference (native) to 473 AUMs, allow 135 AUMs for wild horse use.

Option 2 Reduce cattle preference to 287, horse use at 135 AUMs. Maintain sheep preference at 922 AUMs with more intensive management.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is as follows:

The active cattle preference on the seedings will be reduced to 287 AUMs, with 145 AUMs suspended non use, a 33% reduction.

Wild horses will be managed at 135 AUMs (11 horses year-long).

Sheep preference will remain at 922 AUMs with the following conditions to the grazing permit:

1. 380 AUM's (originally adjudicated) to be used east of Belmont road for spring sheep grazing (March 1 - April 15), dependant on availability of water/snow. Water hauling along the Buster Mountain bench will be required for full use of this portion of preference. This portion is to be licensed separately.

2. The remainder of preference (542 AUM's) to be used west of Belmont road in the Newark Valley portion of the allotment for winter use (11/1 - 12/31).

3. Two water haul sites will be located at T 17 N, R 57 E, sec. 7 NESE, and sec. 19 NESE (see attached map). Full use of the 542 AUM's in Newark Valley will be dependant on use of these sites.

4. Sheep will not be trailed or bedded in winterfat bottoms.

5. Sheep camps will be placed a minimum of 1/2 mile from winterfat bottoms.

6. Sheep watered at the seedings will only be allowed access to the troughs placed outside the seeding fence at the east seeding. Sheep will not be allowed access to the seedings when licensed for the adjoining native range.

Rationale:
The desired stocking level on the seedings is based on 55% desired utilization, with spring/summer/fall use. This calculation results from actual use and measured utilization data, and indicates that a reduction to 287 AUMs is necessary to meet the desired utilization level.

Utilization pattern mapping indicates a distribution problem (local overutilization) on native range for winterfat bottoms in Newark Valley, used by both wild horses and sheep. These problems should be mitigated by a reduction in wild horse use to 135 AUMs, and a redistribution of sheep use by allocation of AUMs to use areas and permit stipulations including water hauling and herding conditions.

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

Reductions in cattle preference will be phased in over 5 years as follows:

					AUM's	
Pasture	Year	Number	Kind	Period of use	Active	Suspended
Seeding	1	58	Cattle	4/15 - 10/31	383	49
Seeding	3	51	Cattle	4/15 - 10/31	335	97
Seeding	5	44	Cattle	4/15 - 10/31	287	145
E. Native	1	1256	Sheep	3/1 - 4/15	380	0
W. Native	1	1351	Sheep	11/1 - 12/31	542	0

Year 1 for this schedule is considered to be the 1991 grazing year, starting 3/1/91.

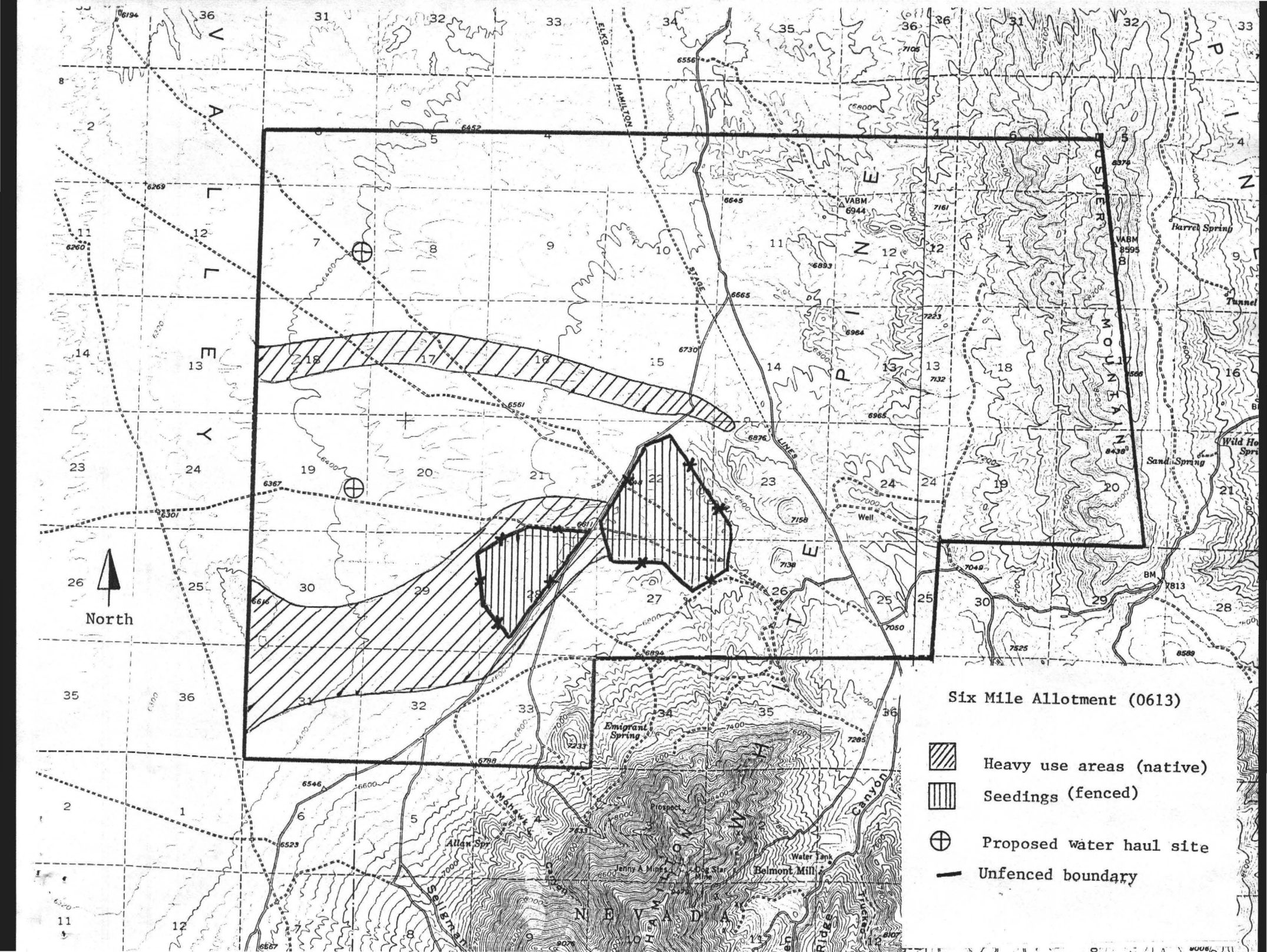
Stipulations on sheep use will be effective immediately.

Adjustments in wild horse numbers will be made by future Monte Cristo Herd Area gathers based on continued monitoring.

F. FUTURE MONITORING AND GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

The Egan Resource Area will continue to monitor all existing studies and establish additional studies as identified in Section VI of the Allotment Evaluation. This monitoring data will continue to be collected in the future to provide necessary information for subsequent re-evaluations in the third and fifth years following the decision. These re-evaluations are necessary

to determine if the allotment objectives are being met under the new grazing management strategies. In addition, these subsequent evaluations will determine if continued or additional adjustments are needed to meet allotment objectives.


Six Mile Allotment (0613)
Heavy use areas (native)
Seedings (fenced)
Proposed water haul site
Unfenced boundary
North
VALLEY
PINE
NEVADA
Emigrant Spring
Allan Spr
Belmont Mill
Water Tank
Jenny A Mines
Dog Star Mine
Barrel Spring
Sand Spring
Well
VABM 6944
VABM 8595
ELKO
HAMILTON
LINES
Canyon
Ridge