

9/10/92



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Ely District Office
HC 33 Box 33500
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408



IN REPLY REFER TO:

4403.3 (NV-047)

SEP 10 1992

Commission for the Preservation
of Wild Horses and Burros
Attn: Cathy Barcomb
Stewart Facility
Capitol Complex
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

Enclosed for your information is the Management Action Selection Report for the South Butte Allotment. This report is the final section of the allotment evaluation, and completes the monitoring evaluation process.

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

This report is 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,

Gene L. Drais, Manager
Egan Resource Area

1 Enclosure

1. South Butte Allotment Section 8 Report

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT
SOUTH BUTTE ALLOTMENT
EGAN RESOURCE AREA
Warren Robison, Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The South Butte 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 in 1990 and 1991.

A limited amount of public comment was received pertaining to this allotment evaluation. Copies of the correspondence pertaining specifically to this allotment can be found in the South Butte allotment evaluation file located in the Ely District office. All allotment-specific comments were considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. Some of the concerns expressed on South Butte are addressed as follows:

Resource Concepts Inc. comment that a reduction in the active preference has occurred on the South Butte Allotment (0504) between 1980 and 1992 is incorrect. Prior to the 1981 grazing year, the total active preference on the South Butte Allotment was 850 AUMs. However, this total included both the South Butte native range plus the South Butte Seeding (0506) established in 1963. Both areas were licensed as one unit. Beginning 3/1/81 the South Butte Seeding was licensed separately from the South Butte Allotment. The seeding was adjudicated at 342 AUMs leaving 508 AUMs attached to the South Butte Allotment. Total active preference remained constant but licensed separately to enhance grazing management.

A comment letter was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listing the threatened and endangered species as well as the candidate species pursuant to section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 that may occur in the South Butte Allotment. No threatened or endangered species were listed for this allotment. However, candidate species listed include the pygmy rabbit, spotted bat, ferruginous hawk, black tern, western least bittern, loggerhead shrike and white-faced ibis. Actions proposed in the South Butte Allotment Evaluation Summary are not likely to adversely affect any of the listed species nor jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

Comments were received from Warren and Betty Robison during a meeting held 6/29/92 to discuss the South Butte allotment evaluation. The Robison's felt that a significant portion of the heavy use occurring on the South Butte Allotment can be attributed to sheep trailing through their allotment. They contend that the sheep are allowed to stay too long and spread out too far during trailing. They also complained about herder campsites and sheep bed grounds in white sage flats. Bedding

sheep, setting up water troughs or sheep camps in white sage flats is prohibited. No documentation exists of sheep staying too long or spreading out too far while crossing the South Butte Allotment. However, consultation with the permittees whose sheep are involved in the dispute will occur and stipulations covering allowable trailing dates and location of the sheep trail will be written into future grazing licenses and permits if an agreement cannot be reached among the parties.

Conclusions of the evaluation were based upon data collected from the following sources:

1. Range, wild horse, wildlife, water inventory, and riparian monitoring and studies files compiled by the Egan Resource Area and Division of Resources.
2. Input from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region II, in letters dated December 11 and 30, 1991.
3. Input from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a letter dated June 29, 1992.
4. Input from the N-4 Grazing Board, via Resource Concepts, Inc., in a letter dated June 12, 1992.
5. Input from the permittee, Warren Robison, on 6/29/92 and via actual use data submitted for the grazing years evaluated.
6. Input from the Sierra Club in a letter dated October 29, 1991.

B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on identified issues of the evaluation, seven of the eleven land use plan objectives for the allotment are not being achieved with current management practices. The major resource problem on the South Butte Allotment is the overutilization of key forage species by livestock and wild horses. The cause can be attributed to excessive numbers and poor distribution. This has led to a decrease in carrying capacity and a deterioration of the range resource. The situation has been aggravated by a persistent five year drought.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Management options considered are those listed in the Selected Management Action.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

1) Reduce active preference for livestock from 508 AUMs to 340 AUMs as indicated by monitoring studies.

2) Establish wild horse appropriate management level (AML) at 60 AUMs as indicated by monitoring studies (7 horses for 9 months) on that portion of the Butte herd management area (HMA) within the South Butte Allotment.

3) Fence Willow Spring riparian site and pipe water to a trough(s) outside of the fence.

4) Establish season of use from 4/15 to 2/28. The total number of AUMs that can be licensed from 4/15 to 6/15 would be 10% of active preference to prevent overutilization of key forage species during the critical growth period.

Rationale:

Monitoring studies and other existing information support the conclusion that overutilization of key forage species by livestock and wild horses, due to excessive numbers and poor distribution, has led to a decrease in carrying capacity and a deterioration of the range resource. The selected management actions above will remedy this situation.

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.6-1(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 as determined through monitoring and adjusted as necessary under 4110.3, 4110.3-1 and 4110.3-2."

In accordance with 43 CFR 4110.3-3(2), changes in livestock preference greater than 10% shall be phased in over a five year period. Adjustments will be implemented in years 1, 3 and 5. In accordance with 43 CFR 4110.3-2(c), reductions in active preference AUMs over this phase in period will be held in suspended nonuse. The following table summarizes the changes in the adjudicated preference over the 5 year phase-in period. Year 1 is the 1993 grazing year.