



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office
HC 33 Box 33500
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408

TAKE
PRIDE IN
AMERICA

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 North Steptoe 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

Gene L. Drais, Manager
Egan Resource Area

1 Enclosure

1. North Steptoe Allotment Section 8 Report

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT
NORTH STEPTOE ALLOTMENT
EGAN RESOURCE AREA
Holtz, Inc., Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The North Steptoe 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 1988, 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 North Steptoe 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 North Steptoe are addressed as follows:

Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI) commented on the amount of suspended AUMs attached to the North Steptoe Allotment. The evaluation summary incorrectly stated that the preference was 700 AUMs of sheep use with no AUMs in suspension. However, North Steptoe has an active preference of 700 AUMs with 589 AUMs in suspension for a total preference of 1289 AUMs.

A comment letter was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listing the threatened and endangered species as well as candidate species that may occur in the North Steptoe Allotment. The only endangered species listed is the bald eagle. 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 North Steptoe Allotment Evaluation Summary will not adversely affect any of the listed species, jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

A comment was received from Merlin Kingston, the authorized officer for Holtz, Inc., in a telephone conversation requesting that the season-of-use be changed from late winter/spring to fall/winter. This change would facilitate his sheep operation as well as avoid a repeat of the heavy sheep losses incurred due to cold, wet weather after shearing in the spring of 1991. The proposed change in season-of-use would also be beneficial to the range since the allotment is primarily a black sagebrush benchland site with limited quantities of winterfat and perennial grasses. The allotment is better suited for fall/winter grazing by sheep. The proposed change would also eliminate livestock grazing during the critical spring growing season.

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 May 8, 1990, December 11, 1991 and December 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, Merlin Kingston for Holtz, Inc., via telephone conversation and 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 the identified issues of the evaluation, all eleven land use plan objectives are being met with current management practices.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Proposal A:

- 1) Existing livestock use will remain unchanged at 700 AUMs of sheep use with 589 AUMs in suspension for a total preference of 1289 AUMs.
- 2) Retain season of use from 2/1 to 4/15.
- 3) Establish wild horse appropriate management level (AML) at 77 AUMs or 6 horses yearlong, as indicated by monitoring studies on that portion of the Antelope Herd Management Area (HMA) within the North Steptoe Allotment.

Proposal B:

- 1) Existing livestock use will remain unchanged at 700 AUMs of sheep use with 589 AUMs in suspension for a total preference of 1289 AUMs.
- 2) Change season of use to 10/1 to 3/15.
- 3) Establish wild horse appropriate management level (AML) at 77 AUMs or 6 horses yearlong, as indicated by monitoring studies on that portion of the Antelope Herd Management Area (HMA) within the North Steptoe Allotment.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

Proposal B:

- 1) Existing livestock use will remain unchanged at 700 AUMs of sheep use with 589 AUMs in suspension for a total preference of 1289 AUMs.
- 2) Change season of use to 10/1 to 3/15.
- 3) Establish wild horse appropriate management level (AML) at 77 AUMs or 6 horses yearlong, as indicated by monitoring studies on that portion of the Antelope Herd Management Area (HMA) within the North Steptoe Allotment.

Rationale:

Monitoring studies and other existing information support the conclusion that sheep use does not exceed proper utilization levels on the allotment. However, the season-of-use permitted on the allotment will be changed from late winter/spring (February 1 to April 15) to fall/winter (October 1 to March 15). This change would facilitate the permittee's sheep operation as well as be beneficial to the range resource by eliminating livestock grazing during the critical spring growing season. Also, existing numbers of wildlife and wild horses are meeting objectives at this time.

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 4700.0-6(a), wild horse use on that portion of the Antelope Herd Management Area (HMA) within the North Steptoe Allotment shall be managed at an AML of 77 AUMs, or 6 horses yearlong.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4720.1, all wild horses in excess of the appropriate management level will be removed. Wild horses will be managed at 77 AUMs to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and prevent deterioration of the range.

F. FUTURE MONITORING AND GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

The BLM will continue to monitor the allotment to determine if allotment objectives are being met, and if not, the data will be used in future re-evaluations leading towards new and adjusted management actions to correct problems. Use pattern mapping and/or utilization spot checks (key area utilization) will be performed every 1-3 years. Actual use will continue to be collected from the livestock permittee and wildlife use estimates from NDOW. Ecological site inventory based on the completed third order soil survey and ecological site information will be completed as funding allows. Wild horse aerial census will continue, as funding allows, once every 1-3 years.