United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Caliente Field Station
1400 S. Front Street, P. O. Box 237
Caliente, NV 89008-0237
http://www.nv.blm.gov

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

In Reply Refer To:
4130
Tempiute Grazing Assoc.
Grazing Case File

Dear Interested Public:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely Field Office, Caliente Field Station, received an application from the Tempiute Grazing Association requesting authorization for Temporary Non-Renewable grazing use (TNR) on the Sand Springs Allotment (#01066).

This action requires the completion of an Environmental Assessment (EA). Consequently, an EA has been completed and is being distributed to the interested publics, expressing interest in such matters, for the solicitation of comments and concerns. It is being sent to you, because the BLM is not able to post it on the Internet for public viewing at this time.

Please review the enclosed EA and provide, in writing, any comments or concerns which you may have by close of business on November 30, 2005.

Please address all comments to:

Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 237
Caliente, Nevada 89008

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions and wish to speak to someone, please contact Domenic Bolognani at (775) 726-8124.

Sincerely,
Richard A. Orr

Assistant Field Manager
Caliente Field Station

Enclosures (1):

1. Environmental Assessment for Temporary Non-Renewable Grazing Authorization for the Tempiute Grazing Association During Winter 2006 on the Sand Springs Allotment.

Environmental Assessment
NV045-05-021

Temporary Non-Renewable Grazing Authorization for the Tempiute Grazing Association During Winter 2006

Sand Springs Allotment

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely Field Office, Caliente Field Station (CFS) received an application from the Tempiute Grazing Association, on May 13, 2005, requesting authorization for Temporary Non-Renewable grazing use on the Sand Springs Allotment (#01066). The application is a request for the authorization of 1600 head of cattle, from approximately January 25, 2006 until the end of the 2005 grazing year (February 28, 2006), for a total of approximately 1,842 temporary non-renewable Animal Unit Months (AUMs).

The current term grazing permit for the Tempiute Grazing Association is for the period 03/15/2000 to 09/21/2008. The permit is as follows:

Existing Term Grazing Permit for the Tempiute Grazing Association for the Sand Springs Allotment						
Livestock Number	Kind	Period of Use	% Public Land	Permitted Use (AUMs)	Historically Suspended Use	Total Use
584	Cattle	03/01 – 02/28	100	7,005	2,995	10,000

The allotment is divided into three pastures (Map #2, Appendix I): the northwest, northeast and south pasture. During 2005 all cattle were removed from the allotment in late April with resumed grazing in October and continuing through the winter and early spring of 2006. Therefore, the pastures are not grazed during the latter portion of the critical spring and summer growing season while plants mature and progress through seed production. This lends itself to maintaining plant vigor, healthy plant growth and subsequent good reproductive potential through plant rest during the critical growing period.

Total AUMs activated for the spring use grazing period was 2,657 AUMs. Total AUMs authorized for the fall/winter grazing period will be 4,356 AUMs. A total of 7,013 AUMs is authorized to January 25, 2006. This will activate the total annual AUMs for the allotment for the grazing year.

During the spring 2005 cattle were grazed according to the following:

Sand Springs Allotment 2005 Spring Grazing Use				
Pasture Name	Livestock #	Begin Date	End Date	AUMs
South	576	3/1/05	4/16/05	890
South	448	4/17/05	4/18/05	29
South	322	4/19/05	4/21/05	32
South	156	4/22/05	4/24/05	15
Northwest	443	3/1/05	4/12/05	626

Northwest	30	4/13/05	4/16/05	4
Northeast	617	3/1/05	04/15/05	933
Northeast	563	4/16/05	4/17/05	37
Northeast	477	4/18/05	4/19/05	31
Northeast	394	4/20/05	4/20/05	13
Northeast	265	4/21/05	4/24/05	35
Northeast	175	4/25/05	4/26/05	12
			Total AUMs	2,657

Authorized grazing use for the fall/winter period will occur on all three pastures. Livestock will be incrementally added to each pasture from October 15, 2005 to November 12, 2005. Stocking levels will range from 250 cattle to 1,600 cattle. Approximately one-third of the total herd will graze each of the three pastures. Authorized grazing use for the fall/winter period will be as follows:

Sand Springs Allotment 2005 Fall/Winter Grazing Use			
Livestock #	Begin Date	End Date	AUMs
250 (approx. 83/pasture)	10/15/05	10/31/05	140
550 (approx. 183/pasture)	11/1/05	11/04/05	73
850 (approx. 283/pasture)	11/5/05	11/09/05	140
1250 (approx. 416/pasture)	11/10/05	11/11/05	83
1600 (approx. 533/pasture)	11/12/05	01/24/06	3,920
		Total	4,356

During the Grazing Years 1986–1995, 1997 and 1999, grazing use was authorized above the active use (above 7,005 AUMs). Data was collected during the years 1997, 1999 and from 1986 to 1995 for a total of 12 years. The average licensed AUMs use on the allotment was 8,028 AUMs. The average forage utilization values - measured at the low end - ranged from 5% - 16% or slight use. The average forage utilization values – measured at the high end - ranged from 10% - 34% or slight to light use. Temporary non-renewable use was authorized during 10 out of the 12 years. In summary, during the aforementioned grazing years cited, the permittee grazed an averaged equivalent of 114.6 % of their active use, thus exceeding their active use of 7005 AUMs by an average of 14.5%; grazed an average of 8,028 AUMs, with a high of 9,876 AUMs; and never exceeded a 34% average forage utilization level (light) at any

of the key areas.

A summary of data collected during the years 1986 – 1995 and also during 1997 and 1999 is shown in the table below. It shows the percent utilization range observed on the key species at each key area within each pasture.

Summary of Data Collected During the Years 1986 – 1995 and also During 1997 and 1999 Showing the 12 Year Average Percent Utilization Observed on Key Species at Each Key Area Along with the Average Licensed Use Over the Same Period

Grazing Years 1986 – 1995 and 1997 and 1999	Average No. of AUMs Licensed ----- % Active Use Made	No. of Temporary Use AUMs Authorized	PERCENT UTILIZATION ON KEY SPECIES AT KEY AREAS							
			North West Pasture	Northeast Pasture				South Pasture		
			Quinn	Smith Well	Apple Reservoir	Wildhorse Spring	Honest John	Hot Water Well	Honest John	Southeastern Well
AVERAGE	8,028 AUMs ----- 114.6%	1,263 AUMs	9% - 33%	15% - 34%	4% - 20%	16% - 30%	15% - 26%	4% - 10%	6% - 18%	12% - 32%

Two BLM rain gauges are located within the Sand Springs Allotment: Sand Springs North and Sand Springs South (Map #4, Appendix I). The following tables show the monthly rainfall totals collected at each of the rain gauges within the allotment from September 2004 through September 2005. Where no data appears the rain gauge was not read for that month. Where a reading does appear it indicates the accumulation of precipitation for all prior unread months since the last reading. Both gauges indicate that rainfall during the winter of 2004-2005, and through the spring/summer growing periods and potential fall regrowth period of 2005 was plentiful (Appendix II).

Precipitation (Rain) Collected at the Sand Springs North and Sand Springs South Rain Gauges From September Through December 2004

Gauge Name	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual Total
Sand Spring South	0.06	2.42		0.50	2.98
Sand Spring North	0.00	1.73		0.81	2.54

Precipitation (Rain) Collected at the Sand Springs North and Sand Springs South Rain Gauges During 2005

Gauge Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual Total
Sand Spring South				1.77	0.30	0.05	0.08	0.92	0.75				3.87
Sand Spring North				3.31	0.60	0.04	0.16	0.77	0.79				5.67

Such rainfall events have resulted in an abundance of forage on the allotment.

The following table summarizes the vegetation measurements of forage species at each key area in terms of leader lengths on shrubs or leaf lengths on grasses. Measurements listed indicate average lengths found. Measurements in boldface indicate a key species for the respective key area.

Vegetation Measurements of Forage Plants at Each Key Area in Terms of Leader Lengths on Shrubs and Leaf Lengths on Grasses (average lengths)							
Key Area	Plant Species						
	ACHY	HECO	CELA	ATCA	ATCO	HIJA	ARSP
Southeastern Well	**2"- 4"**		**8"- 12"**	3"- 4"			
Hotwater Well	**6"- 8"**	**5"**	**8"- 14"**	5"- 9"			
Honest John #1			7"- 10"		**3"- 4"**	**2"- 3"**	**Dormant**
Honest John #2	**6"- 8"**		**7"- 11"**	3"- 4"			
Quinn	**6"**		**9"- 13"**		**3"- 4"**		
Smith Well	**5"- 6"**		7"- 13"	**6"**			
Wildhorse Spring	**6"- 7"**		**8"- 12"**				
Apple Reservoir	**6"- 10"**		**8"- 12"**		**3"- 4"**		

Measurements in **boldface** indicate a key species for the respective key area.

Pictures exhibiting these measurements - in response to the aforementioned rainfall events - are shown in Appendix III. They display vegetation both at and vicinal to each key area on the allotment. In the captions below each picture an asterisk (*) next to a species name indicates that it's a key species at that key area. At each key area, on the allotment, no measurable use on vegetation was noted.

Need for the Proposal

The purpose for the proposal is to authorize legitimate multiple use of the public lands through the issuance of a Temporary Non-Renewable grazing use permit to the permittee of the Sand Springs Allotment. The Federal Code of Regulations (CFR), 43 CFR 4130.6-2 states, "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."

Relationship to Planning

The proposed action is in conformance with the following:

1. *Caliente Resource Area Management Framework Plan* (MFP) (February 1982);

2. The Caliente Land Use Plan titled, *Caliente Final Environmental Statement - Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Management Program (INT FES 79-44)* (September 21, 1979).

It is also in conformance with the objectives of maintaining and/or improving vegetative and

soil conditions to benefit watershed, wildlife, wild horses, and livestock.

The *Final Caliente Environmental Statement* states, "Data from [monitoring] would be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of current management and to assist in making appropriate adjustments...Changes in use requested by the livestock operator, which were outside the limits of the proposed action and were consistent with management objectives, would be requested in writing and must be approved in advance of the grazing period" (page 1-22).

The proposed action is also consistent with the *Lincoln County Public Land and Natural Resource Management Plan* (December 5, 1997) in that it supports grazing.

It states, "Lincoln County supports multiple use of the public lands, grazing is a part of this system. Grazing shall be managed to support a healthy range resource. Resource utilization must be monitored according to standard accepted range monitoring standards" (page 15).

Issues

There are no issues currently identified with regard to the proposed action.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to authorize 1600 head of cattle, from approximately January 26, 2006 until the end of the grazing year (February 28, 2006), for a total of approximately 1,842 temporary non-renewable Animal Unit Months (AUMs). Temporary non-renewable grazing would be authorized according to the following:

Proposed TNR Grazing Schedule for the Sand Springs Allotment During January and February 2006						
Livestock Number	Kind	Period of Use	% Public Land	Permitted Use (AUMs)	Historically Suspended Use	Total Use
1,600	Cattle	01/26/06 – 02/28/06	100	7,005	2,995	10,000

The application for Temporary Non-Renewable use is within the authorized period of use indicated on the term grazing permit. The 1,842 AUMs of Temporary Non-Renewable use applied for will exceed the active use of 7,005 AUMs indicated on the term permit. The 7,005 AUMs will become totally activated by January 24, 2006.

The proposed action would utilize surplus biomass and portions of the allotment previously under-utilized or not utilized at all due to lack of water. Additional water was made possible through the recent construction of 80 miles of pipeline with associated troughs (Map #3, Appendix I).

The 1600 cattle would be distributed equally in all three pastures for the duration of the proposed action. All available watering locations, within each pasture, would be utilized to achieve as wide as cattle distribution as possible. This would include 18 watering locations in the northwest pasture, 17 in the northeast pasture and 22 in the south pasture (Map #3, Appendix I).

In accordance with 43 CFR §4130.3 and §4130.3-2, the following terms and conditions would be included in the Temporary Non-Renewable grazing licensing for the Sand Springs Allotment for the aforementioned period indicated:

1. According to the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook (September 1984), the desired overall use (Allowable Use Level) is 55% on perennial grasses and forbs, and 45% on shrubs (based on year long use). Therefore, Allowable Use Levels will not exceed these utilization levels during the authorized Temporary Non-Renewable use period (1/26/06 - 2/28/06).

2. The use of salt and/or herding may be used to promote maximum cattle distribution - especially into areas feasible to graze, but where cattle may be reluctant to go.

3. Grazing use will be in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Nevada's Mojave-Southern Great Basin Area* for grazing administration as developed by the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council and approved by the Secretary of the Interior on February 12, 1997. Grazing use will also be in accordance with 43 CFR Sub-part 4180 - Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration.

Grazing would continue to be monitored throughout the Temporary Non-Renewable grazing period to assure that Allowable Use Levels are not being exceeded and, correspondingly, the Guidelines for Rangeland Health are being achieved. If it is determined that any of the aforementioned are failing in any of the pastures, the cattle would be removed from the pasture in question and, subsequently, from the allotment.

The proposed action will also assist in determining if forage is available on a permanent basis to support a permanent change in active use AUMs.

No-Action Alternative

The Temporary Non-Renewable grazing authorization would not be issued and livestock grazing, exceeding the active use, would not occur on the Sand Springs Allotment.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment is described in Caliente Land Use Plan titled, *Caliente Final Environmental Statement - Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Management Program (INT FES 79-44)* (September 21, 1979).

Site-specific descriptions of portions of the affected environment are included, as needed, in the

Environmental Consequences section of this Environmental Assessment (EA) to facilitate understanding of anticipated impacts.

The Sand Springs Allotment is located approximately 60 miles west of Caliente, Nevada and surrounds the town of Rachel, Nevada (Map #1, Appendix I). It encompasses most of Sand Springs (Penoyer) Valley, contains 249,685 acres of public land and is indicative of the Great Basin. Approximately 5,200 acres of private land occur within the allotment. Elevations range from approximately 6,000 feet in the hills located in the west and east portions of the allotment to 4,750 feet on the allotment bottoms.

Most of the grazing occurs on the valley floor which is divided between the salt-desert shrub and the cool desert shrub communities. The major dominant forage vegetation within the allotment consists of Indian ricegrass, galleta, shadscale, 4-wing saltbush and winterfat. Sagebrush is also widely scattered throughout the allotment.

Ecological Condition was determined at the four key areas (listed in the table below) which represent the pasture in which they occur. The range site was determined using soil mapping units, determined by the Soil Conservation Service (Soil Survey of the Pahranagat-Penoyer Areas, Nevada - 1968), and adjusted through a field inspection. Ecological Condition was completed on the listed key areas in May 2001 using the double sampling method described in the Soil Conservation Service National Range Handbook (July 13, 1976) and the Bureau of Land Management National Range Handbook H-4410-1 (1984). This data was then compared to the appropriate Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) range site description (also published by the Soil Conservation Service) determined for each key area. Rangeland sites are ecological subdivisions of rangeland that are differentiated in terms of the climax (original or natural potential) plant community they are capable of supporting.

The following table displays the condition class and rating found at each key area.

Ecological Condition Obtained in May 2001 at Four Key Areas on the Sand Springs Allotment	
Key Areas	Condition Rating (% of PNC)
Quinn	Mid Seral (41%)
Smith Well	Late Seral (56%)
Honest John #1	Mid Seral (42%)
Hot Water Well	Early Seral (30%)

Seral stages were calculated using percent composition, derived from using the above double sampling method, and comparing these values to the most appropriately applicable range site to determine a rating. The rating is defined as being the percent of the Potential Natural Community (PNC) which may also be referred to as historic climax (existed before European immigration and settlement). Therefore, the seral stages listed above, for each key area, and the associated percentages are an indicator of the percent of climax for the respective range site on which they occur. A rating of $\geq$ 75 % is considered the achievement of PNC with values approaching 100% being the species composition and plant diversity indicated in the applicable range site description. Most of the allotment is in a mid to late seral stage and showing good species diversity.

The far northeast corner of the allotment – the northeast portion of the northeast pasture - falls within the Worthington Mountains Wilderness Area (Map #2, Appendix I). The portion of the allotment falls within the Worthington Mountains Wilderness Area. This area has been grazed for years while it was designated as a Wilderness Study Area. Continued use is not anticipated to have any additional impacts on wilderness values over and above that which occurs during the course of the normal grazing period indicated on the grazing permit.

There are no known threatened and endangered plants or animal species found within the allotment.

There are no known sage grouse populations found within the allotment.

The allotment is not located within a Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA).

Natural spring sources on public land within the allotment consist of Wildhorse Spring and Mud Spring. Both springs are developed springs. Wildhorse Spring supplies water to the existing pipeline system. Mud Spring only supplies water to vicinal troughs and is not connected to the main pipeline system. There are no riparian areas associated with either spring.

Although a variety of wildlife occurs on the allotment, the year-long resident antelope herd is most prominent. The wildlife community also includes badger, fox, coyote, small mammals, reptiles and birds.

Ecological condition data indicates that most of the allotment is in a mid to late seral stage and showing good species diversity. In addition, plant growth was exceptional due to rainfall during the winter of 2004-2005, and through the spring/summer growing periods and potential fall regrowth period of 2005. The combination of the aforementioned translates into a smorgasbord of plentiful forage as illustrated by the photographs in Appendix III.

The noxious weed, tamarisk, is found in three small areas within the allotment on public lands and one small area on private land. Each area is 100 square feet or less in size. No additional known noxious weeds are known to exist within the allotment. In addition, halogeton and cheatgrass, which are not listed as noxious, are also present within the allotment.

A portion of the allotment falls within the Worthington Mountains Wilderness Area. The following describes the key values of the wilderness area.

1. Naturalness

   The 6,596 acres of the 30,664 acre Worthington Mountains Wilderness that overlaps with the allotment is in a predominantly natural state with the evidence of human activity localized. Human imprints include both authorized and unauthorized activities. Authorized activities include range developments such as water troughs and pipelines. Unauthorized disturbances include vehicle routes, now closed as a result of wilderness designation, these routes are generally 4WD access roads created by repeated unauthorized cross-country travel.

2. Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

   Recreational uses of the wilderness areas include day hiking, backpacking, caving, photography, rock-hounding, big game and upland bird hunting, wildflower viewing, bird watching, sightseeing and other activities.

   There are outstanding opportunities for solitude in all 14 wilderness areas. A variety of geologic formations and vegetative screening all provide excellent opportunities for solitude.

3. Supplemental Values

   Several special features were mentioned in the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2004 including ecologically diverse habitat and prehistoric cultural resources.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or are not affected by the proposed action or no action alternative: special status species (federally listed, proposed or candidate threatened or endangered species, and state sensitive species); floodplains, wetlands and riparian areas; areas of critical environmental concern; wild and scenic rivers; visual resource management; prime or unique farmlands; environmental justice; cultural, paleontological, and historical resource values; water quality (drinking/ground); Air Quality; Wild Horses and Burros; Native American religious concerns; wastes, hazardous and solid or migratory birds.

Vegetation

Impacts would include the partial removal of annual above ground biomass from vegetation within the allotment.

The Proposed Action would take place during the dormant season and the AULs would not be exceeded. Grazing to AUL in some areas may maintain or stimulate healthy vigor if decadent plants are grazed.

The residual vegetation would provide forage and cover for wildlife, and would meet soil and watershed objectives.

Because the livestock grazing intensity would be within the allowable use levels and the season of use is during winter, impacts to the growth and reproductive cycle of vegetation would not occur. This would favor a plant's production and storage of carbohydrate reserves, vigor, reproduction, and a tendency towards favorable species composition in the area.

Grazing decadent plants may help reduce the potential or rate of spread of wildfires in the area by decreasing fire fuels.

The potential spread of noxious weeds would be non-existent, because there are no known noxious weeds within the allotment.

Wildlife

The wildlife that occurs within the allotment is representative of those that occur within the Great Basin (e.g., antelope, coyote, badger, upland bird species, rabbits, foxes, small reptile species, rodents and native birds). There are seasonal areas of use for antelope, elk and deer. The east and north portion of the allotment is considered summer and winter deer range, while yearlong elk use is associated with the north and northwest areas of the allotment. The east side of the Sand Springs Allotment is considered yearlong antelope range.

Impacts on the wildlife populations should not occur due to the low grazing intensity of use analyzed by this EA. Small reptile species, rodents, and native birds may be somewhat impacted by the Proposed Action through the temporarily reduction of available cover. However, because AULs would not be exceeded, an adequate supply of forage would be available for wildlife.

Migratory Birds

Issuance of Temporary Non-Renewable use would result in additional removal of herbaceous vegetation that is utilized by ground/low shrub nesting species of migratory birds. This would result in the possibility of increased avian predation.

Invasive, Non-Native Species

A noxious weed risk assessment was completed on August 18, 2005 (Appendix IV). The results indicated that the noxious weed, tamarisk, is found in three small areas within the allotment on public lands and one small area on private land. Each area is 100 square feet or less in size. No additional noxious weeds are known to exist within the allotment. The assessment indicated that grazing activity is not likely to result in the establishment of tamarisk or other noxious weed species within the allotment

In addition, halogeton and cheatgrass, which are not listed as noxious, are also present within the allotment. Because these species would be dormant during temporary non-renewable grazing, very little spread of such species would be anticipated.

The assessment also indicates that preventive management measures for noxious weeds should be developed. These measures (mitigation) are as follows:

1. The project proponent (grazing permittee) will watch for, report, and eradicate any small noxious weed patches in their allotment area.

2. Noxious weeds would be treated by methods to be approved by the Authorized Officer.

3. The grazing will be conducted in compliance with the Ely District BLM noxious weed

schedules. The scheduled procedures can significantly and effectively reduce noxious weed spread or introduction into the project area.

4. The range specialist for the Sand Springs Grazing Allotment will include weed detection into project compliance inspection activities.

5. The grazing project area will be monitored for at least three consecutive years following the conclusion of winter grazing.

The project can proceed as planned. Control treatments would be initiated on noxious weed populations that establish in the allotment.

Soils

Although the soils within the allotment vary, the soils on which grazing commonly occurs, mainly fall under two prominent range sites and are described in the Major Land Resource Area range site descriptions (MLRA 29) published by the Natural Resource Conservation Service: 029XY017NV (Loamy 5-8 P.Z.) and 029XY046NV (Sandy Loam 5-8 P.Z.). These soils associated with these range sites are typically moderately deep to deep and well drained and have coarse textured and/or sandy surfaces and have a low (< 20%) clay content. Therefore, it is not anticipated that compaction would be consequential. However, small increments of soil compaction and trampling can be reasonably expected from the additional livestock use.

The proposed action would allow the removal of vegetation by livestock. This would reduce the foliar groundcover and standing biomass and may reduce protection of the soil surface from precipitation events, runoff, and other overland flow. The effects of trailing may also be amplified in the area. Such impacts can be mitigated by the distribution of livestock and the establishment of the Allowable Use Levels.

Soil cover from litter accumulation would be somewhat reduced by additional forage consumption. The lost litter would not be available to microbial populations for the recycling of carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients from the organic matter.

Rangeland Resources

The abundance of forage, due to frequent rainfall events, combined with the installation of the new pipeline and associated watering troughs has greatly increased allotment potential, for the 2005 grazing year, for supporting additional grazing beyond the current permitted use while still maintaining allotment objectives.

The newly installed pipeline system would encourage cattle to visit areas that were previously either under-utilize or unutilized. This, in essence, creates a larger forage base than was available prior to the installation of the pipeline, while simultaneously enhancing cattle distribution. Furthermore, the Temporary Non-Renewable grazing would occur during the winter when plants are dormant.

Consequently, the impact on vegetation would be limited, while assuring the long term productivity of the vegetation resources.

Wilderness Values

Because a portion of the allotment falls within the Worthington Mountains Wilderness Area the following impacts would be anticipated.

1. Naturalness

   The temporary addition of AUMs is would not impact the naturalness of the Wilderness Area. The Wilderness Area within the Allotment is only three percent of the total allotment acreage. It is anticipated that most of the additional AUMs would occur outside of the Wilderness to utilize the new water developments.

2. Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

   The proposed action would not have impacts to solitude or unconfined recreation. The majority of recreational use of the Worthington Mountains is caving, and occurs at the higher elevations outside of the Sand Springs Allotment boundary. Access to the caves of the Worthington Mountains is predominantly from the East side of the Range, opposite that of the allotment boundaries.

3. Special Features

   The special features of the Worthington Range lie outside of the allotment boundaries.

Social and Economic

The Proposed Action would increase the social and economic values of the area by providing opportunities for livestock grazing to the applicant, while adding economic value within Lincoln County through direct income to residents. Expenditures for supplies and contributions to the local economy would occur.

Cumulative Impacts

According to BLM handbook *Guidelines For Assessing and Documenting Cumulative Impacts* (1994), the Cumulative impact analysis can be limited to those issues and resource values identified during scoping that are of major importance. The resource value of major importance for which analysis was conducted is Livestock Management.

Past Actions

The land which comprises the current Sand Springs Allotment has been grazed since the 1800's. The BLM has been managing such grazing since 1946 when the General Land Office merged with the Grazing Service to form the BLM.

In 1948, the Sand Springs Unit (Allotment) was established and the grazing preference was adjudicated to nine permittees according to base waters owned. The base waters on which the permit is based include: Wild Horse Spring & pipeline, Mud Spring & pipeline, Stinkbug

Spring, Sand Springs, Black Rock Well, No. 6 Well, Buttes Well, Tempiute Well, Smith Well, Highway Well, Southeastern Well, Hot Water Well, Quinn Canyon Spring & pipeline, Shadow Well, Honest John Well. The original active grazing preference associated with the base waters totaled 29,797 AUMs. In 1960, the Paris Brothers purchased ½ of the water share on Shadow Well. The Paris Brothers used their water share in Shadow Well as base to gain preference to graze sheep within the service area of the water. In 1961, adjustments were made on the grazing privileges and the active grazing preference was reduced to a total of 19,175 AUMs. In 1962-63, Edwin Burns purchased the existing base waters for the Sand Springs Allotment which included the other ½ share in Shadow Well. The serviceable area around Shadow Well was designated a dual use area where Edwin Burns had preference to run cattle as part of his Sand Springs Permit and the Paris Brothers had preference to run sheep. In 1965, the grazing preference for Sand Springs was reduced to a total of 10,000 AUMs of which 6,509 AUMs were active and the remaining 3,491 AUMs were placed into suspension. In 1966, an Allotment Management Plan was implemented on the Sand Springs Allotment introducing a yearlong 3 pasture rest-rotation system. In 1983, the Shadow Well Dual Use Area was moved to its current location through a range line agreement. In 1985, the authorized grazing use was increased on the Sand Springs Allotment to 7,005 active AUMs keeping the total at 10,000 AUMs.

Rangeland management and activities within the Ely District, Caliente Field Station, have been in accordance with the Final Caliente ES – Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Management Program (INT-FES 79-44) (September 21, 1979).

By 1987, it was determined that substantial progress was made towards meeting objectives on the Sand Springs Allotment. Past livestock grazing on the allotments has been authorized under the guidance of and in accordance with the *Caliente Grazing ES.*

Present Actions

Present grazing use is being managed to maintain and improve rangeland health as presented in the *Standards and Guidelines for Nevada's Mojave Southern Great Basin Area* for grazing administration, approved February 12, 1997. Currently a Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) for the Ely District is available for public comment.

Monitoring data is has been collected on the allotment in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines.*

Rangeland improvements are being implemented and maintained, in accordance with the land use plans, in order to help livestock distribution which can improve rangeland health.

The three-pasture rotation system was followed until 1998, when the previous permittee suggested the formation of the Tempiute Grazing Association. The management of the allotment, up until a few years ago, consisted of a base herd of 200-300 cows that grazed the allotment year round and association members graze the remaining AUMs from mid-November though April. Since that time, until the present, cattle only graze the allotment from approximately mid-October until late April. This grazing scheme utilizes all three pastures during the cool months when most vegetation is dormant. The majority of green up

and plant reproduction occurs after the main cattle numbers have left. The result is healthier plants throughout the year and better range condition.

A proposal is currently being reviewed for the restoration of 2995 AUMs to the existing 7005 active AUMs. The request to reinstate the 2995 suspended AUMs was initially proposed in 1985. Monitoring data since that date has been collected on the allotment and shows that the use on vegetation is consistently below the established allowable use levels for the allotment and that the *Guidelines* for grazing administration are being met. The restoration of the suspended AUMs would be based exclusively on monitoring data.

A range improvement project proposal is currently being processed; this project involves modifying an existing fence to include approximately 500 acres that are currently not being used into a pasture that is used. Approximately 8,000 feet of fence would be moved from its current location and placed along the right of way associated with Highway 375 on the far west portion of the allotment.

Present grazing use is being managed to maintain or improve rangeland health and to maintain conformance with the *Standards and Guidelines*.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Continued maintenance of existing range improvements and construction of new improvements would occur.

Continued monitoring of the allotment, to ensure that grazing use is in conformance with the *Guidelines*, would occur.

Cumulative Impacts

Past actions, as identified above, have provided a foundation on which current grazing management actions occur. Past management actions and development of improvements have allowed for the continued improvement of the allotment and conformance with the *Mojave Southern Great Basin Area Guidelines*.

Monitoring data since 1985 has been collected on the allotment and shows that the use on vegetation is consistently below the established Allowable Use Levels, for the allotment, and that current grazing management is in conformance with the *Guidelines* for grazing administration on BLM lands. Additionally, the relatively new installation of the aforementioned extensive pipeline will not only result in an improvement in livestock distribution, but expand grazing into areas which were previously either ungrazed or under-utilized due to lack of water. This, in essence, will translate into a larger forage base than previously existed, while decreasing the overall impacts of grazing within the allotment through the provision of additional AUMs.

Cattle numbers are the same now as they were prior to the pipeline installation leaving room for additional grazing above the active use. Rainfall events from September 2004 through September 2005 resulted in an abundance of forage. In view of the aforementioned, the proposed action of grazing additional forage would continue to be in conformance with the

Guidelines for grazing administration. Allowable use levels (AULs) would be monitored and maintained and, correspondingly, so would the *Guidelines* for grazing administration.

Anticipated Impacts of the No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would have no anticipated impacts to the following: special status species (federally listed, proposed or candidate threatened or endangered species, and state sensitive species); floodplains, wetlands and riparian areas; wilderness values, areas of critical environmental concern and wild and scenic rivers; visual resource management; prime or unique farmlands; environmental justice; cultural, paleontological, and historical resource values; water quality (drinking/ground); air quality; wild horses and burros; Native American religious concerns; wastes, hazardous and solid; invasive non-native species (including noxious weeds) or migratory birds.

The Temporary Non-Renewable grazing authorization would not be issued and livestock grazing, exceeding the permitted use, would not occur on the Sand Springs Allotment.

V. PROPOSED MITIGATING MEASURES

Appropriate mitigation measures have been included as part of the proposed action. No additional mitigation measures have been proposed as a result of the analysis of the potential impacts.

VI. SUGGESTED MONITORING

Appropriate monitoring has been included as part of the proposed action. No additional monitoring has been suggested as a result of the analysis of the potential impacts.

VII. CONSULTATION and COORDINATION

Intensity of Public Interest and Record of Contacts

This EA will be posted on the web for all interested publics, to provide them opportunity to review and comment on this Temporary Non-Renewable use proposal. If preferred, the final EA and associated Decision of Record (DR/FONSI) will be mailed to Interested Publics listed on the following June 17, 2005 Interested Public mailing list for rangeland management related actions.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Dirk Agee
Mr. Steven J. Carter, Carter Griffin Inc., Carter Cattle Company
Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife - Ed Wagner, Director
Crawford Farms, Eldon Crawford
Western Watersheds Project - Katie Fite
Nevada Division of Wildlife, Mr. Steve Foree
Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Nevada Division of Wildlife , Brad Hardenbrook
Michael Kuyper
ENLC, Betsy Macfarlan
Nevada State Clearinghouse
PLUAC, Virginia Lani
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southern Nevada Field Office
Jule Wadsworth

Internal District Review

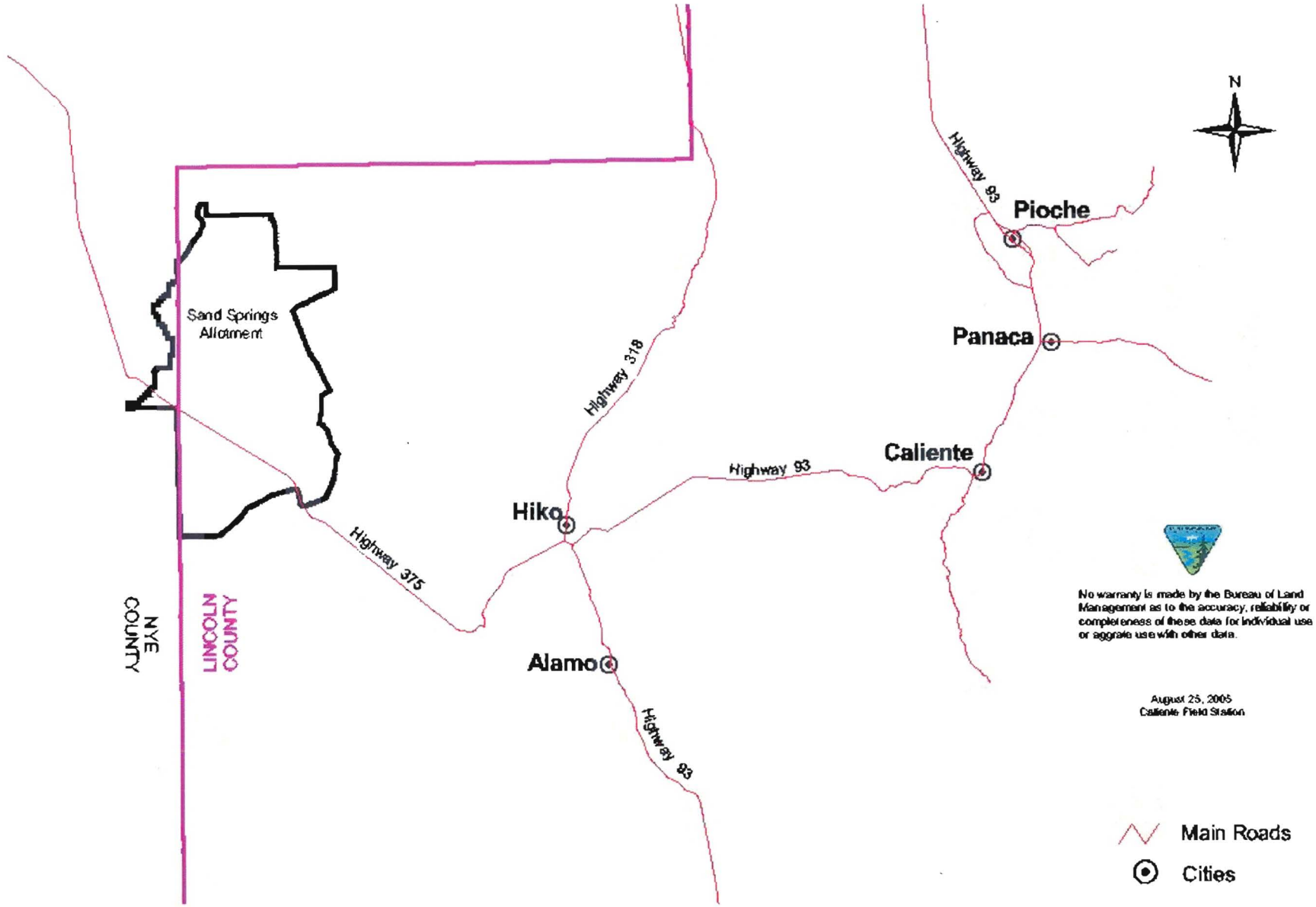
Chris Mayer	Rangeland Resources
Gary Medlyn	Special Projects Manager – Soil, Water and Air
Nathan Thomas	Archaeology
Jared Bybee	Wild Horses
Carolyn Sherve-Bybee	NEPA Coordinator and Cultural Resources
William Smith	Wildlife/T & E Species/Riparian/Migratory Birds
Elvis Wall	Native American Religious Concerns
Mark Lowry	Noxious Weeds
Steve Leslie	Wilderness Values, VRM, Recreation
Matt Wilkin	Hazardous Wastes

APPENDIX I

Maps

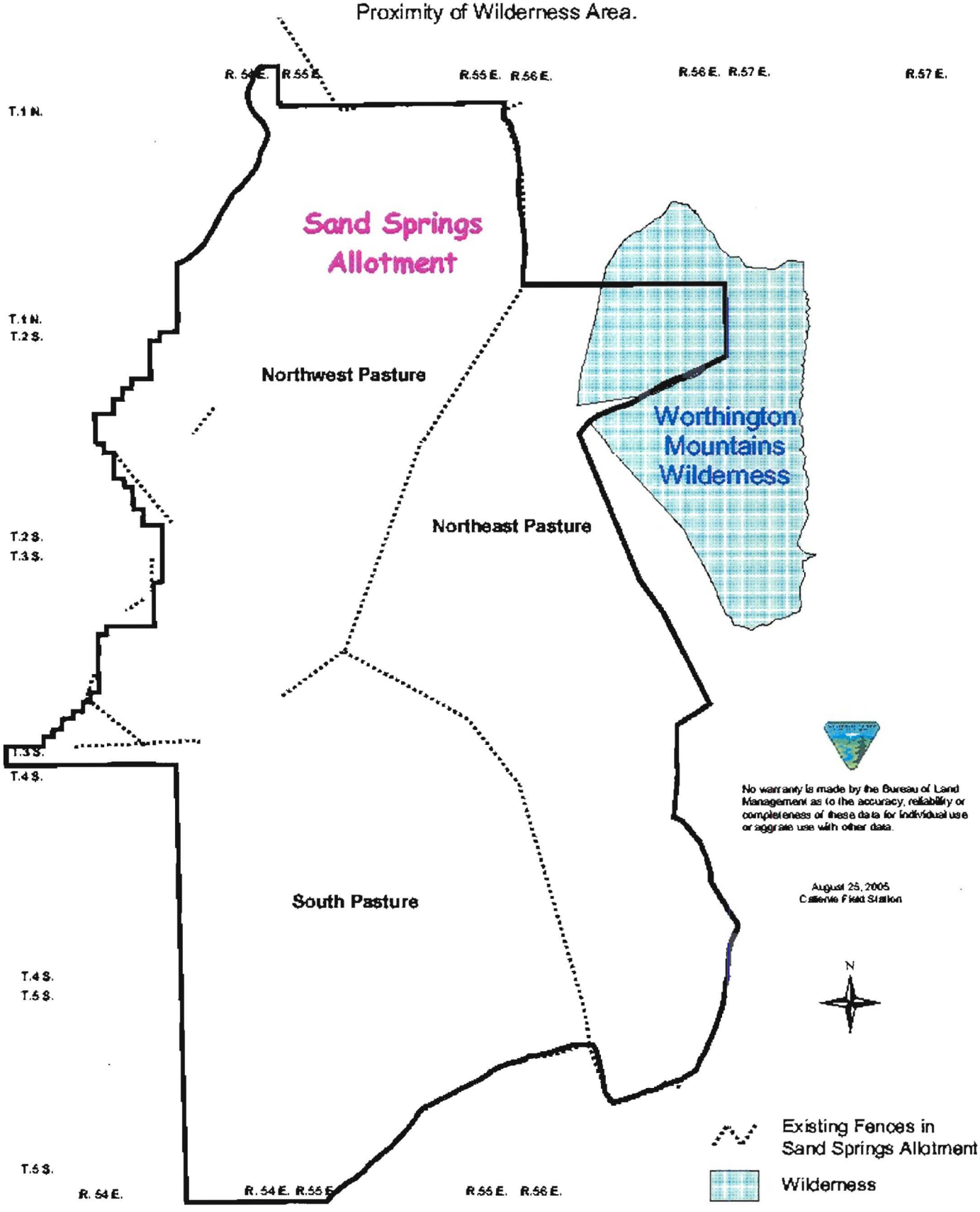
Location of Sand Springs Allotment within Lincoln and Nye Counties
with
Respect to Surrounding Towns

MAP #1



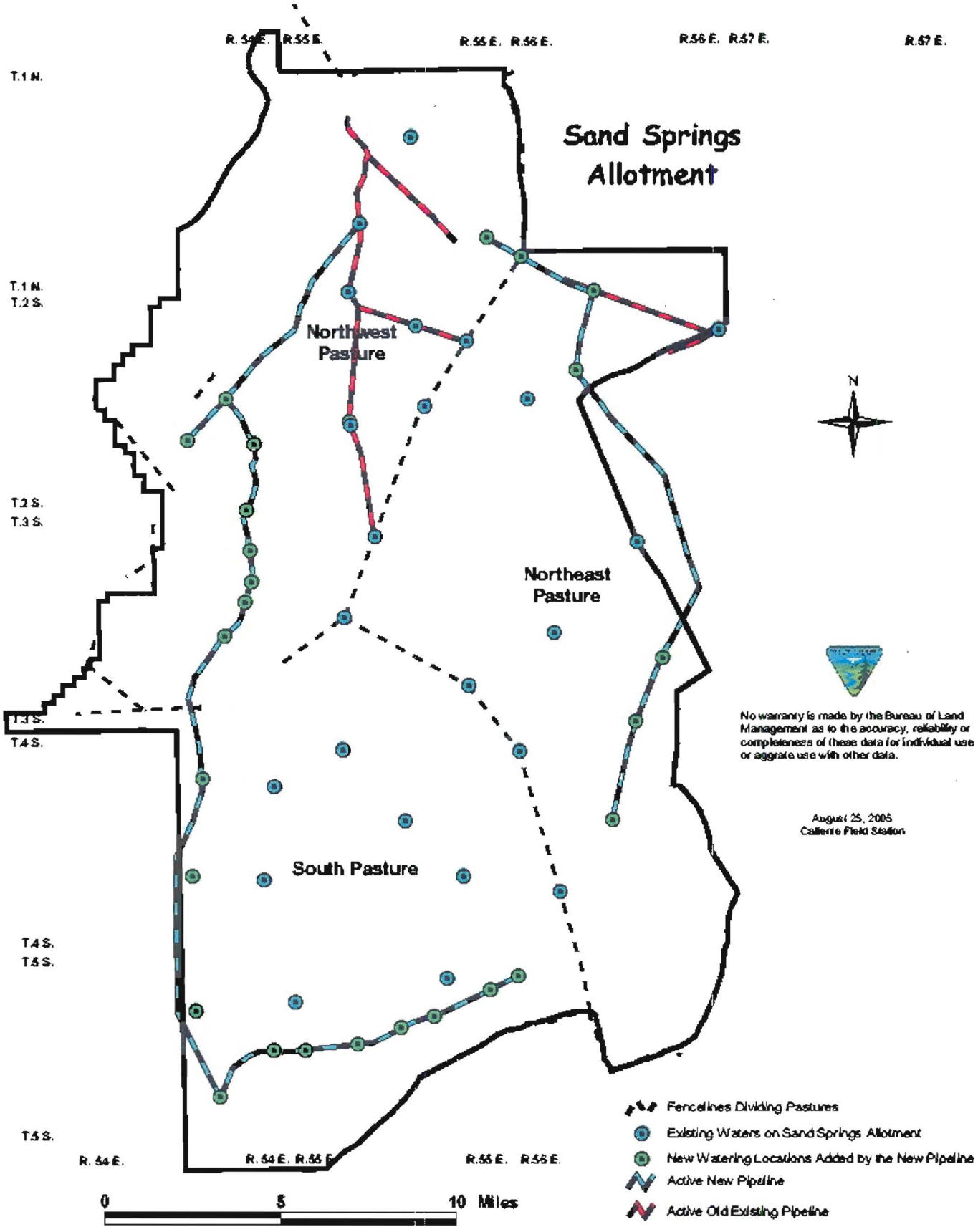
Sand Springs Allotment Showing Pastures
and
Proximity of Wilderness Area.

MAP #2



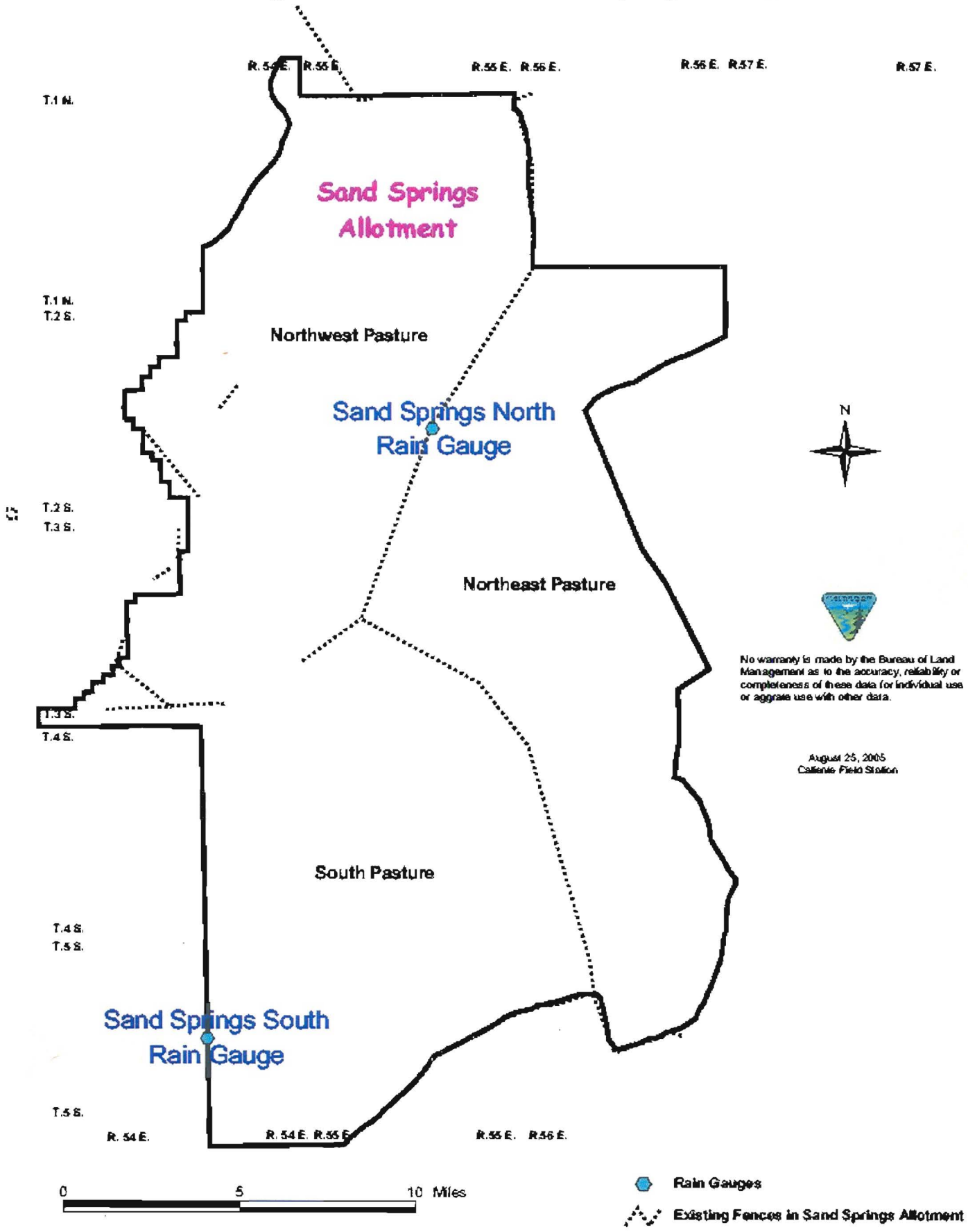
Active Waters Along New Pipeline to be Used in Conjunction with Existing Waters for TNR During January and February 2006

MAP #3



Rain Gauge Locations within the Sand Springs Allotment

MAP #4

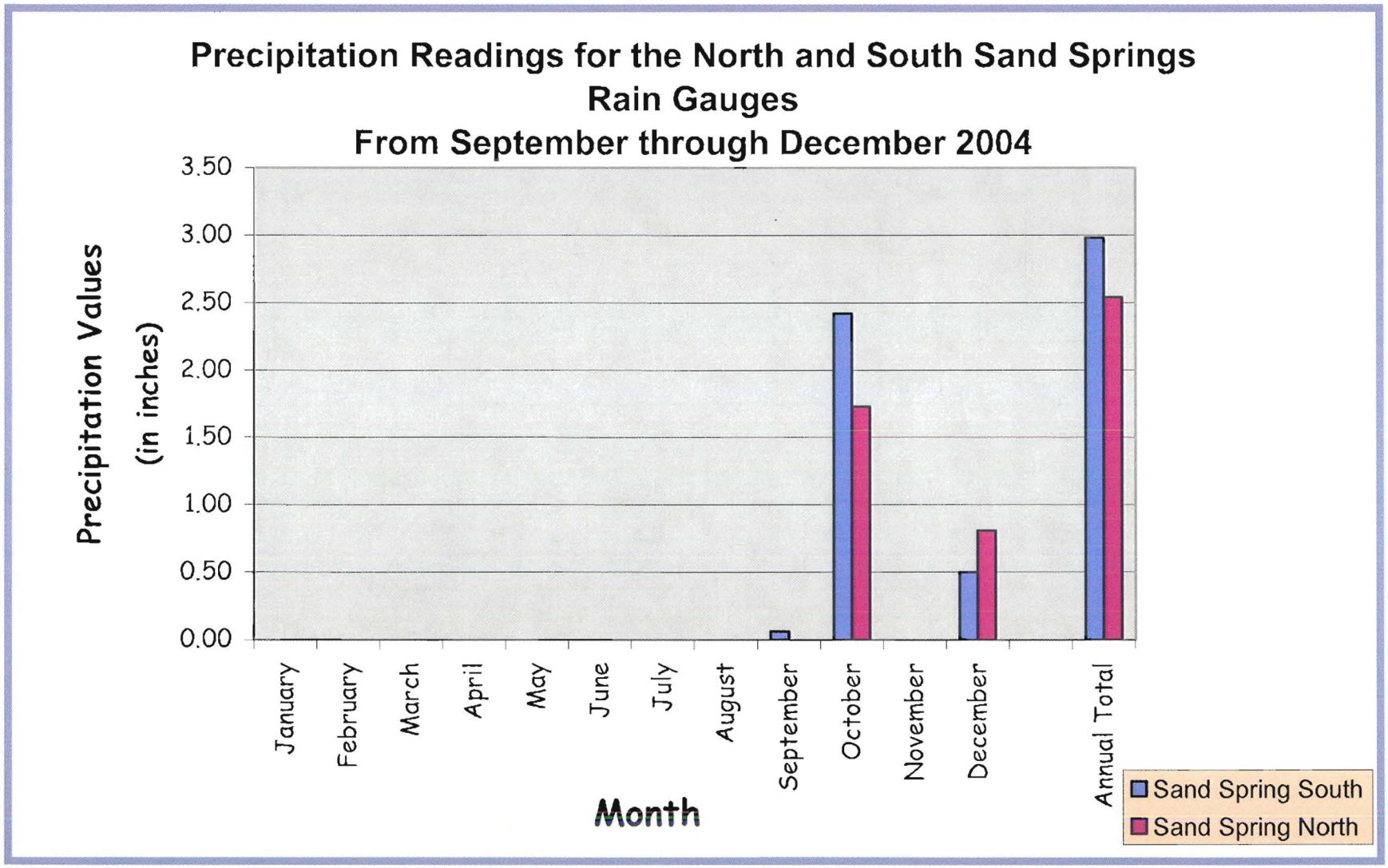


No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual use or aggrate use with other data.

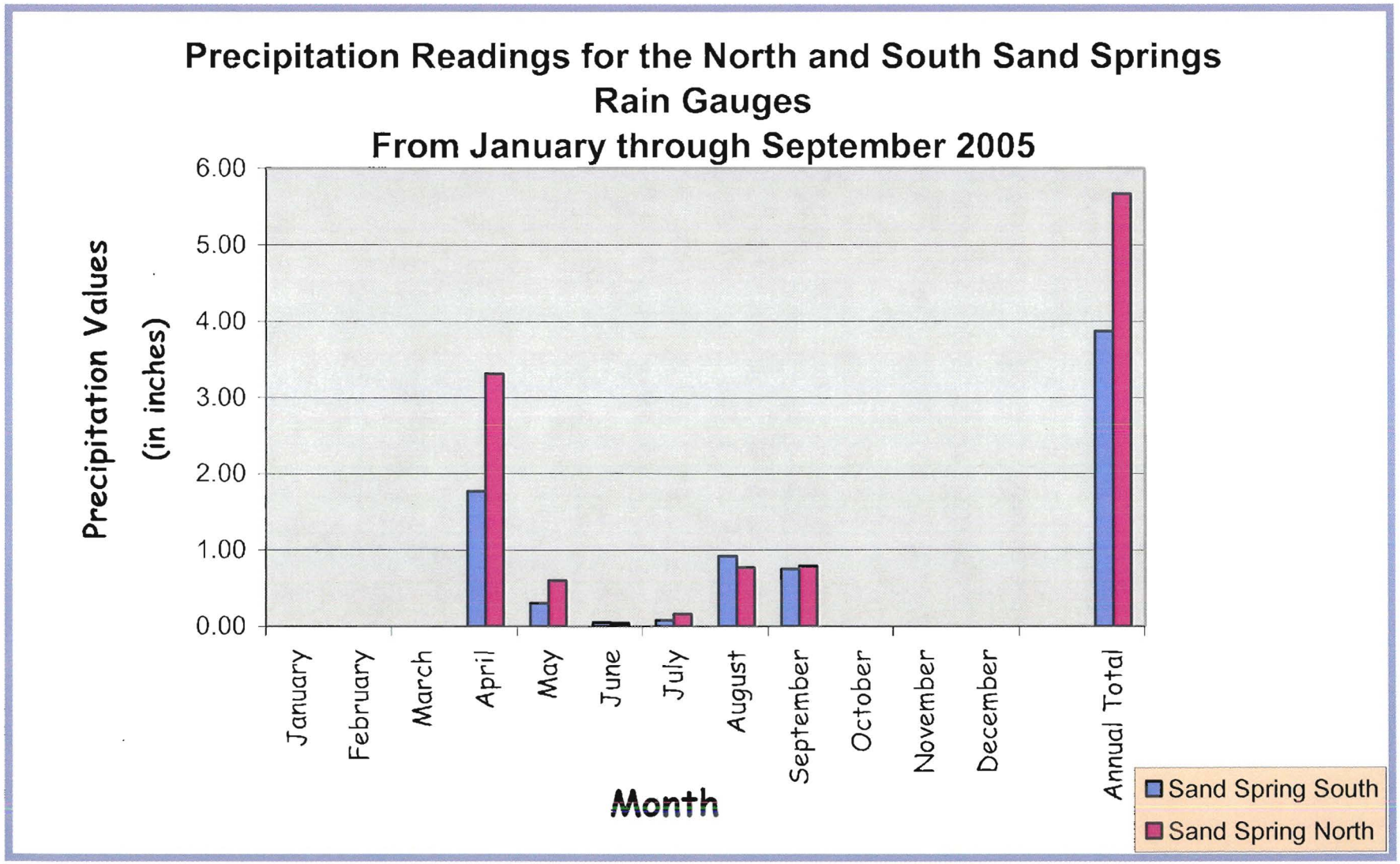
August 25, 2005
Caliente Field Station

APPENDIX II

Precipitation Graphs



NOTE: Months showing precipitation amounts are a result of the accumulation of precipitation from the last amount recorded (e.g., the amount of precipitation indicated for April is the accumulation of precipitation for March and April). This is because the rain gauge was not read during the months where a precipitation amount isn't shown due to inaccessibility resulting from poor road conditions.



NOTE: Months showing precipitation amounts are a result of the accumulation of precipitation from the last amount recorded (e.g., the amount of precipitation indicated for April is the accumulation of precipitation for January, February and March). This is because the rain gauge was not read during the months where a precipitation amount isn't shown due to inaccessibility resulting from poor road conditions.

APPENDIX III

Photographs and Measurements of
Forage Plants at Key Areas
Observed on August 18, 2005

(An asterisk (*) next to a species name indicates that it's a key species at that key area)

Key Area: Southeastern Well

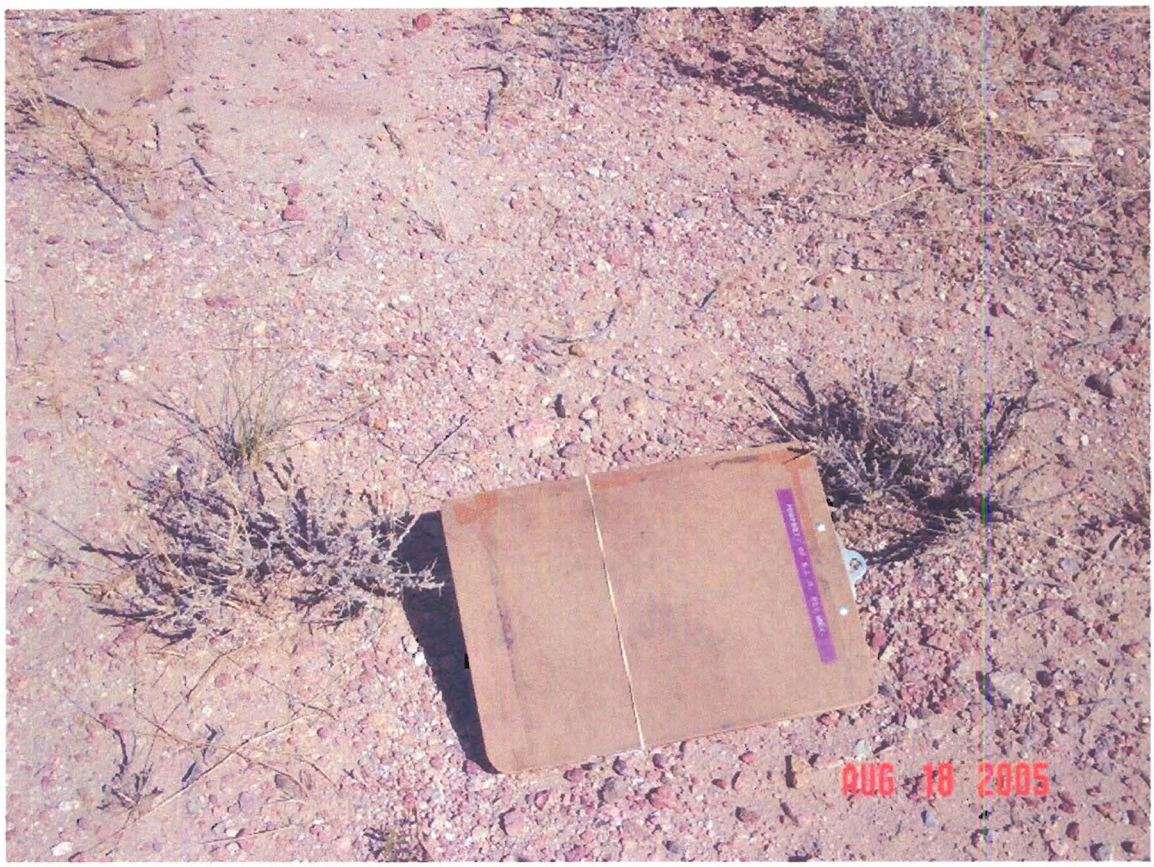
Note: The clipboard used for scale in any of the following photos = 9" X 12"

Panoramic showing *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 8-14" leader growth.

*Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 8-12" leader growth.

*Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 8-13" leader growth.

4-Wing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) with approximately 3-4" leader growth.



*Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) with 2-4" leaf lengths and dormant Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*).

Key Area: Hotwater Well

Panoramic showing *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 8-14" leaders.

4-Wing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) with 5-9" leader lengths and *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) with 6-8" leaf lengths.

View showing *Needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*) with 5" leaf lengths and *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) with 6-8" leaf lengths.

View showing *Needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*) with 6-8" leaf lengths

*Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 9-14" leaders.

Key Area: Honest John #1

Panoramic showing Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 7-10" leaders, *Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*) entering dormancy, Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6" leaf lengths) and *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (approximately 3-4" leaders).

Showing *Galleta with 2-3" leaf lengths and Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*) in dormancy.

Showing Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 7-10" leaders, Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) with 6" leaf length and *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) with approximately 3-4" leader growth

Panoramic showing Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) with 7-10" leaders, *Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*) entering dormancy, Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6" leaf lengths) and *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (approximately 3-4" leaders).

Key Area: Honest John #2

*Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (7-11" leaders), *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-8" leaf lengths) and Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*) in dormancy.

*Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (7-11" leaders), *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-8" leaf lengths) and Bud Sagebrush (*Artemisia spinescens*) in dormancy.

Showing 4-Wing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) with 3-4" leader growth

Key Area: Quinn

Showing *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) with approximately 6" leaf lengths, *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (9-13" leaders), *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders).

Key Area: Smith Well

Showing *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (5-6" leaf lengths), *4-Wing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) (6" leaders) and Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (7-13" leaders).

Key Area: Wildhorse Spring

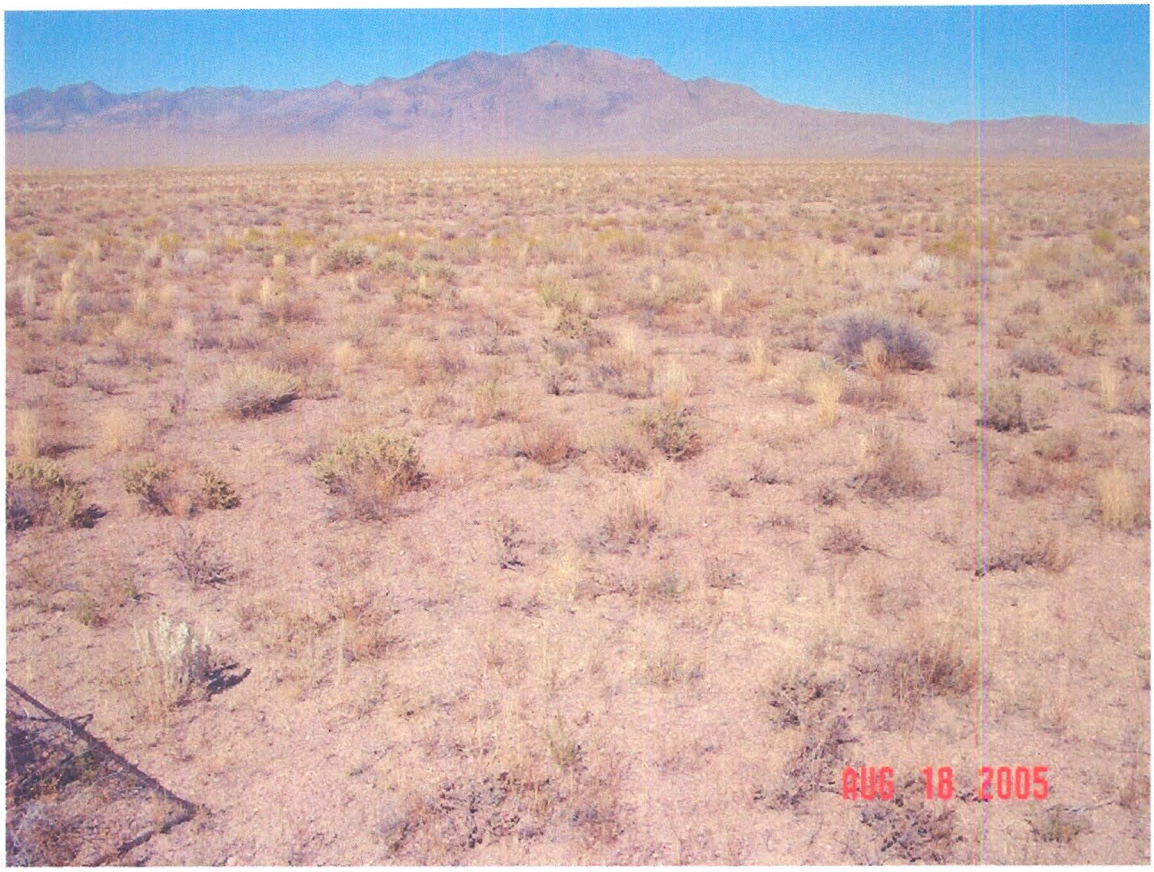
Showing *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (8-12" leaders).

Showing *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (8-12" leaders) and *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-7" leaf lengths).

Key Area: Apple Reservoir

Showing *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-10" leaf lengths) and *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders).

Showing *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders).



Panoramic showing *Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-10" leaf lengths), Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders), and *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (8-12" leaders)

*Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-10" leaf lengths), *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders) and *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (8-12" leaders).

*Indian Ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) (6-10" leaf lengths), *Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) (3-4" leaders) and *Winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) (8-12" leaders).

APPENDIX IV

Noxious Weed Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment For Noxious Weeds
Temporary Non Renewable Grazing Use
Environmental Assessment (EA) No.: NV045-05-021

On May 13, 2005 the Tempiute Grazing Association applied for temporary non-renewable grazing use (TNR) on the Sand Springs Allotment (#01066). The application is to graze 1600 head of cattle from approximately 1/25/06 to 2/28/06, for a total of approximately 1,842 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). Current permitted season of use is 3/1 – 2/28.

On August 18, 2005, a Noxious Weed Risk Assessment was completed for Temporary Non-Renewable Grazing (TNR) on the allotment. The allotment is located in west-central Lincoln County, Nevada, on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management Caliente Field Station.

The allotment is located within the following legal location: Townships 1 North through 4 South; Ranges 53 through 57 East, Mount Diablo Base Meridian. The allotment encompasses approximately 249,685 acres, however, the livestock would realistically graze approximately 190,000 acres.

Major range sites found within the allotment are as follows:
029XY017NV 029XY012NV 029XY046NV 029XY020NV

The dominant vegetation on these sites includes winterfat, Indian ricegrass, fourwing saltbush, galleta grass, shadscale, and sand dropseed.

The Ely Field Office noxious weed inventory shows very small areas (100 square foot areas) of the noxious species salt cedar (tamarisk - *Tamarix ramosissima*) present on three areas of public land and one area of private land. Tamarisk is present south of Mud Spring about ½ mile, north of Rose Spring about 1 mile, and east of the old lakebed in the southeast portion of the allotment. Tamarisk is also present on private ground in the Sand Springs Valley bottom in the south-central part of the allotment. In addition to consulting the existing weed inventory, BLM specialists familiar with the allotment were asked about their awareness of weeds in this area. In addition, a general field reconnaissance was completed on the aforementioned date while touring the allotment and looking at existing forage. No additional noxious weeds were found and none are known to be present within the allotment.

However, halogeton (Halogeton glomeratus), an invasive plant that is not listed as noxious, does occur on the allotment, growing mostly along and near county roads and two track roads. Halogeton was introduced as a soil stabilizer along the roads by the State of Nevada Highway Department sometime during the mid 1900s. In addition, cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum) also exists in sparse amounts that are widely scattered in the allotment. Of the two aforementioned species, halogeton is the most prominent and widespread.

The Noxious Weed Risk Assessment consists of two factors; each factor is assessed and given a score. The scores are multiplied together to obtain a Risk Rating.

Factor 1 assesses the likelihood of noxious weed species spreading to the project area.

For this project, the factor rates as moderate (4) at the present time. No noxious weeds were found in the grazing area during the allotment inspection of August 18, 2005. Halogeton and cheatgrass are present in or near the project grazing area. Project activity is not likely to result in the establishment of tamarisk or other noxious weed species in the project area, however, project activity could result in the spread and establishment of halogeton or cheatgrass.

For this project, the factor rates as moderate (4) at the present time. The likelihood that noxious weeds will become established in the native plant community is very limited. There are no expected cumulative effects to native plant communities. Minor adverse effects of noxious weeds becoming established are possible. Some expansion of halogeton and/or cheatgrass is possible.

The Risk Rating is obtained by multiplying Factor 1 by Factor 2.

For this project, the Risk Rating is moderate (16) at the present time. Preventive management measures for noxious weeds should be developed. These measures (mitigation) are as follows:

1. The project proponent (grazing permittee) will watch for, report, and eradicate any small noxious weed patches in their allotment area.
2. Noxious weeds would be treated by methods to be approved by the Authorized Officer.
3. The grazing will be conducted in compliance with the Ely District BLM noxious weed schedules. The scheduled procedures can significantly and effectively reduce noxious weed spread or introduction into the project area.
4. The range specialist for the Sand Springs Grazing Allotment will include weed detection into project compliance inspection activities.
5. The grazing project area will be monitored for at least three consecutive years following the conclusion of winter grazing.

The project can proceed as planned. Control treatments would be initiated on noxious weed populations that establish in the project area.

Reviewed by: Mark Lourie — Noxious Weed Coordinator

10/28/05 — Date