



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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



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Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed for your information is the Management Action Selection Report for the Warm Springs 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 for 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,

acting for
Gene L. Drais, Manager
Egan Resource Area

1 Enclosure

1. Warm Springs (11 pp)

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT
WARM SPRINGS ALLOTMENT
EGAN RESOURCE AREA
Dan Russell, Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The Warm Springs Allotment evaluation was conducted in accordance with the direction set forth in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 86-706 and is based on monitoring data collected in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991.

Comment letters were received from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wild Horse Organized Assistance, the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses and Nevada Department of Wildlife Resources (NDOW). Copies of the comment letters that specifically address this allotment can be found in the Warm Springs Allotment Evaluation file located in the Ely District Office. All allotment specific comments were considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. From the comments received, it was evident that concern exists on how available forage is divided among users. As stated in the Egan Rangeland Program Summary (RPS),

"The following large herbivore levels will be used in the analysis of monitoring data.

- a. Livestock- Actual use as reported by permittees, documented by licenses, and/or use supervision.
- b. Wildlife- Current population estimates of big game as determined by the Nevada Department of Wildlife.
- c. Wild Horses- Current population estimates of wild horse numbers as determined by the most recent BLM aerial census."

Through the evaluation process, actual use by livestock and the most recent census for the evaluation period for wild horses is used in the stocking rate calculations in order to determine the proper stocking level of all users. Using the stocking rate formula described in the evaluation, a proper stocking level is determined for each use area. In use areas where livestock and wild horses graze in common, the evaluation states in part, "...the stocking level will be proportioned to cattle and wild horses based on preference demand for livestock and existing use by wild horses."

It is established policy that livestock reductions are made from preference and wild horse reductions are made from the most recent census for the evaluation period.

There was also concern about AUMs for deer and antelope. The numbers quoted in the comment letter are only objectives from the Land Use Plan and are not intended, at this time to represent AUMs over and above what the stocking rate calculations have determined are available on the allotment. Most of the deer and antelope forage within the allotment is not available to livestock and wild horses due to topography and water availability, therefore, it does not overlap significantly with wild horse and livestock use areas.

An additional comment from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, questioned the use of Ely precipitation data instead of Ruby Valley precipitation data for stocking rate calculations. Ely precipitation data was used in the evaluation because it was more complete, which allowed a larger statistical sample to calculate the yield index.

B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on the identified issues of the evaluation, 18 of the 21 land use plan objectives are not being met with current management practices. Therefore, additional management actions and/or adjustments in use are necessary. The current problem on this allotment is overutilization of native perennial grasses and winterfat by wild horses and cattle. Cattle utilization has been severe on crucial mule deer fall/winter ranges of bitterbrush and concentrated use on riparian areas has resulted in overuse and degradation of riparian vegetation in many areas. Although current ecological condition is largely acceptable, continued overuse will result in a decline in vegetative vigor and ultimately lowered condition.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Only one management option can reasonably be considered. It is outlined in the following section. No comments from the public, including the permittee presented alternatives that were consistent with the data and BLM policy. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented one option during scoping which recommended using Long Valley and Ruby Valley as strictly spring, summer and fall use areas based on the fact that major livestock losses had occurred in these areas over the past two winters. This is not a valid option since winterfat comprises the majority of the forage in these areas and winterfat is considered a winter forage species due to its physiology. Even moderate spring and summer use would be detrimental to winterfat communities and prevent management objectives from being met.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is outlined as follows:

a. Buck and Bald Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 2269 AUMs for cattle and 883 AUMs for wild horses. The 883 AUMs for wild horses includes allocation for 76 horses summer use (7 months) and 29 horses for yearlong use (12 months). Livestock use would be limited to spring/summer with a season of use from 4/1 - 8/1. No salt or supplements will be allowed within 1/2 mile of water sources.

b. Newark Valley Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 357 AUMs for cattle and 317 AUMs for wild horses. The 317 AUMs for wild horses includes allocation for 14 horses moving down from West Buck to winter in the valley (5 months) and yearlong use for 21 animals. Livestock use will be limited to fall/winter, with a season of use extending from 8/1 - 4/15. Adherence to the spring removal of livestock from this area will be strictly enforced.

c. Diamond Mountain Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 264 AUMs for cattle use only, since the Diamond Mountain Use Area is not within a wild horse herd area. Livestock use will be limited to spring/summer/fall, with a season of use extending from 4/15 - 10/15. Due to poor forage production and rabbitbrush invasion, livestock use will not be made until a wild horse removal is completed. Salt will not be allowed within 1/2 mile of water.

d. Ruby Valley Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 840 AUMs for cattle use only. Livestock use will be either spring/summer/fall (4/15 to 10/15) or winter (10/15 to 4/15) but not both in the same growing season. No AUMs will be allocated for wild horses since wild horses do not utilize this use area even though it is within the Buck and Bald HMA.

e. Long Valley Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 3088 AUMs for cattle and 382 AUMs for wild horses. The AML for wild horses for that portion of the Buck and Bald HMA within the Warm Springs Allotment using the Long Valley winter range will be 76 animals for five months. Livestock use will be limited to the winter use period (10/15 to 4/15). Adherence to the

spring removal of livestock from this area will be strictly enforced. All wells will receive normal yearly maintenance and will be pumped on a regular basis throughout the winter to maintain animal distribution. Cattle moved into the valley will be split up and driven to various water sources rather than pushed over Buck Pass and allowed to drift. Salt and supplements will not be allowed within 1/2 mile of stock waters or in winterfat vegetation.

f. Long Valley Wash Use Area

The stocking rate will be set at 378 AUMs for cattle and 150 AUMs for wild horses. The AML for wild horses for that portion of the Buck and Bald HMA within the Warm Springs allotment using the Long Valley Wash winter range will be 30 animals for five months. Livestock use will be limited to the winter use period (10/15 to 4/15), and will be contingent on the availability of adequate stockwater. Adherence to the spring removal of livestock will be strictly enforced.

g. Julian and West Bald Seedings

The stocking rate for cattle will be set at 227 AUMs and 321 AUMs respectively for the two seedings. This is considered an initial stocking rate to be modified as use is made and specific actual use collected. These seedings will be used and licensed separately for spring/summer/fall (4/15 to 10/31) cattle use. If spring use is made prior to 6/1 it will be alternated between the seedings from year to year.

h. General (all pastures)

Total active preference for livestock on the Warm Springs Allotment for Dan Russell would be 7744 AUMs licensed separately for the seven use areas as outlined in previous sections. This would be a 68% reduction from current preference which is 23,995 AUMs. The wild horse AML would be set at 1732 AUMs, this would be a 72% reduction of wild horse AUMs based on the 1991 census and seasonal movements of wild horses within the allotment. Active preference and wild horse AUMs for each of the use areas are summarized as follows:

<u>Use Area</u>	<u>Cattle AUMs</u>	<u>Horse AUMs</u>
Buck & Bald	2269	883
Newark Valley	357	317
Diamond Mountain	264	0
Ruby Valley	840	0
Long Valley	3088	382
Long V. Wash	378	150
Seedings	548	0
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Total	7744	1732

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

Changes in livestock preference will be phased in over five years, in roughly equal increments as follows, with AUMs removed from active use to be held in suspension:

Cattle Preference:

<u>Use Area</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 5</u>
Buck & Bald	7212	4778	2269
Newark Valley	938	652	357
Diamond Mountain	264	264	264
Ruby Valley	840	840	840
Long Valley	8263	5715	3088
Long Valley Wash	935	660	378
Seedings	<u>548</u>	<u>548</u>	<u>548</u>
	19,000	13,457	7744

Wild horse AMLs for the Warm Springs Allotment are summarized as follows:

<u>Use Area</u>	<u>Herd Mgmt. Area</u>	<u># Animals</u>	<u>AUMs</u>
Buck & Bald	Buck & Bald	105	883
Newark Valley	Buck & Bald	35	317
Long Valley	Buck & Bald	76	382
Long Valley Wash	Buck & Bald	<u>30</u>	<u>150</u>
		246	1732

Rationale:

The desired stocking level on the seedings were based on 60% desired utilization, with spring/summer/fall cattle use. Stocking rates for native pastures use 50% utilization on perennial grasses and winterfat as allowable use on areas classified as "Maintain" (Newark Valley, Diamond Mountain, Ruby Valley Use Area and Long Valley Wash Use area) and 35% utilization on areas classified as "Improve" (Buck & Bald, Long Valley). These calculations result from actual use and measured utilization data, and indicate that

reductions on the Buck & Bald, Long Valley, Newark Valley, Long Valley Wash, Diamond Mountain, and Ruby Valley use areas are necessary to meet the desired utilization.

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 year following the decision. These re-evaluations are necessary to determine if the allotment objectives are being met under the grazing management strategies. In addition, these subsequent evaluations will determine if continued or additional adjustments are needed to meet allotment objectives.

Appendix I Land Use Plan/Rangeland Program Summary Objectives

1. Land Use Plan (RMP) Objectives

(a) Rangeland Management - All vegetation will be managed for those successional stages which would best meet the objective of this proposed plan. (Egan Resource Area Record of Decision, p. 3)

(b) Wild Horses - Wild horses will be managed at a total of 700 animals within the Buck and Bald HMA (Egan ROD, p. 6)*

- Future adjustments in wild horse numbers will be based on data provided through the rangeland monitoring program. (Egan ROD, p. 8)

* - The 700 horses yearlong identified in the ROD is no longer a valid AML. The Interior Board of Land Appeals June 7, 1989 decision (IBLA 88-591, 88-638, 88-648, 88-679) ruled in part: "an AML established purely for administrative reasons because it was the level of wild horse use at a particular point in time cannot be justified under the statute." The IBLA further ruled that AML must be established through monitoring "in terms of the optimum number which results in a thriving natural ecological balance and avoids deterioration of the range."

(c) Wildlife - Habitat will be managed for "reasonable numbers" of wildlife species as determined by NDOW. (Egan ROD, p. 6)

- Forage will be provided for "reasonable numbers" of big game as determined by NDOW (Egan ROD, p. 8)

(d) Watershed - Establish utilization limits to maintain watershed cover, plant vigor and soil fertility in consideration of plant phenology, physiology, terrain, water availability, wildlife needs, grazing system and aesthetic values. (Egan ROD, p. 44)

2. Rangeland Program Summary Objectives

(a) Provide for up to 10261 AUMs of livestock use.

(b) Maintain Julian and Bald Mtn. Seedings in good or better condition.

(c) Improve the condition of winterfat/nuttal saltbush dominated vegetation types on the Long Valley winter range.

- (d) Maintain or improve ecological condition of native range with utilization levels not to exceed Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook (NRMH) recommended allowable use levels. Allowable use levels for winterfat and perennial grass species are 50%.
- (e) Improve mule deer yearlong habitat to good or better condition by not exceeding utilization levels on native species as recommended in the NRMH. Manage rangeland habitat and forage condition to support 10159 AUMs for mule deer.
- (f) Manage rangeland habitat and forage condition to support 125 AUMs for pronghorn antelope, with potential augmentation/reintroduction.
- (g) Improve and maintain habitat condition of meadows and riparian areas from poor to good or better condition for mule deer and upland game. Utilization levels will not exceed 55% on perennial grasses and 45% on shrubs along stream riparian areas and mesic meadows.
- (h) Limit utilization of browse species in crucial deer winter range to a maximum of 45% of current annual growth.
- (i) Protect sage grouse breeding complexes by maintaining the big sagebrush sites within two miles of active strutting grounds for mid to late seral stage with a minimum of 30% shrub composition by weight.
- (j) Protect ferruginous hawk nest sites by limiting utilization to 50% on winterfat flats within two miles of nest sites.
- (k) Improve three miles of stream riparian habitat condition from poor/fair to good or better. (Deadman and Old Deadman Creeks)
- (l) Manage rangeland habitat to support wild horses as part of the Buck and Bald HMA by not exceeding allowable use levels on native species as recommended in the NRMH. Initially, provide for 280 horses in the Buck and Bald HMA (3359 AUMs). *

* - The number of horses yearlong identified in the RPS is no longer a valid AML. The Interior Board of Land Appeals June 7, 1989 decision (IBLA 88-591, 88-638, 88-648, 88-679) ruled in part: "an AML established purely for administrative reasons because it was the level of wild horse use at a particular point in time cannot be justified under the statute. The IBLA further ruled that AML must be established through monitoring "in terms of the optimum number which results in a thriving natural

ecological balance and avoids deterioration of the range."

3. Buck, Bald, Maverick, and Diamond Mountains Habitat Management Plan (HMP) - specific objectives which apply to Warm Springs and paraphrased from the HMP.

- (a) Limit utilization of bitterbrush and other browse species to 25% of current year's growth by September 30, to ensure adequate forage availability for wintering mule deer at the following key locations:

Overland Pass	T 25 N, R 57 E
Big Bald Mtn West	T 24 N, R 57 E
Water Canyon/Bald Mtn.	T 24 N, R 57 E
Mahoney Canyon	T 24 N, R 58 E
Cherry Springs	T 24 N, R 58 E
Mooney Basin	T 23 N, R 58 E
Buck Pass	T 22 N, R 57 E
Orchard Canyon	T 22 N, R 56 E
Little Willow Springs	T 21 N, R 57 E
Willow Springs	T 21 N, R 57 E

- (b) Limit utilization levels to 55% of current annual growth on perennial grasses and grasslike species along stream riparian areas and mesic meadows by November 1 at the following key locations:

Cottonwood Cyn/Buck Mtn.	T 22 N, R 57 E, sec.30
Handy Spring	T 22 N, R 55 E, sec. 9
Water Canyon/Bald Mtn.	T 24 N, R 57 E, sec.20
Mud Spring	T 22 N, R 57 E, sec.32
Orchard Canyon	T 22 N, R 56 E, sec.36
Little Willow Spring	T 21 N, R 56 E, sec. 6
Old Deadman Creek	T 21 N, R 56 E, sec. 9
Deadman Creek	T 21 N, R 56 E, sec.16

- (c) Limit utilization to 45% of current year's growth on riparian shrub species and to 25% on riparian tree species by November 1 at the following locations:

Cottonwood Cyn/Buck Mtn.	T 22 N, R 57 E, sec.30
Orchard Canyon	T 22 N, R 56 E, sec.36
West Buck Mtn.	T 21 N, R 56 E, sec.27

- (d) On Deadman Creek (rated poor in 1989) limit utilization on streamside vegetation to 20%.

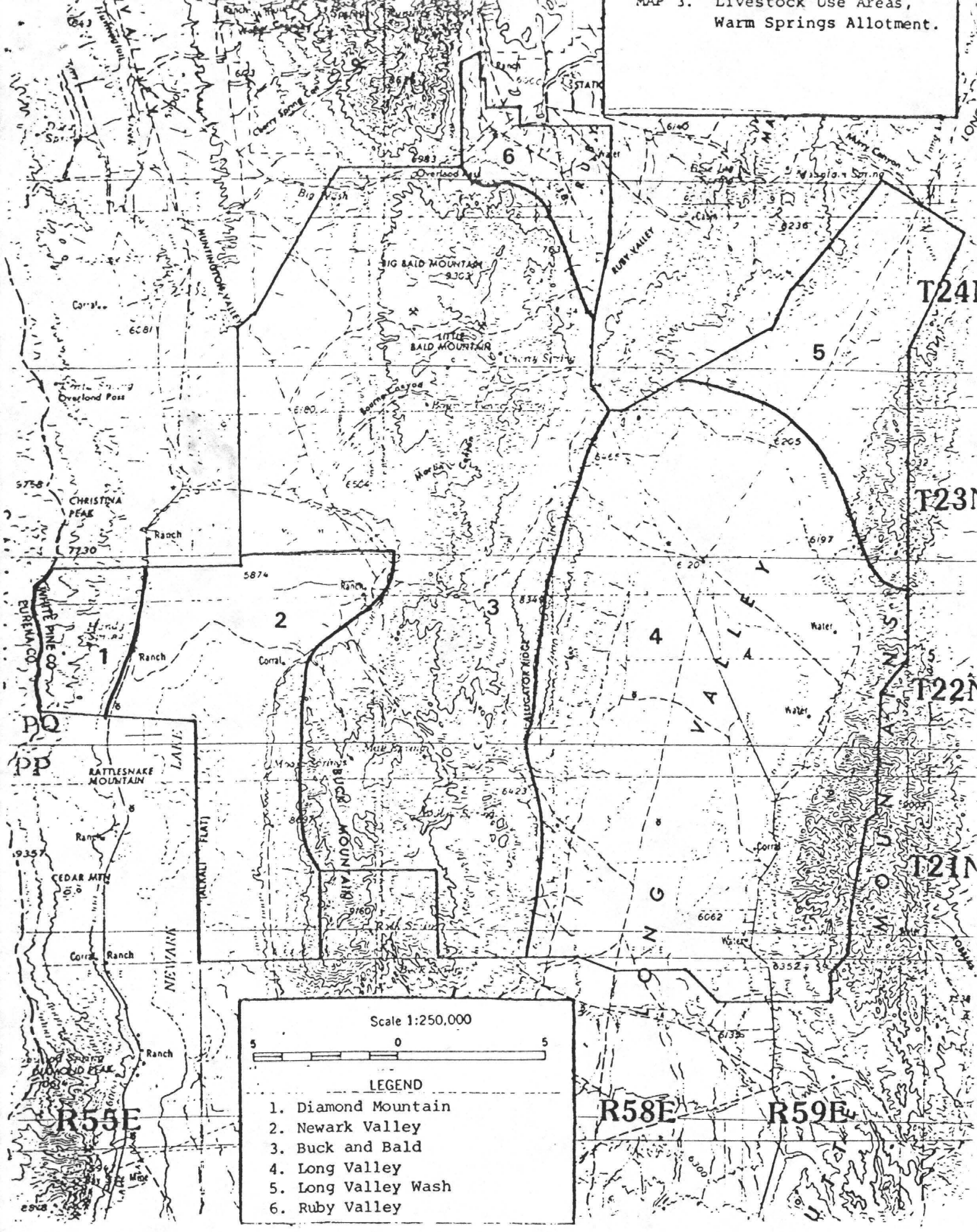
- (e) Limit utilization of winterfat to 55% at the following locations to protect ferruginous hawk prey-base habitat:

McBride's Sheep Well	T 21 N, R 58 E, sec.25
Shallow Well	T 21 N, R 57 E, sec. 8

(f) Manage the following key sage grouse areas for late mid seral stages with at least 25% sagebrush cover.

Mouth of Bourne Canyon
Long Valley Slough

T 23 N, R 56 E, sec.10
T 23 N, R 58 E, sec.26



Scale 1:250,000

LEGEND

1. Diamond Mountain
2. Newark Valley
3. Buck and Bald
4. Long Valley
5. Long Valley Wash
6. Ruby Valley