



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ELY DISTRICT OFFICE  
Star Route 5, Box 1  
Ely, Nevada, 89301



IN REPLY REFER TO:

4400 (NV-046)

APR 24 1990

Dear Participant:

Enclosed for your information is the Management Action Selection Report for the Chin Creek Allotment. This report was suppose to be included with the proposed multiple-use decision when it was mailed to you; however, it was inadvertently left out.

The Management Action Selection Report is the final section of the allotment evaluation, and completes the monitoring evaluation process. It 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.

The Management Action Selection Report is provided for your information only. The proposed multiple-use decision that was previously issued actually initiates the selected management actions on the ground, and specifies the procedures for protest and appeal.

Sincerely,

Gerald M. Smith, Manager  
Schell Resource Area

1 Enclosure

1. Management Action Selection Report (8 pp)

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT

CHIN CREEK ALLOTMENT

SCHELL RESOURCE AREA

REED B. ROBISON, PERMITTEE

A. INTRODUCTION

The Chin Creek Allotment evaluation was conducted in accordance with the direction set forth in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 86-706, and based on data collected between 1980 and 1988.

A considerable amount of public comment was received pertaining to the allotment evaluations conducted in the Schell Resource Area. Copies of the comment letters pertaining specifically to this allotment can be found in Section VII of the allotment evaluation summary, located in the Ely District files. All allotment-specific comments were carefully considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. Errors and inconsistencies between text and tables were corrected. Several concerns were common to more than one allotment and often more than one individual. Some of the primary concerns are addressed as follows:

Numerous comments were received concerning the use of the Sneva and Hyder Crop Yield Index. The yield index is not used to "correct" utilization levels as suggested. The determination of whether or not allowable use levels were exceeded is based on actual utilization measured. The index is used to account for the affect of yearly climate variations on the calculation of appropriate stocking levels for all users. Since it is not feasible to adjust numbers of all grazing animals (livestock, wildlife, and wild horses) on a yearly basis to respond to annual fluctuations in precipitation, an average carrying capacity is determined based on a "normal" year. The affects of precipitation on carrying capacity must be considered. After review of existing research on this subject, the Schell Resource Area chose the Sneva and Hyder 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.

Some concern was expressed over short term allowable use level objectives. The allowable use levels recommended in the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook were used in conjunction with existing research as guidelines to establish acceptable use levels. The use levels from the handbook were considered appropriate on most native ranges to maintain the present plant

community under yearlong or fall/winter use. However, the literature suggests that more conservative utilization levels are necessary during critical spring growth, on sensitive areas, or to improve condition within acceptable timeframes on certain plant communities. The information also suggests that higher utilization levels are appropriate for seeded ranges and for native ranges under an intensive management system. Allowable use levels were developed for key species within individual use areas in each allotment taking into consideration these guidelines, monitoring observations, and site-specific factors.

Several comments suggested that the Draft Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Habitat Evaluation Procedures be used in the allotment evaluations to establish objectives. These are draft procedures which have not yet been approved and are still being tested to determine if the procedures should be established in a final form and used statewide. Until such time as it is appropriate to incorporate these procedures, wild horse forage objectives are being based on ecological status (seral stages). Specific herd objectives for wild horses will be developed during preparation of Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plans.

There were several comments pertaining to the continued use of Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for wild horses. All evaluations have been revised to clearly state that the goal for each herd area is to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance between the public land resources and the animals using these resources. Recommended adjustments in the level of wild horse use will be based on analysis of monitoring data.

A few individuals questioned why suitability criteria were not included in the monitoring evaluations. Suitability criteria were developed to be used with "one-point-in-time" vegetative inventories which are not presently being used as the sole data source upon which adjustments are made. However, most of the suitability criteria are inherently applied during the implementation of certain portions of the monitoring program such as use pattern mapping and allotment stratification for key area selection. Areas of no use on a use pattern map usually indicate areas that are unsuitable for use due to steepness of slope, distance from water, or insufficient forage production. Appropriate stocking levels are calculated based on those portions of the allotment which can be effectively utilized by grazing animals.

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

Range, wildlife, and wild horse monitoring files compiled by the Schell Resource Area staff.

Input from Reed B. Robison, Permittee, through a meeting at the Ely District Office on August 30, 1989, telephone conversations dated August 5, 1989 and September 29, 1989, and letters dated August 25, 1989 and September 13, 1989.

Input from the Nevada Department of Wildlife through coordination meetings in 1984, the Antelope Range field tour on August 31, 1988, and letters dated May 26, 1989 and September 14, 1989.

Input from Resource Concepts, Inc., range consultants, through letters dated June 15, 1989, September 7, 1989, September 13, 1989, and September 22, 1989.

Input from the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses through a letter dated September 21, 1989.

Input from the Animal Protection Institute of America through letters dated June 27, 1989 and September 20, 1989.

Input from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service through a letter dated September 25, 1989.

Input from the Nevada Cattlemen's Association through letters dated June 14, 1989 and July 20, 1989.

Input from the Natural Resources Defense Council through a letter dated July 14, 1989.

Input from the Nevada State Grazing Board (N-4) through a letter dated July 4, 1989.

Input from the American Mustang & Burro Association through a letter dated July 12, 1989.

Input from the Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association, Inc. through a letter dated July 7, 1989.

Input from the Wild Horse Organized Assistance through a letter dated June 24, 1989.

Input from the Nevada Department of Agriculture at a meeting at the Ely District Office on January 3, 1990 and a letter dated January 17, 1990.

Input from the University of Nevada Reno at a meeting at the Ely District Office on January 3, 1990 and a letter dated January 18, 1990.

#### B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on the identified issues of the evaluation, eight of the nine land use plan objectives for the allotment are not being met with

the existing management practices. Therefore, changes in management actions and/or adjustments to livestock and/or wild horses are necessary to meet these objectives. Over-utilization of the key species selected for specific use areas on the allotment, poor distribution of livestock and wild horses, downward trend of range sites, and trampling of riparian areas are the primary problems that need to be corrected. In addition, there are conflicts between users over much of the allotment (i.e., livestock, wild horses, antelope, deer, raptors, game birds, etc.).

Several range improvement projects have been implemented during the evaluation period providing control for livestock and supplying additional water sources for all users. Actual use records show a significant amount of voluntary nonuse applied for by the permittee over the past years. Census and observations show a significant increase in wild horse numbers and use areas on the allotment. Livestock and wild horses contribute to the high use levels recorded in Antelope Valley where both livestock and wild horses graze. Wild horses are the major user on the rest of the allotment where few sheep and no cattle have grazed for approximately ten years. Monitoring studies indicate that wildlife use is not presently a problem.

#### C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Option 1 - Adjust livestock and wild horse use. Active livestock preference would be reduced 44 percent from 13,115 AUMs to 7,407 AUMs. Wild Horse use would be reduced 59 percent from the existing 320 head utilizing 3,840 AUMs to 131 head utilizing 1,568 AUMs.

Option 2 - Change the season of use from yearlong use to fall/winter use. Active livestock preference would be reduced 26 percent from 13,115 AUMs to 9,716 AUMs. Wild horse use would be reduced 59 percent from the existing 320 head utilizing 3,840 AUMs to 131 head utilizing 1,568 AUMs.

Option 3 - Implement a deferred grazing system to include the adjacent Antelope Valley Allotment in Elko County of the Elko BLM District to provide rest during the critical spring growing season. Active livestock preference would be reduced 30 percent from 13,115 AUMs to 9,187 AUMs. Wild horse use would be reduced 72 percent from the existing 320 head utilizing 3,840 AUMs to 89 head utilizing 1,063 AUMs.

Option 4 - Implement a rest rotation grazing system to include the adjacent Antelope Valley Allotment in Elko County of the Elko BLM District. The stocking level for this option would remain the same as in Option 3.

#### D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is a combination of the above options and is as follows:

Reduce active livestock preference 36 percent from 13,115 AUMs to 8,426 AUMs phased in over a 5 year period as follows:

Reduction in Year 1 = 2,160 AUMs  
Reduction in Year 3 = 1,264 AUMs  
Reduction in Year 5 = 1,265 AUMs

The livestock reductions will be placed into suspended nonuse as they are implemented.

Change the season of use in the Antelope Valley use area from 11/01 thru 06/30 to 11/01 thru 04/15.

Implement a deferred-rotation grazing system for cattle on the Antelope Valley use area, a rest-rotation grazing system for cattle on the Spring Valley use area, and a rotation grazing for sheep on the Spring Valley, Antelope Range, and the Black Hills use areas.

Manage the wild horses on the Chin Creek Allotment at 152 head (8 head on the Spring Valley use area and 144 head on the Antelope Range, Antelope Valley, and Black Hills use areas) to maintain the thriving natural ecological balance.

Based on the 1988 census remove 168 horses from the allotment in 1990. This equates to a 52 percent reduction from the 1988 level of 320 head of horses.

Based on the post gather census in 1990 those wild horses above the 152 head, which has been determined to be the optimum level to maintain the thriving natural ecological balance, will be considered excess animals, and will be removed in subsequent gathers.

Revise the Antelope Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) to reflect current site-specific objectives and numbers of wild horses identified through the allotment evaluation process.

#### Rationale

The desired stocking level for the Chin Creek Allotment is 10,250 AUMs, and was calculated from actual use data and use pattern mapping completed in 1985 and 1986. Although some utilization data was collected at the key areas every year, the information from these two years was collected by use area for the entire allotment. At the desired stocking level site-specific management objectives will be met.

The total reduction (existing wild horse use plus livestock active preference, minus the desired stocking level) for the Chin Creek Allotment will be 6,705 AUMs. This reduction will be made by use area, and will be proportionately divided between livestock and wild horses based on the actual use data collected by use areas in 1987. That year's data is the most complete for both users, and the most current for wild horses. The percentage of actual use by use area for 1987 was:

Spring Valley	Livestock	360 AUMs -	19%
	Wild Horses	1,548 AUMs -	81%
Antelope Range	Livestock	0 AUMs -	0%
	Wild Horses	1,965 AUMs -	100%
Antelope Valley	Livestock	3,480 AUMs -	56%
	Wild Horses	2,751 AUMs -	44%
Black Hills	Livestock	0 AUMs -	0%
	Wild Horses	1,608 AUMs -	100%

Therefore, the total reduction for livestock will be 4,689 AUMs, and for wild horses it will be 2,016 AUMs.

The reduction for livestock in Year 1 (2,160 AUMs) is equal to the AUMs from the previous adjudication that are no longer available due to the encroachment of pinyon and juniper trees. These sites were rated at 16 acres/AUM at the time of the 1946 range survey. Use pattern mapping in 1985 and 1986 identified approximately 34,500 acres of rangeland that has little to no forage for livestock under the pinyon and juniper overstory.

Past livestock licensing was for the allotment as a whole, and not by use area, which resulted in overstocking of Antelope Valley. Future livestock licensing will be based on the desired stocking level for each use area. The four use areas identified on the Chin Creek Allotment, and the desired stocking level for each are as follows:

	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
Spring Valley	1,942 AUMs	1,893 AUMs	1,844 AUMs
Antelope Range	1,406 AUMs	923 AUMs	439 AUMs
Antelope Valley	5,640 AUMs	5,129 AUMs	4,618 AUMs
Black Hills	1,967 AUMs	1,746 AUMs	1,525 AUMs
	<u>10,955 AUMs</u>	<u>9,691 AUMs</u>	<u>8,426 AUMs</u>

A change in the season of use and the rotation grazing systems will provide needed rest from livestock during the critical spring growing period. This will maintain or allow for an increase in the percent composition of native forbs and perennial grasses on specific sites throughout the allotment. Also, the grazing systems are for the protection and improvement of critical habitat

for sage grouse strutting/nesting/brooding grounds, deer fawning grounds, antelope kidding/wintering grounds, and hawk prey species, as well as, for numerous other animals that inhabit the area.

#### E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

Authorized use effective in Year-1 will be:

Spring Valley	174 Cattle	04/16 to 10/31 =	1,138 AUMs
	2,005 Sheep	05/01 to 06/30 =	804 AUMs
Antelope Range	1,738 Sheep	07/01 to 10/31 =	1,406 AUMs
Antelope Valley	1,033 Cattle	11/01 to 04/15 =	5,638 AUMs
Black Hills	1,653 Sheep	11/01 to 04/30 =	1,967 AUMs

Authorized use effective in Year-3 will be:

Spring Valley	170 Cattle	04/16 to 10/31 =	1,109 AUMs
	1,955 Sheep	05/01 to 06/30 =	784 AUMs
Antelope Range	1,141 Sheep	07/01 to 10/31 =	923 AUMs
Antelope Valley	940 Cattle	11/01 to 04/15 =	5,130 AUMs
Black Hills	1,467 Sheep	11/01 to 04/30 =	1,746 AUMs

Authorized use effective in Year-5 will be:

Spring Valley	165 Cattle	04/16 to 10/31 =	1,080 AUMs
	1,905 Sheep	05/01 to 06/30 =	764 AUMs
Antelope Range	543 Sheep	07/01 to 10/31 =	439 AUMs
Antelope Valley	846 Cattle	11/01 to 04/15 =	4,617 AUMs
Black Hills	1,281 Sheep	11/01 to 04/30 =	1,525 AUMs

(Note: During the winter, three to four months of sheep use from the Black Hills Use Area and cattle use from the Antelope Valley Use Area has historically been made in the Elko BLM District. Use in the Elko District is dependent on the presence of snow cover because of the lack of an adequate permanent winter water supply. To accommodate this Elko District use in the overall livestock operation, the livestock use identified in the Black Hills and Antelope Valley may vary, but not exceed the period of use or total AUMs as identified above in the scheduled phased-in period.)



The following terms and conditions will be a part of the grazing permit:

A rest-rotation grazing system will be implemented for cattle on the Spring Valley use area. Cattle use will be rotated between the three existing seedings (i.e., Flat Spring, North Creek, and Robison). Also a deferred grazing system will be implemented for sheep on this area. Sheep use made on this area will be by herding and will be rotated between this use area and the Badlands Allotment in the Elko BLM District thus eliminating continuous spring use every year.

A deferred grazing system will be implemented for the Antelope Range use area. Only sheep use will be made on this area and will be by herding. In even calendar years use will be grazed starting from the north end of the area and ending at the south end. In odd years the order will be reversed.

A deferred-rotation grazing system will be implemented for the Antelope Valley use area. Only cattle use will be made on this area and will be rotated between the existing north and south pastures. In even calendar years use will be made starting in the north pasture for the period 11/01 thru 01/09 followed by use in the south pasture for the period 01/10 thru 04/15. In odd years use will be made starting in the south pasture for the period 11/01 thru 02/05 followed by use in the north pasture for the period 02/06 thru 04/15.

A deferred grazing system will be implemented for the Black Hills use area. Only sheep use will be made on this area and will be by herding. In even calendar years use will be grazed starting from the north end of the area and ending at the south end. In odd years the order will be reversed.

#### F. FUTURE MONITORING AND GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

The Schell 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 the necessary information for subsequent evaluations in the third and fifth years following the decision. These re-evaluations are necessary to determine if the allotment specific objectives are being met under the new grazing management strategies. In addition, these subsequent evaluations will determine if the phased in adjustments are still necessary or if additional adjustments are required to meet the established allotment specific objectives.

1987 use - 7872 AUMS - 656 horses

1988 - post gather census - 320

## Chin Creek

past NML - 1698 AUMS - 141.5 horses

proposed AML - 1824 AUMS - 152 head

8 - on Spring Valley Use Area

144 - on Annetop Range

my prev. <sup>comments</sup>

Are you proposing reduction to ~~help~~ better manage the riparian areas?

Reduction of w/h ~~use~~ use should be "to achieve..." not as a tool to ~~my~~ riparian.

Riparian areas should be fenced.

Horse reduction should also be ~~to~~ adjusted over 5 years