United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ELY DISTRICT OFFICE
Star Route 5, Box 1
Ely, Nevada, 89301

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4400.6
(NV-046)

FEB 5 1990

MASR

Dear Participant:

Enclosed for your information are the Management Action Selection Reports for the Tippett, Sampson Creek, Geyser Ranch, Dry Farm, and Batterman Wash Allotments. The 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. 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.

Sincerely,

Gerald M. Smith

Gerald M. Smith, Manager
Schell Resource Area

FEB 5 1990

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT

BATTERMAN WASH ALLOTMENT

SCHELL RESOURCE AREA

Gracian Uhalde, Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The Batterman Wash 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 between 1983 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 office.

Input from Gracian Uhalde (permittee) at meetings on February 23, 1989, June 8, 1989, September 5, 1989, September 8, 1989, October 6, 1989, October 31, 1989, and November 20, 1989; in letters dated June 7, 1989, and August 10, 1989; and during a telephone conversation on August 16, 1989.

Input from Rangeland Data Source at meetings on June 8, 1989, September 5, 1989, September 8, 1989, and October 31, 1989.

Input from Resource Concepts Incorporated at a meeting on September 8, 1989 and in a letter dated August 11, 1989.

Input from Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region III, during meetings conducted on February 28, 1989, May 6, 1989, and May 10, 1898; and in letters dated May 19, 1989 and August 8, 1989.

Input from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in a letter dated August 29, 1989.

Input from the Animal Protection Institute of America in a letters dated June 27, 1989 and August 23, 1989.

Input from the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Council in a letter dated July 30, 1989.

Input from the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses in a letter dated July 27, 1989.

Input from the Wild Horse Organization Assistance in a letter dated July 28, 1989.

B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on identified issues of the evaluation, three of the six land use plan objectives for the allotment are not being achieved with current management practices. Therefore, additional actions and/or adjustments in management actions are necessary. Poor distribution as indicated by the small areas of heavy and severe use along the winterfat bottomland is the primary problem that needs to be corrected.

Presently there is minimal conflict with other users. Wild horse use is minimal within the allotment. No wild horses have ever been censused and sign (i.e., fecal matter) is minimal. Few deer utilize the allotment.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Option 1 - Reduce the livestock active preference to 1,033 AUMs from 2,093 AUMs if no other management action is taken.

Option 2 - No adjustment in livestock active preference is necessary with the incorporation of other management actions.

Option 3 - Implement rangeland improvements concurrent with an Allotment Management Plan (AMP).

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is as follows:

No adjustment in livestock active preference will be made on the Batterman Wash Allotment.

Change the season of use on the bottomland from 11/10 thru 6/15 to 11/10 thru 04/15.

Batterman Spring (T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 27, SWNE) will be reconstructed and fenced. The pipeline from that spring and the set of troughs (T. 2 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 3, NENE) will also be reconstructed.

The ditch diverting water from the private land (T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 13) thru the public land, will be left on during the winter rather than being shut off once it freezes.

Uhalde Well, located in T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 16, will be turned on once the ditch water freezes.

Salt will be placed upon the benchlands at the following locations: T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 12, NESE and T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 26, SENW.

Rationale

The desired stocking level for the Batterman Wash Allotment is 2,093 AUMs, and was calculated from actual use data and use pattern mapping for the years 1985, 1986, and 1987. During three years of use pattern mapping less than 5% of the allotment was in the heavy use category and only 1% was in the severe use category, indicating a minor distribution problem. Utilization objectives for the key species at the key areas were met except at key area BWR1 in 1985. Apparent trend is up at both key areas. Desired stocking level calculations using actual use data and key management area utilization indicate that an increase in grazing may be applicable in the longterm.

Livestock authorizations for the allotment have permitted cattle to graze from November thru mid June on the winterfat bottoms. The restricted season of use on the winterfat bottomland will help meet the long term objective for Key Area BWR1 by increasing the percent composition of the perennial grasses and forbs. By resting the area from livestock grazing during the critical spring growing season, perennial grasses and forbs will be allowed to increase.

The following additional actions will increase the distribution of livestock within the Batterman Wash Allotment. The ditch which diverts water from the private land (T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 13)

thru the public land, will be left on during the winter rather than being shut off once it freezes. Leaving the ditch on will provide a water source for livestock in T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 13. Water will generally flow one mile from the head gate before freezing. Uhalde Well, located in T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 16, will be turned on once the ditch water freezes. Uhalde Well will be turned off in early spring at which time the ditch water will be used. This will decrease the small areas of overutilization on the winterfat bottomland near the water well, and increase the utilization on the benchlands. Utilization on the benchland has been at or below the site-specific objectives.

Fencing the area around Batterman Spring will further ensure that the identified riparian objectives will be met.

There is an opportunity to develop an allotment management plan (AMP) for the Batterman Wash Allotment jointly with the Worthington Mountain Allotment which is used by the same permittee. The selected management action will facilitate the future implementation of a grazing system in conjunction with an AMP. Both the AMP and grazing system will help meet the long term objectives on both allotments.

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

Livestock use will be authorized as follows:

243	Cows	Active Use	11/15 - 03/31	1,094 AUMs
80	Cows	Active Use	04/01 - 06/15	200 AUMs
1,292	Sheep	Active Use	12/01 - 01/31	527 AUMs
1,292	Sheep	Active Use	03/15 - 04/15	272 AUMs

Active use shall not exceed the AUMs as listed above.

Terms and conditions of the grazing permit will include:

1. Livestock use will not occur in the bottomland (winterfat area) after 04/15.

2. Salt will be placed at the following locations: T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 12, NESE and T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 26, SENW.

3. Uhalde Well (JDR No. 0373) at T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 16, will be use when the ditch freezes, and shut off by 04/15.

4. The ditch that runs from T. 3 N., R. 57 E., Sec. 13 will be left on rather than shut off when the water begins to freeze.

5. Actual use report will be submitted within 15 days after completing your annual grazing use.

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 additional adjustments are required to meet the established allotment specific objectives.