



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

m 4/23/90
TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

4400.3
(NV-047)

APR 23 1990

Commission for the Preservation of
Wild Horses and Burros
c/o Terri Jay, Executive Director
Stewart Facility
5500 Snider Ave., Bldg. 6, Rm. 137
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Dear Ms. Jay:

Enclosed for your information is the Management Action Selection Report for the Dry Mountain Allotment. 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,

Gene L. Drais

Gene L. Drais, Manager
Egan Resource Area

Portion Buck & Bald

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT
DRY MOUNTAIN ALLOTMENT
EGAN RESOURCE AREA
Dan Russell, Permittee

*RPS - 28 horses
335 AUMS
now - 517 AUMS*

A. INTRODUCTION

The Dry Mountain 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 limited amount of public comment was received pertaining to this allotment evaluation. Copies of the comment letters pertaining specifically to this allotment can be found in Section VII of the Dry Mountain allotment evaluation summary, located in the Ely District files. All allotment-specific comments were considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. Some of the primary concerns expressed for Dry Mountain are addressed as follows:

One comment concerned the use of the Sneva and Hyder Crop Yield Index. The yield index is not used to "correct" utilization data. 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 Ely District 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 the actual use figures used for wild horses on the allotment. The figures for both 1987 and 1988 (years of monitoring data evaluated) were both based on aerial census counts of horses within the boundaries of the allotment. It was felt by some that the figures used were less than the actual use made and did not reflect the fact that horses use the allotment all year long versus cattle use only during the winter and early spring. The actual use figures for all grazing animals reflect their entire use period. There were also several comments pertaining to the continued use of Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for wild horses. All evaluations in wild horse herd areas will 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.

Another comment 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.

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

1. Range, wildlife, and wild horse monitoring files compiled by the Egan Resource Area.
2. Input from Dan Russell (permittee) at meetings on May 22, 1989, December 1, 1989 and January 12, 1990; and his letter of September 12, 1989. There were also telephone conversations with Tom Van Horne (Mr. Russell's lawyer) on September 13, 1989, with Mr. Russell on the same date, and with Dick Mecham on September 12, 1989.
3. Input from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region II, in a letter dated August 11, 1989, and a telephone call from Duane Erickson on August 28, 1989.
4. Input from the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses in a letter dated August 8, 1989.
5. Input from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in a letter dated August 11, 1989.

B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on identified issues of the evaluation, six of the ten land use plan objectives for the allotment are not being achieved with current management practices, therefore additional actions and/or adjustments in management are necessary. Overutilization of the winterfat dominated flats by cattle and horses is the problem that needs to be corrected. In addition, though the current ecological condition is adequate on the allotment, continued overutilization will jeopardize continuance of the appropriate seral stages.

C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

- Option 1 Reduce the cattle active preference to 1940 AUMs from 3432 AUMs and allow 355 AUMs for wild horse use.
- Option 2 Deny the sheep-to-cattle conversion and leave the allotment preference at 3432 AUMs for sheep winter use.

Option 3 Shorten the season of use so as not to graze livestock after March 15th. Otherwise AUMs would be as in options 1 or 2 above.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is as follows:

The active grazing use for cattle will be decreased from 2827 AUMs to 1940 AUMs and 350 AUMs will be allowed for sheep use, with 1142 AUMs placed in suspended nonuse. This equates to a 33% reduction over 5 years from the old sheep preference (3432), or a 19% reduction from the 1984 proposed decision cattle preference (2827).

Wild horses will be managed for 355 AUMs of yearlong use (30 horses).

The season of use for sheep and cattle will be October 1st to April 1st.

The sheep preference will be utilized in areas that are not dominated by winterfat, i.e. the bench and lower slopes on the east side of Dry Mountain above the winterfat flats and south to the allotment boundary, and in the blacksage/juniper dominated foothills in the south 1/3 of the allotment. The sheep preference is also predicated on either hauling water to these use areas or utilizing snow for water. In no case will sheep be grazed around the wells or trailed back and forth from the wells for water.

The preference for cattle is based on continued maintenance and pumping of all of the following wells during the use period, though not necessarily all at the same time, to spread the utilization evenly through the allotment:

-Long Valley Well #2: T21N, R58E, Sec.32, SWSW
-Moore Well: T20N, R58E, Sec. 8, NESW
-J & J Well: T20N, R58E, Sec. 20, SWNE
-Maple Syrup Well: T19N, R58E, Sec. 3, NENE

Rationale:

The desired stocking level for the Dry Mountain Allotment is 1940 AUMs for cattle, 355 AUMs for horses, and 350 AUMs for sheep. Because there is a direct spatial and seasonal overlap of wild horse and cattle use on the winterfat bottom, reductions are being made in direct proportion to actual use. These adjustments are being made in order to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance between grazing animals and the rangeland resources. These figures were calculated from actual use data and utilization mapping. The calculated initial stocking rate for sheep is based on use pattern mapping to determine those areas underutilized by cattle and horses (see Map #1) and the 1983 weight estimate survey data for sheep forage preference. At these stocking levels objectives are expected to be met. The reduction for cattle will be phased in over 5 years in three portions as outlined below.

The season of use ending on April 1st each year will allow the key species (winterfat) to initiate growth in the absence of grazing pressure. Extensive grazing during growth on winterfat has been shown in studies to cause the most damage to the plants, resulting in loss of vigor and eventually replacement of winterfat with less desirable species.

Water hauling and/or use of snow for water for sheep into fringe areas now little, if any, utilized by cattle will allow for a slightly higher preference than with cattle use alone. Even though horses use these fringe areas to some extent now, there should be little competition for forage due to the limited dietary overlap between horses and sheep. The sheep will compete with deer more for forage; however, the sheep preference was set at a level that allows ample forage for wintering deer.

The allotment will be reevaluated during the third and fifth year of the scheduled five year phase-in of the suspended nonuse, to determine the effects of the management actions upon the allotment objectives and if additional actions may be required.

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

The livestock adjustments over the next five years will be as follows:

Year	Number*	Kind	Period of Use	%Federal	AUMs	
					Active	Susp
1	421	Cattle	10/01 - 04/01	100	2531	551
	291	Sheep	10/01 - 04/01	100	350	0
3	371	Cattle	10/01 - 04/01	100	2235	847
	291	Sheep	10/01 - 04/01	100	350	0
5	322	Cattle	10/01 - 04/01	100	1940	1142
	291	Sheep	10/01 - 04/01	100	350	0

*Flexibility in cattle numbers will be allowed up to a maximum of 1000 head not to exceed the maximum preference allowable or to extend beyond the period of use.

Terms and conditions of the grazing permit will include:

1. The following wells will all be pumped during the use period, though not necessarily all at the same time, to spread the cattle utilization:

- Long Valley Well #2: T21N, R58E, Sec.32, SWSW
- Moore Well: T20N, R58E, Sec. 8, NESW
- J & J Well: T20N, R58E, Sec.20, SWNE
- Maple Syrup Well: T19N, R58E, Sec. 3, NENE

2. Sheep preference will be utilized on the bench and lower slope on the east side of Dry Mt., above the winterfat areas, and in the blacksage/juniper dominate foothills in the south 1/3 of the allotment in the vicinity of the following water haul site

locations:

- Site 1: SE portion of the allotment - T19N, R58E, Sec. 16
(2 miles south of Maple Syrup Well)
 - Site 2: South portion of the allotment - T19N, R58E, Sec. 20
(north of Sabala Spring)
 - Site 3: Dry Mountain Bench - T19N, R57E, Sec. 1
(east of Cherry Pass)
- Water need not be hauled if snow is available and being used to water the sheep.

3. Actual use will be submitted within 15 days of completing annual grazing use.

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 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.