



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office  
HC33 Box 150  
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408



IN REPLY REFER TO:

4400.3 (NV-047)

SEP 30 1991

Commission for the Preservation  
of Wild Horses  
Stewart Facility  
Capitol Complex  
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Participant:

Enclosed for your information are the Management Action Selection Reports for the Medicine Butte and Steptoe Allotments. These reports are the final section of the allotment evaluation, and complete the monitoring evaluation process.

The Management Action Selection Reports address the primary concerns received from involved interests, lists the options considered during the evaluation, and identifies the management actions selected. The reports also describe the rationale as to why those actions were selected.

These reports are 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 action 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. If no decision is required, the Management Action Selection Report will serve as documentation to the grazing file that current management is appropriate.

Sincerely,

Gene L. Drais, Manager  
Egan Resource Area

- 2 Enclosures
1. Medicine Butte
  2. Steptoe

MANAGEMENT ACTION SELECTION REPORT  
STEPTOE ALLOTMENT  
EGAN RESOURCE AREA  
STEPTOE RANCH CO. (Bill Davidson), Permittee

A. INTRODUCTION

The Steptoe 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 primarily in 1989, 1990, and 1991.

A limited amount of public comment was received pertaining to this allotment evaluation. Copies of the comment letters or conversations that specifically address this allotment can be found in the Steptoe Allotment Evaluation file located in the Ely District. All allotment-specific comments were considered for incorporation into the final evaluation. Some of the primary concerns expressed for Steptoe are addressed as follows:

A concern raised by Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI) was about the utility of a "one percent change in active use". The change in active use is indeed small for the allotment as a whole. On a pasture by pasture basis, however, the changes range from a 38% reduction (North Steptoe Seeding) to no change. When the previously unadjudicated South Steptoe Seeding is added into the preference total, the resulting monitoring based stocking level is close to the old existing preference. That the change in preference is one percent or some much larger percent, whether up or down, is not relevant. BLM regulations and policy dictate that if monitoring data indicates a change in stocking levels is warranted, that change shall be made, regardless of amount. Following RCI's logic the small increase in preference recommended in section D. below should not be made because it is small and wouldn't "accomplish" anything.

RCI raised many questions in their comment letter that concerned a perceived lack of data in the allotment evaluation summaries. It should be pointed out that the evaluations are summaries, not a reiteration of every piece of data that exists on a given allotment. The actual utilization maps, transect forms, key area location writeups, desired use level rationales, etc., are located in the Ely District and Egan Resource Area files and are available for the public, including RCI, to review as desired.

One question raised by the state wildlife agency dealt with a lack of forbs as a key species. By definition (NRMH standards) a key species should "provide more than 15% of the available forage in the grazing area." According to the Range Site Descriptions for this area, none of the range (ecological) sites have the potential to provide more than 5-10% total forbs, at Potential Natural Community (PNC), much less than that of one particular forb. We believe that with utilization of key grass and brush species at

moderate or less, forbs will be available in sufficient quantity to serve wildlife needs. In any event, the NDOW admits that "antelope use of the Steptoe Allotment continues to increase" which is somewhat contradictory to their contention that levels of forbs are inadequate.

For the purposes of clarification, the 50% desired utilization objective for the key grass species was selected as a reasonable objective, supported by virtually all the research to date, for native grasses being grazed during the season-of-use on the grass dominated pastures in the Steptoe allotment, i.e. spring through fall. If the use was entirely spring use (active growth season), 40-50% may be more appropriate; similarly, if the use was all during the dormant season, then 60% could be considered. Since the grazing season straddles both of these physiological periods, 50% was deemed a reasonable objective. On the winter use pasture (Duckcreek Flat) where winterfat is the key species, a 55% desired utilization level, used in the original evaluation, is also within the range supported by the research for dormant season use. In fact, 60% utilization for use made no later than 2/28 (pre-growing season) is supported by the research literature. Because of this, 60% is calculated into the formula for the Duckcreek Flat pasture and the "average desired AUMs" adjusted accordingly. Table 3 in the Steptoe Allotment Evaluation Summary is adjusted as listed below:

Pasture Year	Actual Use(AUMs)	Measured Util.(%)	Yield Index	Adjusted Util.(%)	Desired Util.(%)	Desired AUMs
<u>Duckcreek Flat</u>						
88/89	811	65%	1.06	69%	60%	705
89/90	1135	70%	0.79	55%	60%	1238
90/91	1129	70%	0.90	63%	60%	<u>1075</u>
Average Desired AUMs						1006

More specific information pertinent to the selection of allowable use levels is found in the allotment evaluation file.

All other comments were favorable to the technical recommendations within the evaluation.

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

1. Range, wildlife, wild horse, water inventory, and riparian monitoring and studies files compiled by the Egan Resource Area and Division of Resources.
2. Input from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Region II, in a letter dated August 28, 1991.
3. Input from the permittee, Bill Davidson, on numerous occasions, including an office meeting on August 16, 1991, a field meeting on May 23, 1991, and via actual use data submitted for the grazing years evaluated.

4. Input from the N-4 Grazing Board, via Resource Concepts, Inc., in a letter dated August 28, 1991.

#### B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

Based on the identified issues of the evaluation, four of the seven land use plan objectives are not being met with current cattle management practices. The only significant resource problem on the allotment, contributing to failure to meet objectives at this time, is that allowable use levels, by cattle, have been exceeded in some pastures in some years. Riparian and wildlife oriented objectives, however, are being met on the allotment at this time. In addition, though the current ecological condition and plant communities are adequate for the allotment, continuance of overutilization in those pastures where it occurs, may jeopardize continuance of the appropriate seral stages.

#### C. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

The only management options feasible and recommended at this time are as described in the selected management action below, i.e. make pasture-by-pasture adjustments in the allowable use levels.

#### D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTION

The selected management action is to adjust the preference (where needed) by pasture, based on analysis of monitoring data, as follows:

<u>Pasture</u>	<u>AUMs</u>
Egan Bench	189
North Slough	546
Duckcreek Flat	1006
Dry Canyon	454
Shep Field	94
North Steptoe Seeding	247
South Steptoe Seeding	<u>300</u>
Total	2836

Seasons of use for each pasture will remain as outlined in the Steptoe Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and listed in section E. below. All other requirements and stipulations contained in the Steptoe AMP will remain as written.

Since wild horses historically have not been present and thus do not make significant use of the allotment, a decision will be issued to set the Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the portion of the Butte HMA within the Steptoe Allotment at zero.

Wildlife (i.e. deer and antelope) are causing no resource problems on the allotment at existing numbers and no changes in numbers or management are recommended. The average use of approximately 500

mule deer during the period from 3/1 to 5/31 (300 AUMs) and yearlong antelope use of 40-50 head (96-120 AUMs) are judged, from monitoring data, to be reasonable numbers.

Rationale:

Monitoring studies, particularly use mapping, show that some pastures in some years have distribution and/or slight overstocking problems. The adjustments in pasture stocking levels listed above should alleviate these problems. Substantial reductions made in the late 1960's as well as establishment of the seedings have corrected many of the past resource problems and thus the recommendations are limited in scope. In general, most of the pastures will receive small reductions. These reductions, however, are more than offset by the establishment of the South Steptoe Seeding; thus, the allotment as a whole will receive an increase in overall grazing use of 57 AUMs.

E. GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

A Multiple Use Decision will be issued changing the grazing permit as follows:

FROM: (existing permit)

Pasture	Livestock Number	Period	%PL	AUMs
Egan Bench	200C	3/1 - 4/30	50	201
N. Steptoe Seeding	134C	4/1 - 6/30	100	401
Dry Canyon	300C	4/16- 5/13	100	454
Shep Field	470C	6/16-10/15	5	94
Duckcreek Flat	75C	10/16-2/28	100	335
Duckcreek Flat	150C	11/16-2/28	100	518
Duckcreek Flat	25C	12/14-2/28	100	63
Duckcreek Flat	75C	1/16- 2/28	100	108
North Slough	400C	6/16- 9/30	43	605

TO:

Pasture	Livestock Number	Period	%PL	AUMs
Egan Bench	189C	3/1 - 4/30	50	189
N. Steptoe Seeding	83C	4/1 - 6/30	100	247
Dry Canyon	300C	4/16- 5/13	100	454
Shep Field	470C	6/16-10/15	5	94
Duckcreek Flat	73C	10/16-2/28	100	326
Duckcreek Flat	148C	11/16-2/28	100	511
Duckcreek Flat	24C	12/14-2/28	100	61
Duckcreek Flat	75C	1/16- 2/28	100	108
North Slough	361C	6/16- 9/30	43	546
S. Steptoe Seeding	100C	4/16- 6/30	100	300

The total permitted grazing use will be adjusted from 2,779 AUMs to 2,836 AUMs in one increment, as per the regulations, since the change is less than 10%.

In addition, the Multiple Use Decision will include setting the Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the portion of the Butte HMA within the Steptoe Allotment at zero.

#### F. FUTURE MONITORING AND GRAZING ADJUSTMENTS

The BLM will continue to monitor the allotment to determine if allotment objectives are being met, and if not, the data will be used in future reevaluations leading towards new or adjusted management actions to correct problems. Use pattern mapping and/or utilization spot checks (key area utilization) will be performed every 2-3 years in most pastures, with the exception of Dry Canyon which will be use mapped each year for the next 2-3 years. Actual use will continue to be collected from the livestock permittee and wildlife use estimates from the NDDW. A revision of the ecological site inventory based on the revised third order soil survey and ecological site information will be completed as funding allows. Trend will continue to be reread as scheduled in the AMP on existing trend plot locations.