



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE
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IN REPLY REFER TO:
4400.4 (NV-015)

Reed B. Robison
HCR 33, Box 33940
Ely, NV 89301

M 8/29/94
SIGNED

Dear Mr. Robison:

The Management Action Selection Report (MASR) for the Antelope Valley Allotment is enclosed for your review.

This MASR follows the Antelope Valley Allotment Evaluation mailed to you in April 1994, and describes the management actions to be implemented on the Antelope Valley Allotment. This MASR also responds to significant comments made about the evaluation and discusses proposed management actions that have been modified, added and/or not selected.

Proposed and final multiple use decisions will be issued to you and other affected interests to establish the selected actions as final decisions.

If you have any questions, please contact Karl Scheetz or Bruce Thompson at (702) 753-0200.

Sincerely yours,

BILL BAKER, Manager
Wells Resource Area

Enclosure: As stated

cc: Nevada Division of Wildlife
American Horse Protection
Humane Society-US
Animal Protection Institute
Natural Resources Defense Council
Kenneth Jones
Ely District, Schell Resource Area
Commission for the Preservation of Wildhorses
Von Sorenson
Kathryn Cushman
HTT Resources
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Land Bank
Metta Richins
Holtz Inc.
Rose Strickland
NV Dept. of Agriculture
The Nature Conservancy
Wild Horse Organized Assistance
Wells Resource Area Grazing Association
Rutgers Law School

Management Action Selection Report
Antelope Valley Allotment
Wells Resource Area

A. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the management actions selected for the Antelope Valley Allotment. Monitoring was conducted from 1984-1992 to determine if management practices were meeting the Land Use Plan (LUP), Rangeland Program Summary (RPS), and key area multiple use objectives. The public involvement process and response procedure for the allotment evaluation and subsequent management actions are pursuant to guidance set forth in Instruction Memorandum No. NV-91-185.

Comments on the Antelope Valley Allotment Evaluation were received from HTT Resource Advisors on 4/14/94, and Reed Robison on 4/29/94 and 6/09/94. Copies of the comment letters can be found in the Elko District files. The concerns were as follows:

1. Comment: The desired plant community objective (DPC) for key area 1011 might not be attainable due to the percentage of halogeton on the site. An enclosure should be built on the site to monitor this objective.

Response: An enclosure will be built on the site to monitor site potential and attainment of the desired plant community objective.

2. Comment: The interim grazing system outlined in the Antelope Valley Allotment Evaluation ends this year, and a new grazing system should be designed so as to meet the requirements of the permittee.

Response: Through this Allotment Evaluation (AE), current management has been evaluated to determine whether or not multiple use objectives have been met. The Technical Recommendation addressing the livestock grazing system proposed in the AE has been identified in this Management Action Selection Report and is consistent with attainment of multiple use objectives. Further, the Schell Resource Area, Ely District, is developing an allotment management plan (AMP) which will include livestock management for the Antelope Valley Allotment in conjunction with Chin Creek Allotment in the Schell Resource Area. Appropriate changes, if any, to the selected actions identified below should be described in that AMP.

3. Comment: Antelope Valley Allotment is difficult to use in the winter due to the lack of water. Look at the possibility of using the Antelope Valley Allotment in the winter in conjunction with one of the pastures in the Ely District.

Response: The interim grazing system will remain in effect until such time as the Chin Creek AMP is developed. Any changes in the interim system will be addressed during development of the Chin Creek AMP.

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B. ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

An evaluation of the existing monitoring data indicates that of the 14 LUP, RPS, and key area multiple use objectives, progress was made on five, sufficient or satisfactory progress was not made on one, no progress or non-attainment was made on two, available data was not sufficient to make a determination on three, and three were attained.

C. SUMMARY OF OPTIONS

Based on the analysis of all available monitoring data, sixteen of the technical recommendations are required to ensure that all the multiple use objectives are met. The following is a discussion of the management actions not selected in the Management Action Selection Report (MASR) as well as those that were added.

1. Technical Recommendations Not Selected

Technical recommendation "N" concerning threatened, endangered, and candidate species was not selected because as per the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended) and Bureau policy, the Bureau is already obligated to ensure that any impacts of proposed management actions on threatened, endangered, and candidate species are considered prior to their implementation.

The permittee's request to modify the rest-rotation grazing system for Antelope Valley Use Area was considered but not selected due to the fact that the "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" is still in effect until the Ely District completes the Chin Creek AMP. Based on the best available information, the interim grazing system outlined in the "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" has been determined appropriate for attainment of multiple use objectives. Changes to this system should ensure continued progress toward attainment of the multiple use objectives. Monitoring and reevaluations will determine if further changes in management need to be made and will also be used in the development of the Chin Creek AMP.

2. Technical Recommendations Added

Construct an enclosure to help determine if the white sage communities represented by key area 1011 have the capability to achieve DPC objectives.

Rationale: A fenced area which excludes livestock and wild horse grazing will serve as a comparison area to the key area that is grazed. We can then observe if white sage areas similar to the key area have the potential to increase key species and replace halogeton without grazing and whether or not grazing management as planned would also improve condition.

D. SELECTED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

The following technical recommendations will be implemented through a multiple use decision:

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1. LIVESTOCK GRAZING SYSTEM.

Continue to implement the interim livestock grazing system and associated stipulations outlined in the September 1991 "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" which includes use on the Antelope Valley Allotment within the Elko District in conjunction with the Chin Creek Allotment within the Ely District. The "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" includes a light prescription level of use (35%) on white sage, and water hauling as interim practices. The livestock grazing system and associated stipulations are described as follows:

ANTELOPE VALLEY USE AREAS			
Grazing Fee Year*	SOUTH PASTURE Ely District	NORTH PASTURE Ely District	ANTELOPE VALLEY Elko District
1994	3/1-3/31 11/1-1/15	4/1-5/31 1/16-2/28	<i>REST</i>
1995	<i>REST</i>	3/1-3/31 11/1-1/15	4/1-5/31 1/16-2/28
1996	4/1-5/31 1/16-2/28	<i>REST</i>	3/1-3/31 11/1-1/15
Repeat 3 year grazing cycle.			
* Fee year is March of one year through the end of February of the next year. Example is 3/1/94 - 2/28/95			

* The above grazing system results in each pasture receiving a complete rest during one out of three fee years (3/01 - 2/28) and grazing use during the critical growth period (i.e. after 4/1 is the critical growing period) one out of three years. This is due to the timing of the grazing fee year. For example, when a pasture is grazed from 11/1/94 - 1/15/95, the period of use for that same pasture is 4/1-5/31/96, therefore no use is scheduled during the 1995 fee year (3/1/95 - 2/28/95).

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Cattle #'s	FEE YEAR	AUMs
718	1994	-0-
718	1995	2,517
718	1996	2,512

Rationale: Livestock grazing during the critical growth period of key forage plants will be limited to one year during the three year grazing cycle. Grazing during the other two years will end by March 31 which is the beginning of significant critical growth. This change to less frequent livestock grazing during the critical growth period of key forage plants and a light grazing use prescription should provide for more opportunities for the establishment of new plants towards a more diverse plant community, as well as increase production of existing plants. Poor forage diversity is the most limiting factor on antelope seasonal range within the Antelope Valley Allotment. An improvement of the overall average percent forb and grass composition would significantly improve habitat conditions and facilitate attainment of big game habitat objectives.

2. LIVESTOCK GRAZING PREFERENCE.

Adjust active use (AUMs) to the maximum level that would be authorized during the grazing fee year (March-Feb.) based on the grazing system described above as follows:

Permittee	No.	Kind	%PL	Active	Suspend.	Nonuse
Reed Robison	718	C	100	2,517	130	2,555 (CP)

(CP) Nonuse for Conservation and Protection of Federal Range

Rationale: Adjusting active preference to this level would be consistent with the grazing system outlined in the "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals". In addition, adjusting active use to this level appears to be consistent with the best available studies data. However, a conclusion about carrying capacity based on utilization and actual use requires additional information. Therefore, the livestock grazing levels outlined in the September 1991 "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" would establish the level of authorized livestock use until additional monitoring information is available to support further adjustments of the carrying capacity. Active preference is based on the number of AUMs that would be licensed during the fee year. However, the AUMs that are scheduled for any one pasture during the grazing season (11/1 - 5/31) would be 1,794 AUMs for winter use & 1,440 AUMs for spring use.

3. TERMS AND CONDITIONS WILL BE AS FOLLOWS.

(a) Supplemental feeding is limited to salt, mineral and/or protein supplements in block, granular or liquid form. Such supplements will be placed at least 1/4 mile from live waters (springs, streams, and troughs).

Rationale: Placement of salt and other supplements should be used to encourage more even distribution of livestock.

(b) The livestock actual use report (form 4130-5) will be turned in within 15 days after completing annual grazing use.

Rationale: The prompt submission of the permittees actual use is important to determine carrying capacity in the future and whether suspended AUMs and or AUMs placed in non-use for conservation and protection of Federal Range can be activated.

(c) All range improvements will be maintained/repared prior to livestock turn out.

Rationale: Maintaining and repairing range improvements would facilitate livestock management and distribution in the Antelope Valley Allotment.

4. THE PERMITTEE WILL BE REQUIRED TO HAUL WATER DURING THE CRITICAL GROWING PERIOD AND DURING ESPECIALLY DRY PERIODS AS DESCRIBED IN THE "STIPULATION TO WITHDRAW APPEALS" FOR THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ALLOTMENT AT BUREAU DESIGNATED HAUL SITES ON THE UPPER VALLEY BENCHES UNTIL PERMANENT WATER SOURCES ARE DEVELOPED.

Rationale: Livestock grazing in Antelope Valley is often dependent on the presence of snow to facilitate better livestock distribution. Hauling water, during dry periods, will allow the grazing system to be followed more consistently. It will also draw livestock away from the heavily used existing water sources, valley bottoms, and promote more even grazing of the allotment.

5. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ALLOTMENT.

Enter into an interdistrict agreement which would permit the Ely District to license livestock use in the Antelope Valley Allotment, and cooperate on the development of an AMP which would include this allotment. The Ely District would provide copies of licenses and actual use reports to the Elko District. The Ely District would consult with the Elko District if changes to the established management are proposed. The Elko District, Wells Resource Area would continue to administer all other aspects of livestock administration and other resources.

Rationale: The current livestock permittee also licenses with the Ely District and has requested that one district be responsible for all of his licensing. It would be more efficient for the permittee to license in one district only.

6. DEVELOP ADDITIONAL PERMANENT WATER RESOURCES WITHIN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE ALLOTMENT WHERE NECESSARY AND FEASIBLE. WATER WELLS WOULD BE THE PREFERRED METHOD.

Rationale: Developing permanent water within the eastern half of the allotment will improve livestock distribution by encouraging cattle use away from the bottoms of the valley. This water would also be available for wildlife and wild horses while livestock are in the allotment. Water would be left in troughs/storage tanks when cattle are removed from the allotment. Water wells are preferred because they provide a higher degree of control over the availability of water and localized grazing pressure.

7. EXTEND THE FENCE, LOCATED ON THE ELKO/WHITE PINE COUNTY LINE, TO THE WEST. THIS WOULD BE A LET-DOWN FENCE.

Rationale: The fence extension would stop any cattle drift from White Pine County into the southern part of the allotment. No fence would be built until permanent water is developed in the Antelope Valley Allotment. The let-down type of fence would be used to reduce obstacles to wild horse movements when livestock are not present. The BLM would be responsible for placing the fence up prior to livestock turnout and taking down the fence after livestock removal.

8. EXTEND THE FENCE AT KINGSLEY POINT. THIS WOULD BE A LET-DOWN FENCE.

Rationale: This fence would stop cattle drift in the northern part of the allotment. The let-down type of fence would be used to reduce obstacles to wild horse movements when livestock are not present.

9. ESTABLISH A WILD HORSE APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL (AML).

Establish an AML of 10 wild horses for an average of 9 months in the Antelope Valley Allotment.

Rationale: Wild horses appear to use the Antelope Valley Allotment for approximately 9 months per year. They are in the allotment as long as there is water available and this seems to be the limiting factor. There can be as many as 35 horses in the allotment in the spring and as few as zero in mid summer. All available data indicates that when there are between 5-10 horses in the allotment, utilization levels are at or below the objective levels of 10% prior to livestock entry.

All available data indicates that only 4.1% of the Antelope Valley HMA herd utilize the Antelope Valley Allotment throughout the year. When the herd size in the HMA is reduced to initial herd size of 240, then approximately 10 horses may be using the allotment at any given time (4.1% of 240), and this amounts to 90 AUMs (10 horses x 9 months).

10. REDUCE WILD HORSES IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY HMA TO INITIAL HERD SIZE OF 240 HEAD AS PER THE RMP AMENDMENT.

Rationale: The only way to achieve initial AML within the allotment is to reduce horses in the HMA.

11. RECONSTRUCT THE EXISTING WHITEHORSE PIPELINE

Rationale: Upgrading the Whitehorse pipeline would provide permanent water in the northern part of the Antelope Valley Allotment for livestock, wild horses, and wildlife. Water availability would be limited in the summer due to the fact that the Whitehorse Pipeline would be the only source of water in the Antelope Valley Allotment.

12. CONSTRUCT THE ANTELOPE WATER CATCHMENT FOR WILD HORSES

Rationale: Provide additional water for wild horses.

13. FENCE MODIFICATIONS

Identify and prioritize needed fence modifications through development of the Spruce/Goshute Habitat Management Plan (HMP) scheduled for completion in 1995/1996 or sooner if the need or opportunity arises. Fence modifications will also be identified in the Chin Creek AMP.

Rationale: Completion of these projects will help achieve the multiple use objectives identified for the Antelope Valley Allotment.

14. ANTELOPE KIDDING AREAS

Ensure that the impacts of proposed management actions on antelope kidding areas are considered prior to their implementation.

Rationale: Successful kidding is necessary for a healthy productive herd. Disturbing antelope on the kidding areas may result in a lower recruitment rate.

15. ESTABLISH NEW KEY AREAS/CONTINUE TO GATHER DATA ON WILD HORSE USE
Establish key areas on the upland sites such as the south end of White Horse Mountain and the east side of Antelope Valley.

Continue to gather wild horse distribution and utilization data on the existing key areas in the Antelope Valley Allotment, to assist in the next allotment evaluation to determine attainment of multiple use objectives.

Rationale: The current key areas are confined to the valley bottom and may not be representative of all the sites used by wild horses.

Data is limited on wild horse use in the Antelope Valley Allotment. Utilization needs to be read prior to livestock turnout and after livestock come off each year to determine if a thriving natural ecological balance is being maintained between wild horses and other resource users.

16. CONSTRUCT AN EXCLOSURE TO HELP DETERMINE IF THE WHITE SAGE COMMUNITIES REPRESENTED BY KEY AREA 1011 HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO ACHIEVE DPC OBJECTIVES

Rationale: A fenced area which excludes livestock and wild horse grazing will serve as a comparison area to determine the range site potential for attainment of the DPC objectives under proposed grazing management.

17. CHANGES TO OBJECTIVES

(a). Delete RPS objective d. which states "Coordinate season of use with the Ely District BLM".

Rationale: This objective was accomplished during the consultation on the September 1991 "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" which incorporated the Antelope Valley Allotment in a deferred rotation system which established seasons of use.

(b). Delete RPS objective a. which states "Manage livestock to maintain present ecological status and trend"

Rationale: This objective is covered under 17.(d) Changes to Key Area Objectives.

(c) Revise the utilization objectives for key areas 1011, 1012, and establish utilization objectives for 1013 and 1014 as follows:

(1) Manage for a maximum use of current years growth at 35% on key grass species and 25% on white sage by the end of the spring use period for livestock (i.e. at the end of grazing).

(2) In areas grazed in common by wild horses and livestock, manage for an average of 10% use on key forage species by wild horses prior to entry by livestock on winter range.

Note: Future evaluations will determine if this utilization objective is still appropriate, especially during those years when livestock graze during the spring use period.

(3) Manage for a maximum average combined utilization by livestock and wild horses on previous years growth at 55% on key grass species and 35% on white sage by the end of winter dormancy. Combined use not to exceed 60% on key grass species and 50% on key shrub species in any one year.

Rationale: The livestock grazing system includes periodic use during the winter and spring use periods. Wild horses graze the allotment for approximately 9 months out of the year. Adding utilization objectives for spring use is important because vegetation can be most adversely affected by grazing during the growing season. The Wells Resource Area Wild Horse Amendment approved August 13, 1993 established the objective of 10% average use by wild horses on key forage species prior to entry by livestock on winter range so that grazing by both wild horses and livestock would not exceed the utilization objective established for the end of winter dormancy. The "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals" of September 1991 included a light utilization prescription (35%) on white sage which applies to grazing through the end of winter dormancy. The revised utilization levels, coupled with the rotation cycle described in the grazing system, is expected to improve ecological conditions and wildlife habitat conditions.

d. The wildlife habitat objectives and ecological status objectives for KA-1012 will be combined and modified to be a desired plant community objective. The ecological status objective on KA-1011 will also be modified to be a desired plant community objective. The desired plant community objectives for each key area are expected to be achieved by 2005 and are outlined below:

Desired Plant Community Objectives	
Key Area	Desired Plant Community
KA-1011	Increase perennial grass composition from 1% to 3% or more** Maintain or increase perennial forb composition from 3% or more** Maintain or increase white sage composition at 53% or more.**
KA-1012	Increase perennial grass composition from 11% to 15% or more** Maintain or increase perennial forb composition at 4% or more** Maintain the percent composition of black sage at 55%**
** As measured by percent composition of dry weight	

Rationale: Halogeton, an undesirable invader species, currently makes up 41% of the plant community at key area 1011. There is sufficient desirable grasses to produce seed for new plant establishment and compete with halogeton. Recommended management actions should allow a modest increase in grass composition by 2005.


The plant community at key area 1012 also has openings for new plant establishment. Recommended management actions should allow desirable grasses to increase by 2005.

E. NEPA Review

The selected management actions for the Antelope Valley Allotment conform with the Record of Decision for the Wells Resource Management Plan (RPM) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued on July 16, 1985. The Environmental Impact Statement and Administrative Determination of NEPA Compliance are on file in the Elko District Office, P.O. Box 831, Elko, Nevada 89803.

F. FUTURE MONITORING EFFORTS

The Wells Resource Area will continue to monitor the allotment. The monitoring data will be reevaluated according to the Wells Resource Area Allotment evaluation schedule. These reevaluations are necessary to determine if the allotment specific objectives are being met under the existing management strategies. Appendix A outlines the multiple use objectives to be used in the next allotment evaluation.



Bill Baker, Manager
Wells Resource Area



Date

Appendices:

- A. Multiple Use Objectives

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APPENDIX A

Allotment Management Objectives

1. General Allotment Objectives Listed in the Wells Rangeland Program Summary:

- A. Provide forage to sustain 5,072 AUMs for livestock grazing.
- B. Periodically evaluate the monitoring data for the allotment to reinstate 130 AUMs of suspended non-use when they become available.
- C. Improve or maintain all seasonal big game habitat in the Antelope Valley Allotment to good or excellent condition to provide forage and habitat capable of supporting the following reasonable numbers:
 - 51 mule deer; 64 AUMs
 - 22 pronghorn antelope; 53 AUMs
- D. Facilitate big game movements by modifying 2.6 miles of existing fences in the Antelope Valley Allotment to Bureau standards.
- E. Manage for a wild horse herd size which will maintain a thriving natural ecological balance consistent with other multiple uses while remaining within the wild horse herd boundary.
- F. Construct the "Antelope Water Catchment" for wild horses.

2. Activity Plan Objectives

An interim grazing system has been developed for the allotment via the "Stipulation to Withdraw Appeals". An AMP or Habitat Management Plan has not yet been developed for the allotment. A Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan has been developed for the Antelope Valley Herd Management Area.

A. AMP - None

B. Herd Management Area Plan Objectives

(1). Multiple Use: The objective in the Antelope Valley HMA is to maintain a healthy, viable population of wild horses in a thriving natural ecological balance with all other resources and users.

(2). Appropriate Management Level (AML): When the allotment evaluations are complete (prior to 1994), a total AML for the HMA will be determined. The number of horses will be maintained within of \pm 15% of AML.

AML will be maintained using one or more of the following options: periodic removals with no selectivity, selective removals targeting specific age groups, or fertility control. The objective of the selective removals and fertility control is to decrease the reproductive rate in the wild horse population so removals are not necessary more than once every four years. The reproductive rate is now at 18% annually; the objective is to reduce the rate by 10%.

(3). Free-Roaming Characteristics: The wild horses within the Antelope Valley HMA will be managed in a manner to maintain their wild and free-roaming characteristics.

(4). Coloration and Conformation: The wild horses within the Antelope Valley HMA which exhibit the "Spanish Barb" characteristics will be maintained within the population. Fertility control treatments and or removals in the future will exclude those horses that obviously exhibit those traits. No other characteristics or conformations will be selected. Only those animals with gross deformities or disease will be eliminated from the herd.

3. Key Area Objectives

The wildlife habitat objectives and ecological status objectives for KA-1012 will be combined and modified to be a desired plant community objective. The ecological status objective on KA-1011 will also be modified to be a desired plant community objective. The desired plant community objectives for each key area are expected to be achieved by 2005 and are outlined below:

Desired Plant Community Objectives	
Key Area	Desired Plant Community
KA-1011	Increase perennial grass composition from 1% to 3% or more** Maintain or increase perennial forb composition from 3% or more** Maintain or increase white sage composition at 53% or more.**
KA-1012	Increase perennial grass composition from 11% to 15% or more** Maintain or increase perennial forb composition at 4% or more** Maintain the percent composition of black sage at 55%**
** As measured by percent composition of dry weight	

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Key Area Objectives			
Key Area	Key Species	Utilization ¹	Utilization ²
KA-1011	Indian Ricegrass (ORHY)	55%*	35%*
	White Sage (EULA5)	35%*	25%*
KA-1012	Indian Ricegrass (ORHY)	55%*	35%*
	Bluegrass (POA++)	55%*	35%*
	White Sage (EULA5)	35%*	25%*
<p>(1) Manage for a maximum average combined utilization by livestock and wild horses on previous years growth at 55% on key grass species and 35% on white sage by the end of winter dormancy. Combined use not to exceed 60% on key grass species and 50% on key shrub species in any one year.</p>			
<p>2) Manage for a maximum use of current years growth at 35% on key grass species and 25% on white sage by the end of the spring use period for livestock (i.e. at the end of grazing).</p>			
<p>(* In areas grazed in common by wild horses and livestock, manage for an average of 10% use on key forage species by wild horses prior to entry by livestock on winter range.</p>			

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