4-4-01

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Surprise Field Office
P.O. Box 460, 602 Cressler Street
Cedarville, CA 96104
(530)279-6101 - (530)279-2171 FAX
www.ca.blm.gov

In Reply Refer To:
1792/4120/4130 (CA-370) P

April 4, 2001

CERTIFIED MAIL #7099 3220 0002 1690 4884
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Jewelle Estill
PO Box 67
Likely, CA 96116

PROPOSED GRAZING DECISION
Wall Canyon East Allotment
Livestock Grazing Authorization
and Grazing Plan Revision

Dear Jewelle:

Enclosed for your review is my Decision for the *Wall Canyon East Allotment Livestock Grazing Authorization and Grazing Plan Revision.* This Decision represents the Proposed Action (as mitigated) in the Environmental Assessment (CA-370-01-03). The Proposed Action consolidates the two existing permits held by Estill Ranches into a single permit, as well as revises the existing grazing strategy. This proposal was developed in consultation and coordination with the Wall Canyon East Technical Review Team, which included the livestock operator, and other affected interests. The decision is based on monitoring data from 1990-2000.

Please review the attached Decision. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Jeffers or me at the above telephone number/address.

PROTEST AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interest may protest this Proposed Decision under 43 CFR 4160.1 in person or in writing to the Authorized Officer at the following address: *Susan T. Stokke, Field Manager, Surprise Field Office, PO Box 460, Cedarville, CA 96104.*

Any protest must be filed within 15 days after receipt of the Proposed Decision. The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) as to why the Proposed Decision is in error.

In the absence of a protest, the Proposed Decision will become the Final Decision of the Authorized Officer without further notice unless otherwise provided in the Proposed Decision.

Any applicant, permittee, or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the Final Decision may file an appeal and petition for stay of the Final Decision pending final determination of the appeal. The appeal and petition for stay must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the address stated above within 30 days following receipt of the Final Decision, or 30 days after the date the Proposed Decision becomes final.

The appeal shall clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the appellant thinks the Final Decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay, the appellant shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is not granted.
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and,
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer.

Sincerely,

Acting for Susan T. Stokke
Field Manager

Enclosures

cc:
Jim Linebaugh, Consultant - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4891
Huel Morphis, TRT/Environmental - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4327
Steve Slusser, TRT/NRCS - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4334
Marla Bennett, TRT/USFWS - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4341
Mackey Hedges, TRT/Permittee - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4358
Modoc County Land Use Committee - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4365
Roy Leach, Nevada Division of Wildlife - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4372
Rose Strickland, Sierra Club-Toyabe Chapter - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4389
Sharon Netherton, Friends of Nevada Wilderness - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4396
Catherine Barcomb, Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses - #7099 3220 0002 1690 4402
Dan Heinz, American Wildlands (uncertified)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE
P.O. Box 460
Cedarville, California 96104
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In Reply
Refer To:
4120/4130 (CA-370) P

April 4, 2001

WALL CANYON EAST ALLOTMENT

Environmental Assessment for Livestock
Grazing Authorization and Grazing Plan Revision
EA Number: CA-370-01-03

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to consolidate two existing grazing permits and issue a single 10 year term permit on the Wall Canyon East Allotment (No.1014) to authorize livestock grazing. Also proposed is modifying the current grazing management plan in order to address identified rangeland health issues.

The Wall Canyon East Allotment encompasses 49,277 acres, including 1400 acres private land. The allotment is located approximately 41 miles east of Cedarville, California in Washoe and Humboldt Counties, Nevada. Refer to Map 1 (General Location Map) and Map 2 (Allotment Map) for more information. Elevation range is between 5500 and 6200 feet. Vegetation communities are a mix of low sagebrush, big sagebrush, and bitterbrush/bunchgrass.

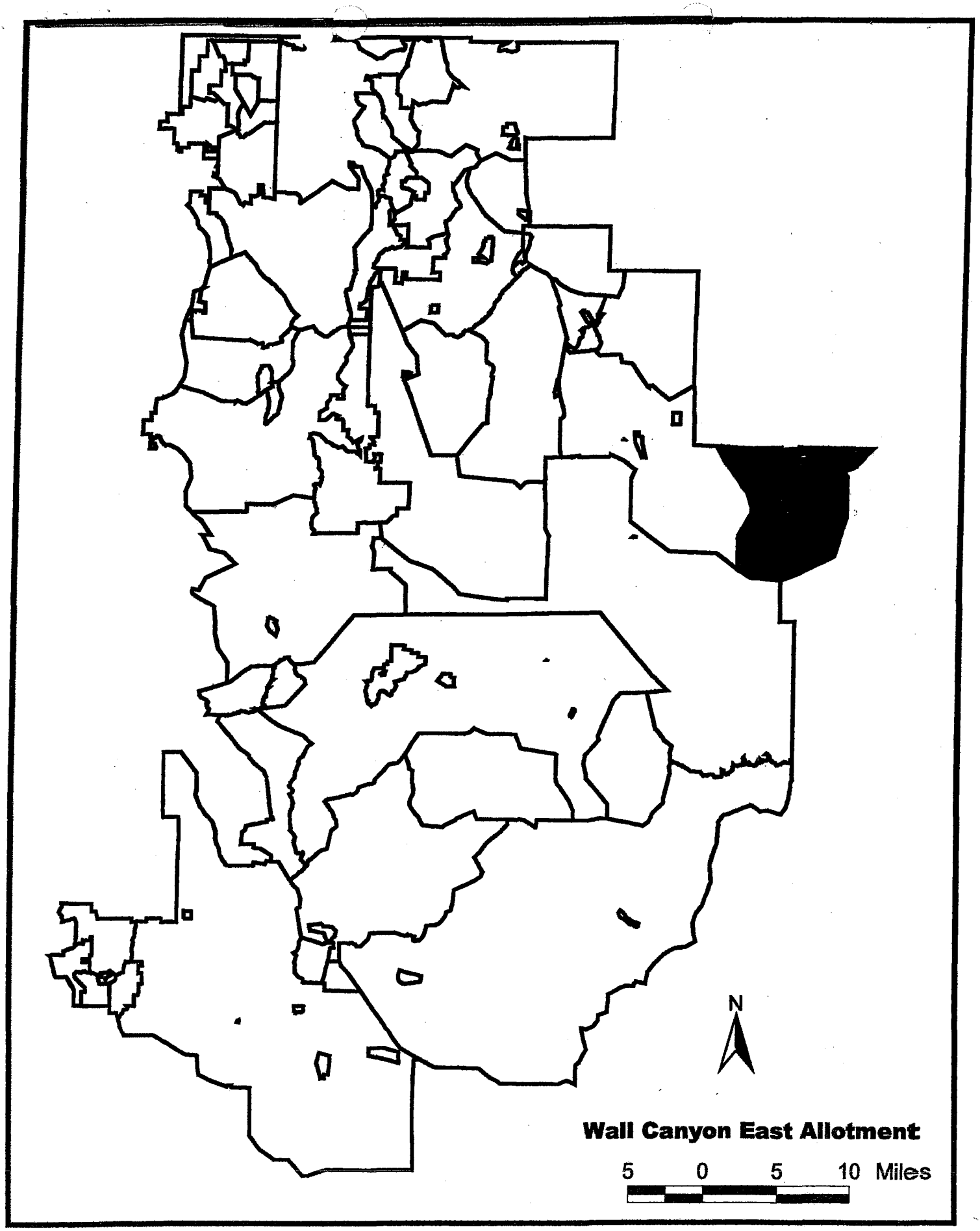
The two existing grazing permits were acquired by Estill Ranches at different times. Consolidating the permits will facilitate permit administration for BLM and the permittee. Total permitted use follows:

Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
3215	224	3439

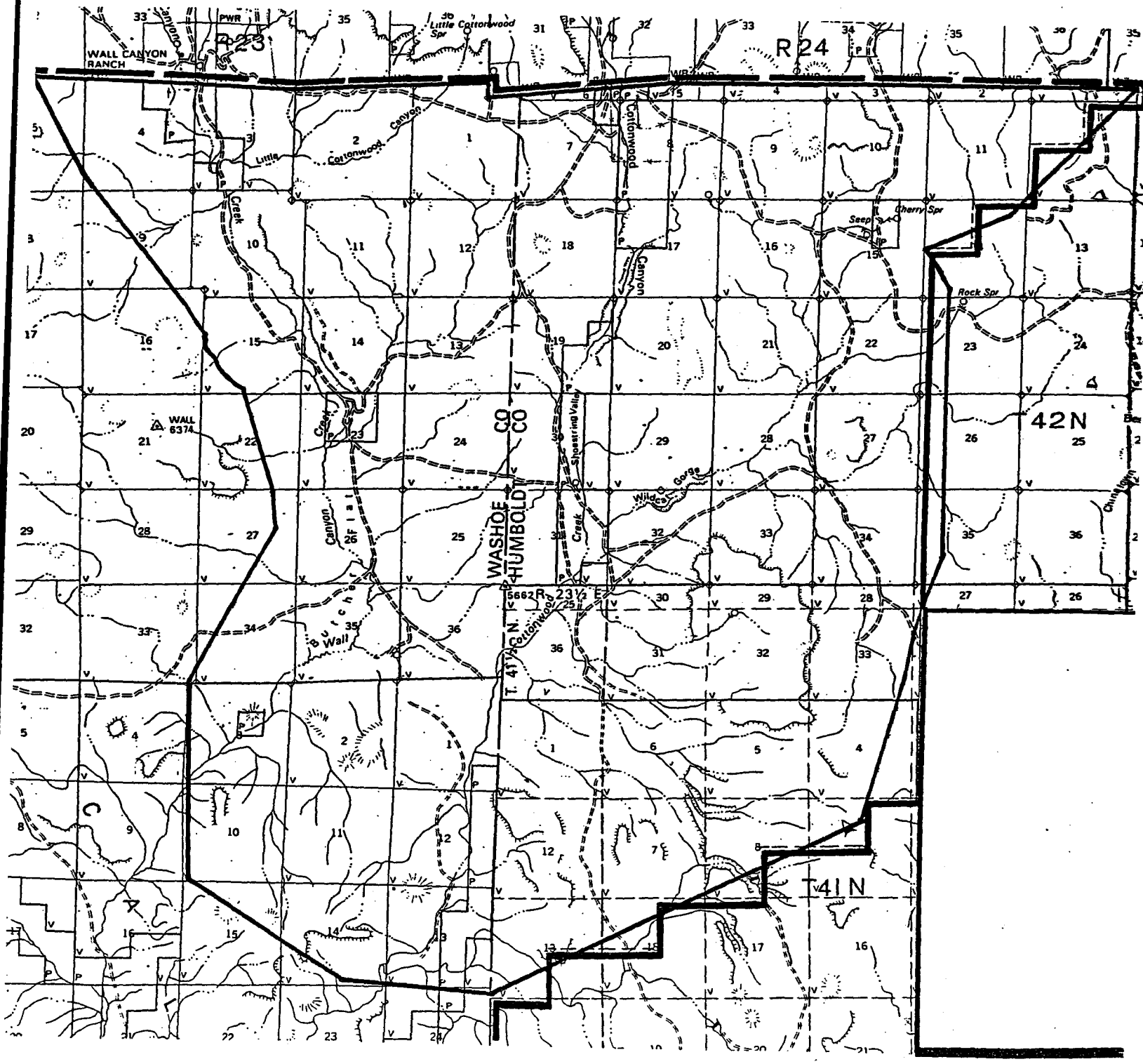
The current season of use is May 1 to October 15; however, actual use has been adjusted annually for several years to allow for a shorter season with more numbers of livestock.

Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is needed to authorize grazing in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.* Action is required to maintain or improve resource conditions including rangeland health.



Map 1- General Location Map



Wall Canyon East Allotment
Environmental Assessment - 3/01

Map 2- Wall Canyon East Allotment Map

Plan Conformance

The Proposed Action is subject to the Cowhead/Massacre Management Framework Plan (MFP), approved on April 24, 1981. The Proposed Action will occur in an area identified for livestock grazing in the Management Framework Plan. The Proposed Action is consistent with the land use decisions and resource management goals and objectives of the plan, pages 24 to 27. Therefore, the Proposed Action has been determined to be in conformance with this plan as required by regulation (43 CFR §1610.5-3(a)).

Conformance with Rangeland Health Standards

The allotment was assessed for conformance with the Fallback Rangeland Health Standards in 1999. Results from this assessment are summarized below:

Standard Not Being Met	Location	Area/Size	Reason Not Met
Stream Health	Lower Portion of Cottonwood Creek/Wall Canyon Creek	1 mile Cottonwood Crk. 2.0 miles Wall Canyon Crk.	Lack of woody species, where potential exists; early to mid-seral vegetation.
Riparian/Wetland Areas	Lower Portion of Cottonwood Creek/Wall Canyon Creek	Cottonwood Crk- 7 acres Wall Canyon Crk- 6 acres	Early to mid-seral herbaceous species present.
Native Plant Communities	Loamy Bottom Sites	Estim. 1000 acres	Lack of native herbaceous vegetation.

The Fallback Rangeland Health Standards (43 CFR 4180) were superceded by the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards for Range Health which were approved in July 2000. The Standards are essentially the same with the exception that the newly approved standards include a standard for water quality. As a result, water quality will be addressed in detail in this environmental assessment.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Plans

Endangered Species

There are no known Federally listed threatened or endangered species on the Wall Canyon East Allotment.

Cultural Resources

California BLM has explicit responsibility to manage cultural resources on public lands consistent with laws, regulations, and procedures that are set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Executive Order 11593, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the Antiquities Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Executive Order 13007, Executive Order 13008, BLM Manual Sections 8100-8160, and the protocol agreement between the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office and the Bureau of Land Management. These laws and regulations are set

into place to provide a means to evaluate, protect, and manage cultural resources located on public and (in some cases) private lands. The environmental assessment regarding cultural resources located within the Wall Canyon East Allotment were guided by the above laws, regulations, and policies.

Wilderness

On December 21, 2000, the East High Rock WSA was officially designated as wilderness, as part of the legislation to establish the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area. The southwest portion of the Wall Canyon East Allotment lies within the East High Rock Wilderness Area.

No new range improvements are proposed within the newly designated East High Rock Wilderness, and none of the actions proposed will increase the amount or appearance of livestock use within the wilderness. The Proposed Action is consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and 43 CFR 8560.

Water Quality

The Wall Canyon East Allotment is within a watershed governed by the State of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Quality Planning. Executive Order #12088 directs Federal agencies to comply with State administrative procedures.

Air Quality

The area designation for northern Washoe County and Humboldt County National Ambient Air Quality Standards has been classified as "attainment". Federal actions are not subject to conformity determinations under 40 CFR 93. No significant cumulative impacts to air quality are expected.[1]

Public Scoping

Over 300 key publics were informed about the Proposed Action in the Surprise Update, issued October 2000. The Proposed Action was also reviewed by the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Executive Committee (December 2000), the Northeastern California Resource Advisory Council (February 2001), the Nevada Division of Wildlife and various environmental groups (January and February 2001), the Fort Bidwell Indian Community (February 2001), the Cedarville Rancheria (March 2001) and the Stewardship Technical Review Team (October 2000).

Concerns identified as a result of these contacts included: a need to implement management which will achieve healthy range and riparian conditions; a need to improve wildlife habitat, especially for sage grouse, a Nevada State Sensitive Species, and to restore native plant communities; a need to ensure that proposed management maintains/enhances wilderness values; maintaining free-roaming behavior of wild horses within the allotment; social and economic impacts to the grazing permittee and local community. An additional concern was voiced relative to potential effects regarding Environmental Justice.

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[1] Consultation with Linda Obrien, Air Quality Supervisor for Washoe County District Health Department, Air Quality Management Division, Washoe County, Nevada and Scott Archer, National Air Quality Program Lead for the Bureau of Land Management.

Consultation with the livestock permittee, his consultant (Jim Linebaugh), and ranch manager has been ongoing since 1997/1998. Consensus regarding the Proposed Action was reached between the livestock permittee, BLM, and TRT.

Issues Selected for Analysis

The following issues were identified for detailed analysis during the scoping process:

- How will upland vegetation communities be affected?
  Livestock grazing has potential to affect the ecological status of range sites within major livestock use areas by selectively grazing preferred plants, resulting in a decrease in the most desirable plants and an increase in less desirable plants over the long term. Long term changes in plant species diversity and productivity, and downward trend in ecological status could result for range sites within the major livestock use areas. Increased risk of invasive plant species becoming established could also result.

- How will riparian areas and water quality be affected?
  Riparian health is a function of plant communities in upward trend toward or achieving good ecologic status. Plant species diversity and productivity consistent with riparian areas in good ecological status protects stream banks from accelerated erosion, slows runoff, catches sediment from spring runoff and provides adequate residual vegetation for wildlife.

- How will known cultural resource sites be affected?
  Livestock grazing can adversely impact cultural resource sites which are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places through trampling, trailing, and compaction.

- How will wildlife habitat values be affected?
  Livestock grazing can affect wildlife habitat values through long-term changes in plant species composition and productivity. Annual removal of herbaceous cover can also alter the amount of residual vegetation available to provide hiding cover for various species. On the Wall Canyon East Allotment, the value of the vegetation communities to provide forage and habitat for species of concern including deer, antelope, sage grouse (a Nevada State sensitive species), and non-game species will be evaluated.

- How will habitat for wild horses and burros be affected?
  Fencing to implement more intensive grazing management strategies has potential to affect free-roaming behavior of wild horses.

- What are the potential social and economic effects?
  Livestock grazing provides an economic benefit not only to the rancher engaged in the livestock business, but also to local communities and businesses. Specific social and economic factors to be addressed in this environmental analysis include: economic value of the authorized AUMs to the ranch operation and local community; employment opportunities for low income and minority groups; and cost of proposed new range improvements.

Issues Considered but Dropped from Detailed Analysis

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

No Areas of Critical Environmental Concern have been designated within the Wall Canyon East Allotment.

Farmlands, Prime or Unique

It is the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) policy to make and keep current an inventory of the prime farmland and unique farmland of the Nation. This inventory is to be carried out in cooperation with other interested agencies at the National, State, and local levels of government. The objective of the inventory is to identify the extent and location of important rural lands needed to produce food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Nevada NRCS has designated any farmland that is irrigated to be of statewide importance. After consulting with NRCS Reno Field Office and Reno State Office, there would be no affect under any of the alternatives because no prime or unique farmlands were identified on public lands within the Wall Canyon East Allotment.

Floodplains and Wetlands

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 require Federal agencies to avoid occupancy and modification of floodplains and wetlands to reduce the hazard and risk from floods on human safety, health, and welfare, and to restore and preserve natural and beneficial floodplain and wetlands values. There are no Federal Emergency Management Agency flood hazard designation for the allotment as the area is not populated and is very remote. All the alternatives should result in improving riparian/wetland health; no significant adverse impact would be expected.[2]

Native American Concerns

Consultation with the Fort Bidwell Tribal Community and the Cedarville Rancheria highlighted support for changes in grazing management which will ensure that healthy range and riparian areas are achieved with resulting benefits to wildlife habitat and native plant communities. Employment opportunities are also a concern for the tribal communities.

Recreation

About 11,000 acres of the Wall Canyon East Allotment was designated by Congress as a wilderness area (East High Rock) within the Black Rock/High Rock Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area on December 21, 2000. As a result of the wilderness designation, off-highway vehicle and other forms of vehicles use would be limited to emergency situations only. Opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude would be expected to increase.

Historically, the Wall Canyon East Allotment has had very low intensity recreational use. Such use is expected to continue, and will likely be in the form of hunting for big game and upland game birds. The primary impact of grazing on primitive recreation opportunities will be the presence of domestic livestock in the area during the grazing season. There will be

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[2] FEMA Flood Boundary and Floodway Map, Washoe County, Nevada.

the continued presence of the livestock operator or his workers on the allotment during periods of livestock use for herding and or facility maintenance activities. No adverse cumulative impacts to recreation opportunities as a result of the Proposed Action would be expected.

Soils

Dominant soil types range from loams on big sagebrush sites to clay loams on low sagebrush sites. Soils mostly have a very low infiltration rate (high runoff potential) when thoroughly wet. Many of the soils have high shrink-swell potential or a claypan or clay layer at or near the surface. Erosion potential of these soils ranges from slight to severe. There are no identified erosion problems on the Wall Canyon East Allotment except for the Chalky Knoll site which is a low-producing, naturally erosive site.

BLM assessed the allotment in August 1999 to determine if the Rangeland Health Standards are being met. The Upland Soils Standard is being met on the majority of the allotment. With the exception of some of the Valley Bottom range sites, upland soils appear to be stable and are well protected from accelerated erosion by vegetation, rock fragments and litter. The Proposed Action would be expected to result in improvement of organic matter and an improvement in long term productivity. No significant adverse impact to soils in the allotment would be expected.[3]

Waste, Hazardous or Solid

Detailed surveys of hazardous or solid wastes have not been undertaken on this allotment. BLM maintains no records of reportable spills in the allotment. Although use of motorized vehicles and equipment by the livestock operator may have resulted in periodic and scattered spills or releases of fuel and petroleum products in the allotment, none are documented.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

There are no wild and scenic rivers nor any reaches of stream currently considered eligible within the Wall Canyon East Allotment. Therefore, there are no impacts to values associated with Wild and Scenic Rivers from livestock grazing.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Features Common to the Alternatives

Grazing Permit Consolidation

Included in the Proposed Action and Early Use Alternatives is the consolidation of the two grazing permits for Estill Ranches.

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[3] Consultation with Steve Slusser (NRCS). More information on soils within the Wall Canyon East Allotment can be found in the following documents: (1) Soil Survey of Washoe County, Nevada - North Part #759 on file in the Surprise Field Office.

Landscape Goals

The following landscape goals have been developed for the Wall Canyon East Allotment:

1. Manage for riparian/willow communities so they will be at or near potential natural community (PNC).
2. Retain at least 75% of the existing bitterbrush communities. Achieve a form class of 2.25 or less.
3. Restore valley bottom range sites in order to achieve site potential.
4. Retain mountain big sagebrush communities by treating no more than 15% of mountain big sagebrush sites every five (5) years.
5. Retain Wyoming sagebrush communities by treating no more than 10% of Wyoming sagebrush sites every ten (10) years.

Resource Management Objectives

See Appendix A for a detailed summary of proposed resource and monitoring objectives.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action was developed by the Wall Canyon East Technical Review Team after a field inspection and on-site review of resource issues and conditions found on the allotment. The Proposed Action would be to:

- ❑ Renew the permit for the Wall Canyon East Allotment (#1014) for a period of 10 years (March 1, 2001 to February 28, 2011);
- ❑ Modify grazing management in order to achieve Rangeland Health Standards.

Livestock Numbers and Season of Use

Number	Kind	From	To	% Public	Active AUMs
656[4]	Cattle	May 1	September 30	98%	3,215

Proposed Grazing System to Achieve Standards

Grazing management would be modified in order to implement the grazing system recommended by the Wall Canyon East Technical Review Team as follows:

- A deferred rest rotational system with a maximum of 600 cattle will be implemented.
- On Years 1 and 3, cattle would be turned out on approximately May 1 in the southeastern portion of the allotment. On or about June 1, the livestock would be moved to the northeastern portion of the allotment until July 15. On July 15, the cattle would be moved to the northwestern portion of the allotment to graze for the balance of the year (until September 15). The southwestern portion of the allotment would receive rest from grazing.

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[4] The operator is proposing to run only about 600 head annually during the first one-two cycles of the proposed grazing strategy. However, flexibility is provided for the operator to run the full authorized number of livestock, provided that annual utilization criteria are met.

- On Year 2 and 4, the above system would be changed so the May 1 turnout would occur on the southwestern portion of the allotment. Here cattle would remain until June 1 when cattle would be moved to the northwestern portion until July 15. On July 15, cattle would be moved to the northeastern portion of the allotment for the balance of the season (until September 15).

- The above grazing system could be adjusted so that the sequence occurring on Year 1 and 3, or the sequence occurring on Years 2 and 4, is repeated on consecutive years, to provide rest for any planned future vegetation treatments.

Terms and Conditions

- All grazing use would be in accordance with the revised allotment management plan.

- Light use (20-40%) would be the upper limit of utilization allowed on herbaceous and browse species.

- Herding would be required to limit cattle use on the riparian areas associated with Wall Canyon Creek and Cottonwood Creek. A four inch (4") minimum stubble height left remaining at the end of the grazing season would be required.

- Salt would be placed no closer than 1/4 mile from any water source.

Range Improvements

The following range improvements are proposed to facilitate implementation of the above strategy to achieve rangeland health:

Proposed Range Improvements			
Project Name	**Location**	**Comments**	**Description**
1) Cottonwood Creek Protection Fence	T. 42 N., R. 24 E., Section 30	New Project	Protect from wild horse/livestock grazing to achieve properly function condition.
2) Shoestring Windmill Reconstruction	T. 41 ½ N., R. 23 ½ E., Section 25	Non-operational	Provide water source away from riparian areas.
3) Yellow Hills Windmill Reconstruction	T. 42 N., R. 23 E., Section 35	Non-operational	Provide water source away from riparian areas.
4) Butcher Flat brush control/ revegetation.	T. 42 N., R. 24 E., Sections 23 & 26	Possible Future Project (will be considered under separate environmental analysis)	Restore Valley Bottom sites.
5) Cherry Spring Redevelopment	T. 42 N., R. 24 E., Section 15	Non-operational	Provide water source to improve distribution.
6) Sheldon Boundary Spring Redevelopment	T. 42 N., R. 23 E., Section 1	Non-operational	Provide water source away from riparian areas.

None of the new range improvement projects are located within the East High Rock Wilderness Area. Refer to Map 3 – Proposed Range Improvements. The Yellow Hills is an existing projects within the wilderness. It will be maintained pursuant to the regulations (43 CFR 8560). A possible future project is reducing brush in the Butcher Flat area. Because this project lies within the new wilderness, this project will be considered for implementation only after completion of appropriate additional site-specific environmental analysis.

Monitoring

The following chart lists types and timing of monitoring to be conducted on the Wall Canyon East Allotment.

Monitoring Type	Location	Date of Establishment	Monitoring Schedule
Upland Utilization - Landscape Appearance Method	Allotment wide	Use Patterns- 2001 Key areas- 2001	Yearly, at end of grazing season.
Riparian Stubble Heights - Greenlines	Cottonwood & Wall Canyon Creeks	2000	Yearly, along the greenline, at mid-season and after removal of livestock.
Riparian Ecologic Status – Greenlines	Wall Canyon & Cottonwood Creeks	Establish spring of 2001	Re-read at five year intervals.

Early Use Alternative

The Early Use Alternative includes:

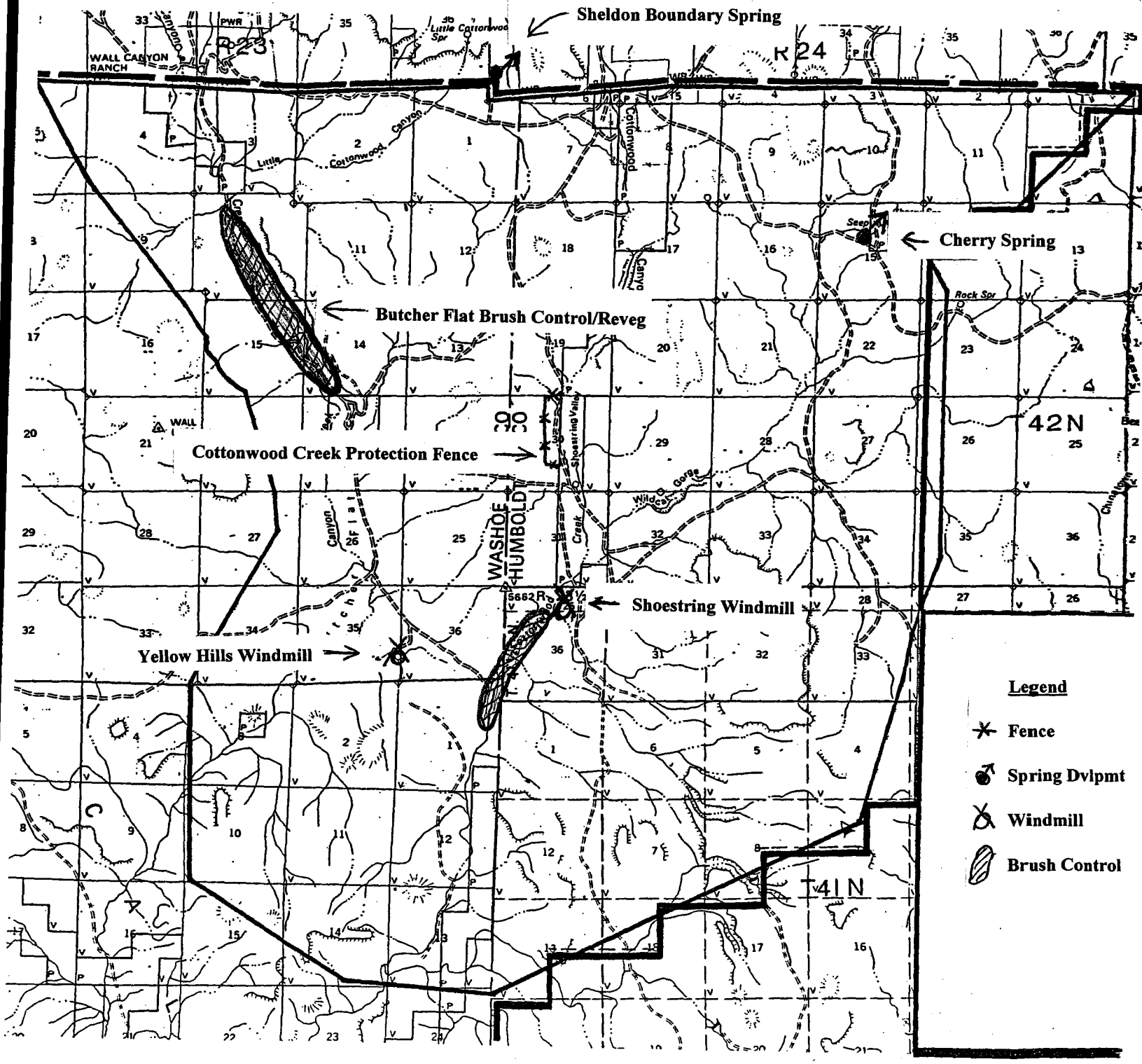
- ❑ Consolidating the two (2) permits for Estill Ranches and issue a 10 year permit to Estill Ranches (for a period of March 1, 2001 to February 28, 2011);
- ❑ Continue present management, which calls for early use of the allotment each year.

Livestock Numbers and Season of Use

Number	Kind	From	To	% Public	Active AUMs
1312	Cattle	May 1	July 15	98%	3,215

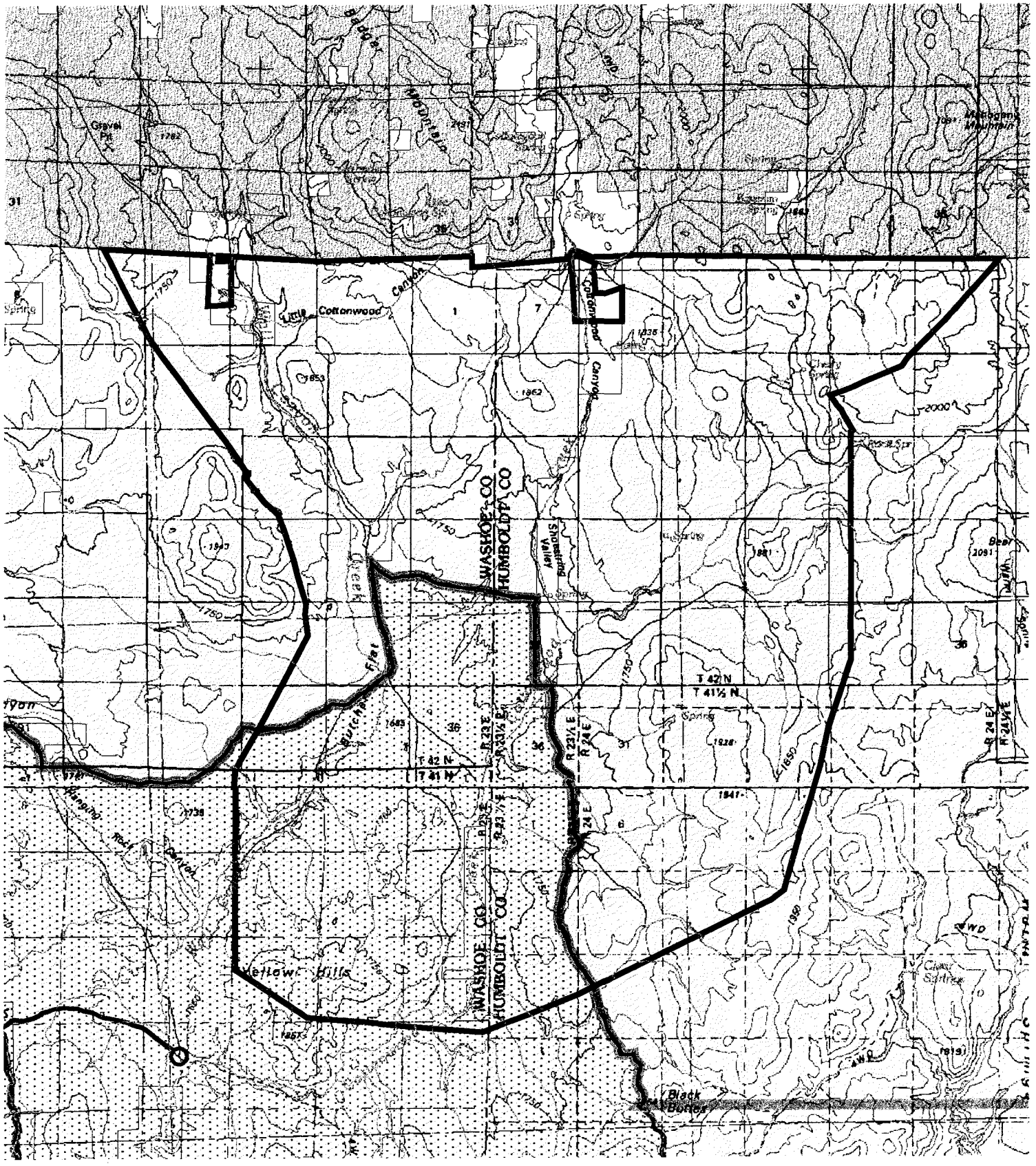
Grazing System - Early Use Alternative

Under this alternative, the allotment would be used early each year (May 1-July 15), with all portions of the allotment being grazed. Herding would be used to minimize use in the riparian areas associated with Wall Canyon Creek and Cottonwood Creek.



Wall Canyon East Allotment
Environmental Assessment - 3/01

Map 3- Proposed Range Improvements



Allotment

Wilderness Area

National Conservation Area

Ownership

BLM

PRIVATE

USFWS

Wall Canyon East Allotment

1:100000

1 0 1 2 3 Miles

N

March 21, 2001

Range Improvements
Proposed range improvements would be the same as in the Proposed Action.

No Grazing Alternative
This alternative would cancel the grazing permits on the Wall Canyon East Allotment. As a result, grazing would not continue on the Wall Canyon East Allotment. This would be a permanent cancellation. The BLM would initiate a process in accordance with the 4100 regulations to permanently eliminate grazing on the allotment.

Other Alternatives Considered
The permittee had proposed the possibility of changing the class of livestock from cattle to sheep in the Wall Canyon East Allotment. Due to the presence of bighorn sheep in High Rock Canyon and on the Sheldon National Refuge directly to the north, and because this is not in compliance with the approved land use plan, this alternative was dropped from further consideration.

Another alternative which was considered was implementing a grazing strategy which would provide for grazing livestock one year in three (graze in year one, rest the allotment in years two and three). This alternative was dismissed from detailed study because the livestock permittee has proposed grazing management which would be expected to result in significant progress toward achieving the identified landscape goals and site-specific resource management objectives. The Proposed Action provides for monitoring and evaluation, and further adjustment, as needed, in order to ensure significant progress is achieved over the next ten to twenty year period.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The following section discusses the existing situation and anticipated environmental effects of the Proposed Action and its alternatives relative to the issues identified for detailed analysis on Page 6 of this environmental assessment.

Upland Vegetation Communities/ Invasive Plants

Affected Environment
The Wall Canyon East Allotment contains mainly low sagebrush communities on the benches and hills, and big sagebrush communities on areas with deeper soils. Herbaceous species associated with the low sagebrush sites include bluegrass, squirreltail and forbs such as buckwheat and phlox. Associated with the big sage sites is needlegrasses, squirreltail, great basin wildrye and a variety of forbs. Repeated early livestock use has impacted plant vigor and diversity of some key upland sites.

In the northeast portion of the allotment, there is a good stand of bitterbrush. Cheatgrass, an invasive plant, is found only in small, localized areas within the allotment; no noxious weeds are known to occur within the allotment. No threatened or endangered plant species have been identified in the allotment. There are small populations of Astragalus tiehmii, Cryptantha schoolcrafti, and Eriogonum crosbyae on ashy soils in the Butcher Flat area. These are special status (sensitive) plant species, however, no impact as a result of current or proposed livestock grazing would be expected.

Observations of livestock utilization during the past five to ten years, indicate that utilization in the uplands is generally light while use in riparian areas has been heavy. During 2000, about five inches of stubble was left in Wall Canyon Creek. The public portion of Cottonwood Creek received heavy use, primarily by wild horses.

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action

   The proposed grazing system provides for alternate years of rest for one half of the lower country each year, and early use alternated with deferment for the higher country each year. This should have positive impacts to the vigor, reproduction and overall production of vegetative communities. Bitterbrush stands in the northeast portion of the allotment would be expected to remain in good condition due to a lack of livestock use.

   Range improvements associated with the Proposed Action include the reconstruction of two windmills, reconstruction of two springs and a short fence to protect Cottonwood Creek (See riparian section). The reconstructed range improvements should improve distribution in the allotment and serve to draw animals away from riparian areas. This will have positive impacts to vegetation by lessening use levels in both the uplands and riparian habitats.

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative

   The current system calls for early use of the entire allotment on an annual basis. Early use, each year, by a large number of livestock could potentially pose a negative impact to the vigor of key perennial species. In the long term, grazing annually during the growing season could have severe impacts to vigor and decrease the composition of key forage species. The risk for invasive plants to become established would be expected to increase. Grazing early each season, would have minimal impacts on bitterbrush, as livestock do not generally graze this browse species until late summer and the primary bitterbrush stands are in poorly watered areas. Impacts from the reconstruction of range improvements would be the same as the Proposed Action.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

   The No Grazing Alternative would benefit upland vegetation in the allotment by decreasing the amount of use by 3,215 AUMs annually and reducing allowable livestock utilization of upland forage from a maximum of 40% to no more than 20% use of upland herbaceous grasses by wild horses. Although use by wild horses would continue, this alternative provides for retaining a minimum of four inches of stubble height within key riparian areas. When wild horse numbers increased to the extent that this minimum level is met or exceeded, excess wild horses would be removed from the herd management area. This would result in positive impacts to the health of vegetative communities throughout the allotment.

4. Cumulative Impacts

   Implementation of the Proposed Action should provide adequate rest/deferment and improvement in plant vigor and diversity over the long term.

Riparian Areas and Water Quality

Affected Environment

Two perennial streams are present: about a one mile reach of Cottonwood Creek and a two mile reach of Wall Canyon Creek. The lower segment of Cottonwood Creek and Wall Canyon Creek have shown heavy use and trampling in the past. These segments are currently functional-at-risk and are not presently meeting the Riparian or Stream Standards; however, some progress is being made towards meeting the standard. The lower segment of Cottonwood Creek is functional-at-risk because of the lack of late seral species such as Nebraska sedge. Only a few young willows are present.

The upper segment of Cottonwood Creek is in properly functioning condition and receives very little use by livestock or wild horses because access is limited by the steep canyon rims. This segment is well vegetated with herbaceous species and dense stands of woody species such as aspen, willow, choke cherry, serviceberry and rose. Diverse age class and structure is also present along the upper segment.

Wall Canyon Creek, a spring fed system, is currently functioning-at-risk. While the stream banks are well vegetated with early seral herbaceous species of rushes and sedges, only a few small patches of Nebraska sedge are present in insufficient amounts to stabilize the stream banks during high runoff years. This system was rated as functional-at-risk with a slight upward trend because the stream channel is slowly narrowing and the banks are trapping sediments and building in places. However, opportunity exists for improvement in species diversity and productivity.

Various seeps and springs occur throughout the allotment, both on public and private lands. The seeps generally occur on areas not accessible to livestock. The springs occur primarily on private lands. Cherry Spring, a portion of which is on public land, is currently grazed heavily with some headcutting and accelerated erosion occurring.

Current beneficial uses for the allotment are: watering for livestock and wild horses; aquatic life; and propagation of wildlife. It is assumed that water quality is suitable for the existing beneficial uses for the allotment. No temperature data has been collected on the two perennial streams.[5]

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action

   The Proposed Action is expected to result in significant progress toward achieving the management objective for riparian plant communities at or near potential natural community during the next ten year period. A four inch minimum stubble height would be retained at the end of the grazing season in Wall Canyon Creek, and the lower reach of Cottonwood Creek is proposed for fencing and livestock exclusion. Herding would be required to ensure progress toward achieving the standards. The Proposed Action would fence Cherry Spring

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[5] State of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Quality Planning - Water Quality Regulations, revised February, 1998.

and install some headcut stabilization structures. Significant improvement would result. No adverse impacts are anticipated on the ephemeral systems within the allotment.

Insufficient information regarding the beneficial uses of water in Cottonwood Creek and Wall Canyon Creek is available to speculate about the importance of water quality impacts from proposed livestock grazing. It is assumed that where riparian condition is less than PFC, water quality is not meeting State standards. Water quality would also probably be less than desirable for the native assemblage of aquatic life.

Provided that herding is effective and utilization criteria are met, an improvement in riparian vegetation diversity and productivity should result with positive long term benefits in water quality for beneficial uses. Should monitoring indicate that herding is ineffective, or utilization criteria are not being met, further adjustment of the grazing strategy is provided for in the monitoring plan (see Appendix A).

Best Management Practices in the proposed alternative include:

- Fencing lotic riparian areas and providing water at designed gaps.
- Decreasing the number of animal units.
- Improving livestock distribution by providing a full time herder.
- Implementation of a deferred rest rotational system.

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative
Impacts to riparian values and water quality from livestock grazing would be the same as those outlined for the Proposed Action.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative
Under the No Grazing Alternative, wild horses would continue to graze riparian and upland areas. Excess wild horses would be removed when monitoring demonstrates that wild horse utilization is meeting or exceeding the four inch minimum stubble height requirement. Provided that a four inch minimum stubble height is maintained annually, significant improvement in riparian species diversity and productivity would be expected.

4. Cumulative Impacts
Over the long term, improvement in riparian functionality, and plant species diversity and productivity would be expected with the proposed grazing management.

Other land use activities within the watershed have potential to cumulatively impact water quality. Included is: excess wild horse numbers; irrigation return flows; pastured livestock on private wet meadows; and any future farming or other disturbance of native meadows. These types of activities have the greatest potential to affect water quality by increasing water temperature and or decreasing dissolved oxygen. Proposed grazing management would not be expected to contribute significantly to the nutrient levels in the streams in the allotment. Under all alternatives, BLM's application of BMPs would result in a gradual reduction in observed temperature loading and an increase in dissolved oxygen.

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment[6]

Fifty-two cultural resource sites have been recorded within the Wall Canyon East Allotment. Ten of the sites have been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The remaining sites are either not eligible or have not yet been evaluated for National Register eligibility. All of the recorded sites are prehistoric. However, unrecorded historic sites are known to exist within the allotment. Site types range between simple, sparse lithic scatters and isolated tools to complex quarries and habitation sites. Less than three percent (approximately 1480 acres) of the allotment has been surveyed for cultural resources at a Class III level (Cowhead-Massacre EIS: 1980). A Class III level survey is a continuous, intensive survey of an entire target area, aimed at locating and recording all archaeological properties that have surface indications, by walking close-interval parallel transects until the area has been throughly examined.

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action

   Under the Proposed Action, archaeological sites located within the Wall Canyon East Allotment would continue to be accessible to livestock and wild horse use. The varying degrees of livestock and wild horse impacts would depend upon the location of the archaeological sites to livestock and wild horse concentration areas. Those sites with potential to be the most affected would be located near water sources, in shady areas, along routes to water sources or along fencelines. Not all sites will be of National Register quality. However, sites that are eligible, or that may become eligible in the future, need to be properly mitigated as outlined in the referenced laws, regulations and policies (page 4). Under the Proposed Action, potential exists for the ten known National Register eligible sites to continue to be impacted to some degree from livestock and wild horse use.

   Recommended Mitigation: Because the proposed grazing strategy proposes to run fewer livestock under a rotational grazing strategy as compared to the current management, livestock impacts associated with the ten known National Register (NR) sites should be substantially reduced. As a result, the known NR sites should be monitored during the first cycle of the grazing strategy. Should monitoring indicate that livestock and wild horse impacts are unchanged as a result of the Proposed Action, the following actions should be implemented: (1) re-record affected sites; (2) collect samples of obsidian lithic sources for sourcing and hydration in those sites associated with reduction and quarrying; (3) sites associated with habitation should also note the depth of disturbance. Because subsurface testing would only disturb more of the cultural resources, it is not recommended for the above sites since depth of disturbance from livestock and wild horses is less than six to eight inches.

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[6] Consultaton with the State of Nevada, State Historic Preservation Officer. References include Cultural Resource Reports, Surprise Field Office.

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative
Continue livestock and wild horse use under the Early Use Alternative (current management) would contribute to further loss of specific utilization loci and some adverse effect to overall site integrity of known NR eligible sites.

Recommended Mitigation: In order to prevent further impacts to site integrity resulting from the Early Use Management, the ten NR sites sites should be re-recorded, and if needed, fence or data recovered.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative
Under the no grazing alternative, damage to cultural resources in the form of trampling, trailing, displacement, and breakage would cease. Re-vegetation resulting from no grazing would contribute to increased soil stability. However, fire would become an increasing threat to the cultural resources within the allotment. Grazing has contributed to the reduction of fine fuels, which has decreased the frequency of fire within the allotment. A no grazing policy would increase fine fuels leading to the possibility of artifact damage from intense, sustained heat.

4. Cumulative Impacts
Future sites discovered within the Wall Canyon East Allotment would need to be assessed for grazing impacts, and an eligibility determination made. National Register eligible sites that are being impacted by grazing would require timely implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

Wildlife

Affected Environment

The Wall Canyon East Allotment provides low value for mule deer and moderate value for pronghorn antelope. One known sage grouse strutting ground exists within the allotment with several others possible. Information from brood surveys and hunting information collected by the Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW) show that sage grouse and their broods can be found using riparian areas in the summer and fall, but mainly in the north half of the allotment.

A portion of the allotment serves as an important fall/spring migration corridor for deer that utilize the bitterbrush component, with approximately the northern eighth of the allotment being used year-long. Winter use areas are critical to antelope along the ridges. The entire allotment is used by antelope, in low densities, all year.

The rocky rims provide good habitat for golden eagles, falcons, and other raptor species. A small population of California bighorn sheep in adjacent High Rock Canyon may use the rim rock canyons within the allotment, particularly in winter. These sites are in the northern half of the allotment in uplands adjacent to Wall Canyon Creek, Cottonwood Creek and two miles east of the Nut Mountain Allotment, just outside the allotment boundary.

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action
   The Proposed Action should result in an improvement of vegetation resources within the allotment. Improving distribution of livestock is expected to benefit big game species such as deer and antelope by increasing vigor of shrubs and grasses. By reducing impacts to riparian areas and/or imposing light use limits on riparian and upland vegetation, overall benefits to sage grouse nesting and brooding habitat are expected. This benefit would occur in the form of better nesting cover and higher production of forbs and insects for young sage grouse.

   In order to reduce possible short term negative impacts to loafing sage grouse broods, the Butcher Flat brush control project would require additional site-specific environmental analysis. Possible measures to be considered in analyzing the proposed Butcher Flat project include: (1) carrying the project out in several phases so that the entire area is not treated at one time; and (2) any re-seeding efforts that take place should include a mix of native grasses and forbs (especially legumes).

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative
   The Early Use Alternative would have much the same benefits to riparian habitats as the Proposed Action. Over the long term, annual early use of the uplands may impact vigor, resulting in decreased production of key vegetative species. This would tend to have negative impacts on all wildlife species, especially sage grouse, which require relatively dense standing herbaceous matter for nesting. Possible negative impacts to sage grouse could arise if herding was not effective at keeping higher densities of livestock from overly disturbing young sage grouse broods on or near riparian habitats, thereby making them more vulnerable to predation.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative
   The No Grazing Alternative would result in reduced competition for available forage with wildlife species. However, wildlife densities are such that livestock are probably not a limiting factor. The No Grazing Alternative would accelerate recovery of riparian communities. This would have beneficial impacts on sage grouse nesting and brooding habitat.

4. Cumulative Impacts
   None identified.

Wild Horses and Burros

Affected Environment

The Wall Canyon East Allotment and Wall Canyon Wild Horse Herd Management Area share common boundaries. In 1993, an appropriate management level (AML) range of 15-25 head of wild horses was established for the herd management area. At the time of AML establishment, a removal brought the population of animals to within this range.

Wild horses from the Wall Canyon HMA are known to mix with wild horses from the adjacent Warm Springs HMA (Winnemucca Field Office) and the High Rock HMA to the south. Since 1993, the population of animals has steadily grown, until the autumn of 2000, when another removal was conducted. With this removal, it is estimated that there are currently 19 head of animals inhabiting this HMA.

The bulk of the animals appear to utilize the higher benches on the northern end of the HMA. The animals have been found to use both Cottonwood and Wall Canyon Creeks, the few scattered reservoirs and springs in the allotment. During the summer of 2000, the wild horses were determined to be impacting riparian conditions along the public portions of Cottonwood Creek. When animals are at or near AML, it appears there is little conflict with livestock for forage or water. As the wild horse numbers increase, competition becomes more apparent. A Herd Management Area Plan was prepared in 1986 and was revised in 1989.

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action
   The Proposed Action calls for fencing a third mile of Cottonwood Creek, where wild horses go for water. However, the fence design will provide for a water gap so animals will still have access to water. The Proposed Action calls for no new interior fencing on public lands within the allotment, therefore, no further impacts to wild horse movements would be expected to occur.

   The Proposed Action allows use by about 600 head of livestock until September 15. This contrasts with the current management which provides for use by 1,312 cattle until July 15th. As a result, increased competition between livestock and wild horses for available water when water becomes more limited may result. Because livestock numbers would be nearly 700 head fewer than current, fewer numbers of animals would be competing for the available water.

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative
   By removing all livestock by July 15, competition for forage and naturally-occurring water during the hot summer season would be eliminated.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative
   Based on the above assumptions, the No Grazing Alternative would benefit wild horses by eliminating competition with livestock for available forage and water. However, this effect would not be considered significant since wild horse numbers are relatively low and would be expected to remain low in order to ensure significant progress toward achieving the identified resource management objectives.

4. Cumulative Impacts
   None identified.

Social and Economic Values/ Environmental Justice

Affected Environment

The livestock operation on the Wall Canyon East Allotment serves as an integral part of the Soldier Meadows Ranch operation, near Gerlach, Nevada. Personnel involved with the operation of this allotment, generally reside outside of Surprise Valley. Operation of this allotment is likely insignificant to the region, but may be marginally important to the economy of Gerlach and to low-income or minority populations for the employment opportunities it could potentially provide. Low income or minority groups who could potentially be affected by the Proposed Action or its alternatives are Native American and Hispanic populations living in Modoc County, California and Humboldt and Washoe Counties, Nevada. The permit holder is not a member of a low-income or minority population.

Environmental Consequences

1. Impacts of the Proposed Action
   The Proposed Action requires intensive livestock herding to meet riparian and upland vegetation objectives. This would result in increased costs for the livestock permittee as the employment of at least one, and possibly more, personnel would be needed at least part-time. The economic value of the increased costs is estimated at $6000 (40 days additional herding for one person @ $150/day). Because herding was proposed and agreed to by the livestock operator, the anticipated costs are not expected to be significant for the livestock operation. Likewise, no adverse impact to the local economy is anticipated as no change in permitted livestock use is proposed. A slight beneficial effect to Gerlach and on low-income or minority populations would be expected as a result of increased employment opportunities for on-the-ground allotment management.

2. Impacts of the Early Use Alternative
   This alternative has much the same impacts as the Proposed Action. Like the Proposed Action, intensive herding would be required to meet riparian and upland vegetation objectives. A similar amount and type of range improvement maintenance would be required. This alternative would continue current employment opportunities for one or more individuals, and therefore, could be expected to minimally improve potential benefits to low income and minority populations regionally and the local community of Gerlach.

3. Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative
   The No Grazing Alternative would eliminate the need for at least one person who is currently employed to herd and otherwise care for the permitted livestock. The need to perform maintenance on livestock support facilities would also be eliminated. This would result in decreased operating costs for the livestock operator of about $20,000 annually (no labor for herding, no grazing fees, and no range improvement maintenance costs). Potential impacts to the local and regional economies would be none to slight. The No Grazing Alternative would potentially have slight negative impacts on the handful of lower income or minority populations associated with this type of ranch work within the local area.

Wall Canyon East Allotment
March 2000

Appendix A

Resource Management and Monitoring Objectives

Resource Issue	Resource Objective	Monitoring Objective	Implementation Objective
The Loamy 8-10 and 10-12 Range Sites are presently below site potential due to the lack of herbaceous perennial plant cover. Opportunity exists to improve the diversity and productivity of the sites by increasing the cover of herbaceous perennial plants and improving plant vigor.	The MFP objective is to manage these range sites to achieve mid-successional vegetation condition (50-75% of climax or good ecologic condition). Proposed short-term objective is: • Increase ground cover of desirable perennial plant species from current levels by 5-10% within 10 years.	Limit livestock use to 30-40% utilization on upland perennial grasses. Determine change in ground cover of desirable perennial plant species from re-reading existing trend studies in 2011.	Implement a deferred/rest rotational grazing strategy.

4. Cumulative Impacts

Increased operating costs or loss of AUMs would be unlikely to have a significant adverse impact to the livestock operator since the Wall Canyon East Allotment is only one of several ranching enterprises in which the operator is involved. The Soldier Meadows Ranch operation has some importance to Gerlach's economy; however, increased tourism following NCA and wilderness designation is likely to be a greater positive economic effect. Over the long term, additional employment opportunities for low income and minority groups may result.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Monitoring and evaluation procedures would be in place to ensure that there would be no long term adverse impacts. Any further changes in management would be implemented based on the evaluation of data collected.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

There would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources due to the minimal investment in range improvement work necessary to implement the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts

The Proposed Action would be expected to result in significant progress toward achieving the identified resource objectives. Opportunity to utilize the available forage would be provided consistent with making significant progress towards meeting resource objectives. No significant adverse cumulative impacts have been identified.

LIST OF PREPARERS

Rob Jeffers, IDT Leader/Range and Wild Horse Specialist
Elias Flores, Wildlife Biologist
Alan Uchida, Soil, Air, Water and Noxious Weed Specialist
Roger Farschon, NEPA Coordinator/Ecologist
Barry Dopp, Rangeland Management Specialist
Penni Carmosino, Archeologist

Resource Issue	Proposed Resource Objective	Proposed Monitoring Objective	Implementation Objective
Upper Cottonwood Creek is at or near potential natural community. Due to terrain, livestock and wild horse use of this area is minimal.	Maintain current conditions.	Periodic spot-checks. Re-assess functionality in 2006.	None identified.
The 1/4 mile reach of Lower Cottonwood Creek (west of the private field) is functioning at-risk with no apparent trend. Riparian vegetation lacks diversity (mostly early seral vegetation is present). Opportunity exists to improve stream health and riparian/wetland condition by retaining sufficient residual vegetation and increasing vegetation diversity.	Manage to achieve 75% of the two-five year floodplain in dense communities of stabilizing/ colonizing vegetation within 5 years.	Determine percent change in early seral vs. late seral vegetation by establishing a greeline transect in 2001 and re-reading it in 2006.	• Riparian exclosure.
The Lower Cherry Spring Complex is currently receiving heavy use by livestock and wild horses. This area lacks vegetation diversity and accelerated erosion is occurring.	Achieve proper functioning condition within 5 years.	Photo-points.	• Install 3-5 headcut structures. • Off site water/fencing.

Resource Issue	Resource Objective	Monitoring Objective	Implementation Objective
Dry Floodplain (Range Site 23-05) sites are below site potential due to the lack of herbaceous understory and a brush-dominated overstory. Opportunity exists to improve the diversity and productivity of this site by decreasing brush cover and increasing the cover of herbaceous perennial plants.	The MFP objective is to manage these range sites to achieve mid-successional vegetation condition (50-75% of climax or good ecologic condition). Proposed short-term objective is: • Reduce brush cover on up to 50% of the Dry Floodplain Range Site.	Limit livestock use to30-40% utilization on upland perennial grasses. GPS or map treated vs. untreated area.	As above. A possible future project which would require detailed analysis in a separate environmental document is brush beating in strips. A minimum of two years post-treatment rest would be required.
Wall Canyon Creek is functioning at-risk with a slight upward trend. There is a lack of vegetation diversity with mostly early seral vegetation present. Opportunity exists to improve stream health and riparian/wetland condition by retaining sufficient residual vegetation and increasing vegetation diversity.	Manage to achieve 75% of the two-five year floodplain in dense communities of stabilizing/ colonizing vegetation within 5 years.	Determine percent change in early seral vs. late seral vegetation by establishing a greeline transect in 2001 and re-reading it in 2006. Retain 3-5" of residual vegetation within the greenline by the end of September annually.	• Implement a deferred/rest rotational grazing strategy. • Herding is required.

Resource Issue	Proposed Resource Objective	Proposed Monitoring Objective	Implementation Objective
Repeated heavy utilization or continuous hot-season livestock use has potential to adversely affect bitterbrush form class, vigor and age distribution. Opportunity exists to maintain bitterbrush form class at 2.25 or less.	The MFP objective is to give special consideration to key mountain brush fields. Include rest periods and utilization limits to improve and maintain this important wildlife habitat type in satisfactory condition. Proposed short-term objectives are: Manage bitterbrush for a form class of 2.25 or less.	Measure form class every 3-5 years at established Cole Browse locations.	• No new water development in this area proposed. • Implement deferred/rest grazing strategy. • Limit livestock use to light (20-40%) on bitterbrush.

Resource Issue	Proposed Resource Objective	Proposed Monitoring Objective	Implementation Objective
Many of the upland range sites (Loamy 8-10, Claypan 10-14 and Loamy 10-12) are important to sage grouse nesting and early brood-rearing. Opportunity exists to increase herbaceous understory and increase composition of palatable forbs.	Maintain suitable vegetation cover, composition and structure to support nesting sage grouse on Loamy big sagebrush sites. Maintain a high diversity of palatable forbs on low sagebrush and meadow sites as well as patches of adjacent sagebrush hiding cover.	On Loamy Range sites, manage to achieve/maintain 15% sagebrush canopy cover, 10% cover each of perennial grasses and forbs, and a minimum of 6-8 forb species. Also maintain 7 inches herbaceous cover surrounding shrubs capable of hiding nesting hens. On Claypan 10-14 sites, manage for 15% sagebrush canopy cover, 15% cover of forbs and 10-15% cover of perennial grasses.	• Periodic growing season rest. • Light utilization (20-40% maximum) at all seasons of use by livestock and wild horses.
Potential exists to interfere with free-roaming wild horse movement, behavior, and water availability through fence construction. Excess wild horses (numbers above the established AML) have potential to slow recovery or adversely impact range vegetation.	Maintain free-roaming wild horse movement, behavior, and water availability. Manage numbers below the high range of the AML.	Document new fence construction. Visual observation during range inspections. Population census once every three-four years, as a minimum.	• Little/no new fence construction. • Gather excess wild horses on a 3-5 year gather schedule, as funding permits.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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In Reply
Refer To:
4120/4130(CA-370) P

April 4, 2001

WALL CANYON EAST ALLOTMENT

Livestock Grazing Authorization
and Grazing Plan Revision
CA-370-01-03

Decision Record/FONSI

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action as described in the attached Environmental Assessment (CA-370-01-03), as mitigated.

My decision consolidates the two existing grazing permits held by Estill Ranches into a single permit. A new grazing strategy and projects designed to meet a new set of resource management and monitoring objectives for the Wall Canyon East Allotment will also be implemented. Implementation will begin with the 2000 grazing season.

Rationale

Based on the environmental analysis, the rotational grazing system described in the Proposed Action should be successful in correcting the identified rangeland health concerns and in making significant progress toward achieving the new site-specific resource management objectives.

The Early Use Alternative would be expected to lead to substantial improvement of riparian areas. However, consecutive years of early season livestock use has potential to, and is currently, negatively impacting the vigor of key forage plants within the uplands. Over-time, potential for long term decreases in species diversity and productivity and risk for invasive plants becoming established would increase.

While the No Grazing Alternative would lead to the most rapid recovery of the upland and riparian habitats, the Proposed Action provides for monitoring, and modification of the grazing strategy, as needed, based upon evaluating monitoring results during the next five to ten year period.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon my review of the Environmental Assessment (CA-370-01-03), I have determined that the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and its alternatives would not result in any significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required.

Approved: Susan J. Stoltz Date: 4/4/01

Surprise Field Manager