

MONITORING TWIN PEAKS ALLOTMENTS SUMMARY

July 23, 1993 - 8:00 AM - Eric Loft CF&G, Mike Dobel NDOW, Roy Leach NDOW

Weather cool: 64 degrees, overcast will occasional light showers, wind 15-25 from north

Range conditions: dry upland annuals, seedripe perennial grasses, few flowering forbs on riparian, seedripe bitterbrush

FINDINGS

It appears that livestock are being herded in the Twin Peaks Allotment and that utilization limits on key riparian habitat are being met with herding. Livestock using the Critical Deer Winter Range Subunit in April appear to have been herded to the Painter Flat, Mixie Flat and Buffalo Creek Subunits of the North Pasture. Livestock are using Skedaddle and Dry Valley Rim Subunits of the South Pasture since June.

Livestock numbers in the North Pasture are approximately 350 head. The 1993 license allows for 650 head. Livestock numbers in the South Pasture are approximately 170 head and the 1993 authorization allows for 328 head.

Wild horses in the North Pasture are approximately 100 head, far below the estimated 391 head.

No domestic sheep were observed on the allotment.

CONCLUSIONS

Livestock are being herded to open basins and pit tanks to avoid key riparian management areas. Actual numbers of livestock are approximately one half than license numbers. If utilization use pattern mapping data are used with licensed numbers, carrying capacity estimates for 1994 will not affect the present herd.

At key riparian management areas utilization limits are being met. Present wild horse numbers appear not to be a significant factor in utilizing riparian forage. Either wild horses are not using riparian forage or the 1992-93 winter killed the majority this herd. We believe the majority of wild horses were lost last winter. The August 1993 proposed gather of 220 head will be difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Review Bureau of Land Management weekly monitoring data to determine if survey findings are correct.

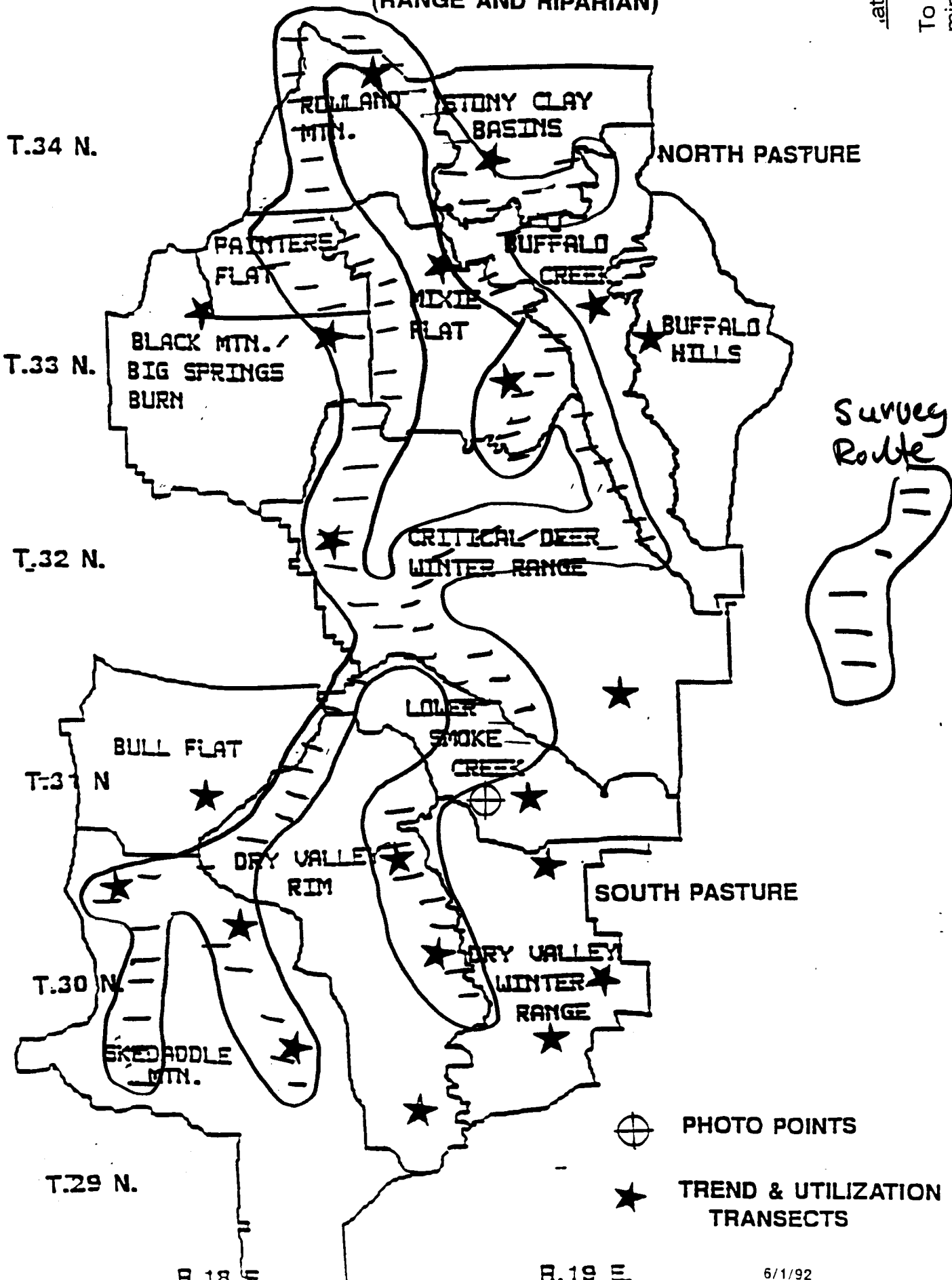
Litigate for using South Pasture.

Litigate for not adjusting livestock to carrying capacity.

FIGURE 2

TWIN PEAKS MONITORING SITES

(RANGE AND RIPARIAN)



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**SOUTH PASTURE**

Survey begin at 8:15 am. We surveyed portions of Dry Valley Rim, Skedaddale Mountain and Dry Valley Rim Winter Range Subunits for livestock distribution, livestock numbers, wild horses and key management areas.

Skedaddle Subunit

Jenkins Trough - Key management area

Cattle observed earlier this year at site. No cows on site and residual riparian vegetation visible by air.

Telephone Springs

Ten cows observed.

Bull Creek - Key management area

Utilization exceeds 40% on riparian key species.

Morgan Spring - Key management area

Thirteen cattle observed within 3 miles of Morgan Springs, Bull Creek drainage and Tin House Spring area. Utilization exceeds 40% limit on key riparian species.

Skedaddle Creek - Key management area (aspen)

Forty-six cattle observed between Skedaddle and Cherry Springs on and off public land.

Fifty head of cattle at the upper reaches of Skedaddle Creek. Aspen stands are within zone of influence.

Spencer Basin

Four cows observed on riparian area.

East Slopes of Skedaddle Mountains - 6,000 to 6,200 feet

Forty-one head found near pit tank.

Dry Valley Rim Subunit

Black Mountain

Thirty-five cattle observed two miles north of Black Mountain near Mustang Spring.

Red Rock Spring - Key management area

Two cows observed on site. Residual vegetation visible by air.

Willow Springs

No cattle observed. Riparian residual vegetation visible by air.

Notes:

The survey resulted in the observation of 164 cattle within the South Pasture of Twin Peaks Allotment. Four groups of approximately 45 cattle were observed. One group was in a large basin near pit tanks within the Dry Valley Subunit. Two groups were found on the slopes of the Skedaddle Mountains at headwaters of Bull and Skedaddle Creeks. A group was observed within the Skedaddle Creek drainage on public/private land. Small groups of livestock were considered strays.

Opinion:

The March 6, 1992 Decision Record did not schedule cattle use in the South Pasture. This decision is consistent with the Draft Cal-Neva Grazing Environmental Impact Statement's rest-deferred livestock grazing prescription for the Twin Peaks Allotment. The 1993 livestock preference statements allow for 328 livestock from June 6 to December 31. Our agencies' stipulation is now being debated with the Bureau.

Livestock numbers on the South Pasture are approximately one half the 1993 authorization. These authorizations were not consistent with the Decision Record or land use plan. Livestock are dependent upon pit tanks and riparian areas for water. When forage and/or water are depleted, it is likely that livestock will further congregate on key riparian management areas, as well as rest in the aspen stands of the Skedaddle Mountain Subunit.

Cattle use of the riparian and uplands must be monitored in the upper reaches of Bull & Skedaddle Creeks within the Skedaddle Mountain Subunit.

If the Decision Record or stipulation is implemented in 1994, "actual" cow numbers might be reported as "authorized" without verification by BLM. Therefore, any reduction per subunit or pasture to carrying capacity in 1994 could result in a "paper cows" reduction.

**SOUTH PASTURE**

Wild horses were not assessed by the Bureau in 1992 or 1993. Limited data was collected by our survey (14 head: 11 adults, 3 foals).

**Recommendation:**

Request monitoring data for numbers, use and utilization during June-July for Skedaddle and Dry Valley Rim Subunits.

**NORTH PASTURE**

Survey started approximately 9:30 am. Surveys were conducted on Lower Smoke Creek, Black Mountain, Painters Flat, Mixie Flat, Rowland Mountain, Stoney Clay Basin, Buffalo Creek and Critical Deer Winter Range Subunits to determine livestock distribution, numbers, wild horses and key management areas.

**Critical Deer Winter Range Subunit**

East Fork Smoke Creek - Key management area

Two cows observed. Riparian residual vegetation visible by air. Burros present.

Chimney Creek - Key management area

Seven cows observed. Residual vegetation present.

Wilcox - Key management area

Twelve cattle observed. Horses present. Residual vegetation present.

Sage Hen Springs - Key management area

Cattle recently removed from site. Exclosure fence down and riparian key species at 4" stubble.

**Mixie Flat Subunit**

Indian Springs - Key management area

Cattle use was evident on sedges. There is a lack of perennial vegetation. Thirty head of cattle present about two miles south, in a open basin (Mixie Flat).

Parsnip Spring/Creek - Key management area

No cattle observed. Cattle use of riparian is evident. Cattle use observed in June 1993.

**NORTH PASTURE**

Painters Flat Subunit

Painters Flat

Two hundred head of cattle observed in open basin. 51 horses observed with cattle.

Rowland Mountain Subunit

Antelope Basin

Twenty-two head of cattle observed. Painter Creek not accessible to livestock and is in good condition.

Rowland Mountain

No cattle observed on east or west slopes.

Stoney Clay Basin Subunit

Middle Fork Buffalo Creek

Forty-seven cattle observed in headwaters of Middle Fork. Thirty five cattle observed on private Norton Place. Heavy utilization of minor portion of riparian habitat along Middle Fork. Cattle observed bedding in creek.

Buffalo Creek Subunit

West Fork Buffalo Creek - Key management area

No cattle observed. Riparian in good condition.

North Fork Buffalo Creek - Key management area

No cattle observed. Riparian in good condition.

Lower Buffalo Creek - Key management area

Eight cattle observed. Site was heavily utilized in early summer. Cattle recently removed for site.

Notes:

Wild horses were observed throughout the allotment. A total of 88 wild horses (77 adults and 11 foals) were counted. Nine burros were observed near Twin Peaks and Burro Mountains comprising of seven adults and two foals. Livestock appeared to have been moved to the open basin in Painter Flat, Mixie Flat and upper Middle Fork of Buffalo Creek from the Critical Deer Winter Range Subunit. Areas void of cattle have residual riparian vegetation in spite of current wild horse numbers. Survey data indicates that cattle

numbers are approximately 330 head with 220 in Painter Flat, 30 in Mixie Flat and 80 head in the Middle Fork of Buffalo Creek. Small groups found in East Fork of Smoke Creek, Chimney Creek and Lower Buffalo Creek were considered strays.

Opinion:

The 1993 Livestock preference statement authorizes 650 head of cattle in the North Pasture until October 31. We believe that current livestock numbers are no greater than 350. Utilization of key species on key management areas in most subunits was evident and residual vegetation was present. With current licensing for 550 cattle from October 31 to December 31, and the estimated herd of 330 head, we suspect that livestock will be moved back into key management areas in used Subunits this fall and winter. The result will be no residual vegetation on key riparian management areas by early November.

The Decision Record and stipulation requires stocking rate or carrying capacity adjustments per Subunit or Pasture for 1993 and 1994 grazing seasons. Since the operator is running approximately one half of licensed use, it is likely that any reduction in 1994 will result in "paper cows" providing no resource protection for 1994.

The 1992 Wild horse decision estimated 391 wild horses within the North Pasture. In order to reduce this herd to appropriate management levels in August 1993 to 169 horses, the Bureau must capture 222 horses. Observations of 1992-93 winter wild horse mortalities were made by the departments, we feel horses were significantly reduced. We observed only 88 horses throughout their summer range. Capture of over 200 horses next month is unlikely. It is possible that wild horses are at their appropriate management levels based upon observed key riparian vegetation at key management areas.

The current livestock stocking rate, wild horse herd and antelope herd in the Painter Flat Subunit cannot be retained throughout the entire grazing season and met objectives. To our knowledge, the Monitoring Action Plan has no upland monitoring studies on Painter Flat, Mixie Flat, Stoney Clay Basin or Buffalo Hills Subunits. Monitoring studies are required by the Decision Record and are essential as cattle are herded from key riparian management areas.

Recommendations:

Request monitoring data to verify livestock numbers, distribution and utilization of key management areas. Wild horse population data and utilization of key management areas should be available. Monitor wild horse gathers as to numbers.