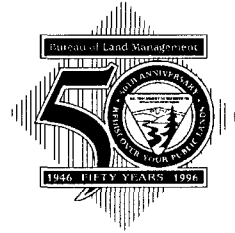




United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Resource Area
P.O. Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104



1-17-97
a: tuleda, ga 2

January 17, 1997

In Reply Refer To:
1792 (CA-370)
CA-370-97-01

CERTIFIED MAIL #P 954 727 010
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
c/o Catherine Barcomb
255 W. Moana Lane
Suite 207A
Reno, NV 89509

Dear Cathy:

Enclosed for your review is my Decision for the 1997 grazing plan on the Tuledad Allotment. This proposal was developed at the November 15, 1996, Tuledad Allotment meeting, and was based on monitoring conducted during 1996.

This Decision represents the Proposed Action (as mitigated) in the Environmental Assessment (CA-028-96-09).

Please review the attached Decision. If you have any questions, please contact Roger Farschon, Tara de Valois or myself at (916) 279-6101.

PROTEST AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interest may protest this Proposed Decision under Sec. 43 CFR 4160.1, in person or in writing to the Authorized Officer at the following address: **Susan T. Stokke, Area Manager, Surprise Resource Area, P.O. Box 460, Cedarville, CA 96104.** Any protest must be filed within 15 days after receipt of the 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, this 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 Decision pending final determination 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 state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the Final Decision is in error.

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

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
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,



Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Resource Area Manager

Enclosure

Decision Record

January 17, 1997

Tuledad Allotment:
Annual Grazing Plan for 1997 Season
Decision Record
CA-370-97-01

Decision

It is my decision is to implement the proposed Plan of Operations for the 1997 Grazing Season on the Tuledad allotment. This proposal is essentially the same as the Plan of Operations for the 1996 season. Therefore, an additional Environmental Assessment has not been prepared. The 1996 Plan of Operations was evaluated in an Environmental Assessment entitled **Tuledad Allotment: Annual Grazing Plan for 1996 Season (CA-028-96-09)**. That document adequately covers the 1997 Plan of Operations. The differences, two bands of sheep in 1997 versus three bands in 1996, and the requirement for full time cattle herding and no livestock conversions, would all result in less potential environmental impact from grazing related activities than occurred in 1996.

The Plan of Operations identifies grazing management actions for the 1997 grazing season needed to accomplish the following short term goals: 1) Provide rest for the Boot Lake pasture, 2) protect areas burned by wildfire over the past three years, 3) continue to minimize livestock use of key bitterbrush stands, and 4) maintain residual vegetation on riparian zones. The table below provides details of the 1997 grazing management and additional requirements.

Activity	Proposed Action
Livestock Turnout	Sheep: March 26 Cattle: April 15, w/option of no earlier than April 1 if soil and vegetation conditions warrant and the Area Manager approves
Sheep Grazing	Two bands of sheep scattered throughout lower elevations during April for lambing. Bunched into a band (1000 sheep) and slowly trailed toward western part of allotment until mid-summer. One band would come back on the allotment in late summer and leave September 30 to October 15. There would be no sheep use of the key bitterbrush areas after July 15. (see maps in Environmental Assessment CA-028-96-09)

Cattle Grazing	<p>650 head would be turned out in the lower elevations of North Pasture, except in the vicinity of past wildfires. Cattle would be herded to avoid burned areas, and limit concentration. Cattle would be removed from the allotment in first half of July.</p> <p>50 head would use the Bald Mountain Pasture from mid April to mid July. Maximum light use overall.</p> <p>500 head would be turned out in lower elevations of South pasture and allowed to slowly drift up in elevation and to the west during April and May. When soil and vegetation conditions in the Cottonwood Mtn and Buckhorn Road areas are appropriate for grazing, cattle would be moved into these two areas for June and early July. Cattle would then be herded out of Cottonwood Mountain and Buckhorn Road and into portions of the South Pasture that have not received use at that time. Cattle would stay in the South Pasture until Sept 30 unless utilization levels were anticipated to be exceeded. Cattle would then be moved into portions of the North Pasture outside the burns, the Wire Lakes key bitterbrush area and areas used in the spring by the 650 head. (see maps in Environmental Assessment CA-028-96-09)</p>
Utilization Standards	<p>4" minimum stubble height on riparian areas at the end of the season.</p> <p>45 percent maximum use on willows.</p> <p>Moderate use (40-60 percent) on upland herbaceous and woody vegetation except bitterbrush. Light use in Bald Mountain Pasture.</p> <p>45 percent maximum use on bitterbrush except in key bitterbrush areas.</p> <p>15 percent maximum use of bitterbrush in key areas by mid-July.</p>

Other stipulations	<p>Rest Boot Lake pasture.</p> <p>No salting or sheep bedding in aspen stands.</p> <p>No use in Bud Brown, Bare Creek, or Ant Spring exclosures.</p> <p>All fences for which the Tuledad livestock operators have maintenance responsibility must be maintained before turnout (higher elevation fences - when access permits).</p> <p>Cattle use would be regulated in both pastures by a full time herder. Permittees need to designate a representative that the BLM can contact to provide instructions to the herder.</p>
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Rationale

Implementation of this decision would provide for additional protection of key riparian areas through rest, grazing during seasons of low impact to riparian vegetation, and raising the residual vegetation requirements. The decision would also reduce the amount of time livestock spend in key bitterbrush areas during the seasons when livestock actively use this important shrub. The recovering wildfire areas would receive protection from potentially damaging levels of livestock use.

The decision would continue the ongoing work of continued improvement of resource conditions in the allotment while the Bureau is developing more comprehensive long term planning for the area.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon the Environmental Assessment CA-028-96-09 I have determined that implementation of the proposed Tuledad Allotment Annual Grazing Plan for 1997 would not result in any significant impacts on the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Susan T. Stokke
 Susan T. Stokke, Area Manager

1/17/97
 Date

Improvement Maintenance

The Bare Creek, Barber Creek and Bud Brown Enclosures were maintained to standards this year.

The Ant Springs Enclosure (constructed in 1996) was in good shape. No livestock use of these areas occurred in 1997. *However, the Bud Brown enclosure was used by wild horses year-round.*

Range Improvements

No new structural range improvements were scheduled for construction in 1997. Non-structural range improvements include the Boot Lake Prescribed Burn (about 400 acres), some aspen stand improvement, and removal of juniper encroachment in Bare Creek. Proposed projects for the longer-term management plan were also scoped and tentatively laid out.

Wild Horses

About 80 head of wild horses were removed from the Coppersmith and Buckhorn HMA's in October 1997 in order to maintain wild horse numbers at the AML's established through monitoring, environmental assessment and decision record in November, 1995.

1997 Grazing Season -- Summary

Ample forage and water was available throughout the 1997 grazing season. Overall compliance with the planned grazing schedule was good and short-term goals were mostly achieved. Upland herbaceous and riparian vegetation was healthy and vigorous with good ground cover/residual vegetation provided. Bitterbrush in Wire Lakes and Cottonwood Mountain had excellent leader growth and apparent trend is up.

Overall use of upland herbaceous vegetation was slight to moderate. Objectives were met for the Wire Lakes key bitterbrush area, but maximum allowable utilization levels were exceeded for the Cottonwood Mountain and Buckhorn key bitterbrush areas. By October, bitterbrush utilization had reached 60-70% on the Buckhorn, 20% on Wire lakes, and 50% on Cottonwood Mountain. Three way enclosures indicate little or no deer use occurring on the Buckhorn bitterbrush, however, about half the bitterbrush use on Cottonwood Mountain can be attributed to mule deer. The majority of riparian areas provided a 4-4+" stubble height at the end of the grazing season although riparian use was exceeded on three key areas within the South Pasture and overall riparian utilization was noticeably heavier in this pasture.

I believe the results from the 1997 grazing season underscore the importance of reaching agreement about a longer-term grazing strategy for the Tuledad Allotment. The following items will be discussed at our meeting on December 10th:

- ***How best to manage livestock to achieve desired resource conditions and implement proposed improvement projects.***
- ***Post-fire recovery and rest (Boot Lake, upcoming project proposals).***
- ***Management of key bitterbrush areas to ensure no use by sheep or cattle after July 15.***
- ***Riparian area management to achieve moderate or less use and maintain 4" or more residual vegetation/accelerate upward riparian trend at the end of the growing season.***

Please let me know as soon as possible if a meeting on December 10th won't work for you. If you have questions, please call me or Tara deValois. *I look forward to seeing you on December 10th.*

Sincerely,



Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Field Manager



**COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES**

1105 Terminal Way
Suite 209

Reno, Nevada 89502
(702) 688-2626

February 4, 1997

Ms. Susan Stokke
Surprise Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
602 Cressler Street
P.O. Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

Subject: Livestock Authorizations - Coppersmith/Buckhorn HMAs

Dear Ms. Stokke:

Thank you for providing the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses this opportunity to review the 1997 Grazing Plan for the Tuledad Allotment. This allotment supports several portions of wild horse herds in Nevada.

Any grazing system that can achieve the approved utilization standards will be beneficial to wild horses. As we agreed to after the last wild horse gather, better data could determine long term appropriate management levels that will achieve a thriving natural ecological balance. Monitoring of the utilization standards is essential to meeting the federal multiple use mandates.

We encourage the District to monitor the utilization standards for riparian areas and upland herbaceous vegetation prior to livestock turnout. These data will confirm the existing numbers of horses or justify future adjustments. After the fact monitoring of combined use (domestic sheep, cattle, wildlife and wild horses) confuses future decisions allocating available forage. Lack of knowledge has prompted controversy and delayed proper planning in the Tuledad Allotment in the past. We are supportive to your annual issuance of grazing authorizations and appreciate meaningful standards applied to terms and conditions of all permits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Barcomb".

CATHERINE BARCOMB
Executive Director