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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SURPRISE RESOURCE AREA
P.O. BOX 460
CEDARVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96104-0460

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1794/4100 (CA-028)

April 11, 1996

Catherine Barcomb
Executive Director
Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses
255 W. Moana Lane
Reno, Nevada 89509

RE: Reply to Tuledad EA/Proposed Decision

Dear Ms. Barcomb:

Thank you for your encouraging letter. I feel that the current efforts to resolve the issues surrounding the Tuledad Allotment will lead to both improved resource conditions for many uses, and improved dialogue between the users. I hope that you continue to stay actively involved.

I did want to address a few of the issues you raised in your letter. The Environmental Assessment was prepared to be as brief as possible. We may have been too brief by not including pertinent 1995 monitoring information. For your information, I have attached a summary of the 1995 data.

Our data for sheep use on bitterbrush suggests that sheep shift from forbs to shrubs sometime in June depending on local conditions. In 1995, sheep were observed using bitterbrush on Cottonwood Mountain in the second week of June. Sheep will continue to use bitterbrush through the summer and fall. The 1996 Grazing Plan for sheep requires that they be herded from the key bitterbrush areas (Cottonwood Mountain, Coppersmith Hills, and the Buckhorn Road areas) during the summer and fall period. This is to ensure that sheep browse little or none of the yearly production.

The goal of any wild fire restoration is to reestablish vegetation to the burned area that will prevent soil erosion. In the burns that have occurred over the past two years in the Tuledad Allotment, the primary goal has been returning the surviving plants to a vigorous condition. Spring grazing by any large ungulate, including wild horses, will be detrimental to that effort. Bitterbrush was planted on two of the burns as an experiment. We had previously contracted with California State University at Chico to start 1000 bitterbrush tubelings, for planting in existing bitterbrush stands. The burns presented an alternative site.

Existing utilization by livestock, wildlife, and wild horses is not uniform in the Tuledad Allotment. It varies with the elevation, vegetation, season, and topography. Regulating livestock use solely with utilization ignores this variability. The 1996 Grazing Plan was designed to shift livestock use around the allotment to allow livestock access to quality forage, but at the same

time minimize use on the key bitterbrush areas, the recovering burns, and the key riparian areas. The grazing strategy was developed based upon the staff's experience with seasonal use by livestock over the past 15 years. I am optimistic that substantial livestock grazing can occur simultaneously with resource improvement.

Tara de Valois and Denny Elllerman will be spending a high percentage of their time in the allotment again this year. They will be in regular contact with the permittees to facilitate any moves needed to ensure that the resource goals outlined are achieved. Their intent is that no area will exceed the utilization limits for the 1996 season.

I will continue to keep you informed of our activities within the Resource Area, and the Tuledad allotment in particular. Please call if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Roger Taylor, Acting

for Susan T. Stokke
Surprise Resource Area Manager

Enclosure
1995 Monitoring

1995 MONITORING

1. Actual Use

OPERATOR	USE AREA	ACTUAL USE 1995 (AUMS)	NONUSE 1995 (AUMS)	TEMPORARY NON-RENEW (AUMS)	ACTIVE PREF (AUMS)	% USE 1995
Berryessa	North	133	1	0	134	99%
Bicondoa	N/A	0	425	0	425	0
Cook (sheep)	South North Total	1,273 1,039 2,312	117	0	2,429	95%
Cook (cattle)	South North Total	726 603 1,329	1,865	0	3,194	42%
Goodwin/Jones	N/A	0	487	0	487	0
Lazy SJ	South North Total	460 404 864	0	62	802	108%
North Fork Ranch	South North Total	1,650 22 1,672	427	0	2,099	80%
Stodtmeister	N/A	0	218	0	218	0
TOTAL	South North Total	4,089 2,201 6,290	3,540	62	9,788	64%

2. Grazing System

The Bald Mountain use area was used by approximately 50 cows from April 15 to July 15.

The South Pasture was used by cattle from April 15 to July 20. Due to late spring rains and excellent forage production, cattle remained on the Duck Flat portion of the South Pasture through mid June. In June, cattle began moving up the slopes of the South Pasture into the lower Express Canyon, Rye Patch Canyon, and Burnt Lake areas. Few cattle reached the highest elevations of the South Pasture before they began moving into the North Pasture in early July.

Approximately 60% the cattle using the allotment were removed from the allotment by July 20. Approximately 150 cattle used the Cottonwood Mountain Pasture from the second week of July

until mid August. The remainder of the cattle used the North Pasture from July 15 to October 15. Within the North Pasture, 200 cattle used the Boot Lake use area from July 13 to late September.

3. Utilization

1995 Upland Utilization

1995 utilization map. Overall use of upland species in the North, South, and Cottonwood Mountain Pastures was light. In the South Pasture, the only heavily used areas measured were around SOB Lake. This use was attributed primarily to wild horses, as cattle did not reach this area until just before the early July pasture change. In the North Pasture, one meadow system in Wire Lakes was used heavily by both wild horses and cattle, and the east shore of Boot Lake was used heavily by cattle. Use in aspen and bitterbrush stands varied; however, overall use of these two species averaged higher than use on perennial grasses and forbs (see below).

Perennial grasses began to set seed in the middle of May, 1994. By early August, 1994, most perennial species in the lower and middle elevations were cured.

In 1995, the perennial grass growing season was 10 to 15 days later than in 1994. Perennial grasses did not begin to set seed until early June. They were curing in the lower elevations in mid August. Many perennial grass communities in the higher elevations did not cure until mid September, and these communities generally experienced regrowth in October.

1995 Riparian Utilization

Thirteen riparian areas were monitored in 1995 (see attached table). By October, only one area exceeded moderate use (Cercocarpus Spring); use on this spring was higher than in 1994 and most of this use was attributed to wild horses which spent virtually the entire summer on the meadow. One other transect was higher than in 1994 (Worland Canyon); two were essentially unchanged from 1994 (Bryant Spring and Windy Flat); and nine were down from 1994 (four of these were drastically lower than 1994).

Use on the Bud Brown riparian transect was down dramatically. Wild horses did not use the meadow as much in 1995 as they did in 1994 because there was more herbaceous forage in the uplands in 1995 and because the exclosure around the Bud Brown drainage received more attention and maintenance which discouraged wild horse use.

1995 Bitterbrush Utilization

AREA	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT.	OCT.
Wire Lakes key area	2.4 %			20.4 %	39.5 %
West of Wire Lakes key area	10.9 %			41.4 %	
Buckhorn key area	2.9 %	52.5 %		43%	51%
East of Buckhorn key area		18%			16%
Express Canyon		22%			54%
Cottonwood key area	30.2 %	26%		48.1 %	
North of Cottonwood key area	10.6 %			11.4 %	
South Boot Lake				70%	

Bitterbrush at 6000-6400 feet elevation hit red juice stage in the first week of July 1994.

Red juice stage was about ten days later in 1995, than in 1994, overall. Bitterbrush reached red juice stage by July 11, 1995 at 5600 feet elevation, and by July 14, 1995 over 6000 feet elevation. Red juice lasted until late July on the lower elevations and until early August on the highest elevations.

1995 Aspen Utilization

AREA	**NUMBER OF STANDS SAMPLED**	**NUMBER OF TRANSECTS SAMPLED**	**AVERAGE UTILIZ. (%)**	**UTILIZ. RANGE (%)**	**SUCKER DENSITY (#/100 SQ. FT.)**	**SUCKER DENSITY RANGE (#/100 SQ. FT.)**
Boot Lake	10	16	64.4	24 - 90	12.5	3.7 - 28
Cottonwood Mountain	5	10	63.1	30.5 - 78.8	5.6	0.8 - 10.7

4. Weather

Precipitation 1994-95

	Cedarville	Red Ball	Duck Lake
September 94	0.36	0.15	0.05
October	0.32	0.60	0.20
November	2.01	0.85	1.15
December	1.60	0.90	1.10
January 95	2.94	0.95	2.00
February	0.46	0.40	0.40
March	2.84	1.25	1.00
April	3.52	2.10	2.20
May	1.89	0.95	0.75
June	1.84	1.75	1.80
Total	**17.78**	**9.90**	**10.65**
Median/Average	**11.33**	**5.65**	**5.75**
% of Normal	**157%**	**175%**	**185%**

6. Riparian Functional Assessment

Functional with good vegetation diversity:

* North Barber Creek
* Silver Creek
* North and Lower Bare Creeks
* Lower Boot Lake Creek

Functional - less diversity/lower resource values:

Perennial:

* Selic Creek
* Alaska Creek
* Upper Bare Creek (w/in exclosure)
* Worland Canyon
* Snake Lake drainage
* Upper Boot Lake Creek drainage
* Bryant Spring Canyon

Intermittant:

* Upper Tuledad Canyon
* Express Canyon
* Post Canyon
* East Post Canyon
* Lower Tuledad Canyon
* Cedar Canyon

Seeps/Springs:

* Ant Spring (to be fenced)
* Wire Lakes
* Cocklebur Spring
* South of Coppersmith Pit
* Mason Spring
* Bryant Spring
* Mattress Spring
* Orchard Spring
* West Post
* Stevens Field Reservoir
* Mahogany Spring
* Chalk Hill Spring
* Unnamed Springs - west of Garden Lake
* Bathtub Spring
* Toadstool Reservoir
* Deer Spring

Wet Meadows:

* Bud Brown
* Pryor
* Mattress Spring Meadow

Functional At Risk:

* Little Tuledad Canyon (headcutting)
* Upper Tuledad Canyon (road-related)
* Bud Brown (currently in a riparian pasture/seasonlong horse use a concern)
* Lower Bryant Spring
* Red Rock Creek