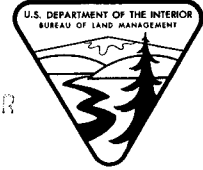




United States Department of the Interior

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



3-13-00

RECEIVED
D.C.N.R.
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
2000 MAR 14 PM 2:15

In Reply Refer To:
1790/4120/4130 (CA-370) P

March 13, 2000

CERTIFIED MAIL # P 971 468 330
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Nevada Commission for Preservation of Wild Horses
Catherine Barcomb
123 West Nye Lane, Room 230
Carson City, NV 89706-0818

Wall Canyon HMA

Dear Cathy:

PROPOSED DECISION

**Wall Canyon East Allotment
Actions to Meet Rangeland Health Standards**

Enclosed for your review is my Decision for the Wall Canyon East Allotment-Actions to meet Rangeland Health Standards. The Proposed Action implements early livestock use with utilization limits for the 2000 grazing season on the Wall Canyon East Allotment. This proposal was developed in consultation with the grazing permittee and other interested publics. The Decision is based on monitoring data and the results of the Rangeland Health Assessment for this allotment.

This Decision represents the Proposed Action in Environmental Assessment (CA-370-00-04) and is summarized in the enclosed 2000 Grazing Season Operating Plan.

Please review the enclosed Decision. If you have any questions, please contact me or Rob Jeffers at (530) 279-6101.

PROTEST AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interest may protest this Proposed Decision under Section 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, P.O. Box 460, Cedarville, CA 96101

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 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.

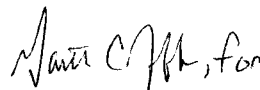
The Appeal shall state, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the Final Decision is in error.

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 Field Manager

Enclosures - 3

Decision Record/FONSI
Environmental Assessment
2000 Grazing Season Operating Plan

cc: BLM, Winnemucca (regular mail)



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:
1790/4120/4130 (CA-370) P

March 10, 2000

WALL CANYON EAST ALLOTMENT Actions to Meet Rangeland Health Standards CA-370-00-04

Decision Record/FONSI

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action in the attached Environmental Assessment, No. CA-370-00-04. My decision implements an early use grazing strategy with use limits for the 2000 grazing season. The changes in grazing management are needed in order to make significant progress toward meeting the Fallback Rangeland Health Standards and conforming with the applicable Fallback Guidelines for Livestock Grazing.

Rationale

Implementation of this Decision would result in achieving the following objectives for grazing year 2000:

- Establish riparian areas as key management areas for the Wall Canyon East Allotment.
- Retain adequate herbaceous vegetation to slow runoff, catch sediment, and provide wildlife habitat. Specific monitoring goals are to allow no more than 40-60 percent utilization by livestock on riparian vegetation in Wall Canyon and Cottonwood Creek and to retain 4-6" of residual vegetation within the greenlines of both streams by the end of the growing season.
- Reduce the degree of meadow and stream bank alteration
- Maintain or increase sod-forming vegetation on point bars, stream banks, and meadows to protect soils from compaction, bank shearing and erosion.

The Decision would allow the grazing permittee to utilize forage provided on the allotment for the 2000 grazing season, while allowing substantial progress to be made toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards. It results in less potential economic impact to the permittee than the No Action/Rest Alternative.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon the Environmental Assessment CA-370-00-04, I have determined that implementation of the proposed short-term actions for the Wall Canyon East Allotment would not result in any significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Page Tasehon, Acting
Susan T. Stokke, Surprise Field Manager

3/10/2000
Date



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:
1790/4120 (CA-370) P

March 9, 2000

WALL CANYON EAST ALLOTMENT Actions to Meet Rangeland Health Standards CA-370-00-04

BACKGROUND

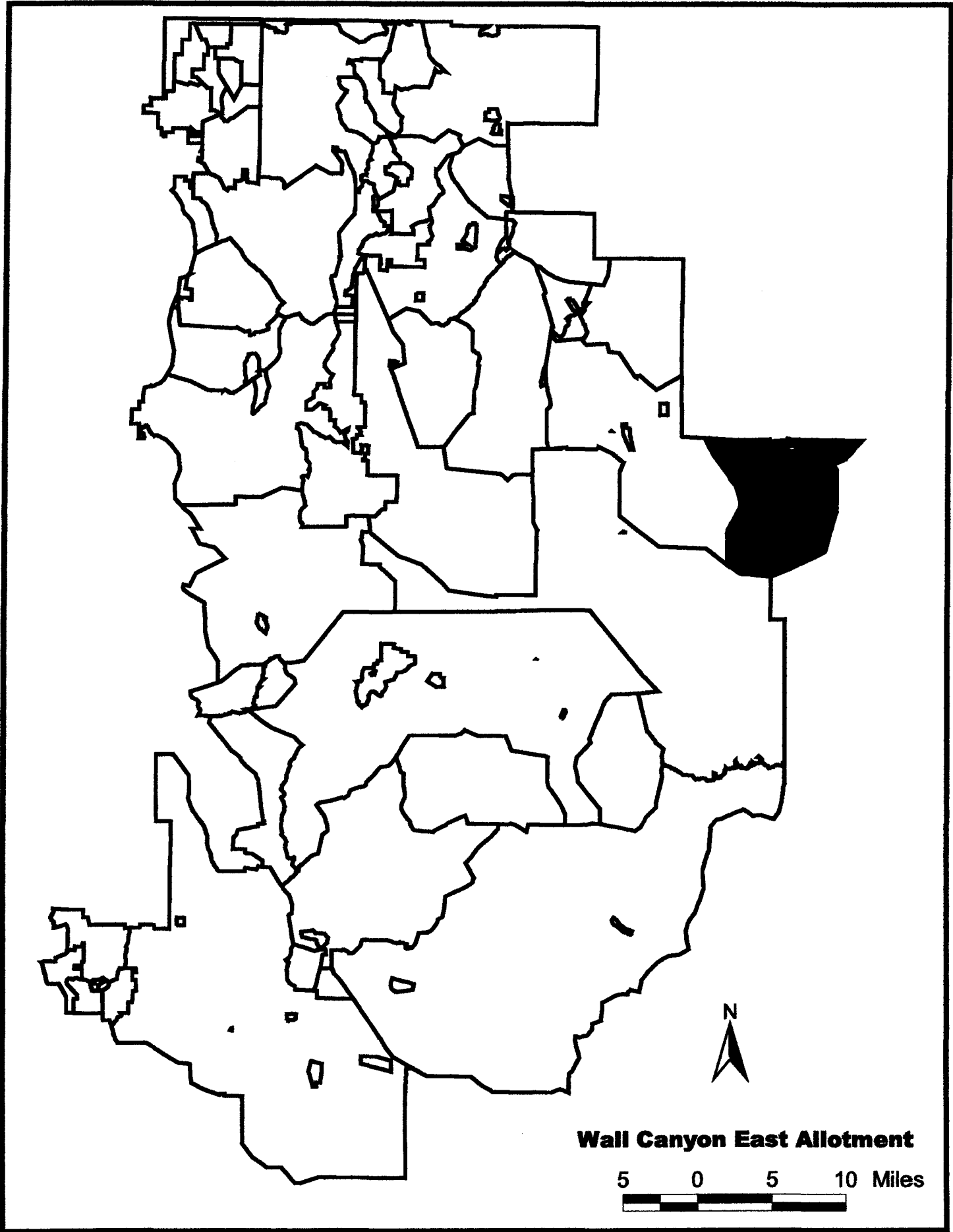
Introduction

The Wall Canyon East Allotment is located about 41 miles east of Cedarville, California, within Washoe and Humboldt Counties, Nevada. Refer to Map 1, General Location Map and Map 2, Allotment Map. The allotment is 49,277 acres in size, including 1400 acres of private lands. The southwest portion of the allotment lies within the East Fork High Rock Canyon Wilderness Study Area (CA-020-914/NV-020-006A). Elevation ranges from 5500 to 6200 feet. Terrain varies from flat to moderately steep to steep, with vegetation mainly low sagebrush, big sagebrush, and bitterbrush.

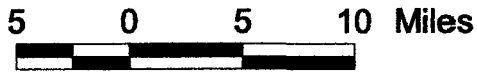
The Wall Canyon East Allotment was assessed for conformance with the Fallback Rangeland Health Standards during the 1999 field season. The 1995 Rangeland Regulations list the Fallback Standards in 43 CFR 4180 (they are included in Appendix 1). These Standards will remain in effect until the regionally developed standards for Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada are approved by the Secretary of Interior.

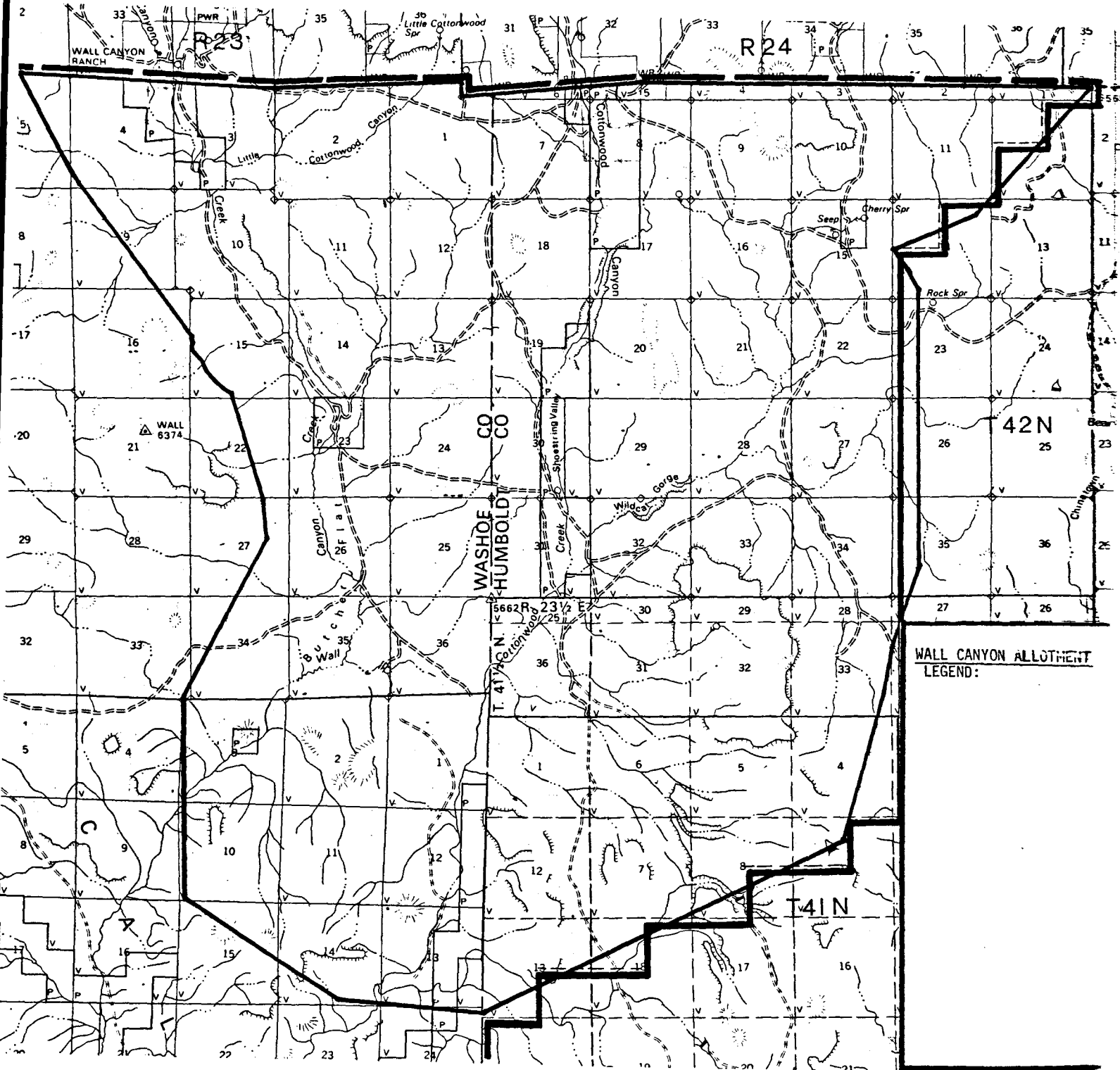
In addition to requiring that Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing be adopted, Section 4180 of the 1995 Rangeland Regulations requires BLM to *"take appropriate action as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determination that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform to the guidelines that are made effective under this section."* Appropriate actions are defined as actions that will *"result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines."*

For more information about BLM California's approach to Rangeland Health Assessment, please refer to Appendices 21-25 of the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for California and Northwestern Nevada Final EIS, April 1998.



Wall Canyon East Allotment





MAP 2
ALLOTMENT MAP

The Rangeland Health Assessment for the Wall Canyon East Allotment concludes that the Upland Soils Standard is being met for most sites on the allotment. The Chalky Knoll and Loamy Bottom Range Sites are not meeting the Upland Soils Standard and Native Plant Communities Standard, respectively, due to historic grazing practices. By contrast, riparian/wetland sites are not meeting the Standards for Stream Health, Riparian/Wetland and Native Plant Communities and current livestock management practices are a significant factor contributing to the Standards not being met. For more information, refer to the Wall Canyon East Rangeland Health Assessment (Appendix 2).

Additional information about the sites not currently meeting Rangeland Health Standards within the Wall Canyon East Allotment is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Summary of Information for Sites Not Meeting Rangeland Health Standards

Standard Not Being Met	Location	Area/Size	Reason Met/ Not Met
Upland Soils	Chalky Knoll Sites-Butcher Flat	About 3000 acres.	Past livestock grazing has contributed to an excessive amount of bare ground.
Stream Health	Lower Portion of Cottonwood Creek/Wall Canyon Creek	3.5 miles Cottonwood Crk. 3.0 miles Wall Canyon Crk.	Trampling and heavy utilization by livestock and wild horses is contributing to a lack of woody species, where potential exists; early to mid-seral vegetation is dominant.
Riparian/Wetland	Lower Portion of Cottonwood Creek/Wall Canyon Creek	Cottonwood Crk- 7 acres Wall Canyon Crk- 6 acres	As above.
Native Plant Communities	Riparian/Wetland Sites Loamy Bottom Sites	As above. About 1000 acres.	As above. Past livestock grazing has heavily altered the vegetation composition of these sites and contributed to an excessive amount of bare ground. Shrub-dominated plant communities with sparse understories of mostly early seral grasses are present.

Purpose and Need

Three of four Fallback Rangeland Health Standards are not being met on the Wall Canyon East Allotment within riparian/wetland sites. Current livestock grazing is a significant contributing factor. In accordance with 43 CFR 4180, the Bureau is required to take action as soon as practicable, but not later than the start of the next grazing year. Therefore, BLM is proposing short-term corrective actions to be implemented for the 2000 grazing season. These actions are designed to provide for significant progress toward meeting all the Rangeland Health Standards and conforming with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing.

In order to ensure that progress initiated in 2000 continues over the longer-term, a Technical Review Team will develop a long-term grazing management strategy for the Wall Canyon East Allotment during the spring/summer of 2000.

Scoping Process

The permittees and interested public were invited to participate in the 1999 field-based Rangeland Health Assessment process. When completed, permittees and the interested public were notified of the assessment results and of possible short-term actions the Bureau was considering. The permittee and interested public were invited to attend a meeting to review and discuss the assessment results and possible short-term actions on January 10, 2000. Another meeting was conducted with the permittee on January 19, 2000, to develop additional management alternatives. Comments from interested public were requested by January 15, 2000.

The permittee expressed concerns about being required to rest the allotment in the short-term due to economic reasons. He also had concerns about wild horse use in the allotment. The Modoc County Land Use Committee and Modoc Cattlemen's Association were concerned about potential impacts to individual livestock operators as well as the local community. The Nevada Division of Wildlife, Sierra Club (Rose Strickland) and Dan Heinz (American Wildlands) supported the need to make immediate changes in the current livestock management based on the identified resource issues. Clarence DeGarmo, of the Fort Bidwell Indian Community, was contacted and had no concerns relating to the Proposed Action or Alternatives.

Issues Selected for Analysis

The following issues were identified by the Interdisciplinary Team during the scoping process. Specific analysis factors were identified for each issue. These factors were chosen because they are easily measured and are the most likely to show improvement during the short timeframe of the Proposed Action.

◆ Impacts on Stream Health

The factors with greatest potential to influence stream health under the Proposed Action and Alternatives relate to changes in grazing management. Grazing management could influence stream health through changes in timing, intensity and/or duration of livestock

use. Specific factors to be considered are stream bank stability, riparian species vigor, and the amount of residual vegetation left at the end of the season.

◆ **Impacts on Riparian/Wetland Health**

The primary effect of the Proposed Action and Alternatives relates to changes in vegetation diversity and productivity. Key factors pertaining to vegetation diversity and productivity in the short-term include riparian species vigor, and adequate ground cover remaining at the end of the grazing season.

◆ **Impacts on Native Plant Communities**

Native plant communities provide wildlife habitat that is influenced by human activities. Key factors include a mix of seral stages, vegetation structure (age classes), and patch size to promote diverse and viable wildlife populations. Because of the importance of streams and riparian areas in providing quality wildlife habitat, areas with stream and riparian condition problems will also have native plant community concerns. Specific factors to be evaluated are utilization levels on woody and herbaceous vegetation, and form class of woody vegetation.

◆ **Impacts on the Economics of Livestock Management**

Changes in livestock management practices, either short or long term, on public lands may have economic consequences to livestock grazing permittees. These potential impacts are also a concern of many individuals, businesses, and local agencies. Factors to be evaluated are season of use, operational costs, and local socio-economic conditions.

Issues Considered But Dropped From Detailed Analysis

- ◆ **Wilderness** - The southwestern quarter of the allotment falls within the East Fork High Rock WSA (CA-020-914/NV-020-006A). No new structural or non-structural range improvements are planned for this area. Also due to the short-term nature of the Proposed Action and Alternatives, no impacts to the wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude, or opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are expected.
- ◆ **Wildlife** - The entire allotment is used by antelope yearlong in low densities. Three known sage grouse strutting grounds occur in the allotment. The northern portion of the area is used yearlong by mule deer. Wildlife populations are primarily driven by the quantity and quality of wildlife habitats. Wildlife habitats are a function of the condition of native plant communities. Because of the short-term nature of the Proposals, evaluation of native plant communities is a better indicator of potential wildlife response than the wildlife populations themselves.
- ◆ **Wild Horses** - The allotment and the Wall Canyon Herd Management Area share identical boundaries. This area has an appropriate management level of 15-25 head established. As

a gather is scheduled for July, any short-term management changes will not have an effect on wild horses. Fencing of private lands (as the permittee plans this spring) may have an effect on wild horses, however that is outside the scope of this analysis.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative Development

Practices such as developing a long-term management strategy through fencing and developing additional stockwater would require multi-year planning and could not be implemented by BLM in time for the 2000 grazing season. However, the permittee has proposed to construct approximately 12 miles of fence around his private lands in Wall Canyon Creek, Shoestring Valley and the Dade Field (Upper Cottonwood Creek). These fields would help add additional flexibility for the operator in managing his livestock.

Changes in timing, intensity and duration of livestock use can be implemented in time for the 2000 grazing season. These kinds of changes have potential to affect stream health, riparian/wetland areas and native plant communities over both the short and long term. Therefore, through the scoping process, the Interdisciplinary Team identified three alternatives for detailed consideration. They are:

- **Continue Present Management** (Early use with no livestock utilization limits for riparian areas).
- **Proposed Action** (Early use with livestock utilization limits established for riparian areas).
- **No Action/Rest** (No use by livestock for the 2000 season).

The Proposed Action and Rest Alternatives would modify permit terms and conditions for the 2000 grazing season. They are designed to accomplish the following resource management objectives.

- ✓ Establish riparian areas as key management areas for the Wall Canyon East Allotment.
- ✓ Retain adequate herbaceous vegetation to slow runoff, catch sediment, and provide wildlife habitat. Specific monitoring goals are to limit utilization to 40-60 percent of current year's growth in the Cottonwood and Wall Canyon Creek drainages and to retain 4-6" of residual vegetation at the end of the growing season along the greenline within both drainages.
- ✓ Reduce the degree of meadow and stream bank alteration.
- ✓ Maintain or increase sod-forming vegetation on point bars, stream banks and meadows to protect soils from compaction, bank shearing and erosion.

The Continue Present Management Alternative is not a viable alternative because past implementation of this alternative has resulted in non-attainment of three Rangeland Health Standards within key riparian/wetland sites. It is included to provide a baseline for comparison in this analysis.

Alternatives Considered in Detail

For a detailed description of the alternatives, refer to Table 2, which follows:

**Table 2.
Alternatives Considered in Detail**

Item	Continue Current Management (No Action)	Proposed Action Early Use with Utilization Limits	No Action/Rest
Authorized Livestock Use	Variable (up to 1286) from 5/1-7/15	1000 Cattle from 5/1-7/15	None
Authorized AUMs	Variable up to 3215 AUMs Active	2500 AUMs	None
Grazing Permit Terms and Conditions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Livestock Utilization Criteria ● Other Management Requirements 	<p>Moderate (40-60%) in uplands.</p> <p>>Turnout on native range will be May 1 +/- 10 days depending on range readiness.</p>	<p>Requires a maximum allowable use of moderate (40-60%) for herbaceous riparian vegetation and woody shrubs.</p> <p>Same as No Action plus:</p> <p>>Turnout will occur on the East side of the allotment, no earlier than May 1.</p> <p>>By June 10th, all cattle will be moved to the West side of the allotment.</p> <p>>Beginning June 10th, a rider will be on the allotment full time (approx. 40 hours/week) to herd cattle from riparian areas when moderate use starts being reached (40%).</p> <p>>Livestock will be moved to private lands beginning July 1 (earlier if livestock utilization starts exceeding 40%).</p> <p>>All cattle will be removed from public lands by July 15.</p> <p>>Any cattle found on public lands after July 15 (except as noted below) will be subject to trespass.</p> <p>>Permittee will be allowed one day to trail each bunch of cattle back to Soldier Meadows.</p>	<p>None</p> <p>>Any livestock found in the allotment would be subject to trespass.</p>
Monitoring Plan Components	Measure utilization on uplands to insure moderate use (40-60%) is not exceeded. Use supervision.	Utilization cages will be placed on public portions of Wall Canyon and Cottonwood Creeks. Low end of moderate use (40%) triggers herding of cattle from riparian areas. Sixty percent use by livestock on riparian areas by end of grazing season is the maximum allowable use. Use supervision to determine effectiveness of herding, and compliance with permitted livestock numbers and season of use.	Use supervision to insure no unauthorized use occurs.

Alternatives Considered but Dropped from Detailed Consideration

The permittees suggested installing a drift fence between their (soon to be fenced) private lands (Cottonwood and Dade Fields). The purpose of this fence would be to assist in implementing a deferred type of grazing system in the allotment. Because the fence may impact wild horse movements, this option has been dropped until there is additional study and a long-term plan for the management of the allotment is developed.

Consistency with Land Use Plan Direction

The Wall Canyon East Allotment is within the Cowhead/Massacre Land Use Plan Area. Applicable objectives, goals, and decisions from the Land Use Plan are:

- Ensure that moderate use (40-60%) is the upper limit for livestock use for major use areas on the native range.
- Manage ecological sites for mid-successional vegetative conditions (50-75% of climax; or good condition).
- Improve and maintain mountain brush types in satisfactory condition and assure browse availability to support reasonable deer populations.
- Provide habitat in satisfactory condition to support reasonable antelope populations.
- Provide at least one growing season of rest every two years.

The Proposed Action and Rest Alternatives are consistent with applicable Land Use Plan direction, except the Proposed Action does not address the requirement to provide alternate years rest during the growing season. The Continue Present Management Alternative is not in compliance with the requirement for growing season rest nor the requirement to ensure that moderate use is the upper limit for major use areas on the native range.

Consistency with Fallback Standards Conformance with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing

The Fallback Standards for Rangeland Health and associated Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (Appendix 1) went into effect in April, 1997. The Proposed Action and Rest Alternatives would allow substantial progress toward meeting the Standards. Therefore, these Alternatives are in compliance with the Standards. The Continue Present Management Alternative is not in compliance with these Standards.

The Continue Present Management Alternative does not conform to the guidelines for riparian/wetland function, stream morphology, sustaining native populations and communities (Guidelines 3, 4, 6, 7 & 9 as described in Appendix 1). Guidelines 8, 11, & 12 do not apply to this allotment nor are actions proposed which require their application. The Proposed Action and Rest Alternatives conform to the applicable guidelines.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Grazing Management

Current maximum allowable use is for 1286 Cattle from May 1 to July 15 for a total of 3215 AUMs active use. There are two permits for the allotment issued to the same operator; one expires on 2/28/2001, the other expires on 3/30/2002.

Prior to 1993, the Wall Canyon East Allotment was managed in conjunction with the Sheldon National Antelope Refuge, under a coordinated grazing management plan. Under this management scenario, the Wall Canyon East Allotment was used as one of six pastures in a rotational scheme, with the Wall Canyon Allotment receiving early use (5/1-6/25) and late use (8/25-10/15) on alternate years. During this period, a total of 1817 cattle were authorized to graze in the allotment.

In about 1993, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service terminated all grazing within the Sheldon Refuge. Since that time, the allotment has been used by the bulk of the livestock from about May 1 to July 15 each year, with varying numbers of livestock. Cattle have not been completely gathered following the take off date and there have often been varying amounts of livestock left grazing throughout the hot season. Cattle have not been rotated through the allotment, rather distributed over the entire allotment.

Actual livestock use records for the allotment reveal that actual use is generally less than authorized use.

BLM is exploring the possibility of developing a coordinated plan in which the Wall Canyon Allotment would be grazed in a rotational system with the Winnemucca Field Office's Soldier Meadows Allotment. This has been opposed by the permittee for several reasons, including the size of his base herd, and the long distance it would be to drive cattle with small calves. This option will be further examined when the Technical Review Team convenes during the spring and summer of 2000.

Vegetation

The 1981 TRT report documents conditions in the Wall Canyon East Allotment. Half of the allotment below 5800 feet was estimated to be in poor to fair in condition. Big sagebrush and big sagebrush/bitterbrush areas above 5800 feet were rated in fair to good condition. Low sage areas were estimated to be in poor to good condition.

Upland Soils

Vegetation was sampled at representative sites within the allotment using the Qualitative Procedure to Assess Rangeland Health (Appendix 25 in Final EIS). Vegetation sampling is designed to determine if adequate ground cover, litter and standing residual vegetation are present to protect upland soils from accelerated erosion. This data documents that only the Chalky Knoll and Valley Bottom sites (about 4000 acres) have an excessive amount of bare ground, and some erosion.

Stream Health

The Standard for Stream Health for both Wall Canyon and Cottonwood Creeks is not met, but progressing is being made toward meeting the Standard. Photos taken in 1999 appear to support this conclusion. The lower portion of Cottonwood Creek and Wall Canyon Creek are lacking necessary woody species for stabilization of stream banks. Wall Canyon Creek and the lower portion of Cottonwood Creek have mostly early to mid-seral herbaceous species. Both reaches of stream have very little shading for regulation of water temperatures. Use pattern mapping indicates that utilization is generally heavy along these creeks.

Riparian/Wetland Areas

Existing riparian vegetation is estimated to be mostly early to mid-seral. More desirable species such as sedges and rushes are limited. These species are more desirable as they form sod and help protect stream banks during high stream flows. They slow runoff and trap sediment. Sufficient residual vegetation is needed at the end of the grazing season in order to protect banks, slow runoff and trap sediment. Past utilization records and observations indicate that utilization in these areas is generally heavy, thus inadequate residual vegetation remains at the end of the grazing season.

Native Plant Communities

The Rangeland Health Assessment found that the Standard for Native Plant Communities (Native Species) was not being met on the majority of the stream sites, a majority of the wet meadow sites, and a majority of the loamy bottom floodplain sites. The Chalky Knoll Range Site in Butcher Flat was also observed to have active erosion taking place. Refer to Table 1, Page 4 of this document for more information.

The affected sites are estimated to be 4,000 acres in size or about eight percent of the allotment. With the exception of the Chalky Knoll Site, the majority of these sites represent the highest potential for improved vegetation composition, cover, structural diversity, and productivity. These factors, in turn, lead to high potential values for native species. These sites have the highest potential to enhance the diversity of vegetation and wildlife habitat across the landscape.

The Chalky Knoll Range Site occupies about 5,000 total acres representing about 20 percent of the Saraph-Hangrock-Tuffo Soil Association. About 3,000 acres of this site is within one mile of perennial water sources and represents a historic and heavily used livestock and wild horse concentration area.

Wild Horses

The Wall Canyon Herd Management Area (HMA CA-265) covers the entire allotment. The appropriate management level was established in 1992 at a level of 15 to 25 head. The last census, conducted in August 1997, revealed a total of 118 head of wild horses. The permittee believes there are in excess of 300 head now occurring in the area. During a field visit during the summer of 1999, the gate between the Wall Canyon HMA and Warm Springs Canyon HMA (managed by the Winnemucca Field Office)

was found open. The permittee said they routinely open the gate to allow livestock access back to Soldier Meadows if it snows. This may be the major factor why wild horse numbers may be higher than expected. This area is planned for removal of excess wild horse numbers in July, 2000.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Proposed Action

Impacts on Stream Health - Stream bank trampling should be reduced from current management levels due to application of utilization criteria and ensuring that livestock are removed from the allotment in a timely manner. Additionally, a rider will herd cattle away from riparian areas full-time. These two factors should result in less than 60 percent of the vegetation being removed from stream side habitats by livestock. About 3.5 miles of Cottonwood Creek and 3.0 miles of Wall Canyon Creek would be expected to benefit from this grazing treatment.

Impacts on Riparian Areas - Ensuring that moderate use is the maximum allowed by livestock would result in modest improvement of vigor of riparian species. Plant regrowth in July and August should also allow plants to improve their vigor (Clary and Webster, 1989). About seven acres of riparian habitat associated with Cottonwood Creek and six acres associated with Wall Canyon Creek would be expected to benefit from this grazing treatment.

Impacts on Native Plant Communities - Utilization of herbaceous species in stream and riparian habitats would decrease as described above. Early season use, with total removal of livestock from the allotment by July 15 should result in light or less use on willows and other woody species, where they occur.

About half the loamy bottom sites would be expected to exhibit higher plant vigor as a result of decreased livestock utilization in the short-term. On the remainder of the loamy bottom sites, less than light (<40%) livestock utilization levels would be expected to continue due to distance from stock water. Ecological status of loamy bottom sites is expected to remain unchanged as a result of the proposed management. Without the removal of highly competitive sagebrush over-story plants, ecological status will remain mostly early seral for the short-term with only a very slow, gradual increase in grasses and forbs expected over the very long-term.

The Chalky Knoll Site is expected to remain unchanged except over the very long-term.

Impacts on Economics of Livestock Management - The primary impacts to the permittee would be the ability to run fewer AUMs than authorized. He will also have added operating expense resulting from hiring a rider to herd cattle away from riparian areas during the June 10-July 15 time period. The permittee also plans to fence a portion of his private lands in the allotment to provide feed after July 15 (the Cottonwood and Dade Fields). It is estimated that additional costs to the operator would be \$2,000 for hiring a full-time rider. The decrease in authorized AUMs would have a value of approximately \$8,650 (715 AUMs x \$12.10/AUM which is the private land rental rate).

Mitigation Measures - No mitigation measures were identified.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts - The primary adverse impact associated with the Proposed Action would be the time and manpower spent for herding cattle away from riparian areas and in totally removing livestock from the allotment by July 15th.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources - No irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources were identified as a result of the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts - Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative is designed to retain adequate herbaceous vegetation to slow runoff, catch sediment, and provide wildlife habitat; reduce the degree of meadow and stream bank alteration; and maintain or increase sod-forming vegetation on point bars, stream banks and meadows to protect soils from compaction, bank shearing and erosion. Modest short term, positive impacts to the natural resources are expected, provided the required livestock herding and total removal of livestock from the allotment is effective.

In addition to the Wall Canyon East Allotment, four other allotments assessed by BLM's Surprise Resource Area did not meet one or more Rangeland Health Standards. Similar actions are proposed for all five allotments, with similar environmental consequences expected.

No Action/Rest Alternative

Impacts on Stream Health - This alternative would result in no trampling damage along streams by cattle. Modest improvement in vigor of stream side vegetation could be expected. This alternative would provide the maximum benefits to begin achieving the Stream Health Standard. Wild horses would continue to utilize stream areas, causing some trampling damage and heavy use in localized areas.

Impacts on Riparian Areas - Modest improvement of riparian species vigor could be expected considering the short-term nature of this proposal. No livestock use would occur during the 2000 grazing period. No livestock grazing in August and September would be especially beneficial to woody plant species vigor. Wild horse use in these areas would be expected to continue to impact some localized areas in the short-term.

Impacts on Native Plant Communities - Herbaceous and woody species would be totally rested from livestock use during grazing season 2000. This should result in maximum growth potential of woody species, where they occur. As discussed for the Proposed Action Alternative, stream and meadow sites would be expected to exhibit the greatest improvement. Loamy bottom sites would remain in early seral ecological condition, dominated by mature sagebrush stands. Chalky Knoll sites would be expected to remain unchanged.

Impacts on Economics of Livestock Management - Implementation of a Rest Alternative for 2000 would have negative impacts on the livestock permittee. Loss of 2.5 months of public land forage could require rental of private pasture for 2500 AUMs at an additional cost of \$30,250. (2500 AUMs X \$12.10/AUM which is the private land rental rate).

Continue Present Management Alternative

Impacts on Stream Health - If grazed early only, this alternative would have the same impacts as the Proposed Action. If cattle are allowed to stay throughout the hot season, without regard to use levels, as has been the past practice, heavy use and trampling would be expected to continue in stream habitats.

Impacts on Riparian Areas - It is expected that riparian species vigor and ground cover would continue to be static or deteriorate. Heavy livestock use would result in inadequate residual vegetation remaining at the end of the grazing season to trap sediment, slow runoff and for wildlife habitat. Woody species would continue to be adversely impacted, where they exist.

Impacts on Native Plant Communities - Implementation of the Present Management Alternative would allow continued heavy grazing and browsing on key native plant communities (e.g. riparian habitats associated with Wall Canyon and Cottonwood Creeks). Conditions of the loamy bottom and Chalky Knoll sites would remain unchanged.

Impacts on Economics of Livestock Management - Livestock grazing practices would remain unchanged from those in the recent past. There would be no changes to the economics of livestock grazing.

Table 3, below, displays a Summary of the Environmental Consequences associated with the Proposed Action and Alternatives.

**Table 3.
Summary of Environmental Consequences**

Resource Issue	Continue Present Management	Proposed Action	No Action/Rest Alternative
<p>Impacts on Stream Health</p> <p><u>Specifically, changes in:</u></p> <p>Stream bank stability</p> <p>Riparian species vigor</p> <p>Amount of residual vegetation</p>	<p>Livestock trampling would continue to result in stream bank alteration. Little or no residual vegetation would remain at the end of the grazing season.</p>	<p>Little change in the amount of sod-forming vegetation is expected in the short-term. Livestock utilization should be reduced from heavy to moderate in 2000 with a slight to modest improvement in plant vigor. Sufficient residual vegetation should remain at the end of the growing season.</p>	<p>No stream bank trampling by livestock would be expected. Modest improvement in vigor could be expected. This alternative would allow for the maximum amount of residual vegetation left remaining at the end of the growing season.</p>

<p><i>Impacts on Riparian Areas</i></p> <p><u>Specifically, changes in:</u></p> <p><i>Riparian species vigor</i></p> <p><i>Adequate ground cover</i></p>	<p>No riparian utilization standard is currently being applied. Actual livestock utilization of riparian areas would continue to be heavy.</p>	<p>By requiring moderate use(40-60%) limitations, vigor and ground cover could be expected to slightly to modestly improve.</p>	<p>No utilization of riparian species by livestock will help in improving vigor and ground cover.</p>
<p><i>Impacts on Native Plant Communities</i></p> <p><u>Specifically, changes in:</u></p> <p><i>Utilization of herbaceous and woody species</i></p> <p><i>Loamy bottom and Chalky knoll ecological sites</i></p>	<p>As discussed above, livestock utilization of herbaceous and woody species within riparian areas would continue to be heavy.</p> <p>No changes would be expected to result in loamy bottom and Chalky Knoll Sites except over the very long-term.</p>	<p>Moderate use levels for livestock should result in no or little use of palatable woody vegetation by livestock, in areas it occurs. No changes would be expected to result in loamy bottom and Chalky Knoll Sites except over the very long-term. Removal of brush overstory would be needed to tangibly improve loamy bottom sites in the shorter-term.</p>	<p>This alternative should result in no use of woody species by livestock in areas it occurs. Form class may also start to improve.</p> <p>No changes would be expected to result in loamy bottom and Chalky Knoll Sites except over the very long-term.</p>
<p><i>Impacts on Livestock Management</i></p> <p><u>Specifically, changes in:</u></p> <p><i>Operating costs</i></p> <p><i>Seasons of use</i></p> <p><i>Local/Social economic conditions</i></p>	<p>No change in the permittee's operating costs would be expected.</p> <p>No effect to local social and economic conditions would be expected during 2000.</p>	<p>Additional operating expense of having a rider out on allotment full time to herd livestock off riparian areas (\$2,000). Permittee will also have the additional expense of fencing private lands in allotment to use once utilization levels within the allotment are reached.</p>	<p>There would be an increased cost for the permittee to find 2.5 months spring forage for 1000 cattle (2500 AUMs). If pasture is leased, the cost to the permittee could be as high as an estimated \$30,250 (1000 cattle X 2.5 mos. X \$12.10/mo.).</p>

CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

Results of the Rangeland Health Assessment and possible short-term management actions have been reviewed by the following individuals and groups: Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Committee, Northeastern California Resource Advisory Council, Congressman Herger, Congressman Gibbons, California Cattlemen's Association, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuges (Mark Strong), Nevada Division of Wildlife, Modoc County Land Use Committee, Modoc County Cattlemen's Association, Friends of Nevada Wilderness (Tom Myers), Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club (Rose Strickland), American Wildlands (Dan Heinz), Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses, the livestock permittee (John Estill) and Clarence DeGarmo, Fort Bidwell Indian Community.

LIST OF PREPARERS

Rob Jeffers, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
Roger Farschon, Ecologist/Wildlife
Alan Uchida, Watershed Specialist
Tara deValois, Rangeland Management Specialist

LITERATURE CITED

- Clary & Webster, Managing Grazing on Riparian Areas in the Intermountain Region, 1989
- NRCS, Malheur High Plateau Site Descriptions, 1987

Appendix 1.

Fallback Standards for Rangeland Health

Soils Health:	Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and landform. (43 CFR 4180.2(f)(1)(i))
Stream Health:	Stream channel morphology (including but not limited to gradient, width/depth ratio, channel roughness and sinuosity) functions and are appropriate for the climate and landform. (43 CFR 4180.2(f)(1)(iii))
Riparian and Wetland Sites:	Riparian and wetland areas are in properly functioning condition. (43 CFR 4180.2(f)(1)(ii))
Native Species:	Healthy, productive and diverse populations of native species exist and are maintained.(43 CFR 4180.2(f)(1)(iv))

Fallback Guidelines (43 CFR 4180.2(2)(i-xv))

1. Management practices maintain or promote adequate amounts of ground cover to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture storage and stabilize soils;
2. Management practices maintain or promote soil conditions that support permeability rates that are appropriate to climate and soils;
3. Management practices maintain or promote sufficient residual vegetation to maintain, improve or restore riparian/wetland functions of energy dissipation, sediment capture, groundwater recharge, and stream bank stability;
4. Management practices maintain or promote stream channel morphology (e.g., stream gradient, width/depth ration, channel roughness and sinuosity and functions that are appropriate to climate and landform;
5. Management practices maintain or promote the appropriate kinds and amounts of soil organisms, plants and animals to support the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow;
6. Management practices maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions necessary to sustain native populations and communities;
7. Desired species are being allowed to complete seed dissemination in one out of every three years;

8. Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, Proposed, Category 1 and 2 candidate, and other special status species is promoted by the restoration and maintenance of their habitats;
9. Native species are emphasized in the support of ecological function;
10. Non-native plant species are used only in those situations in which natives are not readily available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health;
11. Periods of rest from disturbance or livestock use during times of critical plant growth or regrowth are provided when needed to achieve health, properly functioning conditions (the timing and duration of use periods shall be determined by the authorized officer);
12. Continuous season-long livestock use is allowed to occur only when it has been demonstrated to be consistent with achieving health, properly functioning ecosystems;
13. Facilities are located away from riparian/wetland areas wherever the conflict of achieving or maintaining riparian/wetland function;
14. The development of springs and seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions and processes of those sites; and,
15. Grazing on designated ephemeral (annual and perennial) rangeland is allowed to occur only if reliable estimates of production have been made, an identified level of annual growth or residue to remain on site at the end of the grazing season has been established and adverse effects on perennial species are avoided.

2000 ANNUAL GRAZING PLAN

WALL CANYON EAST ALLOTMENT

Authorized Use

Operator	Case File #	Allotment	No.	Kind	Season	Public AUMs	% Public
Estill	042635	Wall Cyn East	1000	C	5/1-7/15	2500	98%
Total			1000			2500	

Pasture Management

Pasture	No.	Dates of Use	Use Criteria
East Half	1000 C	5/1-6/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum allowable use is moderate (40-60%) of herbaceous riparian vegetation and woody shrubs on public portions of Cottonwood and Wall Canyon Creeks. • Beginning June 10th, a rider will be on the allotment full-time. Cattle will be herded from public riparian areas when use approaches 40 percent. • Livestock will be moved to private lands beginning July 1st (or earlier if livestock utilization starts exceeding 40%). • All cattle will be removed from public lands by July 15. • Any livestock found on public lands after July 15 will be subject to trespass. • Permittee will be allowed one day to trail each bunch of cattle back to Soldier Meadows.
West Half	1000 C	6/10-7/15	

Flexibility

- Pasture move dates are flexible, based on actual feed conditions, stockwater availability, etc.

Voluntary Livestock Management Changes for Grazing Season 2000

- The permittee has requested total non-use for 150 cattle for the 2000 grazing season.
- The permittee has committed to hiring a full time rider for the allotment between June 10 to July 15.
- Permittee will be reconstructing the private land fences around the Cottonwood and Dade Fields to facilitate livestock management.

Management Requirements

- Livestock operators have five days to move 90 percent of their cattle and an additional five days to move the remaining 10 percent of their cattle during pasture moves and when leaving the allotment.
- The livestock operator is responsible for moving livestock in a timely manner.
- Salt and other mineral supplements may be fed as needed. Salt stations will be determined by the Field Manager in consultation with the livestock operator.
- Notify BLM before turnout date. We will be counting livestock in 2000.
- All fences for which the Wall Canyon East livestock operators has responsibility must be maintained before turnout.

Special Considerations for the 2000 Grazing Season

This Annual Grazing Plan has been developed in response to rangeland health issues identified for the allotment (reference Environmental Assessment CA-370-00-04). The short-term corrective actions identified in this Annual Grazing Plan are intended to make significant progress toward meeting Range Health Standards and conforming with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing. It is intended to accomplish the following site-specific resource management objectives for grazing season 2000:

- Establish riparian areas as the major livestock use areas for the Wall Canyon East Allotment.
- Retain adequate herbaceous vegetation to slow runoff, catch sediment, and provide wildlife habitat. Specific monitoring goals are to limit livestock utilization to 40-60 percent within Cottonwood and Wall Canyon Creeks and to retain 4-6" of residual vegetation along the greenline in both drainages at the end of the growing season.
- Reduce the degree of meadow and stream bank alteration.
- Maintain or increase sod-forming vegetation on point bars, stream banks and meadows to protect soils from compaction, bank shearing, and erosion.

Monitoring Requirements

Type of Monitoring	Method	Responsibility	Action to be Taken
Range Readiness	Inspect soil and forage conditions	BLM and Operator	Adjust on date and pasture moves up to two weeks earlier or later.
Actual Use	Actual Use Report	Operator	Due within 15 days of takeoff.
Utilization	Ocular estimates of upland herbaceous vegetation. Use pattern mapping.	BLM	Moderate (40-60%) is the maximum allowable livestock utilization on herbaceous and woody vegetation.
Riparian	Ocular estimates by weight of riparian herbaceous vegetation within key riparian areas. Measure stubble heights remaining within the greenline in key riparian areas at the end of the growing season.	BLM	Livestock will be moved to private lands beginning July 1 st (or earlier if livestock utilization starts exceeding 40%).

Prepared by: _____
 Rob Jeffers, Rangeland Management Specialist Date

Approved by: _____
 Susan T. Stokke, Field Manager Date

BLM - SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE

Wall Canyon East Allotment #01014

DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR DETERMINATIONS:
ACHIEVEMENT OF RANGELAND HEALTH STANDARDS,
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND APPROPRIATE ACTION PRIORITIES

*****THIS FORM DOCUMENTS, FOR THE INDICATED AREA: (1) DETERMINATIONS AND SUPPORTING RATIONALE REGARDING IF FUNDAMENTAL RANGELAND HEALTH CONDITIONS CITED IN 43 CFR 4180.1 EXIST IN THESE AREAS; (2) DETERMINATIONS, IN CASES WHERE ONE OR MORE CONDITIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL RANGELAND HEALTH DO NOT EXIST, REGARDING THE STANDARD(S) THAT IS (ARE) NOT ACHIEVED; (3) DETERMINATIONS, IN THOSE CASES WHERE ONE OR MORE STANDARDS ARE NOT ACHIEVED, REGARDING THE CONTRIBUTING FACTOR(S) THAT IS (ARE) PREVENTING STANDARD(S) ACHIEVEMENT OR IS (ARE) PREVENTING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARDS ITS (THEIR) ACHIEVEMENT; AND, (4) THE INFORMATION THAT WAS EXAMINED THAT SUPPORT THESE DETERMINATIONS.

Indicate the date(s) or period the information review occurred: _____

PART I - IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT AREA

A. Indicate area where these determinations and rationale apply:

- 1. Site (Specific Geographic Area) within Management Unit (allotment or pasture):
 Allotment name/no.: _____
 Place name: _____
 Legal location (if needed to ID site): _____
 Approximate size in acres: _____
 (or linear length if lotic riparian)
- 2. Management Unit (allotment or pasture - list name / no. / acres): Wall Canyon East Allotment #01014, 49,277 acres total (47,877 public and 1,400 private)
- 3. Landscape (identify by groups of management units, or by watershed if cross-cutting MU's and list):

- 4. Other Stratification (identify - e.g., all riparian areas in XYZ Pasture):

PART II - IDENTIFICATION OF INFORMATION REVIEWED

The following information (e.g. monitoring, literature, personal communication, etc.) was considered to determine standards attainment and, if applicable, contributing factor(s) to their non-achievement and failure to make significant progress towards their achievement. (if more room is needed to document the type of information reviewed, label and attach sheets as needed)

A. Information relevant to the Fallback UPLAND SOILS, STANDARD 1:
Fallback (43 CFR 4180.2):

Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and landform.

Indicator(s) Observed Information Reference (i.e. identify the information source used by type and date)

Comments / Remarks: **Answers to the following were based on data collected on the Wall Canyon East Allotment in August of 1999, along with professional judgement, management, upland trend monitoring, and observations on the Wall Canyon East Allotment since 1979.**

Criteria

- 1. IS ground cover (vegetation, litter, and other types of ground cover, such as rock fragments) sufficient to protect sites from accelerated erosion? **Yes, on most sites. Some of the Chalky Knoll sites in the Butcher Flat area have an excessive amount of bare ground. Much of the herbaceous understory, litter, and the biological soil crust have been lost.**

4. ARE age class and structure of woody riparian and wetland vegetation appropriate for the site? **Yes, for upper Cottonwood Creek. No, for the lower portion of Cottonwood and Wall Canyon Creek as they have very little woody riparian vegetation. The herbaceous riparian vegetation is in early to mid seral stage in this section of the creeks.**

D. Information relevant to Fallback BIODIVERSITY STANDARD 4:

Fallback (43 CFR 4180.2):

Healthy, productive, and diverse populations of native species exist and are maintained.

Indicator(s) Observed

Information Reference (i.e. identify the information source used by type and date)

- plant vigor (production, mortality, decadence)
- diversity of age classes
- recruitment
- community structure (layers)
- community diversity
- exotic plants (or invaders)

- wildlife life forms present (obligate)
- special status species

Professional observations 1979 to present, photo monitoring, Trend Studies 1983 BLM, Nevada Division of Agriculture and Modoc County Noxious Weed Inventory and Eradication Program

BLM Inventories since 1980's

Criteria

1. DO wildlife habitats include seral stages, vegetation structure, and patch size to promote diverse and viable wildlife populations? **Partially. The community distribution and complexity are sufficient to support a variety of seral stages, structural diversity, and patch sizes that promote healthy wildlife populations. Many of the valley bottom and swale sites are lacking in the native, herbaceous perennial vegetation predicted for the site. Big sagebrush communities are healthy and dominant on many sites.**
2. ARE a variety of age classes present for most species? **Yes on most upland, no on most riparian communities. Most upland communities are healthy and reproductive, including low sagebrush, big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and mahogany communities. With few exceptions, woody and herbaceous riparian communities are in early seral states with few willow, or aspen communities.**
3. IS vigor adequate to maintain desirable levels of plant and animal species to ensure reproduction and recruitment of plants and animals when favorable events occur? **Yes. With the exception of some Valley Bottom sites, most communities have the vigor and seedbank necessary to take advantage of unusual events.**
4. DOES the distribution of plant species and their habitats allow for reproduction and recovery from localized catastrophic events? **Yes, plant species and habitats are adequately distributed across the complex topography to recover from wild fires, floods, insect infestation, etc.**
5. ARE natural disturbances, such as fire, evident, but not catastrophic? **The allotment has a very low historic wildfire frequency.**
6. ARE non-native plant and animal species present at acceptable levels? **Yes, there are no known, large-scale infestations of any noxious weeds on the allotment.**
7. ARE habitat areas sufficient to support diverse, viable, and desired populations, AND are they adequately connected with other similar habitat areas? **Yes. The potential exists, in both upland and riparian areas, to adequately support well connected, diverse, viable, and desired populations.**
8. IS adequate organic matter (litter and standing dead plant material) present for site protection and decomposition to replenish soil nutrients and maintain soil health? **Yes, on most low sagebrush tables and big sagebrush slopes. No, on most Valley Bottom sites. Valley Bottom sites occupy about 3% of the Wall Canyon East Allotment. These sites were heavily altered by livestock grazing in the past. They should support communities dominated by grasses, including basin wildrye, wheatgrass, needlegrass, and other perennial grasses. They currently support communities dominated by shrubs with sparse understories of mostly early seral grasses. They have very little litter, and very little herbaceous vegetation to create litter and incorporate it into the soil.**

- Fish and Wildlife Development and Utilization
 - field notes / photographs
 - other
 - utilization
- Mineral Exploration and Development
 - road building
- Rights-of-way
 - _____
- Outdoor Recreation
 - road building
- Timber Production
 - _____

Historic grazing use _____

Other Events or Circumstances Considered Information Reference (what data was reviewed - type and information date)

- Wild horse and Burro use
 - census / distribution data _____
 - other _____
- exotic plant presence _____
- insect impacts _____
- abnormal fire frequency or lack of fire _____
- abnormal climatic events _____
- other _____

CONTRIBUTING FACTOR(S) (LIST):

Livestock grazing (especially during the hot season).
Roads in/adjacent to riparian zones.

B. RATIONALE FOR CONTRIBUTING FACTOR DETERMINATION

PART VI - DOCUMENTATION OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF PERMITTEES, STATE AGENCIES AND THE INTERESTED PUBLIC IN MAKING STANDARDS CONFORMANCE DETERMINATION AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS DETERMINATION

Indicate the occurrence of public participation (e.g. permittee, interested public, other Federal or State /local agency), or opportunities for public participation that pertains to the review of standards achievement and contributing factors (who, when, and conversation or meeting summary):

The livestock operator and other interested publics in this allotment were offered the opportunity to participate in rangeland health monitoring during the 1999 season.

PART VII - AUTHORIZED OFFICER'S DETERMINATION AND PRIORITY FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

I have reviewed and concur with the determinations and supporting rationale regarding the achievement or lack thereof of rangeland health standards documented herein and, in the cases where standards are not achieved, the determination and rationale regarding the contributing factor(s) for failure to achieve the standards. I have determined that the priority for developing and implementing appropriate action to achieve significant progress to achieve standards for the area identified in Part I is (check one)

high medium low .

Staff is directed to develop appropriate action for my consideration and implementation in accordance with this priority.

Susan J. Stolle
SURPRISE FIELD MANAGER

DATE

2/23/99

COMMENTS: