



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Red Rock  
Ranger District

P. O. Box 20429  
Sedona, AZ 86341  
Phone: (928) 282-4119  
Fax: (928) 203-7539

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File Code: 1950, 2210  
Date: March 21, 2007

Dear Friend,

This letter initiates public scoping for the Fossil Creek Range Allotment Environmental Assessment (EA). This analysis is required in order to ensure that livestock grazing is consistent with goals, objectives, and the standards and guidelines of the Coconino National Forest Plan (1987, as amended). The purpose of this project is to analyze the effects of re-authorizing livestock grazing and to ensure the allotment is managed in a manner that maintains and/or moves the area toward Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions. I am informing you about this action, because of your past interest in grazing management on the Coconino National Forest, or because you are a neighbor or user of the Fossil Creek Allotment project area.

The 42,200 acre Fossil Creek Allotment is located approximately from 5 to 15 miles southeast of Camp Verde, Arizona. The allotment is bounded by Highway 260 on the north and Fossil Creek on the east (Figure 1). We are proposing to authorize year-long grazing on the allotment with a maximum of 5,800 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) which is the equivalent of 483 Animal Units (AUs) for a 12 month period. The Proposed Action consists of five components: authorization, improvements, monitoring, adaptive management, and resource protection measures. These components are described in the Proposed Action section of this mailer.

I encourage your participation in the planning process. At this time, our desire is to receive substantive comments on the merits of the Proposed Action, as well as comments that address errors, misinformation, or information that has been omitted. Your comments should be within the scope of the proposal that have a direct relationship to the proposal, and that include supporting reasons for the deciding official's consideration. Accompanying this letter is a description of the proposed action, a project map, and the Public Comment Form.

Written or oral comments may be submitted via mail, fax, telephone, or in person (Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Carol Holland, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Mogollon Rim Ranger District, HC31 Box 300, Happy Jack, AZ 86024; TEL: 928-477-2255; FAX 928-527-8282. Comments may also be sent by e-mail to: [comments-southwestern-coconino-mogollon@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southwestern-coconino-mogollon@fs.fed.us). The name and address of the person submitting electronic comments must be included. Only those persons who submit comments during this public scoping period will remain on the mailing list for future information regarding the project. Individuals who do not have comments to submit but who wish to remain on this mailing list should check that box on the comment form attached. Please submit your comments by **April 22, 2007**.

If you provide comments to this proposed action, you will receive a copy of the draft EA which is anticipated to be completed in the summer of 2007. If you do not provide comments to this proposed action, your name will be removed from this project mailing list. In the event that you choose not to comment, but would still like a copy of the draft EA, please contact Carol Holland at (928)-477-2255 or [cjholland@fs.fed.us](mailto:cjholland@fs.fed.us).

Comments received in response to this scoping notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215, if the NEPA documentation results in an appealable decision. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any persons may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

permits such confidentiality.

We appreciate your interest and continuing cooperation with our range management programs. Should you have any questions, or need additional information about this project, please contact Gary Hase, Rangeland Management Specialist for the Red Rock and Mogollon Rim Ranger Districts at (928) 203-7517 or by e-mail at [ghase@fs.fed.us](mailto:ghase@fs.fed.us).

I welcome your comments during the scoping period. You are welcome to discuss the project with me at any time at the Red Rock Ranger District Office (928-203-7500).

Sincerely,

*/s/ Heather C. Provencio*

HEATHER C. PROVENCIO  
District Ranger

**PROPOSED ACTION FOR THE  
FOSSIL CREEK GRAZING  
ALLOTMENT  
March 2007**

**Description and Location**

The Fossil Creek Allotment is located on the Red Rock Ranger District of Coconino National Forest. The allotment is located approximately from 5 to 15 miles southeast of Camp Verde and is roughly bounded by Highway 260 on the north and Fossil Creek on the east (Figure 1, Vicinity Map and Proposed Action Map, see insert). Elevations run from approximately 3,000 feet to 6,300 feet and vegetation adheres to typical elevation regimes; ponderosa pine stringers are present at the highest elevations, pinyon/juniper woodlands and chaparral dominate the mid-elevations, and semi-desert grassland/desert scrub vegetation types are typical at the lower elevations.

The allotment is approximately 42,200 acres in size and is divided into 32 main grazing pastures. The allotment also contains several small livestock management pastures and water lots that are less than 100 acres in size. Most of the main grazing pastures are separated by either barbed wire or electric fences; however some pastures are not fenced and location of livestock in these pastures depends on herding. The current season of use is yearlong and the current permitted livestock numbers are 477 head of adult cattle and 6 horses or 5,796 AUMs (483 AUs).

**Purpose and Need**

The Fossil Creek Allotment is scheduled for an environmental analysis of grazing use on the Coconino National Forest, as required by the Burns Amendment (1995). The purpose of this project is to authorize livestock grazing in a manner that maintains and/or moves the area toward Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions. There is a need for change from the current management as the allotment is not meeting or moving toward desired conditions in an acceptable timeframe. Specific desired conditions that are not being met include: soil condition, vegetation condition, and

riparian area condition.

**Proposed Action**

The following Proposed Action has been developed to meet the project's purpose and need. The Proposed Action consists of five components: authorization, improvements, monitoring, adaptive management, and resource protection measures. The proposed action follows current guidance from Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Chapter 90 (Grazing Permit Administration; Rangeland Management Decisionmaking).

**Authorization**

The Red Rock Ranger District, Coconino National Forest, proposes to continue to authorize yearlong livestock grazing for the Fossil Creek Allotment under the following terms:

1. Permitted livestock numbers will be a maximum of 5,800 AUMs (483 AUs yearlong). This is the maximum number of AUMs that can be supported during times of favorable climate once the desired conditions for vegetation and soil have been reached. Current conditions will not support this level of grazing. Livestock numbers will be authorized at a lower level until such time as conditions improve.
2. A management guideline of conservative use (30-40% forage utilization as measured at the end of the growing season) will be employed to maintain or improve rangeland vegetation and long term soil productivity. Within riparian areas (Management Area 12), allowable use will not exceed 20% on the woody vegetation.
3. Grazing intensity is defined as the amount of herbage removed through grazing or trampling during the grazing period. Grazing intensity will be managed to allow for the physiological needs of plants. Generally, moderate grazing intensity (40-50%) will be managed for in the late spring to early summer months when sufficient opportunity exists for plant regrowth. During the remainder of the year, grazing intensity will be managed at

- conservative levels (30-40%) when the potential for plant regrowth is limited.
4. The grazing period within each pasture will be based upon weather/climate conditions, current growing conditions and the need to provide for plant regrowth following grazing. The length of the grazing period within each pasture will also consider and manage for the desired grazing intensity and utilization guidelines. The grazing period per pasture will generally not exceed 60 days during the winter use period (12/1-2/28), 30 days during the spring use period (3/1- 5/31), and 45 days during the summer/fall use period (6/1-11/30).
  5. To protect and enhance woody riparian vegetation, pastures with riparian areas (Management Area 12, perennial and intermittent streams, springs and seeps) that are grazed during the critical growth period for woody riparian species (3/1-4/30) one year will not be grazed during the critical growth period the following year. Pastures that have these types of riparian areas include: Basin, Boulder, Chalk Springs, Sally Mae, Stehr Lake, Surge, Sycamore Canyon, and Upper and Lower Wilderness.  
If livestock enclosure fences are constructed at spring/seep riparian areas (as identified in the Improvements section, #6), alternate year livestock deferment during the critical growth period will no longer be necessary in pastures that have only spring/seep types of riparian areas. These pastures are: Chalk Springs, Sally Mae, Surge, and Lower Wilderness.
  6. Grazing will occur through a rotational management system (either deferred or rest-rotation grazing) which will allow for plant growth and recovery.
  7. Annual authorized livestock numbers will be based on existing conditions, available water and forage, and predicted forage production for the year. Adjustments to the annual authorized livestock numbers (increase or decrease) may occur during the grazing year, based on conditions and/or range inspections.

8. Generally pastures will be grazed only once during the grazing year. However, if the need arises to provide rest (or deferment) for other pastures, a pasture may be used twice provided there has been sufficient vegetative growth/regrowth and grazing is managed within the intensity and utilization guidelines.
9. Water will be left in stock tanks for wildlife use after domestic livestock have been removed from the grazing unit. Critical water tanks for wildlife include: Doren's Defeat, Herbies, Hogback, Natural, Needed, Mail Trail Tank #2, Middle, Pine, Tanque Aloma, and others (Figure 1).

### Improvements

1. Build fences at five stock tanks to improve wildlife habitat. Livestock will be allowed access into the stock tanks via fenced lanes.
2. Improvements and erosion control measures that have been previously implemented to improve soil and vegetative conditions around stock tanks will be maintained or upgraded with fencing to exclude livestock as needed.
3. Remove unneeded electric fences that divide North and South Salmon Lake pastures and North and South Natural pastures (Figure 1).
4. Construct three fenced, livestock water access lanes along Fossil Creek: two locations in the Stehr Lake pasture and one location in the Boulder pasture (Figure 1). Livestock currently have unrestricted access to Fossil Creek at the two locations in Stehr Lake pasture. The proposed livestock watering access lane in the Boulder pasture would be a new watering location.
5. Construct about 0.75 miles of new allotment boundary fence along the eastern edge of the recently decommissioned Stehr Lake (Figure 1). This fence is necessary to keep livestock out of the adjacent grazing allotment.
6. Livestock enclosure fencing may be constructed at spring/seep riparian areas if desired conditions are not achieved through the control of livestock

grazing. Exclosure fencing will be designed and constructed to protect the important riparian vegetation while still providing for livestock watering. Pastures with springs or seeps include: Chalk Springs, Sally Mae, Surge, Sycamore Canyon, and Lower Wilderness.

### **Monitoring**

Two types of monitoring will be used, implementation and effectiveness monitoring. Implementation monitoring will be conducted on an annual basis and will include: livestock actual use data, grazing intensity evaluations during the grazing season (within key areas), utilization at the end of the growing season (within key areas), and visual observation of vegetation and ground cover.

Effectiveness monitoring to evaluate the success of management in achieving the desired objectives will occur within key areas on permanent transects at an interval of 10 years or less. Effectiveness monitoring may also be conducted if data and observations from implementation monitoring (annual monitoring) indicate a need. Initial baseline monitoring will occur.

Both qualitative and quantitative monitoring methods will be used in accordance with the Interagency Technical References, Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Management Training Guide, and the Region 3 Allotment Analysis Handbook.

### **Adaptive Management**

The Proposed Action includes adaptive management, which provides a menu of management options that may be needed to adjust management decisions and actions to meet desired conditions as determined through monitoring. If monitoring indicates that desired conditions are not being achieved, management will be modified in cooperation with the permittee. Adaptive management allows the Forest Service to adjust: the timing, intensity, frequency and duration of grazing; the grazing management system, and livestock numbers. If adjustments are needed, they are implemented through the Annual

Operating Instructions. Adaptive management will also allow for the construction of rangeland improvements if they have been identified and are determined, through monitoring, to be necessary for achieving desired conditions. An example of a situation that could call for adaptive management adjustments is drought conditions.

### **Resource Protection Measures**

The proposed action is designed to comply with Forest Plan standards and guidelines, as amended. Design features are incorporated into the project to protect forest resources of soil, water, scenery values, wildlife and aquatic habitat, and rare plants. Mitigation measures and best management practices will be implemented to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants, to retain water in stock tanks for wildlife, to protect heritage resources, and to protect public health and safety during project implementation.

### **Decision to be Made**

The Red Rock District Ranger is the Responsible Official for this project. The decision to be made is whether or not to authorize livestock grazing and in what manner, as described in the Proposed Action or alternatives to it.

### **Contact Person**

Team Leader: Carol Holland, Planning Staff, Mogollon Rim Ranger District (928-477-2255) or email: [cjholland@fs.fed.us](mailto:cjholland@fs.fed.us)

**PUBLIC COMMENT FORM**

Response to the Proposed Action  
**FOSSIL CREEK RANGE ALLOTMENT PROJECT**

Thank you for your interest in the Forest Service planning processes. Please PRINT your name, address, telephone number, and email address clearly, and write any comments specific to the enclosed proposal in the spaces provided below. Attach additional comments to this form, if needed. Please indicate if you would like to remain on the mailing list for this project.

Yes	No	I wish to remain on the mailing list for this project.
Name and Address:		
Affiliation:		
Telephone Number:		
Email address:		
<b>COMMENTS:</b>		
<p><b>YOUR NAME WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST FOR THIS PROJECT IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE A REPLY. PLEASE MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO:</b></p> <p>Coconino National Forest  Mogollon Rim Ranger District  HC 31 Box 300  Happy Jack, AZ 86024  Attn: Carol J. Holland, IDT Leader, Fossil Creek Range Allotment Project</p>		

