



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mogollon Rim
Ranger District

HC 31 Box 300
Happy Jack, AZ 86024-9714
Phone: (928) 477-2255
Fax: (928) 527-8282

File Code: 1950, 2210

Date: May 24, 2007

Dear Friend:

This letter initiates public scoping of the environmental analysis for the Hackberry and Pivot Rock Range Allotments. 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 allotments are 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 Hackberry/Pivot Rock Allotment project area.

The 24,300 acre Hackberry Allotment is located on the Red Rock Ranger District approximately 10 miles southeast of Camp Verde and is roughly bounded by Highway 260 on the north and the Verde River on the south, (Figure 1). The 54,300 acre Pivot Rock Allotment is located on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District and is roughly bisected by Forest Highway 3 (Lake Mary Road) in the northeast, State Route 87 through the midsection and State Route 260 through the western portions of the allotment, (Figure 2). We are proposing to authorize seasonal grazing on selected pastures within each allotment. The enclosed Proposed Action, for your review and comment, consists of five components: *Authorization*, (including the proposed Animal Units Months – AUM's); *Improvements*; *Monitoring*; *Adaptive Management*; and *Resource Protection Measures*.

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, project maps, and 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, HC 31 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 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 June 7, 2007.

If you provide comments to this proposed action, you will receive a copy of the draft Environmental Assessment (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

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

I welcome your comments during the scoping period. You are welcome to discuss the project with me at any time at the Mogollon Rim Ranger District Office (928-477-2255).

Sincerely,

/s/ *Melinda D Roth*

Melinda D. Roth
District Ranger



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PROPOSED ACTION FOR THE HACKBERRY AND PIVOT ROCK GRAZING ALLOTMENTS May 2007

Description and Location

The Hackberry and Pivot Rock Allotments are currently administered under one grazing permit as a yearlong grazing operation. The current permitted livestock numbers are 760 head of adult cattle and 10 horses or 9,240 AUMs (770 Animal Units). The Hackberry Allotment is typically grazed for 7 months during the winter and spring (November – May) which equates to a permitted use of 5,390 AUMs. The Pivot Rock Allotment is typically grazed for 5 months during the summer and fall months (June – October) which equates to a permitted use of 3,850 AUMs.

The **Hackberry** Allotment is located on the Red Rock Ranger District approximately 10 miles southeast of Camp Verde and is roughly bounded by Highway 260 on the north and the Verde River on the south, (Figure 1). Elevations run from approximately 3,000 feet to 5,900 feet and vegetation adheres to typical elevation regimes. The allotment is approximately 24,300 acres in size and is divided into 16 main grazing pastures, and also includes several small livestock management pastures and waterlots that are each less than 100 acres in size.

The **Pivot Rock** Allotment is located on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District and is roughly bisected by Forest Highway 3 (Lake Mary Road) in the northeast, State Route 87 through the midsection and State Route 260 through the western portions of the allotment (Figure 2). Elevations run from approximately 6,200 feet to 8,000 feet and vegetation adheres to typical elevation regimes. The allotment is approximately 54,300 acres in size and is divided into 23 main grazing pastures, and also includes several small livestock management pastures and waterlots that are each less than 100 acres in size.

Purpose and Need

The Hackberry and Pivot Rock Allotments are 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 portions of each allotment are not meeting or moving toward desired conditions in an acceptable timeframe. Timeframes can be variable depending upon specific resource

areas and conditions that are beyond our control, such as drought and other natural events.

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 Decision Making).

Authorization

The Mogollon Rim Ranger District, Coconino National Forest, proposes to continue to authorize livestock grazing for the Hackberry and Pivot Rock Allotments under the following terms:

Hackberry Allotment

Permitted Livestock:

Permitted livestock numbers for the Hackberry Allotment will be a maximum of 3,650 AUMs. This represents 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 and livestock numbers will be authorized at a lower level until such time as conditions improve.

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.

Season of Use:

The typical season of use will be 5 months; from December 1 to April 30. At the proposed maximum permitted AUMs (3,650), this equates to 730 Animal Units for the 5 month season of use. The season of use may be extended to 6 months if necessary to achieve management objectives. If the season of use is extended, the proposed maximum permitted AUMs (3,650) will not be exceeded.

Management:

Livestock grazing will occur through a rotational management system (either deferred or deferred, rest-rotation grazing) which will allow for plant growth and recovery.

The spring move from the Hackberry Allotment to the Pivot Rock Allotment will be completed using vehicles to transport the livestock.

Certain water bodies are deemed important for wildlife use. It is important that a sufficient amount of water be left for wildlife after domestic livestock have been removed from the grazing unit. These water bodies include: Big Willow Spring, Keg Spring, Cedar Spring, Grapevine Spring, Doren's Defeat Spring, Hackberry Springs, Wet Prong Spring, Towel Creek Perennial Pool, Partnership Tank, Phrone Spring and Pipeline Drinker, (Figure 1).

Grazing Utilization:

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 – Riparian and Open Water), utilization will not exceed 20% on the woody vegetation.

Grazing Intensity:

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, a moderate grazing intensity will be managed for in the winter and spring months when sufficient opportunity exists for plant regrowth.

Pasture Grazing Period:

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) and 30 days during the spring use period. (3/1-6/30).

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.

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, Bull Run, Doren, Hackberry, Pambo, Phrone Spring, and Lower, Middle and Upper Towel.

When livestock enclosure fences are constructed at spring/seep riparian areas (as identified in the Improvements section, #1 and #2), alternate year livestock deferment during the critical growth period will no longer be necessary.

Deferred Pastures:

Teepee Pasture: Livestock use will be deferred in the Teepee pasture due to unsatisfactory soil conditions and the desire to determine the effects of livestock exclusion on soil condition recovery. This pasture will be deferred from livestock grazing for a minimum of 10 years.

Improvements:

1. Livestock enclosure fencing will be constructed at the following spring/seep riparian areas: Grapevine Spring (Bull Run pasture), Towel Creek Perennial Pool (Middle Towel pasture), and Wet Prong Spring (Middle Towel pasture). Enclosure fencing will be designed and constructed to protect the important riparian areas while still providing for livestock watering, (Figure 1).
2. Lower authorized number of livestock combined with pasture rotation schedules are expected to reduce livestock grazing in sensitive areas and allow riparian conditions to improve. However, livestock enclosure fencing may be constructed at additional spring/seep riparian areas if desired conditions are not achieved through the control of livestock grazing. Enclosure fencing will be designed and constructed to protect the important riparian areas while still providing for livestock watering. Pastures with springs or seeps include: Basin, Bull Run, Doren, Hackberry Springs, Pambo, Phrone Spring, and Lower, Middle and Upper Towel.

Pivot Rock Allotment

Permitted Livestock:

Permitted livestock numbers for the Pivot Rock Allotment will be a maximum of 4,650 AUM's. This figure represents 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 and livestock numbers will be authorized at a lower level until such time as conditions improve.

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.

Season of Use:

The typical season of use will be 7 months; from May 1 to November 30. At the proposed maximum permitted AUMs (4,650), this equates to 664 Animal Units for the 7 month season of use. The season of use may be reduced to 6 months if necessary to achieve management objectives. If the season of use is reduced, the proposed maximum permitted AUMs (4,650) will not change.

Management:

Livestock grazing will occur through a rotational management system (either deferred or deferred, rest-rotation grazing) which will allow for plant growth and recovery.

The late fall move from the Pivot Rock Allotment to the Hackberry Allotment may be completed using vehicles to transport the livestock or by trailing/driving livestock across the Fossil Creek Allotment. The approximate route of the drive trail across the Fossil Creek Allotment is shown in Figure 3. Livestock movement across the Fossil Creek Allotment will be completed in one day and watering of livestock at stocktanks will not be authorized.

Certain water bodies are deemed important for wildlife use. It is important that a sufficient amount of water be left for wildlife after domestic livestock have been removed from the grazing unit. These water bodies include: Fuller Tank, Dry Lake Tank, Various natural springs in the Huffer Pasture and Toms Creek Pasture, Miller Canyon, Lee Johnson Spring, (Figure 2).

Grazing Utilization:

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 – Riparian and Open Water), allowable use will not exceed 20% on the woody vegetation.

Grazing Intensity:

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, a moderate grazing intensity will

be managed for in the spring and early summer months when sufficient opportunity exists for plant regrowth. During the late summer and fall, grazing intensity will be managed at conservative levels when the potential for plant regrowth is limited.

Pasture Grazing Period:

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 30 days during the spring use period (3/1- 6/30), and 45 days during the summer/fall use period (6/1- 11/30).

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.

Deferred Pastures:

Kehl Pasture: Livestock grazing will be deferred from the Kehl pasture until desired conditions in the headwater meadow/riparian areas are achieved, (Figure 2). The primary stressor in these important areas is over-utilization by wild ungulates (principally elk). Until wild ungulate grazing is reduced, the ability for these areas to improve in condition is limited. As a result, it is anticipated that long-term livestock deferment from this pasture will be necessary.

Miller and Potato South Pastures: Livestock grazing will be deferred in the Miller and Potato South pastures until livestock/wildlife enclosures are constructed, or reconstructed, at critical headwater meadow locations as identified under 'Improvements'.

Improvements:

1. Construct approximately 1.7 miles of new 3-strand barbwire fence in the Bald pasture (Pivot Rock Allotment (Figure 2). This fence will create the North and South Bald pastures and will improve grazing management by improving the timing, intensity, frequency and duration of livestock grazing. This fence will be constructed in accordance with wildlife specifications.
2. If necessary to improve vegetation and soil conditions, construct approximately 3.5 miles of new 3-strand barbwire fence in the Tom's

Creek pasture (Pivot Rock Allotment Figure 2). This fence will create the North and South Tom's Creek pastures and will improve grazing management by improving the timing, intensity, frequency and duration of livestock grazing. This fence will be constructed in accordance with wildlife specifications.

3. The existing livestock/wildlife enclosure at Coldwater Spring in the Miller pasture is no longer functional and will be reconstructed to protect important riparian habitat (Pivot Rock Allotment, Figure 2).
4. Construct a new livestock/wildlife enclosure at Cienega Draw in the Potato South pasture to protect important riparian habitat, Figure 2.

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 moving the allotment towards 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.

Decision to be Made

The Mogollon Rim 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

PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

Response to the Proposed Action
HACKBERRY AND PIVOT ROCK 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:		
COMMENTS:		

YOUR NAME WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST FOR THIS PROJECT IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE A REPLY. PLEASE MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO:

Coconino National Forest
Mogollon Rim Ranger District
HC 31 Box 300
Happy Jack, AZ 86024
Attn: Carol J. Holland, IDT Leader, Hackberry-Pivot Rock Range Allotment Project