



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache
National
Forest

Logan Ranger District
1500 East, Highway 89
Logan, Utah 84321-4373
(435) 755-3620

File Code: 1950

Date: June 4, 2008

Dear Shareholder,

The Logan Ranger District is conducting an environmental analysis of livestock grazing on the Franklin Basin Cattle Allotment located within the Logan River drainage. The 20,000-acre allotment had been managed by the State of Utah until 1998 when it was transferred to the US Forest Service in a land exchange with the State. It was agreed at that time the allotment would continue to be grazed under State of Utah Grazing Guidelines for a 10-year term (1998-2008). Because the permit was about to expire in 2008, the Forest Service initiated an environmental analysis to authorize continued grazing.

Based on the findings of that environmental analysis, Acting District Ranger Janet Valle signed a decision on September 27, 2007 to authorize grazing on the allotment for a two year temporary term. The two year term was made conditional, based on continued analysis of the allotment during the 2008 and 2009 grazing seasons.

The September 2007 decision was made under authority granted by the Secretary of Agriculture for a categorical exclusion. A decision memo was issued under authority granted the Forest Service by the 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Public Law 108-447, Section 339. The Act provides that certain decisions to authorize allotment grazing "shall be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement" under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if: 1) the decision continues current grazing management; 2) monitoring indicates current grazing is meeting or moving towards Forest Plan objectives; and 3) the decision is consistent with agency policy on extraordinary circumstances. A review of existing data indicated the allotment met these criteria, and a decision to authorize grazing for a two-year term was made.

The decision to authorize a two-year term was made with the expectation to further analyze data, re-evaluate grazing management, collect additional information as needed to complete an allotment management plan, and to substantiate that the allotment is satisfactorily meeting or moving toward Forest Plan desired conditions. These expectations are being addressed in this current environmental analysis.

The attached scoping letter and map provide general information about the allotment and the environmental analysis. The scoping process is for determining the scope of the analysis and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action. Providing comments at this time of scoping does not provide "standing" for an appeal of a project. Standing for appeal purposes comes from providing comment during the "opportunity for comment" at the release of the environmental assessment (EA) expected later this summer 2008.

Your scoping comments may be mailed to: Jennefer Parker, Logan District Ranger, 1500 East Highway 89 Logan, Utah, 84321. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Sincerely,

/s/Jennefer Parker
JENNEFER PARKER
Logan District Ranger





**Scoping Document
June 4, 2008**

**Franklin Basin
Grazing Allotment
Environmental
Analysis**

**USDA Forest Service
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Logan Ranger District
Cache County, Utah**

**Comments Due:
July 7, 2008**

The Purpose of this Scoping Document

This letter is to inform you that the Logan Ranger District is continuing its environmental assessment of the land and resources contained within the Franklin Basin Cattle Allotment (see attached map). The allotment covers about 20,000 acres in the north-eastern portion of the district. It lies within the Cache-Box Elder Management Area of the Wasatch-Cache Land and Resource Management Plan (WCNF Revised Forest Plan).

We would like to hear your comments, concerns, and suggestions regarding the future of rangeland management within this allotment.

What is being proposed?

The proposed action is to authorize grazing on the Franklin Basin Allotment at a level and in a manner consistent with direction in the WCNF Revised Forest Plan and other applicable laws and regulations. The proposal includes grazing management designed to improve unacceptable resource conditions, where they exist on the allotment, and maintain or move vegetation and watershed conditions toward desired conditions. The proposed action would require a grazing system that involves a deferred or rest rotation system of grazing, to improve plant species composition and vigor within the allotment.

The allotment is currently managed under a season-long grazing system. Desired future conditions for livestock grazing within the Cache-Box Elder Management Area (WCNF Revised Forest Plan) direct that “AMPs prescribing rest and deferred rotation grazing systems and riparian pastures will be in place” and that “these systems help improve and maintain plant vigor and composition, aquatic health, and terrestrial habitat.”

Why are we proposing this project?

Preliminary reviews of data available in 2007 indicate the majority of the allotment is in satisfactory condition and is moving towards Revised Forest Plan desired conditions. However, some areas of resource concern remain within the allotment. Evidence of historic sheep grazing in the tens of thousands has not been entirely erased from the landscape. Some areas within the allotment remain deficient in ground cover, desirable species composition, and complex plant community structure, indicating the need for some type of deferred use or rest from grazing. Some riparian areas, such as in Steep Hollow, show signs of heavy use of annual forage exceeding standards, which may indicate the need for better livestock movement and distribution.



The September 2007 decision was made with expectations there would be further analysis of the Franklin Basin Allotment in 2008-09. Early indications were that although the allotment was moving toward desired conditions, grazing management changes (such as deferred or rest rotation grazing) could bring about positive changes more rapidly.

History of Grazing on the Allotment

The Franklin Basin area has been grazed since the late 1890's when it was under the jurisdiction of the State of Utah Land Board. For several years the area was grazed by over 10,000 head of sheep. In the 1950's, numbers were reduced to 5,400 head of sheep and 207 head of cattle. The Cache National Forest surrounded Franklin Basin State land.

When the State land was acquired by the Forest Service with the passage of the Utah Schools and Land Exchange Act of 1998, an agreement was included that the State Term Grazing Permit, which was expiring in 1998, be reissued for another 10 year term and managed under "State of Utah" grazing permit policy (to be converted to a Forest Service Grazing Permit upon the 2008 expiration of the State's Permit).

The historic grazing system has been season long, with riders and herders distributing the livestock in the lower areas of the allotment early in the grazing season then moving to the upper areas later in the grazing season. No structural or non-structural range improvements (such as fences or water troughs) have been constructed on the allotment.

Current Grazing

The current grazing permit authorizes 607 cow/calf pairs for a grazing season of use from June 25 through October 10, (dependant on weather conditions, range readiness, livestock needs, and utilization).

A season long grazing system is in place, with riders distributing cattle throughout the allotment as the season progresses. With this season-long system there are areas that are deferred from grazing by nature of the seasonal progress through the allotment. Management emphasizes the need to graze to Forest grazing standards.

Preliminary Alternatives

In addition to the proposed action presented above, a "no action" alternative will be considered. Under the no action alternative, there would be no grazing on the Franklin Basin Allotment after grazing is phased out over a three-year period. Another alternative to be considered is to continue "current management" under the season-long grazing system. Other alternatives may be developed in response to significant issues.

Preliminary Issues

Preliminary issues identified by the interdisciplinary team include the effects on aquatic species, cultural resources, recreation, vegetation, water and soils, wildlife, and threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife and plant species.

What is the Decision to be made?

The decision to be made is whether or not to authorize grazing on the Franklin Basin Allotment, and if so, under what general specifications.

Who will make the Decision?

The decision will be made by the Responsible Official, Logan District Ranger Jennefer Parker. The decision will be documented in a Decision Notice, subject to public review and appeal.

When do we need your Response?

Please submit your scoping comments by July 7, 2008. Comments should be directed to:

Attn: Franklin Basin Allotment
Jennefer Parker
Logan Ranger District
1500 East Highway 89
Logan, Utah 84321

E-mail comments to: comments-intermtn-wasatch-cache-logan@fs.fed.us

Thank you,

/s/Jennefer Parker

June 4, 2008

JENNEFER PARKER
Logan District Ranger

Date

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibitions bases apply to all programs.) Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-2791 (voice) or (800) 855-1234 (TDD). To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or call (800) 245-6340 (voice) or (800) 855-1234 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Wasatch-Cache/Uinta National Forest

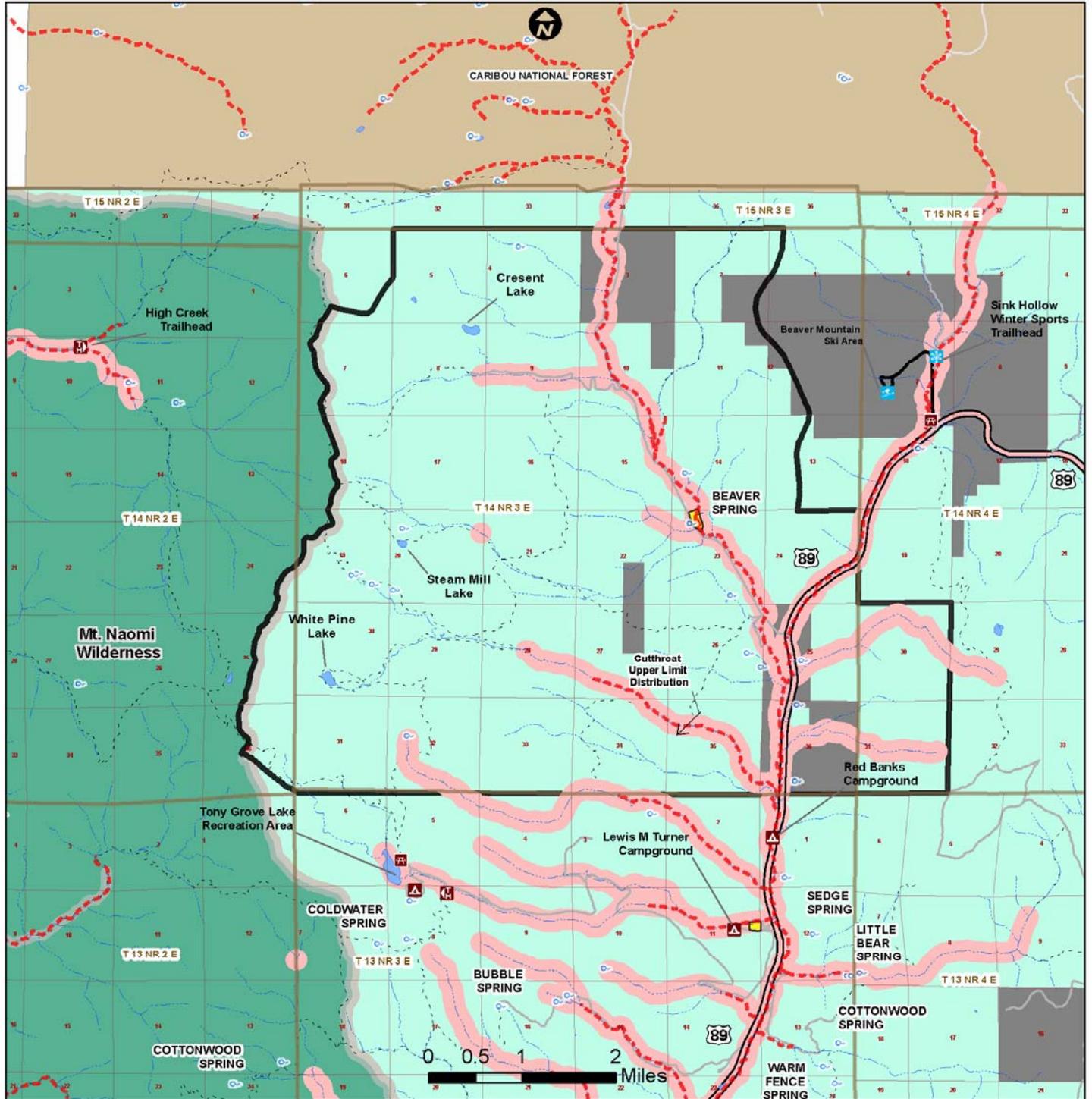
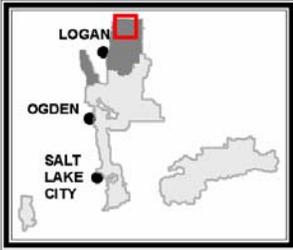
Logan Ranger District

Franklin Basin Allotment

Bonneville Cutthroat/Colorado Cutthroat

Historic Range

August 2007



Legend

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Spring | Upper Limit Cutthroat Distribution | Wilderness Area | Ownership | Transportation Route |
| Stream | Historic Cutthroat Range | Project Boundary | WC-UNF | Forest Service RD |
| Waterbody | Exclosure | Wasatch Cache N. F. | CNF | County RD |
| Class One Riparian Zone | | | Private/State | State RD |
| | | | BLM | US Hwy |
| | | | | Interstate |
| | | | | Trail |