

EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION
Achieving the OR/WA Standards for Rangeland Health
and
Conformance with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Field Office: Medford Determination Date: 2/10/2009
 Grazing Allotment Name & Number: Cove Ranch #10143

Standard 1 Watershed Function – Uplands Standard doesn't apply

1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting the Standard	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, cause not determined
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors (list important causal agents)	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
4 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors (list important causal agents)	7 <input type="checkbox"/> Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (list Guidelines No(s) in non-conformance)

Rationale for Determination: The main soil limitations affecting livestock grazing are erosion, compaction, the depth to bedrock, and the slope. This grazing system does not significantly diminish the health and function of the watershed. This is accomplished by maintaining adequate vegetative cover, healthy root systems, and soil moisture content. These factors aid in maintaining existing infiltration, percolation, runoff and erosion rates. The Rangeland Health Field Assessment (RHFA) indicators pertaining to Soil/Site Stability revealed that all 10 indicators were rated none to slight departure from the ecological site description.

Standard 2 Watershed Function – Riparian/Wetland Areas Standard doesn't apply

1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting the Standard	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, cause not determined
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
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Rationale for Determination: Cove Ranch Allotment has an estimated 0.6 miles of stream channels on BLM land (GIS data). Of these, 0.5 miles have been assessed for PFC. The surveys indicate that 0.2 stream miles (32%) within the allotment were found to be Functional at Risk with an upward trend (improving). The surveys rate 0.34 miles (68%) of channels as Non-Functional due to conditions (flow augmentation) outside of BLM control.

Standard 3 Ecological Processes Standard doesn't apply

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Rationale for Determination: The forested portion of this allotment supports a diverse mix of forest plant communities, where invasive plant species are generally confined to some road-sides or localized disturbed areas the energy, nutrient, and hydrologic cycles are balanced and utilization is low enough to not disrupt these cycles. The dry meadows and oak woodland plant communities support a diverse mix of plant species. However, invasive plant species are scattered in patches throughout the majority of the non-conifer areas, particularly annual grasses. In addition to reducing habitat quality for wildlife, annual grasses have shallower root systems and shorter life cycles than native perennial grasses, and thus have reduced capacity to hold the soil and retain water and nutrients. Annual grassland furthermore often accumulates a layer of thatch where decomposition and nutrient cycling are different than in native plant communities

(Ehrenfeld 2003; D’Antonio and Vitousek 1992). Introduction and establishment of exotic annual grasses occurred in past decades, and current livestock grazing is not intense enough to contribute to additional conversion of native plant communities to exotic annual grasslands.

Standard 4 Water Quality Standard doesn't apply

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Rationale for Determination:

Within the Cove Ranch Allotment, there are no streams listed on DEQs 2004/2006 303 (d) list. However, Cove Creek is a tributary to Walker Creek, a category 4A stream regulated by DEQ as water quality limited with an approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). BLM collected summer stream temperature data in 1999 on Cove Creek, as part of a coordinated effort with DEQ for developing the Bear Creek TMDL. The 7-day statistic for Cove Creek exceeded both the 1996 and the 2004 temperature criteria. A water quality restoration plan (WQRP) for BLM-administered lands in the Upper Bear Creek Analysis Area was prepared by the BLM and approved by the DEQ in 2008. Per the WQRP, current shade on Cove Creek (70%) is less than the target shade (91%) on BLM-administered lands for Cove Creek. The WQRP projects 64 years for shade recovery on Cove Creek to meet the TMDL. On the Cove Ranch allotment, livestock use is not impairing the attainment of the target shade on Cove Creek.

BLM stream surveys conducted in 2007 in the allotment identify scattered locations in T38S, R2E, Section 35 where livestock grazing is contributing to stream sedimentation through trampling of streambanks. However throughout most of the allotment, cattle use was light therefore a significant impact is unlikely.

Standard 5 Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species Standard doesn't apply

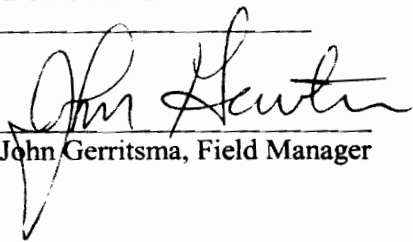
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Rationale for Determination: The allotment is meeting the Standards and Guidelines for protection of habitat for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. Current use levels on this allotment are slight therefore; special status species are not likely to be adversely affected by the grazing use. There are no effects to federally listed SONC coho salmon or their critical habitat as a result of this action. There are not effects to federally listed Northern Spotted Owls or their critical habitat as a result of this action.

The allotment is also meeting the Standards and Guidelines for protection of habitat of special status vascular and non-vascular plant species. The allotment is outside the range of federally listed plants so there is no impact to any federally threatened plant species and there are no known occurrences of any vascular or nonvascular sensitive species.

Field Manager's Determination Rationale:

No additional comments. I concur.


 John Gerritsma, Field Manager

2/10/09
 Date