

## **2006 Evaluation of Lost Basin Allotment (#1027) Relative to Rangeland Health Standards**

Assessment Participants (Name & Discipline or Interest):

_____ Jackie Dougan	Fisheries Biologist
_____ Melissa Yzquierdo	Wildlife Biologist/Botanist
_____ Craig Martell	Range Management Specialist
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### **I. Area Evaluated**

The Lost Basin Allotment (#1027) is located southwest of Durkee, Oregon (see Appendix 1: Map), and it is within the Pedro Mountain Geographic Unit as described in the Baker Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision dated July 1989. The allotment consists of 1523 acres of public land and 6314 acres of private land (as measured by GIS), and the allotment grazing capacity was calculated during adjudication as 281 AUMs public land and 1360 AUMs private land, or 17% federal range. It has been categorized as a “C” allotment and annually licensed with seasons and numbers not restricted as long as abuse to the public land does not occur. The Baker RMP/ROD identified 315 acres in this allotment for disposal, and this 315 acres includes the large aspen grove evaluated for Standard 5 as well as the range photoplots assessed for apparent trend. The riparian zones assessed for proper functioning condition were all on land specified for retention, however.

### **II. Data and Information Used in the Evaluation**

#### **A. Trend Plots**

There is one photoplot in the allotment where photos were taken in 1991 and 2000, and observed apparent trend was recorded.

#### **A. Proper Functioning Condition Assessments**

PFC assessments of 17 riparian zone indicators were completed in 2006, in accordance with Technical Reference 1737-15, A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition, 1998.

#### **B. Native, T & E, and Locally Important Species Habitat Ratings**

These are habitat ratings for Standard 5 that were done at the large aspen grove in Lost Basin.

Indicators used were:

1. Presence or absence of T & E species or species of concern
2. Native Plant Communities
  - a. Age classes
  - b. Diversity



**C. Standard 3 - Ecological Processes**

Healthy, productive, and diverse plant and animal populations and communities appropriate to soil, climate, and landform are supported by ecological processes of nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle.

What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Observed apparent trend data with photos.

**Determinations for Standard 3:**

Standard Met X

Standard Not Met

Standard Not Present

Livestock not a significant factor

Livestock a significant factor

See remarks for Standard 1.

**D. Standard 4 - Water Quality**

Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Water quality data for Cave Creek plus professional judgment based mainly on the observations from the proper functioning condition assessments.

**Determinations for Standard 4:**

Standard Met

Standard Not Met X

Standard Not Present

Livestock not a significant factor

Livestock a significant factor X

The heavy grazing and trampling along Reagan Creek points to livestock as a significant factor. Reagan Creek empties into Cave Creek, which has water quality data showing trouble meeting state standards in temperature (and coliform bacteria on occasion).

**Standard 5 – Native, T & E, and Locally Important Species**

Habitats support healthy, productive, and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including special status species and species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Native, T &E and locally important species habitat ratings done with each rangeland health assessment, plus sagebrush canopy cover estimates.

**Determinations for Standard 5:**

Standard Met

Standard Not Met X

Standard Not Present

Livestock not a significant factor

Livestock a significant factor X

The large aspen grove was identified as a valuable area for wildlife habitat, and it is vulnerable to being lost due to age and lack of regeneration. The current amount of grazing by livestock and wildlife is adverse to the maintenance of this aspen stand. The riparian zone along Reagan Creek and the spring sites on the public land in Lost Basin are also not meeting standards due to heavy livestock use.

### **Conformance with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**

Although this is a C-category allotment which is mostly private land, grazing utilization levels along Reagan Creek indicate that management does not conform to the guideline to provide adequate cover and plant community structure to promote streambank stability, debris and sediment capture, and floodwater energy dissipation in riparian areas.

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide protection to Reagan Creek by means of a riparian enclosure fence.
2. Protect the large aspen grove by cutting excess juniper and piling it around the perimeter of the aspen grove.
3. Fence the two big spring sources in Lost Basin (southwest of the big aspen grove), with livestock water continuing to be piped out to troughs.
4. Recommendations 2 and 3 above are located on the 315 acres previously identified for disposal in the Baker RMP. We recommend that these land parcels be retained in public ownership due to the high value of these areas for wildlife habitat and the need for their protection.

#### IV. Appendices

##### Appendix 1: Map