

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument

Environmental Assessment

**Link Spring Allotment #4819
Grazing Permit Renewal**

EA-AZ-130-2007-0027

I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Interior's final rule for Grazing Administration on February 22, 1995, and effective August 21, 1995, required that Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Directors develop and implement State or regional standards and guidelines for grazing administration in consultation with BLM Resource Advisory Councils (RAC), other agencies and the public.

The Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health are:

1. Upland soils exhibit infiltration, permeability, and erosion rates that are appropriate to the soil type, climate and landform (ecological site).
2. Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning conditions.
3. Productive and diverse upland and riparian-wetland plant communities of native species exist and are maintained.

During 2002-07, the Link Spring allotment was evaluated in accordance with the direction set forth in the Washington Office Memorandum No. 98-91 for implementation of Standards of Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine if the current resource conditions are meeting, making significant progress towards meeting, or not meeting the standards for rangeland health and other land use plan objectives.

The allotment evaluation data was accumulated from all available credible sources including agency files, inventories, monitoring, and other documented fieldwork. The allotment evaluation is a separate document available at the Arizona Strip District Office, and this EA hereby incorporates by reference this allotment evaluation document "Implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration, Link Spring S&G Assessment"

(2007)¹.

Analysis of existing inventory and monitoring data and supporting documentation, contained in the Link Spring S&G Assessment Report (2007), indicates that overall trends of key plant species were static with a few improving, and one down due to drought (1999 to 2004), and past fires on key areas. The Interdisciplinary Assessment Team (IAT) determined during the assessment process that livestock was not impeding improvement of the resources, even considering the recent fires and drought, and the significant progress toward meeting the applicable standard for rangeland health was being made under current management.

Where standards or land use plan objectives are not being met, the resource uses preventing attainment are identified. Technical recommendations developed by an interdisciplinary team to improve resource conditions are presented. Modifications to the terms and conditions of a grazing lease are made when livestock management and practices need to be changed to make significant progress towards meeting the standards for rangeland health.

Since Fiscal Year (FY) 1999, in order to avoid disruption to livestock grazing operations dependent on public land permits, Congress has annually legislated a means to continue authorizing livestock grazing while the Bureau analyzes environmental impacts, and completes appropriate consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The permit for the Link Spring allotment was authorized under the Public Law 108-108 in 2003, until such time as the Secretary of the Interior completes processing of this permit or lease in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, at which time this permit or lease may be canceled, suspended, or modified, in whole or in part, to meet the requirements of such applicable laws and regulations.

This EA will analyze the Proposed Action and alternatives describing grazing management, as a result, of renewing the existing grazing permit. These are all actions that would lead to the attainment of land health standards and forage use on a sustained yield basis to meet multiple use objectives and for renewal of the permit for the Link Spring grazing allotment. The guidelines for grazing administration are common to all alternatives.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the environmental impacts of renewing the grazing permit with modifications to the terms and conditions as outlined in the technical recommendations section of the Rangeland Health Allotment Evaluation. This document is an analysis of the selected management actions deemed necessary to maintain the areas meeting land health standards and allow those areas not meeting land health standards to make progress toward achieving those health standards.

¹Link Spring S&G Assessment, available at the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah 84790.

Conformance with Land Use Plan

The proposed action is in conformance with the Arizona Strip District Resource Management Plan (RMP) dated January 1992, as amended.

Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument

The Link Spring allotment is within the boundary of the newly designated Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument (2000). The presidential proclamation states “Laws, regulations, and policies followed by the Bureau of Land Management in issuing and administering grazing leases on all lands under its jurisdiction shall continue to apply...” However, Interim Management Guidelines (IM 2002-008, October 11, 2001) have been established to guide management while current planning efforts are under way. These guidelines postpone the implementation of new range improvement projects (fences, pipelines, vegetative treatments) until a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) is completed.

Under the Antiquities Act, BLM must protect objects identified in the presidential proclamations that establish national monuments. Therefore, if BLM determines, through the current planning process or otherwise, that any monument objects are harmed by current management, then management (including permit conditions) will be modified accordingly.

BLM is in the process of revising the resource management plan for the Arizona Strip District. During the planning process, lands in the eastern half of the Link Spring Allotment have been identified as having wilderness characteristics, and those characteristics are currently being considered for management that would maintain those characteristics. The proposed action may contribute to maintaining or enhancing a higher a degree of naturalness by improving and promoting the health of native flora. In the long-term, these effects would be minor. Therefore, the proposed action should not preclude future management consideration of these areas for maintaining wilderness characteristics. However, until a Record of Decision is signed for a new RMP, the area is managed in accordance with the 1992 RMP, as amended.

Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans

This action is in conformance with Arizona’s Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration, which were developed through a collaborative process involving the Arizona Resource Advisory Council and the Bureau of Land Management State Standards and Guidelines team. The Secretary of the Interior approved the Standards and Guidelines in April 1997. The Decision Record, signed by the BLM Arizona State Director (April 1997) provided for full implementation of the Standards and Guides in all Arizona BLM Land Use Plans. The interim guidelines for the monument also state land health standards and guidelines for grazing administration apply to livestock grazing in the monument. The proposed terms and conditions for the Link Spring allotment are in conformance with Arizona’s Guidelines for Grazing Administration and should allow for the attainment and/or progress towards meeting Land Health Standards.

Grazing permit renewals are also provided for in 43 CFRs 4100 where the objectives of these regulations are “. . . to promote healthy, sustainable rangeland ecosystems; to accelerate restoration and improvement of public rangelands to properly functioning conditions; to promote the orderly use . . . ; to establish efficient and effective administration of grazing of public rangelands . . .”, and as provided for in the Land Use Plans in accordance with multiple-use objectives, requirements and provisions of established laws, regulations and BLM policies incorporating Desired Plant Community (DPC) objectives using the Ecological Site Index approach.

Renewal of the Link Spring allotment permit conforms to the President’s National Energy Policy and would not have adverse energy impacts. This action would not deny energy projects, withdraw lands, close roads, or in any other way deny or limit access to mineral materials to support energy actions.

Current Planning Process

The Arizona Strip District Office is currently involved in a planning process that will result in three stand alone RMPs, one for each new National Monument and one for the Arizona Strip Field Office outside of the monuments. No grazing changes are currently anticipated for the Link Spring allotment. However, there may be modifications because of the new RMPs. The 10-year grazing permit, in part, states “This permit is subject to (A) modification, suspension or cancellation as required by land plans and applicable law; (B) annual review and to modification of terms and conditions as appropriate; . . .”. BLM may use these permit conditions to implement any changes required under the new RMPs.

Issues raised relating to Standards for Rangeland Health

Identification of issues for the Link Spring allotment S&G evaluation was accomplished by the Rangeland Resources Team (RRT), Interdisciplinary Assessment Team (IAT), livestock permittees and publics during a scoping meeting on January 29, 2002.

Issues brought forward relating to rangeland health for the Link Spring allotment:

- Noxious weeds, scotch thistle
- Buildup of woody species
- Lack a modified suppression plan to mimic fire cycles

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action (Issue 10 Year Grazing Permit on the Link Spring Grazing Allotment)

Under this alternative, BLM would cancel the current grazing permit for the Link Spring allotment and issue a new grazing permit (Table #1) authorizing 1,094 active (685 suspended)

AUMs for the public lands. The grazing system would remain the same in that during the winter (October 1st to May 31st) livestock would graze two pastures, the Canyons and the Wilderness. Livestock grazing starts in one pasture one year and the other the next year allowing for the rotation of the two pastures. The summer system is a three pasture deferred rotation system with most of the use occurring between June 1st to October 31st.

Terms and Conditions to Improve Resource Conditions:

- Season of use would be from 3/1 to 2/28. Average utilization levels of key forage species should not exceed the 50% allowable use.
- Consider, through the NEPA process new range improvements to assist in grazing practices and promote rangeland health.
- Actual livestock use must be submitted to the BLM by March 15, each year.

Table 1 - Proposed Action, Ten Year Term Permit Issuance for Link Spring Allotment							
Allotment Name/Number	Livestock			Active AUMs	Public Land (acres)	% Public Land	Susp. Pref. AUMs
	No.	Kind	Season of Use				
Link Spring/#4819	93	Cattle	3/01-02/28	1,094	27,689	96%	685
	2	Horses					

Alternatives Considered But Rejected For Further Analysis

Alternatives are tiered to the Arizona Strip District RMP (January 1992) and the Shivwits Grazing EIS (July 1980), which was adopted into the RMP and are basically the same for this action. The Grazing EIS addressed five alternatives: Full Stocking with Management, Stocking Level by Condition Class, No Vegetation Manipulation, Elimination of Grazing on Public Lands, and Less Intensive Management of Livestock Grazing.

The following three alternatives were considered for this EA but rejected because they were already analyzed in the RMP, to which this document is tiered:

- **Full Stocking with Management alternative** would allow stocking at the estimated livestock carrying capacity of each allotment but otherwise would provide the same management as the proposed action, which is intensive management of 40 allotments and less intensive management on 10 allotments.
- **Stocking Level by Condition Class alternative** would set the stocking level based on the average condition and apparent trend of the allotment.

- **No Grazing Alternative (Elimination of Livestock Grazing on Public Lands).** The decision to authorize livestock grazing in this area and specifically on the Link Spring allotment is documented in the approved land use plan. The absence of new information or other land use plan decisions showing that continued livestock grazing would preclude BLM from meeting or making significant progress toward achieving land health standards renders the existing land use plan authorizing grazing valid. A no grazing alternative or not renewing a grazing permit would not conform to the land use plan. A plan amendment would be required before closing an allotment to livestock grazing.

Desired Plant Community (DPC)

This document incorporates by reference the Link Spring S&G Assessment (2007), which provides a complete discussion, analysis, and summaries of the range resources, associated issues, and desired plant community (DPC) objectives. The technical recommendations were carried forward and became part of the Proposed Action and alternatives for analysis in this Environmental Assessment. Also, see the Link Spring S&G Assessment Appendix for specific resource data and other associated information. These objectives are expressed in species composition by weight (CBW) and percent vegetation cover. DPC objectives were established in an effort to address issue concerns and improve all vegetative resources, which includes wildlife habitat as a whole.

Key Area No. 1, located in the Middle Bench pasture
 Maintain Bocu (side-oats grama) to between 1 and 2% CBW
 Increase Spcr (sand dropseed) to between 1 and 2% CBW
 Increase Sihy (bottlebrush squirreltail) to between 1 and 3% CBW
 Increasing Come (cliffrose) to between 1 and 3% CBW
 Increasing Ephedra (Mormon tea) to between 1 and 3% CBW
 Maintaining the forb CBW to between 1 to 5 percent
 Maintain Live Vegetation (Basal Cover) to between 3% and 8%.

Key Area No. 2, located in the Tweedie pasture
 Increasing Bocu (side-oats grama) to between 2 and 5% CBW
 Increasing Spcr (sand dropseed) to between 1 and 5% CBW
 Maintain Hija (galleta) to between 5-15% CBW
 Increase Sihy (bottlebrush squirreltail) to between 2 and 5% CBW
 Increasing Come (cliffrose) to between 2 and 5% CBW
 Increasing Ephedra (Mormon tea) to between 1 and 5% CBW
 Maintaining the forb CBW between 1 to 5 percent
 Maintain Live Vegetation (Basal Cover) to between 3 and 8%.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The following critical elements of the human environment or resources are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

- Wild & Scenic Rivers
- Wetlands/Riparian Areas
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's)
- Wild Horses and Burros
- Minerals
- Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Water Quality, Drinking or Ground

The Link Spring allotment is located about 40 miles south of St. George, Utah, in the northwest portion of Arizona. It is situated within the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

The affected environment is tiered to the Arizona Strip District RMP (January 31, 1992), Affected Environment pages III-1 to III-58, and pages 41 to 92 of the Shivwits Grazing EIS (July, 1980), which was adopted into the RMP and are essentially the same for this action. Chapter 2 of the Shivwits Grazing EIS describes the environmental components likely to be impacted by the proposed action. Environmental components discussed in the EIS that might affect or be affected by the proposal are: Wilderness, Climate, Vegetation, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species, Soils, Water Resources, Animals (wildlife), Cultural Resources, Visual Resources, and Land Uses including livestock grazing and recreation.

This EA also incorporates by reference the "Implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration, Link Spring allotment S&G Assessment" (2007)². This S&G Assessment describes the resources and issues applicable to the area. See the individual S&G Assessments Appendix for other resource data and associated information.

Issues raised during Standards for Rangeland Health assessment process

- Noxious weeds, scotch thistle

A field check for scotch thistle resulted in none being found; however, the field office has an aggressive weeds program and any occurrences of scotch thistle discovered will be treated.

² Link Spring allotment S&G Assessment is available at the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah 84790.

- Buildup of Woody Species

The vegetation on the south end of Tweedie Mountains consists of closed stands of pinyon-juniper and sagebrush making it both unproductive for wildlife and poor watershed cover and potential increase in erosion.

- Lack a modified suppression plan to mimic fire cycles

A Statewide Fire Management Plan is being developed, which addresses this issue, and prescriptions will be incorporated into the Resource Management Plan for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

Wilderness

The southern portion of the Wilderness pasture contains the Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness. In addition, the Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final Environmental Impact State (2007) identified that the area between Hidden Canyon and the Wilderness boundary are to be managed for wilderness character. The Wilderness pasture is situated along the middle bench of the Grand Wash Cliffs. The northern end of the wilderness area contains some red rock formations, but most of the area is made up of limestone formations with blackbrush to mixed blackbrush pinyon-juniper plant communities. Wilderness management objectives focus on protecting wilderness character, which includes naturalness, as well as outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

Climate

Precipitation amounts are varied due to extremes in elevations found in the allotment. Yearly moisture accumulations range from a maximum of 13-inches on the higher elevations to a minimum average of eight inches in the middle and southern portions of the allotment. Most of the allotment falls in a 12-inch precipitation zone, with most occurring either during the summer or winter months.

Recent drought has and is still playing a major role in modifying the vegetative community. For example, the Olaf Knolls rain gauge precipitation for the year 2000 was 65% of normal (0% for fall, 85% winter, 49% spring, and 82% for summer). The 2001 precipitation year was above normal for fall, winter, and spring, but summer again was below normal at 65%. That was followed by another year (2002) of below normal conditions with no effective precipitation received, (fall 12%, winter 33%, spring 5%, summer 15%). As a result, the 2002 annual precipitation was only 19% of normal.

Vegetation

The vegetation component consists mainly of scattered pinyon-juniper in the higher elevations

with an associated understory of sagebrush, cliffrose, blackbrush, Mormon-tea, desert ceanothus, narrowleaf goldenbush, buckwheat, scrub oak, turpentinebroom, rabbitbrush Joshua trees, banana yucca, with a variety of forbs etc.

Vegetation towards the southern end and lower elevations of this allotment has various mixtures of blackbrush and pinyon-juniper, Mormon-tea, turpentinebroom, Joshua trees, white ratany and littleleaf ratany, banana yucca, brittlebush, buckhorn cholla, barrel cactus, creosote bush, burrobrush, snakeweed, desert willow, catclaw acacia, Mexican bladdersage, white burrobrush, big galleta and various forbs.

During wet winters, annual grasses grow under shrubs and fill the interspaces between shrubs, creating fine fuels that enable wildfires to spread, killing vegetation, and changing the fire frequency. Fire frequency in the desert community is very long, possibly over 100 years, and shorter in the pinyon-juniper areas.

Expansion of the fine fuels increase the fire frequency to only a few years, resulting in the elimination of native perennial vegetation due to repeated burning. For example, small portions of the this allotment may have burned several times between 1960 and 1990, however wildfire did burn during 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2001 with the last fire during 2005. The affected environment from the 2005 fire was addressed in NEPA document, EA AZ-130-2006-008.

These vegetative types consist of several ecological sites³ that are part of Land Resource Units D30, D35 and D39, as defined by the NRCS. These ecological sites consist mainly of: Basalt Slopes 13-17" precipitation zone (pz), Loamy Upland 9-12" pz, Basalt Slopes (Cal) 10-14" pz, Shallow Upland (Cal) 10-14" pz, Shallow Loamy 10-14" pz.

Trends of Key Species:

Frequency data was collected using the Pace-Frequency method and occurrence of forage as well as non-forage species was noted. In addition, Cover data was collected, using the point step method, to determine the percent bare ground, litter, rock, and live basal vegetation.

Vegetation monitoring data is collected at different points in time, at the same place (key area), then comparing the data back to the original (baseline) data to detect change (trend). (Analysis assumes the use of a binomial confidence limits table to evaluate significant differences between frequency readings between different years.) A trend up, down, or static refers to the direction of change to the forage plant frequency at the key area which is toward or away from the stated.

Frequency monitoring was conducted at two key areas on the allotment.

³ An ecological site is a distinctive kind of land that differs from other kinds in its ability to produce a characteristic plant community. Each ecological site is a product of all environmental factors responsible for its development. Each site is capable of producing and supporting a plant community typified by an association of species that differs from other ecological sites in species kind, proportion and total production.

Composition of Key Species:

The “Dry Weight Rank” vegetative sampling method is used to determine species composition. The present composition and the potential for each key species are used to set composition objectives. The potential composition is determined by the applicable soil type and precipitation zone. These potentials are described in Ecological Site Guides provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Utilization of Key Species:

The Key Species Grazed Class method was used to collect the data. Utilization is read at or around the designated key area for each pasture. Utilization is the portion or amount of a key plant species current year’s growth that is consumed or destroyed by animals.

Utilization levels during the analysis period have been well below or at, in some cases, the 50 percent allowable level except for one year on Sihy and Ephedra. (See also the utilization sections in the Link Spring S&G evaluation documents, which this EA incorporated by reference, for more detailed utilization information.)

Water Resources

- 5 fenced reservoirs
- 2 unfenced reservoir
- 4 troughs on pipelines
- 1 developed spring

Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species

According to the 1992 RMP and amendments, the Link Spring allotment contained 2,500 acres (<3%) of habitat for the Mojave Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), federally listed as threatened in 1990. The tortoise habitat included in the allotment is identified as the Category III⁴ habitat, meaning that the area is not considered essential to maintenance of viable populations. However, because of the way, the boundaries for the habitat were drawn (following aliquot parts, where the outer boundaries extended beyond actual habitat boundaries), areas upon the Grand Wash Middle Bench (over 4,000 feet in elevation) were included within those boundaries. In addition, the Middle Bench is separated by over 1,000 foot cliffs in most places, which becomes a barrier to tortoise movement. As such, the primary constituent elements of critical habitat are not found on this allotment nor has any evidence of Mojave Desert Tortoise ever been found on the Grand Wash Middle Bench. As such, the Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final Environmental Impact State (2007) boundary maps now reflect that the tortoise

⁴Tortoise densities in Category III areas are low to medium and are not contiguous with higher density areas; tortoise populations in these areas are stable or declining; and most conflicts are not resolvable.

management area is down off the Grand Wash Middle Bench. Therefore, the Link Spring allotment will not be managed as Desert tortoise habitat, and further analysis will not be made.

Special status raptors such as bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), and peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus alatum*) (delisted in 1999) may occasionally fly over the area. There is a historic Peregrine and Golden Eagle nesting site (not currently occupied) in the allotment and AGFD have been actively monitoring both.

There are no riparian areas that would provide habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax trailii extimus*).

An experimental non-essential population (as defined under section 10J of the Endangered Species Act) of California condors was established on the Vermillion Cliffs in 1996. There are presently 62 California condors (June 1, 2005) in northern Arizona and southern Utah. These birds may eventually forage on carrion within the allotments but have not yet been observed doing so.

The probability of occurrence of these species on the Link Spring allotment is extremely low.

No other, federally listed T&E species are known to occur in the area covered by this EA.

BLM Sensitive and State Species of Concern

Sensitive species are usually rare within at least a portion of their range. Listed below are the sensitive species that may occur within or adjacent to the Link Spring allotment:

- Ferruginous hawks (*Buteo regalis*)
- Swainson's hawks (
- Western burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia hypugea*)
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*)
- Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)
- Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotis californicus*)
- Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)
- Big free-tailed bats (*Nyctinomops macrotis*)

Ferruginous hawks, Swainson's hawk, and western burrowing owls are known to use habitat similar to that found on the Link Spring allotment, though specific sightings have not been recorded for any of these species.

A variety of sensitive bat species have been captured on this and neighboring allotments including Townsend's big-eared, spotted bats, small-footed myotis, fringed myotis, and big free-

tailed bats. To date, no California leaf-nosed bats have been captured on this or neighboring allotments.

A herpetological inventory has not been done for the spring site found on the allotment. No other sensitive reptiles or amphibians are known or suspected to occur on this allotment.

Wildlife

Mule deer are the primary big game species found in this allotment. The allotment is within Arizona Game & Fish Department's (AGFD) much larger Game Management Unit (GMU) 13B. Mule deer are at low densities throughout the available habitat on the allotment.

Desert bighorn sheep may be found in the southern portion of the Link Spring allotment along the Grand Wash Cliffs part of AGFD's Game Management Unit 13B, which is considered historic bighorn habitat, but the original sheep were extirpated in the early 1900's. Cooperative BLM/AGFD releases of bighorn sheep have occurred since 1983 in this allotment. The Grand Wash Cliffs Habitat Area encompasses ~113,360 acres. Survey data indicates the bighorn population is underutilizing much of the habitat available in the unit, and is widely dispersed at low densities. Data actually indicates that the population is only 12% of the projected maximum

Efforts continue to be made through the Arizona Strip Desert Bighorn Sheep Management Plan to improve habitat and population conditions for this area.

This allotment is part of the overall core area for Gambel's quail in the Pakoon Basin and is hunted seasonally along with other small game, such as rabbits. Quail populations are dependent upon accessibility to water for their survival. Their populations vary widely depending on the year. Raptors, small reptiles, small birds, and small mammals are also found here. Coyotes are common. Mountain lions and bobcats also can be found in this allotment.

Migratory Birds

Migratory birds may occur seasonally on this allotment. However, a list of migratory birds has not been developed for this specific allotment. The Arizona Strip DEIS lists Special Status bird species that could occur in the GCPNM that are considered migratory. Mostly seasonal migrants, this list includes the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis apache*), Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugea*), Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), White-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*).

Soils

Lithology

The allotment consists of sandstone and limestone hills and scarps and associated alluvial fans atop a structural bench.

Soil Map Units , SSA 623,(SCS,1993)

- 18 Childers-Rizno association, 4 to 15 percent slopes, (plateaus), limestone and sandstone; Childers-Shallow Upland (calcareous), 9" to 13"ppt
- 34 Hindu-RO-Gypill complex, 35 to 70 percent slopes, (cliffs, scarps, mtns), gyp, LS, SS, CG; Hindu-Limestone Hills, 6" to 9"; Gyphill-Gypsum Hills, 6" to 9"
- 45 Mellenthin-Rock outcrop-Torriorthents complex, 10 to 70 percent slopes (hills) Kaibab; Mellenthin-Shallow Loamy, 9" to 13"; Torriorthents-Breaks, 9" to 13"
- 51 Meriwhitica-Rock outcrop-Strych complex, 35 to 70 percent slopes, (cliffs, canyons) Callville & Redwall limestones; Meriwhitica-Breaks, 9" to 13"; Strych-Loamy Upland, 9" to 13"
- 52 Meriwhitica-RO-Strych complex, 35 to 70 percent slopes, warm, (scarps, cliffs, canyon walls), basalt, limestone, sandstone, gypsite, shale, conglomerates; Meriwhitica-Breaks (calcareous), 9" to 13"; Strych-Loamy Upland (calcareous), 9" to 13"
- 64 Riverwash-Torrifluents complex, 1 to 3 percent slopes, (channel, floodplain), mixed; Torrifluents-Sandy Wash, 9" to 12" ppt
- 65 Rizno-Bond RO complex, 4 to 25 percent slopes, (plateau slopes), Navajo sandstone; Shallow Sandy Loam, 9" to 13" ppt
- 73 Strych very gravelly loam, 2 to 10 percent slopes (fan) mixed; Loamy Upland, 9" to 13"
- 76 Tassi-Risno complex, 5 to 35 percent slopes, (benches), limestone, sandstone; Tassi-Shallow Upland (calcareous), 9" to 13" ppt
- 93 Yumtheska-Katzine-Rock Outcrop complex, 2 to 30 percent slopes (hills) limestone; Yumtheska-Limestone Slopes (PJ-Woodland), 13" to 17"; Katzine-Loamy Upland (gravelly) PJ-Woodland, 13" to 17"
- 95 Yumtheska- Natank complex, 10 to 45 percent slopes (plateau, mesa), limestone; Yumtheska-Limestone Slopes (PJ-Woodland), 13" to 17"; Natank-Clay Loam Upland (gravelly) PJ-Woodland, 13" to 17"

Cultural/Historical

Prehistoric and Historical sites exist throughout this allotment. Cultural resources cover the span of human occupation in the new world from around 10,000 years ago, up to and including the ranch operators of today. Our specific knowledge of the cultural makeup is limited due to the lack of scientific investigation of the area. A class I review was conducted and certain sites have been recorded on the allotment, but no known impacts to significant resources resulting from grazing have been found or documented.

Visual Resources

The area within the allotment has been classified by the 1992 RMP as follows: Class I, II and IV.

The objective for Class I areas is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention. The objective for Class II areas is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.

The objective for Class IV areas is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention.

Livestock Grazing

The Link Spring grazing allotment is located in northwest Arizona approximately 40 miles south of St. George, Utah, within the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. Tweeds Point, Hidden Rim, Hidden Canyon, and Upper Grand Wash Cliffs are a few of the topographical features found within the allotment. Because of its size, a good variety and diversity of vegetation exist on the allotment ranging from pinyon-juniper in the higher elevations to desert shrub and annual grasses in the lower elevations.

Active grazing use is 1,094 AUMs with 685 AUMs as suspended non-use. The grazing permittee can run 93 cows and calves, and 2 horses from 3/1 to 2/28.

Recreation Resources

Within the allotment areas, recreation setting attributes include geology, scenic view sheds, remoteness and solitude. General recreation activities include: recreational OHV use, driving for pleasure, horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, rock collecting, photography, bird watching, and nature study.

The area within the Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness, is designated as closed to motorized and mechanized transport use. In the remainder of the allotment, motorized and mechanized vehicle use is limited to designated roads and trails.

Recreation activities occur primarily in physical settings that range from Roded Natural to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; social settings that range from Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized to Primitive; and administrative settings that range from Roded Natural to Primitive. (See following tables)

PHYSICAL – Resources & Facilities: Character of the natural landscape					
Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roded Natural	Rural	Urban
SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES					

PHYSICAL – Resources & Facilities: Character of the natural landscape					
Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural	Rural	Urban
a. Remoteness					
>3 miles from any road	>½ mile from any kind of road, but not as distant as 3 miles, and no road is in sight	On or near 4WD roads, but at least ½ mile from all improved roads, though they may not be in sight	On or near improved country roads, but at least ½ mile from all highways	On or near primary highways, but still within a rural area	On or near primary highways, municipal streets, and roads within towns or cities
b. Naturalness					
Undisturbed natural landscape	Naturally-appearing landscape having modifications not readily noticeable	Naturally-appearing landscape except for obvious primitive roads	Landscape partially modified by roads, utility lines, etc., but none overpower natural landscape features	Natural landscape substantially modified by agriculture or industrial development	Urbanized developments dominate this landscape
c. Facilities					
None	Some primitive trails made of native materials such as log bridges and carved wooden signs	Maintained and marked trails, simple trailhead developments, improved signs, and very basic toilets	Improved yet modest, rustic facilities such as campgrounds, restrooms, trails, and interpretive signs	Modern facilities such as campgrounds, group shelters, boat launches, and occasional exhibits	Elaborate full-service facilities such as laundry, groceries, and book stores

SOCIAL – Visitor Use & Users: Character of recreation & tourism use					
Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural	Rural	Urban
SPECIFIC SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES					
d. Group Size (other than your own)					
Fewer than or equal to 3 people per group	4-6 people per group	7-12 people per group	13-25 people per group	26-50 people per group	Greater than 50 people per group
e. Contacts (w/other groups)					
Fewer than 3 encounters per day at campsites and fewer than 6 encounters per day on travel routes	3-6 encounters/day off travel routes(e.g., campsites) and 7-15 encounters/day on travel routes	7-14 encounters/day off travel routes(e.g., staging areas) and 15-29 encounters/day en route	15-29 encounters/day off travel routes(e.g., campgrounds) and 30 or more encounters/day en route	People seem to be everywhere, but human contact is still intermittent	Other people consistently in view
f. Evidence of Use					
Only footprints may be observed	Footprints plus slight vegetation trampling at campsites &	Vehicle tracks and occasional litter and soil erosion.	Well-worn soils and vegetation, but often gravel surfaced for	Paved routes protect soils and vegetation, but noise, litter, and	A busy place with what seems like constant noise.

	travel routes. Only infrequent litter	Vegetation becoming worn	erosion control. Litter may be frequent	facility impacts are pervasive	Unavoidable litter seems to be a lifestyle choice
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ADMINISTRATIVE – Administrative & Service Setting: How public land managers, county commissioners and municipal governments, and local businesses care for the area and serve visitors and local residents

Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural	Rural	Urban
SPECIFIC ADMINISTRATIVE ATTRIBUTES					
g. Visitor Services					
None is available on- site	Basic maps, but area personnel seldom available to provide on-site assistance	Area brochures and maps, plus area personnel occasionally present to provide on-site assistance	Information materials describe recreation areas and activities. Area personnel are periodically available	Everything described to the left in this row, and describe experiences and benefits available. Area personnel do on-site education	Everything described to the left in this row, plus regularly scheduled on- site outdoor skills demonstrations and clinics
h. Management Controls					
No visitor controls apparent. No use limits. Enforcement presence very rare.	Signs at key access points on basic user ethics. May have back country use restrictions. Enforcement presence rare	Occasional regulatory signing. Motorized and mechanized use restrictions. Random enforcement presence	Rules clearly posted with some seasonal or day-of-week use restrictions. Periodic enforcement presence	Regulations prominent. Total use limited by permit, reservation, etc. Routine enforcement presence	Continuous enforcement to redistribute use and reduce user conflicts, hazards, and resource damage
i. Mechanized Use					
None whatsoever	Mountain bikes and perhaps other mechanized use, but all is non- motorized	4WD, ATV, dirt bikes, or snowmobiles in addition to non- motorized, mechanized use	2WD vehicles predominant, but also 4WD and non-motorized, mechanized use	Ordinary highway auto and truck traffic is characteristic	Wide variety of street vehicle and highway traffic is ever- present

Noxious Weeds

No noxious weed species have been found, however, this allotment is monitored annually and any noxious weeds would be treated upon detection.

Socio/Economic

The economic revenue generated from the Arizona Strip has historically been ranching with a few gypsum/selenite mines and uranium operations. Nearby communities are supported by tourism (including outdoor recreation), construction and light industry. The social aspect involves remote, unpopulated settings with moderate to high opportunities for solitude. Livestock grazing provides economic benefit to the individual rancher as well as the region.

“The total economic activity which includes the direct expenditures plus the secondary economic contributions is \$89.70 . . .” per AUM, according to values determined for the Arizona Strip by Fletcher et al (2006). Applying this secondary economic value to the allotment, which totals 27,689 acres of public lands, and produces 1,094 AUMs, the total economic value would be \$98,131.80.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Only impacts that may result from implementing the proposed action are described in this EA. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered effects to the component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects.

General effects from projects similar to the proposed action alternative are also described in the documents to which this plan is tiered.

This document incorporates by reference the Link Spring S&G Assessment (2007), which provides a complete discussion, analysis, and summaries of the range resources and associated issues. Also, see the Link Spring S&G Assessments Appendix for specific resource data and other associated information.

Issues raised relating to Standards for Rangeland Health

- Noxious weeds, scotch thistle

Implementing the Proposed Action would result in similar dissemination of noxious weeds as occurs now by livestock grazing. Dissemination of noxious weed seeds by other means (i.e., recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, hunting, ATV's, vehicles, and by birds and other wildlife etc.) would continue, regardless of livestock grazing. However, annual inventories for noxious weeds will be conducted and if found the field office has an aggressive weeds program and any occurrences of noxious weeds will be treated in an attempt to control.

- Buildup of Woody Species

Implementing the proposed action will have a minor effect on the buildup of wood species. However contingent on funding and staffing, provide for vegetative treatment projects in pinyon-juniper habitat to benefit livestock and mule deer and other wildlife species using prescriptions developed in appropriate activity plans would reduce woody species buildup. Leaving debris piles unburned for small mammals where practical and as many snags as possible for raptor perches, cavity-nesting birds, and bats would still provide wildlife habitat. In addition, most of the north end of the Tweedie Mountains

burned during 2005, leaving only scattered patches of unburned areas, thus the need for vegetative treatment may be moot.

- Lack a modified suppression plan to mimic fire cycles

Implementation of the proposed action would not have any impact of a modified suppression plan for the area. A Statewide Fire Management Plan is being developed, which will address this issue, and prescriptions will be incorporated into the draft Resource Management Plan for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument area.

Wilderness

A portion of the allotment is situated within the Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness Area, along with an adjacent area to be managed for wilderness character as identified in the Arizona Strip Proposed Plan/Final Environmental Impact State (2007). Within the wilderness boundaries, range improvement projects and resource study plots are located, as such, these projects require periodic maintenance and study plots require annual reading. However, all projects and study plots are located along the Bench road; a route which Congress specifically provided for occasional, reasonable administrative access by both the BLM and the allotment permittee. Having projects adjacent to or within the wilderness boundaries does change to some degree wilderness character and naturalness. However, there are still plenty of outstanding opportunities for solitude, primitive and unconfined types of recreation, as such; impacts of the Proposed Action (current management) to wilderness characteristics would be minor. Though no range improvement projects are listed under the proposed action any future construction of rangeland developments in the allotment could impact wilderness settings to a negligible to minor degree, due to the presence of new structures (affecting naturalness); due to possible new fencing as an impediment to access (primitive recreation); and due to possible construction operations (solitude.)

Climate

Implementing the Proposed Action would have no effect on the climate. However, the Proposed Action would allow affected resources to respond to the climate with improvement to these resources, as mentioned below in the vegetation section.

In response to drought conditions, BLM may modify the terms and conditions of a grazing permit (i.e. number of cattle, turn out dates, removal dates, etc.) temporarily or on a more long-term basis. Most modifications are accomplished on a cooperative basis with the livestock permittee. However, if a permittee disagrees with BLM's assessment of the resource conditions or the necessary modifications, BLM may nevertheless issue a Full Force and Effect Grazing Decision to protect resources.

Vegetation

Red brome is already present throughout this allotment as well as the Monument. Therefore, the Proposed Action should not have any additional influence on the expansion of red brome.

Wildfires did occur during 2005 in the Link Spring allotment burning approximately 39% of the allotment, mostly on Tweeds Points. The environmental impacts were addressed in NEPA document EA-AZ-130-2006-0008. Any rehabilitation measures for the burn areas were addressed under the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan for the wildfires.

The Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1) provides the guidance for rehabilitation projects. Burn areas, whether revegetated or not, “. . . will be closed to livestock grazing for at least two growing seasons following the season in which the wildfire occurred to promote recovery of burned perennial plants and/or facilitate the establishment of seeded species.” “Livestock closures for less than two growing seasons may be justified, on a case-by-case basis, based on sound resource data and experience”.

Established key areas could be used to monitor the Proposed Action. In addition, established key areas will be used for post fire site monitoring and evaluation. Once evaluated along with other monitoring data, the rehabilitation projects and management practices can be adjusted if necessary.

Grazing impacts on vegetation under the Proposed Action are mitigated by timing of use, duration of grazing, adjusting of stocking rates, and conformance with Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Management. The Proposed Action would have an established grazing rotation designed to allow each pasture a different season of rest during growing cycles, let cool and warm season grasses and browse to elongate their apical buds, build vigor, and achieve seed ripe.

The major vegetation component in the higher elevation consists of scattered pinyon-juniper with an associated understory of sagebrush, cliffrose, desert holly, blue grama, squirrel tail, sand dropseed; and a variety of forbs on the rolling hills and sagebrush in the draws, which is typical of the Great Basin ecological zone on the west side of the Arizona Strip District. The lower elevation area falls into Mojave Great Basin transition zone picking up blackbrush, to mixed blackbrush and pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, cliffrose, desert holly, Mormon tea, banana yucca, prickly pear, and cholla, galleta, sand dropseed, squirrel tail and various forbs. These vegetation components constitute the ecological sites upon which DPC objectives are based. Key areas are established on ecological sites and monitored to determine the species composition, the frequency of plant species, and the vegetative ground cover on the site.

Under the Proposed Action all key areas would still be in the areas to be grazed, and monitoring at these key areas would continue, and be the basis for any future adjustments to livestock grazing on the allotment.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in similar utilization levels as current management. However, livestock-stocking rate would be adjusted accordingly to balance stocking rate with carrying capacity based on the monitoring results.

Again, this document incorporates by reference the Link Spring S&G Assessments (2007), which provides a complete discussion, analysis, and summaries of the vegetative resources. Also, see the Link Spring S&G Assessments Appendix for specific resource data and other associated information, particularly the tables for pace frequency data and trend analysis in relation to the key species.

Trends of Key Species:

Monitoring data (1982 to 2003) of the Link Spring allotment indicates that drought and fires have had impacts on trends. However, twenty-one years of data even with the influence of fire suggest that current management has not precluded achievement of static to improving trends on key forage species, but that climatic change is a factor.

Trends of the key forage species (tables #2 and #3) are mostly static with 2 key forage species trends up, 5 static, and 1 is downward, which is not surprising considering the drought; i.e., precipitation for the year 2000 was 65% of normal (0% for fall, 85% winter, 49% spring, and 82% for summer). The 2001 precipitation year was above normal for fall, winter, and spring, but summer again was below normal at 65%. That was followed by another year (2002) of below normal with no effective precipitation received, (fall 12%, winter 33%, spring 5%, and summer 15%). As a result, the 2002 annual precipitation was only 19% of normal. Livestock numbers were reduced during the drought to balance use with available forage. Livestock AUMs were below the authorized number of AUMs by 15% in 2000, 28% in 2001, 61% in 2002, 51% in 2003, and 45% in 2004.

However as noted precipitation amounts prior to 2000 varied, as did the frequency of the key species as indicated by their overall upward trending from the base year of 1982 through 1998, suggesting that precipitation amount, and timing influence vegetative trends. As a result, the ID team determined that the current drought was having an impact on the trend of key species. However, even considering the recent fires and drought, the team still felt that livestock was not impeding improvement of the resources, and the significant progress toward meeting the applicable standard for rangeland health were being made under current management.

Along with fire, precipitation or climatic influences maybe the overriding factors influencing vegetation changes at the present grazing level. According to Hendrickson et al. "Rangeland ecosystems are event-driven, and water events are typically considered most important." Cook et al⁵ (2005) stated that plant cover was closely related to weather cycles, and that basal area of perennial grasses decreased by as much as 65 percent during dry years. Herbel et al⁶ (1996)

⁵ Cook, C. Wayne, and Sims, Phillip L., Drought And Its Relationship To Dynamics Of Primary Productivity And Production Of Grazing Animals, <http://www.fao.org/wairdocs/ilri/x5543b/x5543b01.htm> or <http://www.cnr.colostate.edu/frws/research/cook/CookDrought/drought.htm>. 2005

⁶ Herbel, Charlton H. and Gibbens, Robert P., Post-Drought Vegetation Dynamics on Arid Rangelands of Southern New Mexico. Department of Animal and Range Sciences, New Mexico State University, Agricultural Experiment Station. Bulletin 776, June 1996.

indicated that droughts can change species composition, vegetation cover, and herbage production, and can drastically reduce range condition regardless of past grazing history.

Table #2 Pace Frequency Trend Analysis					
Allotment:	Link Spring	Pasture: Middle Bench			Key area # 1
Cover Categories	years plots were read				Trend key species
	1982	1986	1998	2003	
Vegetation (basal cover)	1	4	13	4	→
% Ground Cover	95	64	69	69	↓
Frequency of Key Species					
Spcr	1	76	12	1	→
Bocu		11	25		→
Come	2	1	2		→
Table #3 Pace Frequency Trend Analysis					
Allotment:	Link Spring	Pasture: Tweedie			Key Area # 2
Cover Categories	years plots were read			Trend key species	
	1982	1997	2003		
% Vegetation (basal cover)		1	5	↑	
% Ground Cover	24	29	84	↑	
Frequency of Key Species					
Sihy			4	↑	
Hija			22	↑	
Spcr	62	55	1	↓	
Bocu		1		→	
Come			T	→	
Epne				→	

Composition of Key Species:

The following tables #4 and #5 lists the current composition by weight of the key species and the desired plant community (DPC) composition. This type of study has only been read once, but will be read repeatedly to develop a study history. Implementing the Proposed Action should allow for the attainment of the DPC objectives, assuming recovery from drought and fires.

Table #4 Composition of Key Species			
Key Area # 1		Allotment: Link Spring	
		Pasture: Middle Bench	
		Range Site:	Shallow Upland (Cal) 9-13
Plant Species	Site-Guide Allowable Percent Composition	Composition 2003	DPC Composition Objective
Grasses	15-25%	2%	

Sihy	1-3%		1-3%
Spcr	1-2%		1-2%
Bocu	Group PPGG	1%	1-2%
Come	1-3%		1-3%
Epvi	3-5%		1-3%

Table #5 Composition of key Species			
Key Area # 2		Allotment: Link Spring	
		Pasture: Tweedie Bench	
		Range Site: Shallow Loamy 9-13" pz	
Plant Species	Site-Guide Allowable Percent Composition	Composition 2003	DPC Composition Objective
Grasses	60-75%	20%	
Sihy	5-10%	1%	2-5%
Hija	5-15%	6%	5-15%
Spcr	1-5%		1-5%
Bocu	2-10%		2-5%
Come	-	1%	2-5%
Ephedra	1-5%		1-5%

Utilization of Key Species:

Utilization data from 1985-2000 has been compiled for this evaluation. Tables #6 and #7 shows the utilization levels during the analysis period have been well below or at, in some cases, the 50 percent allowable level except for one year 1986 on Sihy and Ephedra. Based on this data implementing the proposed action should still allow the utilization levels to be below the 50 percent allowable.

Table #6 Utilization Key Area #1												
	1985	1986	1987	1990	1991	1993	1994	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000
Bocu	28	36	32	35	--	25	34	27	--	14	18	10
Sihy	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spcr	20	27	22	33	--	17	12	28	--	16	19	20
Come	10	18	26	9	--	3	39	40	--	21	34	40
Ephedra	--	--	--	25	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table #7 Utilization Key Area #2												
	1985	1986	1987	1990	1991	1993	1994	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000
Bocu	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Sihy	10	53	--	--	22	--	34	34	29	29	38	31
Spcr	12	50	--	--	40	--	25	42	32	34	42	41
Come	--	--	--	--	2	--	50	42	26	36	41	40

Ephedra	--	77	--	--	2	--	50	50	39	39	50	41
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Water Sources

Under the Proposed Action, existing water sources such as reservoirs pipelines and troughs would continue to be used and would be wildlife friendly. The Proposed Action or Alternatives would not have an impact on the resource conservation objectives of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Clean Water Act, State of Arizona Environmental Quality Act Certification and rangeland health. Overall impacts would be minor.

Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species

The Proposed Action would not affect any listed threatened or endangered species nor would the Proposed Action have an impact on the historic Peregrine and Golden Eagle nesting site (not currently occupied) or their occasional fly over, or the occasional fly over by the California condor. No take of any such species is anticipated.

BLM Sensitive and State Species of Concern

The Proposed Action would have no substantial impact on BLM sensitive and State species of concern. Sensitive species are usually rare within at least a portion of their range. These species include the avian species, Ferruginous hawk, Black-crowned Night Heron, and snowy egret and sensitive bat species such as Townsend’s big eared, spotted bats, small-footed myotis, fringed myotis, and big free-tailed bats.

Wildlife

Implementation of the Proposed Action would have no substantial impact on mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), which are at low densities throughout the available habitat on this allotment. The entire allotment is potential mule deer habitat including the Grand Wash Cliffs. This allotment is included within Game Management Unit (GMU) 13B. AGFD are actively managing the mule deer habitat through water projects, coordination on fire rehab, etc. for mule deer and other wildlife species. Obviously, the long-term effort is to improve this habitat for mule deer.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not have a substantial impact to desert bighorn sheep. During 2004, AGFD redeveloped the Olaf and Nax wildlife catchments. AGFD are actively managing Bighorn sheep in the Link Spring allotment.

Migratory Birds

Executive Order 13186 requires BLM and other federal agencies to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve protection for migratory birds. Implementation of the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect any species of migratory bird known or suspected to occur

on this allotment. No take of any such species is anticipated.

Soil

Attributes making up the soil resource should remain stable or improve through implementation of the Proposed Action and the enforcement of the Arizona Standards and Guides process for permitted livestock grazing within the Link Spring grazing allotment. Grazing associated with the Proposed Action allow for seasonal plant rest and vigor, allowing ground cover and litter to increase, thus protecting the soil. Current utilization levels are within what is allowable, vegetation cover trends are static or up, and current key species frequency trends are static with a few trends upward

In addition, to some degree, all range improvement projects would continue to receive some routine maintenance under the Proposed Action or Alternative(s), which could result in long-term minor disturbances to the soil resources.

Cultural Resources

There would be no substantial impact to cultural or historical sites due to issuing a grazing permit under the Proposed Action. A Cultural Resources Project Record AZ BLM-100-2002-03, for the Link Spring grazing allotment contains review documentation of compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act under the Standards and Guides process, and permit renewal. Great efforts are made to avoid sites during allotment project implementation. Further, archaeological inventory, evaluation, and avoidance or mitigation recommendations are completed prior to all project initiation.

Visual Resources

The long-term success of improving land health could contribute to enhancing visual resource conditions by increasing the variety of visual forms, lines, colors and textures where past land use practices may have virtually eliminated any such variety. Conversely, though none are listed in the proposed action future range improvement projects could potentially create slight to minor visual contrast from the construction of rangeland developments. Also such developments could add weak to moderate horizontal structural lines to the landscape. In the long-term, these potential effects may only require more intensive mitigation if placed within VRM Class I and II areas. Conducting a Visual Resource Contrast Rating evaluation as part of rangeland development design would likely enable most projects to be mitigated to meet VRM Class objectives.

Livestock Grazing

Under the Proposed Action, the forage preference would remain active and livestock grazing would continue.

Recreation Resources

Though no range improvement projects are listed under the proposed action future construction of rangeland developments in the allotment could slightly impact physical recreation settings and recreation opportunities in the short term due to the presence of new structures and access routes in semi-primitive non-motorized physical settings. Future construction of new fence developments could have a slight to minor impact to recreation settings and recreation activity opportunities in the short-term due to fencing as an impediment to access, as well as the increase in evidence of human use created by the placement of the fencing.

Noxious Weeds

Implementing the Proposed Action would result in similar dissemination of noxious weeds as occurs now by livestock grazing. Dissemination of noxious weed seeds by other means (i.e., recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, hunting, ATV's, vehicles, and by birds and other wildlife etc.) would continue, regardless of livestock grazing. Inventories for noxious weeds are conducted annually and any noxious weeds would be treated in an effort to eradicate or control.

Socio/Economic

Implementing the proposed action would not change the socio/economic structure associated with the Arizona Strip. The total economic activity, which includes the direct expenditure plus secondary economic contributions as defined by Fletcher et al (2006), would remain the same. The social aspect of providing remote, unpopulated settings with moderate to high opportunities for solitude would continue.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative Impacts are tiered to the Arizona Strip RMP (1992), Environmental Consequences pages IV-36 to IV-38, and to chapter 3 of the Shivwits Grazing EIS (1980), which was adopted into the RMP. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts, Relationship between Local Short-term Uses of Man's Environment, Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity, and the Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources were discussed.

Cumulative impacts occur when additional management facilities are added to those already present. Grazing plans set specific objectives and include rangeland improvements that are designed to maintain or improve wildlife habitat, watershed, and overall resource conditions, thus improving ecosystem health. There are no additional management facilities under the Proposed Action thus negating this impact.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions within the analysis area would continue to influence range resources, naturalness, aesthetics, watershed conditions, and trends. The impact of land treatments targeting woody species, voluntary livestock reductions during dry periods

and implementation of a grazing system have improved range conditions. The net result has been greater species diversity, improved plant vigor, and increased ground cover from grasses and forbs. No cumulative impacts are predicted to the range resource as a result of the Proposed Action.

Residual Impacts

Residual Impacts are tiered to the Arizona Strip RMP (1992), Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources page 172 of the Shivwits Grazing EIS (1980), which was adopted into the RMP. Though the Proposed Action does not propose any new fences, it does allow for the existence of present fence lines, which do create some restrictions of free passage, but do not prevent or prohibit passage of mule deer. Nor are other forms of wildlife using the area restricted by existing fences.

There are no residual impacts, as a result, of the Proposed Action to the vegetative resource. Future maintenance of existing vegetation treatments would likely take place and would not affect additional acres beyond that done previously. Residual impacts from maintenance activities would be improve watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, and rangeland resources over time.

Monitoring

Monitoring would be conducted to determine if livestock management actions were resulting in significant progress toward fulfillment of the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health (1997). The criteria for meeting standards of rangeland health exist on the Link Spring grazing allotment as indicated by measurable attributes or indicator factors. (See document titled "Arizona Standards For Rangeland Health And Guidelines For Grazing Administration" 1997). Monitor the attributes or indicator factors using the following technical references.

To monitor rangeland health conditions, key areas as defined in the *Monitoring* "Planning for Monitoring", "TR 4400-1", (1984) would be used. The key area would be used as an indicator area to reflect the effect of on the ground management on the site they represent. Each key area would be established based on a Range Site/Ecological Site (developed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, (NRCS)) with a specific Potential Natural Community (PNC) and specific physical site characteristics. Knowing the PNC of the area, and using the ecological site descriptions as a guide, DPC objectives can be developed. The DPC then becomes the objectives by which management actions would be measured.

Dry Weight Rank (DWR) method of data collection would be used to monitor species composition. In addition, Pace Frequency and Step-Point studies would be used at each key area to detect changes of individual species and vegetative cover, which indicates a trend and status of basal and foliar cover. Pace Frequency, Step-Point and DWR would be completed on each key area every 3-6 years. DWR and Pace Frequency study methods are described in *Sampling Vegetation Attributes*, "Interagency Technical Reference 1734-4" (1996).

Livestock use on forage plants would be determined by conducting grazing utilization studies using the Grazed-Class Method as described in the *Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements* "Interagency Technical Reference 1734-3" (1996). Utilization studies would be completed annually in each grazing unit by BLM prior to and/or after livestock have been removed from the pasture. Study data would be compiled each year. Other information to be collected and compiled is precipitation, actual use, etc. All monitoring data would be used to evaluate current management and assist BLM in making management decisions that helps achieve vegetation objectives on the allotment.

In addition to those methods described, there are efforts in place to inventory for noxious weed establishment, as well as monitor treated areas for treatment effectiveness. BLM weed specialist has the lead on monitoring and treating noxious weeds on the Arizona Strip. Training on identification and treatment as well as ways to reduce the spread of weeds is provided to BLM employees and permittees.

Allotment compliance would be conducted annually on the allotment. Compliance monitoring assures terms and conditions of the permit and any other subsequent requirements attached to range improvement permits are being met.

Based on analyses of this allotment monitoring data and supporting documentation contained in the Link Spring S&G Assessment Report (2007), the IAT determined that overall the resource conditions on this allotment are making significant progress toward meeting the applicable standards for rangeland health.

Mitigation

When noxious weeds are located, various methods are used for their control depending on the size of the infestation and growth stage of the plants. The methods include but are not limited to:

- Physical or mechanical
- Biological
- Chemical or Cultural

If vegetative monitoring indicates current livestock grazing practices are causing non-attainment of resource objectives, BLM would modify the terms and conditions of a grazing permit (i.e., timing of use, duration of grazing, adjusting of stocking rates, etc.) temporarily or on a more long-term basis. Most modifications are accomplished on a cooperative basis with the livestock permittee; however, if a permittee disagrees with BLM's assessment of the resource conditions or the necessary modifications, BLM may nevertheless issue a Full Force and Effect Grazing Decision to protect resources.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

This EA was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 E. Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790. Phone (435) 688-3200. Public involvement for the Link Spring S&G evaluations began on January 29, 2002. Rangeland health issues were raised at the public scoping meeting; therefore, an assessment field trip to the Link Spring allotment occurred on November 20, 2002. The Interdisciplinary Assessment Team (IAT) was assisted by the Rangeland Resources Team (RRT) appointed by the Arizona Resource Advisory Council. On January 4, 2007, the evaluation document was sent out for public review and comment to Individuals, Groups, and Agencies. Comments from Individuals, Groups, and Agencies, were considered in preparation of this EA.

Interdisciplinary Assessment Team (IAT)

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John Herron, Archaeologist

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Michael Herder, Wildlife

Ray Klein, GCPNM Supervisory Ranger

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Environmental Assessment AZ-130-2007-0027, hereby incorporated by reference, analyzed a livestock grazing permit renewal action conducted under the Arizona BLM Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management (S&Gs) where an intensive allotment evaluation was conducted with public and other agency involvement throughout the process.

Analysis of existing study data indicates that a few key forage plants were improving though overall trends of most were static relating to past and recent fires (2005) and drought. Overall, the resource conditions on this allotment are making significant progress toward meeting the applicable standards for rangeland health. Issues were analyzed and it was determined that current management is not a factor in preventing attainment of Standards.

The Environmental Assessment reaffirmed the present AMP, and determined that the present grazing management program would continue to allow improvement to the health of public land resources, such as soil, water, vegetation, wildlife habitat, and wildlife and other resource values.

Based on the analysis of Environmental Assessment AZ-130-2007-0027, I have determined that renewal of the Link Spring livestock grazing permit with current terms and conditions will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

/s/ Dennis Curtis
Dennis Curtis, Monument Manager
Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument

8/13/07
Date



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GRAND CANYON-PARASHANT NATIONAL MONUMENT**

345 East Riverside Drive

St. George, Utah 84790

Phone: (435) 688-3345 Fax: (435) 688-3388

In Reply Refer To:

AZ-130: 4160 (0201015)

August 14, 2007

Certified #

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

NOTICE OF PROPOSED DECISION

INTRODUCTION

This Proposed Grazing Decision is the final administrative step in the condition assessment and permit renewal process that began on the Link Spring allotment in January of 2002. In order to fulfill our requirements for "consultation, cooperation and coordination", copies of this decision have been sent to the Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, any lien holder of record and all of the interested publics designated on this allotment. See page 2 for the details of the proposed decision, and the last page for protest and appeal instructions.

BACKGROUND

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 provide for livestock grazing use of the public lands, which have been classified as available for grazing. Grazing use must be consistent with good range management aimed at conservation and protection of the natural resources.

On April 28, 1997, Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration (S&Gs) were approved by the Secretary of the Interior and adopted into all Land Use Plans in Arizona as indicated by the Decision Record for the Statewide Amendment. This included the Arizona Strip District Resource Management Plan.

Arizona's Standards and Guides were developed by the BLM State Standards and Guides Team and the Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC); a state level council appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

The purpose of Standards and Guides is to ensure the health of public rangelands. These standards help the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), rangeland users, and interested members of the public achieve a common understanding of acceptable resource conditions, and work together to implement that vision.

On October 19, 2001, the public was notified about the Link Spring allotment evaluation and was invited to participate in the process. Different individuals, groups, organizations and agencies were contacted from the general Arizona Strip District mailing lists to determine specific interest in the Link Spring allotment and to solicit interest in the decision making process for grazing term permit renewal and Standard and Guideline evaluation.

The permittees, RAC, Interdisciplinary Assessment Team, Rangeland Resource Team, and the interested public were invited to an issue-scoping meeting on January 29, 2002; and a field meeting on the allotment November 20, 2002. The assessment, completed on January 4, 2007, fulfilled its purpose of determining if the existing soil, water, and vegetative resources on public lands within the Link Spring allotment, meet, are making significant progress toward meeting, or are not meeting the standards. A thirty-day comment period on the report was afforded to the permittees, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State Land Department, Interdisciplinary Assessment Team, Arizona Resource Advisory Council, Rangeland Resource Team and the designated interested public.

The Link Spring Standards Assessment and allotment evaluation was conducted in accordance with the direction set forth in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 98-91 for implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The evaluation supported issuance of a ten-year grazing permit, which conformed to applicable land use plans and amendments. The existing NEPA documentation adequately addresses the proposed action of renewing the Link Spring allotment-grazing permit.

The EA/FONSI, EA-AZ-130-2007-0027, which analyzed the livestock grazing permit renewal action, was completed August 13, 2007; is considered a public document and is available upon request.

PROPOSED DECISION

In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.2, and based upon the allotment evaluation, consultation with affected permittees, interested publics, rangeland resource team, and recommendations from the interdisciplinary assessment team, and findings of EA-AZ-130-2007-0027; it is my proposed decision to offer the renewal of the Link Spring grazing permit, to the extent of 1,094 AUMs, on the Link Spring allotment, for a period of ten years in accordance with the following terms and conditions, which becomes effective upon acceptance of the permit.

Your current grazing permit, dated May 8, 2002, will be canceled as of the implementation date of the new term permit.

The new Federal grazing permit for the Link Spring allotment will be issued as follows:

Grazing Preference, including active and suspended use							
Allotment Name & Number	livestock Numbers	Kind	Season of Use	Active AUMs	Public Land (acres)	% Public Land	Susp. Pref. AUMs
Link Spring #4819	93 2	Cattle Horses	3/01-02/28	1,094	27,689	96%	685

Terms and Conditions:

- Season of use would be from 3/1 to 2/28. Average utilization levels of key forage species should not exceed the 50% allowable use.
- Authorized grazing use will be in accordance with the Link Spring Allotment Management Plan, dated August 16, 1996, as modified by this decision.
- As provided by 43 CFR 4130.6-1(b), this permit is subject to cancellation, suspension, or modification for any violation of the regulations of 43 CFR Part 4100 or of any term or condition of this permit.
- Use of roughage for supplemental feeding will not be authorized. However feeding of nutritional livestock supplements is allowed, including protein, minerals and salt.
- Consider, through the NEPA process new range improvements to assist in grazing practices and promote rangeland health.
- Actual livestock use must be submitted to the BLM by March 15, each year.

Monitoring:

- Desired Plant Community (DPC) and vegetation cover objectives as listed in the Link Spring S&G Assessment will be monitored to determine trends.
- Monitoring utilization of upland key plant species over time on the allotment to ensure average utilization of key herbaceous forage species does not exceed 50%. Utilization goals and guidelines are stated for each key area. Utilization guidelines are intended to indicate a level of use to be achieved over the short and long term. Utilization data collected over a period of time will be used along with analysis of frequency, cover, structure, actual use reports, precipitation, and desired plant community data to determine if changes in levels of use and current management practices are necessary.

- Livestock use levels will be adjusted as necessary based on the results of monitoring data, to balance the AUMs between the newly created pastures.
- If measurement of annual use indicates that the current grazing intensity or strategy is not being achieved or is inconsistent with achieving the desired resource objectives in key management areas as shown in the allotment evaluation, then BLM would modify the terms and conditions of a grazing permit (i.e., number of cattle, turn out dates, removal dates, etc.) temporarily or on a more long-term basis.

RATIONALE:

The Link Spring allotment evaluation was conducted in accordance with the direction set forth in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 98-91, for implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The evaluation supported issuance of a ten-year grazing permit, which conformed to applicable land use plans and amendments. The existing NEPA documentation adequately addresses the proposed action of renewing grazing permit for the Link Spring grazing allotment.

In accordance with Bureau policy and regulations, all applicable monitoring data were examined and evaluated in order to determine attainment and progress towards meeting Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and other land use plan objectives. Analysis of data indicated that the Land Use Planning (LUP) Objectives are being met. LUP Objectives pertaining to DPC's are being met and they assure rangeland health, state water quality standards, and habitat for endangered, threatened, and sensitive species, as well as other wildlife, are being maintained and improved. Standard #1 is being met on all 27,689 acres on the allotment. Standard #2 does not apply in that there is no riparian-wetland areas in the allotment. Standard #3 pertaining to key area DPC objectives for the allotment is being met on 16,283 acres, and not being met on 11,406 acres due to past wildfires and more recent wildfires during 2005 and 2006. The rehabilitation measures for the burn areas were addressed in NEPA documents, EA AZ-130-2006-008 and DNA AZ-130-2006-0056.

The proposed action conforms to the Arizona Strip Resource Management Plan (Land Use Plan) dated January 31, 1992, as amended, and the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument Proclamation and interim management policy. The existing NEPA documentation covers the proposed action and alternatives, which constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA, and procedural requirements as provided in the CEQ regulations. This is demonstrated by the background information set forth below:

- The EA/FONSI, EA-AZ-130-2007-0027, which analyzed the livestock grazing permit renewal action, and is based on the analysis of data contained in the Link Spring allotment evaluation. Both the EA and the allotment evaluation are available upon request.

- The NEPA analysis from the Environmental Assessment determined that the Proposed Action would allow for improvement to the health of public land resources, such as soil, water, vegetation, wildlife habitat, and wildlife and other resource values.

AUTHORITY

The authority for this decision is contained in Title 43 CFR 4100, as amended, in Effect on July 11, 2006, which states in pertinent subparts and sections:

4100.0-8 “The authorized officer shall manage livestock grazing on public lands under the principle of multiple use and sustained yield, and in accordance with applicable land use plans. Land use plans shall establish allowable resource uses (either singly or in combination), related levels of production or use to be maintained, areas of use, and resource condition goals and objectives to be obtained. The plans also set forth program constraints and general management practices needed to achieve management objectives. Livestock grazing activities and management actions approved by the authorized officer shall be in conformance with the land use plan as defined at 43 CFR 1601.0- 5(b).”

4110.3 “The authorized officer shall periodically review the permitted use specified in a grazing permit or grazing lease and shall make changes in the permitted use as needed to manage, maintain or improve rangeland productivity, to assist in restoring ecosystems to properly functioning condition, to conform with land use plans or activity plans, or to comply with the provisions of subpart 4180 of this part. These changes must be supported by monitoring, field observations, ecological site inventory or other data acceptable to the authorized officer.”

4110.3-3(a) “After consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the affected permittee or lessee, the State having lands or managing resources within the area, and the interested public, reductions of permitted use shall be implemented through a documented agreement or by decision of the authorized officer. Decisions implementing §§4110.3-2 shall be issued as proposed decisions pursuant to 4160.1 of this part, except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section.”

4120.2(c) “. . . The decision document following the environmental analysis shall be considered the proposed decision for the purposes of subpart 4160 of this part.”

4130.2(a) “Grazing permits or leases shall be issued to qualified applicants to authorize use on the public lands and other lands under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management that are designated as available for livestock grazing through land use plans. Permits or leases shall specify the types and levels of use authorized, including livestock grazing, suspended use, and conservation use. These grazing permits or leases shall also specify terms and conditions pursuant to §§ 4130.3, 4130.3-1, and 4130.3-2.”

4130.2(b) “The authorized officer shall consult, cooperate and coordinate with affected permittees or lessees, the State having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public prior to the issuance or renewal of grazing permits and leases.”

4130.2(d) “The term of grazing permits or leases authorizing livestock grazing on the public lands and other lands under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management shall be 10 years . . .”

4130.2(f) “The authorized officer will not offer, grant or renew grazing permits or leases when the applicants, including permittees or lessees seeking renewal, refuse to accept the proposed terms and conditions of a permit or lease.”

4130.3 “Livestock grazing permits and leases shall contain terms and conditions determined by the authorized officer to be appropriate to achieve the management and resource condition objectives for the public lands and other lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and to ensure conformance with the provisions of subpart 4180 of this part.”

4130.3-1 “(a) The authorized officer shall specify the kind and number of livestock, the period(s) of use, the allotment(s) to be used, and the amount of use, in animal unit months, for every grazing permit or lease. The authorized livestock grazing use shall not exceed the livestock carrying capacity of the allotment. (b) All permits and leases shall be made subject to cancellation, suspension, or modification for any violation of these regulations or of any term or condition of the permit or lease. (c) Permits and leases shall incorporate terms and conditions that ensure conformance with subpart 4180 of this part.”

4130.3-2 “The authorized officer may specify in grazing permits or leases other terms and conditions which will assist in achieving management objectives, provide for proper range management or assist in the orderly administration of the public rangelands.”

4130.3-2(g) “The percentage of public land use determined by the proportion of livestock forage available on public lands within the allotment compared to the total amount available from both public lands and those owned or controlled by the permittee . . .”

4130.3-3 “Following consultation, cooperation and coordination with the affected lessees or permittees, the State having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public, the authorized officer may modify terms and conditions of the permit . . .”

4160.1(a) “Proposed decisions shall be served on any affected applicant, permittee or lessee, and any agent and lien holder of record, who is affected by the proposed actions, terms or conditions, or modifications relating to applications, permits and agreements (including range improvement permits) or leases, by certified mail or personal delivery. Copies of proposed decisions shall also be sent to the interested public.”

4160.2 “Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other interested public may protest the proposed decision under Sec. 4160.1 of this title in person or in writing to the authorized officer within 15 days after receipt of such decision.”

4160.3(d) “When the Office of Hearings and Appeals stays a final decision of the authorized officer regarding an application for grazing authorization, an applicant who was granted grazing use in the preceding year may continue at that level of authorized grazing use during the time the decision is stayed . . .”

4180.2(c) “The authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines that are made effective under this section. Appropriate action means implementing actions pursuant to subparts 4110, 4120, 4130, and 4160 of this part that will result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines. Practices and activities subject to standards and guidelines include the development of grazing-related portions of activity plans, establishment of terms and conditions of permits, leases and other grazing authorizations, and range improvement activities such as vegetation manipulation, fence construction and development of water.”

RIGHT OF PROTEST AND/OR APPEAL

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interests may protest the proposed decision under 43 CFR 4160.1 in person or in writing to the authorized officer, Dennis Curtis, Monument Manager, Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, at 345 East Riverside Dr., St. George, Utah 84790, within 15 days after receipt of such decision. The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) as to why the proposed decision is in error.

In the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become the final decision of the authorized officer at the conclusion of the protest period without further notice.

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal and petition for stay of the decision pending final determination on appeal under 43 CFR 4160.4, 43 CFR 4.21 and must follow the requirements set forth in § 4.470 through 4.480 of this title. The appeal and petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted above, within 30 days following receipt of the final decision, or 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final as provided in §4160.3(a).

The appeal shall comply with the provisions of 43 CFR 4.470 and state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error. When filing a petition for stay, the appellant must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant’s success on the merits.

- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

Sincerely,

/s/ Dennis Curtis
Dennis Curtis, Monument Manager
Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument