

Appendix L

Glenwood Springs Grazing Guidelines for Riparian Areas

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS FIELD OFFICE GRAZING MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR RIPARIAN AREAS

I. Supporting Documentation

Colorado Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines that are applicable to riparian areas:

“1. Grazing Management practices promote plant health by providing for one or more of the following:

- periodic rest or deferment from grazing during critical growth periods;
- **adequate recovery and regrowth periods;**
- opportunity for seed dissemination and seedling establishment.

2. Grazing management practices address the kind, numbers, and class of livestock, season, duration, distribution, frequency and intensity of grazing use and livestock health.

3. Grazing management practices maintain sufficient residual vegetation on both uplands and riparian sites to protect the soil from wind and water erosion, to assist in maintaining appropriate soil infiltration appropriate soil infiltration and permeability, and to buffer temperature extremes. In riparian areas, vegetation dissipates energy, captures sediment, recharges ground water, and contributes to stream stability.”

The bolded sections are probably the most important for riparian zones.

Excerpts from BLM TR 1737-14 1997 Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas:

“No single grazing management system has resulted in consistent recovery of degraded riparian areas. Many combinations of sites, resource condition, and impacts, as well as human perspectives, are involved. The grazing management system for an area should be tailored to the conditions, problems, potential, objectives, and livestock management considerations on a site-specific basis.”

“Ehrhart (in press) concluded that the common denominator among riparian areas that were functioning properly, or at least improving, in eastern Montana was continual involvement by the operator or manager. As long as there is control of livestock distribution and grazing intensity, the specific grazing system employed may not be important (Clary and Webster 1989).”

“Successful grazing management strategies for riparian areas can usually be achieved using a combination of options, including grazing “prescriptions” that:

- Limit grazing intensity, frequency and/or season of use, thereby providing sufficient rest to encourage plant vigor, regrowth, and energy storage and minimize compaction of soils.
- Control the timing of grazing to prevent damage to streambanks when they are most vulnerable to trampling.

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- Ensure sufficient vegetation during periods of high flow to protect streambanks, dissipate energy, and trap sediments.”

“Proper distribution of livestock can be an effective and economical tool in managing riparian areas. In some areas that are degraded, some rest may required, especially where woody species are part of the management objective.”

“Due to the variation in riparian sites and management objectives, one standard utilization and/or residual vegetation target is not appropriate.”

“Utilization patterns relative to total forage distribution reveal that livestock distribution, coupled with timing, duration, and frequency of grazing are often the main problems. Most successful grazing strategies of “prescriptions also include additional practices or techniques that promote distribution of livestock...”

“Total stocking rate problems at the pasture, ranch, or allotment level are the exception rather than the rule in today’s operations. The apparent overstocking of some areas while others are only moderately grazed or even ungrazed will not be solved by simply reducing numbers if other factors are not also changed. Reducing stocking rates may reduce the percentage of area in unsatisfactory condition, but the impacts around the foci of highly utilized areas (e.g., riparian areas, other waters, etc.) will remain the same until few, if any animals remain.”

“Sometimes exclusion fencing can be the most practical approach for initiating rapid riparian recovery or improving highly sensitive areas, or it can be a temporary measure for initiating recovery.”

“Using riparian pastures offers alternatives to eliminating livestock grazing and fencing riparian boundaries, which can be costly.”

“Frequent riding and herding can effectively control livestock distribution in some situations.”

II. Recommended “Rule of Thumb” Guidelines

In consideration of the above, the following Rules of Thumb/Guidelines (not to be confused as mandates) are recommended to meet resource objectives and achieve Land Health Standards:

- Continuous season-long grazing strategies should be avoided. Adopt grazing strategies that limit the duration of grazing use and allow ample regrowth periods.
- Salt and supplemental feed placement should be done in a manner that attracts livestock away from riparian areas. Avoid placement of salt and supplemental feed adjacent to riparian areas. Place at least 0.25 and preferably 0.5 mile from riparian areas and in locations that encourage use of uplands.

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- Develop additional water sources in uplands to attract livestock away from riparian areas.
- Adopt frequent riding and/or herding requirements where appropriate in AMPs or terms and conditions of grazing permits.
- Avoid using streams as fenced pasture boundaries. Fences that are adjacent to streams or zig-zag across streams tend to concentrate livestock near the stream.
- Consider exclusion fencing where practical or riparian pasture fencing.
- Adopt utilization and/or residual vegetation targets in AMPs or terms and conditions of grazing permits.¹
- Apply guidelines that limit streambank shearing and trampling to acceptable levels in AMPs or terms and conditions of grazing permits.
- Conduct prescribed burning or other land treatments in uplands to provide better forage to attract livestock away from riparian areas.
- Employ rest from livestock grazing whenever appropriate (e.g., some rest may be required for degraded riparian areas where woody species are part of the management objective).

¹ GSFO has commonly used the following as a term and condition on grazing permits: “grazing in riparian areas by livestock will leave an average minimum 4-inch stubble height of herbaceous vegetation and will not exceed an average utilization of 40% of the current year’s growth for browse species. Livestock will be moved to another portion of the allotment where utilization levels are still within acceptable limits or removed immediately from the allotment when the above utilization levels occur.” A slightly older version of this term and condition used a 3-inch stubble height and 50% of the current year’s growth for browse species. It is not known where either figures were derived; hence, there is reluctance to apply these in a land use plan amendment without supporting published research.

