

PART III

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A
RANGE MANAGEMENT

Selective Management

A worksheet (Table A.1) containing specific criteria was developed to categorize allotments. Six specific criteria were addressed for each allotment. The criteria were as follows:

1. Is the public land proposed for retention or disposal?
2. Is the range condition and trend satisfactory or unsatisfactory?
3. Are the resource conflicts low, moderate, or high?
4. Is the site potential for improvement low, moderate, or high?
5. Are management goals being met?
6. Does the public land provide greater than or less than 20% of the total allotment forage?

Of the six criteria, the resource-specific criteria (Items 2 through 5 above) were considered the most significant in categorizing allotments. Utilizing the six specific criteria, each allotment was placed into one of three categories: maintain, improve, or custodial.

Maintain (M) allotments are described as follows:

Present livestock management, range improvements and stocking rates are all adequate to meet the needs of the operator and to provide a sustained forage yield without damaging the vegetation. In these allotments, the BLM will want to maintain present conditions.

Improve (I) allotments are described as follows:

Present management is not adequate to meet the needs of the operator or the vegetation. Allotments may be placed in this category for a variety of reasons, varying from the need to develop water sources, to making large-scale improvements, to adjusting the stocking rate. The BLM will want to improve conditions in allotments that fall into this category.

Custodial (C) allotments are described as follows:

These allotments are generally small, have a low percentage of public land, or have conditions which cannot feasibly be improved. In the custodial allotments, the BLM will spend little time or money for range management.

Distribution of public funds and involvement by BLM personnel will have highest priority for the Improve allotments, followed by the Maintain and Custodial allotments. Within these categories, allotments will be prioritized according to the degree of resource problems and the need for immediate improvement. Improvement potential in terms of a positive return on public investments will also be a priority criterion. Allotment priority may also improve when interested parties are willing to contribute with the BLM in cost-share improvements for obtaining or improving resource conditions.

The management category for an allotment may change when resource conditions change or when additional data becomes available.

Livestock Conversions

No permanent livestock conversions will be authorized until the Pocatello Resource Management Plan has been completed. Until then, conversions will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and may be allowed on a temporary basis.

The Pocatello Resource Area Livestock Conversion Policy is based upon current policy, guidance, and regulations. The following general guidelines currently apply:

1. A technical report on an allotment's capability for the new kind of livestock is prepared. This report serves to develop the proposed action and alternatives in the environmental assessment.
2. All conversions must initially be conservative (75 percent conversion for the first three years as modified by suitability).
3. The amount of conversion from one kind of livestock to another must be in proportion to the allotment's capability for grazing the new kind of livestock.
4. Environmental assessments are completed to identify impacts and the mitigating measures necessary to meet multiple use objectives.
5. Concerns of other permittees in the affected allotment and of the Idaho Fish and Game Department must be considered in the analysis of the proposed conversion.
6. Necessary structural improvements, such as fencing and water developments, must be completed prior to allowing the conversion.
7. Results of ongoing monitoring studies will be used to determine whether the amount of conversion was satisfactory.
8. Final amounts converted will depend on the desired season of use, initial balance between spring and fall preference, and resource response.

Future Livestock Use Adjustments

If the results of resource monitoring studies show that the proposed grazing management is not meeting the multiple use objectives of the Pocatello Resource Management Plan, livestock use adjustments will be made in accordance with the BLM grazing administration regulations and existing policy. Livestock use adjustments could take the form of changes in the grazing system, changes in season of use, reductions or increases in active preference, or a combination of all of these.

Range Improvements

The following design features, construction practices, and mitigation measures are common to the several kinds of range improvements proposed in the Pocatello RMP. Structural improvements are generally installations which help control livestock distribution, while nonstructural improvements are vegetation treatments.

Structural Improvements

Fences

New fences would provide exterior allotment boundaries, divide allotments into pastures, and protect sites having other values from livestock disturbance. Fencing would be built in accordance with BLM specifications. Existing fences that create wildlife movement problems would be modified. Where fences cross existing roads, cattleguards or gates would be installed. Gates would also be installed as needed in other areas. Fence lines may be cleared to the extent necessary for construction and maintenance, but mechanical clearing of vegetation to bare soil would not be allowed.

Cattleguards

Cattleguards would be 8 feet wide and 12 to 24 feet long, depending upon the traffic type and pattern.

Springs

Springs would be developed or redeveloped using a backhoe or hand tools to install a buried collection system. The collection system would be covered and fitted with a delivery pipe. A pipeline would be installed to deliver water to a trough for use by livestock and wildlife. Normally, the spring area would be fenced following development to exclude livestock. Riparian vegetation would be protected at the spring source.

Pipelines and Troughs

Water pipelines would be buried in a trench excavated by a backhoe or hand tools, with excavated material being used for the backfill. Rigid plastic pipe may be used. Flexible pipe may also be installed with a

ripper tooth. Valves would be installed at intervals along each pipeline to allow easy drainage to prevent freezing. Troughs would be placed, where needed, to provide an even distribution of livestock water. Each trough would have a bird ladder to allow wildlife use and escape.

Separate wildlife water storage and watering devices may also be constructed at regular intervals. Disturbed areas would be rehabilitated.

Reservoirs/Water Catchments

Reservoir and catchment sites would be selected, based upon geologic structures and in consultation with engineers, hydrologist, soil scientist, range conservationists and permittee/lessees. BLM earth work guidelines and specifications would be followed for reservoirs and catchments constructed for livestock water.

Roads

Several miles of new or existing roads would be bladed to provide access to new water developments. Existing vegetation would be eliminated and the soil surface would be bared. Depending on the amount of traffic, herbaceous vegetation could reestablish itself on the new roads without impairing their function.

Nonstructural Improvements

Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire may be used to release the native understory from brush competition in areas proposed for brush control. Burning would be done to meet the objectives of this plan and in accordance with site-specific prescribed burn plans. Plant succession would be carefully weighed in preparing burn plans. Where wildlife habitat is a major consideration, areas would be burned to create a mosaic of shrubbery and herbaceous vegetation. Burned areas would be rested from livestock grazing for at least two growing seasons following treatment.

Interseeding

Desirable plant species would be interseeded with existing vegetation. A seed dribbler, small scalper/seeder, or range drill would be used to interseed strips. Broadcast seedings could also be used. The seed mixture would include grasses and forbs as appropriate for the specific site and management objectives. Treated areas would not be grazed for at least two growing seasons following treatment. Whenever practical, interseeding would be used in preference to plowing, disking, and seeding.

Plowing, Disking, and Seeding

This treatment would be used to eliminate undesirable plant species or competition in order to establish new seedings. Treatment would be done on areas having a low potential under other management practices. Size limitations on individual treatment areas may be necessary in major wildlife habitat areas. Seed would generally be planted with a standard rangeland drill. The seed mixture would include grasses, forbs, and shrubs as appropriate for the specific site and management objectives. Treated areas would not be grazed for at least two growing seasons following treatment.

Chemical Control of Vegetation

The use of chemicals to control unwanted vegetation would be considered when it was an environmentally acceptable and cost-effective way of meeting management goals and objectives. The use of herbicides on public land will follow the guidelines found in the Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program EIS, as amended.

Chaining and Rotobeating

In general, this treatment would be used to release the native understory from shrub competition in areas where prescribed burning is undesirable due to soil erosion.

A tractor pulling a chain, rail, or rotobeater would be used, creating areas of mosaic patterns. Chained areas would not be grazed for at least one growing season following treatment. Other treatment areas would be evaluated for grazing rest on a case-by-case basis.

Grazing Systems

Rest-Rotation Grazing

Under a rest-rotation grazing system, an allotment is divided into pastures, usually with comparable grazing capacities. Grazing is deferred on various pastures during succeeding years in a rotation sequence. A complete rest for a year is also included in a planned sequence. Each pasture is systematically grazed and rested so that livestock production and other resource values are provided for, while the vegetation cover is simultaneously maintained or improved. This practice protects soil from wind and water erosion.

Any of several rest-rotation grazing systems may be used, depending on the objectives for the allotment and number of pastures.

Deferred Rotation Grazing

Deferred rotation is the postponement of grazing on different parts of an allotment in succeeding years. This allows each pasture a rest from grazing successively during the forage growing season to allow plants to produce seed, establish seedlings, and restore plant vigor (American Society of Range Management 1964). One or more pastures are grazed during the spring, while the remaining pasture(s) is rested until after seed ripening of key species and then grazed. Deferred rotation grazing differs from rest-rotation grazing in that no yearlong rest is provided.

Deferred Grazing

Deferred grazing is a delay of livestock grazing on an area for a specified period of time during the forage growing season. Under this system, grazing begins after key plants have reached an advanced state of development in their annual growth cycle. The growing season rest provided by this system promotes reproduction of plants, establishment of new plants, or restoration of the vigor in mature plants (American Society of Range Management 1964).

Seasonal Grazing

Seasonal grazing is use by livestock during one or more seasons of the year. Seasonal grazing occurs during the same season each year and does not involve rotation or deferment. For RMP purposes, seasonal grazing also includes season-long grazing (livestock use throughout the grazing season). The most common types of seasonal grazing in the PRA are spring-fall sheep grazing, spring-fall cattle grazing, season-long cattle grazing.

Methodology Used In The Vegetative Inventory

A vegetative inventory was conducted during the 1984 and 1985 field seasons in conjunction with a third-order soil survey. The inventory gathered information on range site classifications, present vegetation, ecological condition, and apparent trend.

Classification

Two classification systems were used during the inventory. Sites with remnant native plant species were classified according to the Soil Conservation Service's (SCS's) Range Sites Inventory Method (USDA-SCS 1976). This system classifies sites according to geographic region, soil characteristics, mean annual precipitation, and potential plant communities to the extent that these can be interpreted for the site.

Ecological Condition

Inventory crews first identified and delineated the boundaries for the sites to be inspected. Estimates of plant species composition, based on weight, were then made for the plant community found on each site. The present species composition was compared to the expected potential species composition from the SCS's Range Site Descriptions. A condition rating was computed for the vegetation on each site. This rating represents the amount of departure from the potential plant community (see Range Condition Worksheet).

Four condition classes are set forth by the SCS: Potential Natural Community (PNC), late seral, mid seral and early seral. An excellent condition community would have 76 to 100 percent of the kinds, amounts, and proportions of vegetation produced in the potential plant community. Late, good, and early seral condition classes would have 51 to 75 percent, 26 to 50 percent and 0 to 25 percent, respectively, of these factors.

Eight condition classes were assigned during the vegetative inventory: PNC, late seral, mid seral, early seral, disturbed, rock or water, seeded, agricultural trespass.

Range Trend

Present range trend was determined by observed apparent trend ratings made during the vegetative inventory because no long-term trend data was available (see Observed Apparent Trend form).

Projecting Ecological Condition And Trend

Projections of ecological (range) condition and range trend were made after considering present condition, present vegetative composition, current trend, wildfire, proposed stocking levels, grazing systems, and other management facilities. The following assumptions were made:

1. All trend projections are for the long-term (20 years).
2. Increased grazing, when accompanied by range developments, would change existing trends.
3. The trend on new seedings and brush control areas would be stable once the desired results were achieved. Long-term trends were considered to be stable.
4. Mid to early seral condition areas with few native perennials (highly disturbed) may show upward trend with decreases in grazing, but would not change condition class.

Determining The Proposed Stocking Rate

Allotments with a 5-year average use that is below the estimated stocking level were not adjusted. The allotments generally had excessive amounts of nonuse or were originally adjudicated below the stocking levels needed to protect other resource values as proposed in a given alternative.

Some allotments have available forage problems and were in less than satisfactory range condition and trend because of heavy sagebrush densities and other factors.

Upward Adjustments

Increases in active preference resulting from nonstructural range improvements will be based on the expected increase in forage production as correlated with the potential for the range site treated. Stocking rates in acres per AUM from allotments in similar range sites of satisfactory range condition will be used to establish new stocking rates.

Some allotments will be proposed for increases whenever available data indicates these allotments are stocked below the acre per AUM figure for similar allotments. Similar allotments have the following in common: kind of livestock, improvements, soil sites and potentials, and satisfactory range condition and trend.

Downward Adjustments

Some allotments have excessive average use according to the available monitoring and ecological range condition and trend data. These allotments will be adjusted using an acre per AUM figure that allowed for the improvement of resource conditions and any proposed increase in wildlife numbers. Some allotments will lose suitable acreage for livestock grazing because of the proposed land transfers.

In some allotments, the present resource conditions are not satisfactory. Management is satisfactory, but a lack of desirable understory species or the presence of heavy brush density results in problems. In other allotments, existing management is unsatisfactory. In these allotments, downward adjustments in active preference will be proposed based on monitoring data.

In most cases, downward adjustments will be made based on numbers of acres per AUM, general observations, and professional judgment. In these cases, allotments will be compared with other allotments in the district with similar range sites and forage production potential.