

Homestead Allotment # 905

Product: Huffer Farm, LLC

Tract Area: 12,877 Acres

County: W

# RANGELAND HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Source of Data: aerial, satellite, field, owner

Grazing system: Deferred Rotation

US Dept and Vegetation

## HOMESTEAD ALLOTMENT # 905

US National Topographic Map: Contour Interval 200 Feet, 7.5 Minute Grid

Location: See Attached Map

Special Status Species: The special status species that have been identified within this allotment are: Sage-grouse, bald eagle, junco, house sparrow, meadow lark, vesper sparrow, and vesper sparrow.

### Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management In the states of Oregon and Washington.

August 12, 1997

Notes: The area is within the boundary of the Dore-Gardner Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and is also within the boundary of the Homestead Allotment.

Vegetation: Vegetation of the allotment is predominantly shrubland and woodland/western forest. The community is primarily (grass, shrub). The allotment also contains some riparian forest along the Homestead Allotment.

## Homestead Allotment # 905 Overview

**Permittee:** Hufford Estate LLC

**Public Acres:** 12,877 **Other Acres:** 9,728

**Category:** M

**AUMs of Authorized Use:** 685 AUMs

**Season of Use:** spring, summer, fall, winter (5/1-9/30 = permit dates)

**Grazing system:** Deferred Rotation

**ESI Data and Vegetation Summaries:** See Attached Tables

**7.5 Minute Topographic Map:** Cabin Lake, Cougar Mountain, Fort Rock, Shuab Lake

**Locations:** See Attached Maps

**Special Status Species:** The special status species or their habitats occurring within this allotment are: Sage-grouse, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, peregrine falcon, burrowing owl, Townsend's big eared bat, and pygmy rabbit. Species of high public interest include mule deer, pronghorn, and antelope.

**Other:** The area is within mule deer winter range. A small portion of the Devils Garden Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Wilderness Study Area (WSA) occurs within the Homestead Allotment.

**Vegetation:** Vegetation on the allotment is predominately Mountain big sagebrush/Western Needlegrass communities. Rabbitbrush (green, grey), Thurber's needlegrass, and bitterbrush also occur throughout most of the Homestead Allotment.

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# HOMESTEAD ALLOTMENT # 905

## I. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL ALLOTMENT INFORMATION

The Homestead Allotment is located 1 mile north east of Fort Rock, Oregon (See Attached Map). There is one grazing permit within this allotment, held by Hufford Estate LLC.

This allotment contains 12,877 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered land and 9,728 acres of private land. These are encompassed in four pastures.

The vegetation types on this allotment are primarily Mountain big sagebrush/Western needlegrass. Mountain big sagebrush/Idaho fescue, grey rabbitbrush/squirreltail, Thurber's needlegrass, and bitterbrush also occur in the allotment.

The Homestead Allotment supports a diversity of wildlife species. Special status wildlife species or their habitats that are present within this allotment include the bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, peregrine falcon, burrowing owl, Townsend's big-eared bat, sage-grouse, and pygmy rabbit. There are also two species with high public interest. These are mule deer and pronghorn antelope.

There has been no Evaluation or Allotment Management Plan completed for the Homestead Allotment to date.

A small portion of the Devils Garden ACEC and WSA occurs within the Homestead Allotment. It is on the northeast side of the allotment, in the Cummings Pasture, which is mostly private.

There are no perennial or intermittent streams, riparian or wetland areas within this allotment.

The Homestead Allotment is managed as a four pasture deferred rotation, and the active AUMs are in the following table (1). The average actual use for the past seven years is 256 AUMs. The reason for the low average actual use is because permittees in the past have taken non use on portions of the allotment (which may have resulted from lack of livestock water, and the lack of fences).

Table 1

Permittee	Active Permitted Use	Suspended Use	Total Use
Hufford Estate LLC	685	0	685

Currently there are no long term trend plots located in the Homestead Allotment. Originally, there was a trend plot located in the Britt and Webster Seedings (960 acres), but these pastures were sold in 1996. Trend plots will need to be established to monitor long-term trend in the Homestead Allotment.

## II. STANDARDS FOR RANGELAND HEALTH AND GUIDELINES FOR LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

### **STANDARD 1 – Watershed Function - Upland**

*Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage, and stability that are appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.*

This standard is being met.

Indicators used to evaluate this standard are Soil Surface Factor (SSF) which documents erosion class and soil susceptibility to accelerated erosion; plant community composition, and existing vegetation monitoring (forage utilization and trend studies) which indicate plant and root health. Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) (used for estimation purposes only). Field surveys to determine ESI were conducted from 1999 through 2001. Please refer to allotment specific tables and the ESI summary for full vegetative information including plant species, soil surface factor, observed apparent trend and ecological status.

SSF data is available on 97% of the area. The acreage without data represents vegetative areas too small to be mapped, transition zones between vegetative communities and soil types, and rock outcrops. The majority of the area, 3% has an SSF rating of stable, 93% slight, and 4% moderate. Overall SSF data indicates the soils in 96% of the assessment area are slightly susceptible to wind or water erosion. Areas in the moderate erosion class are not related to current grazing practices as indicated by livestock utilization, distribution and grazing management. Grazing management systems have been followed.

Plant cover, is adequate on the Homestead Allotment to capture, store and safely release moisture associated with normal precipitation events. Litter amounts are adequate for intercepting raindrop impact and moisture retention. This allotment has an array of plant species including grasses, forbs, and shrubs enhancing moisture storage and soil surface protection.

The current livestock grazing system maintains healthy perennial vegetative communities. Livestock grazing levels have been well below active use for the last seven years. The proper livestock management has assisted in maintaining perennial vegetation and root health of perennial vegetation which assists in soil stabilization.

Although this allotment is lacking long-term monitoring data, it is determined by rangeland indicators and professional judgment that this standard is being met in the Homestead Allotment.

## **STANDARD 2 – Watershed Function – Riparian/Wetland Areas**

*Riparian/Wetland areas are in properly functioning physical condition appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.*

This standard is not applicable.

There are neither perennial or major intermittent streams nor associated riparian areas within this allotment; therefore this standard is not applicable.

## **STANDARD 3 - Ecological Processes**

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

This standard has been achieved.

Indicators used to evaluate this standard include animal populations, vegetative composition, presence of weed species, botanical reports, ecological status, Observed Apparent Trend (OAT), Seral Stage and Potential Natural Community (PNC) from the Lake County ESI survey (which is preliminary at this time). Field surveys for ESI were completed in 1999 through 2001. Data is used in this assessment for estimation purposes only. Please refer to the Tables presented in the Allotment Overview for summary of ESI data.

The ESI survey compares the current plant composition to a defined Potential Natural Community for the identified soil type and precipitation zone. The 1999-2001 ESI data indicates that 35% of the native plant communities are in Late Seral, 63% are in Mid Seral, and 2% are in Early Seral.

OAT is a one time trend for the area determined in the 1999-2001 ESI survey. Totals for the surveyed acreage, show 8% had an OAT indicating upward trend, 81% had a Static trend and less than 1% had a downward trend.

The Homestead Allotment shows good diversity of community structure including grasses, forbs, and shrubs. This diversity ensures that the capture and storage of energy occurs throughout most of the season. Nutrient cycling is evidenced by litter accumulation and overall plant productivity. Plants are allowed to cycle by providing grazing management that provides periodic rest or deferment.

Although this allotment is lacking long-term monitoring data, it is determined by rangeland indicators and professional judgment that this standard is being met in the Homestead Allotment.

### **Fauna**

Much of this area supports healthy diverse wildlife populations. Ecological processes and species diversity are adequate to make this allotment functional. Standard 3 is being met for wildlife species in the Homestead Allotment.

### **Flora**

During the allotment tour in 2006, native plant communities were observed to be in healthy condition. The present day native plant communities appear to be associated with corresponding soils in a positive sense according to NRCS. With the placement of water developments and fencing, grazing can be spread out and fewer areas will receive heavy use. This standard has been met for plant communities in this allotment.

### **Weeds**

There are currently no known noxious weeds in the Homestead Allotment.

There are two noxious weed species found in close proximity to the allotment, with the potential to invade the allotment. These species are spotted knapweed and diffuse knapweed. These sites are relatively small in size and occur along roadways, and in the towns of Christmas Valley and Fort Rock.

Public use occurs on a regular basis in this allotment because of its access and proximity to Fort Rock. With the mobility of hunters and the increased use of Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs), the potential for new weed introductions as well as the spread of existing infestations in this area is increasing.

The County road runs through the allotment, new weed introductions are likely to occur. These areas are monitored annually and new infestations should be detected and eliminated before they spread to adjacent acreages.

### **STANDARD 4 - Water Quality**

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

This standard is not applicable.

There are no perennial or major intermittent surface waters on BLM administered lands within the Homestead Allotment, therefore this water quality standard is not applicable.

### **STANDARD 5 - Native, T&E, and Locally Important Species.**

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

This standard has been achieved.

### Aquatic

There are no listed T&E or sensitive aquatic species known in the area.

### Fauna

Special status wildlife species or their habitats present in this allotment include the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), burrowing owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), and pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*). There are also two species with high public interest. These are mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*).

No surveys have been conducted for bald eagles, peregrine falcons, or ferruginous hawks within the allotment. No nesting habitat is available within the allotment for bald eagles or peregrine falcons. It is suspected that bald eagles are occasional visitors to much of the area, foraging on winter killed deer or other carrion scattered through the allotment. No incidental sightings of peregrines exist within the allotment, but occasional sightings occur in the surrounding area. Marginal foraging habitat exists within the allotment for peregrine falcons. Some marginal nesting habitat for ferruginous hawks on scattered junipers within the southern end of the allotments and occasional sightings occur within the area. There are no resource conflicts for peregrine falcons, ferruginous hawks or bald eagles.

No observations of burrowing owls exist within the vicinity of the allotment. It is assumed that they may occasionally occur within the allotment. There are no resource conflicts for this species.

There are no known roost sites within these allotments for Townsend's big-eared bats, however known roosting sites do occur in the lava fields adjacent to the allotment. It is suspected that Townsend's forage across portions of this allotment. There are no known resource conflicts for this species.

Habitats for sage-grouse occur throughout much of this allotment. Sage-grouse numbers are low within this allotment compared to other areas in Lake County, but are relatively high at this location. There are two active sage-grouse lek sites within the allotment. Sage-grouse habitats in the allotment consist of 7021 acres (41%) of nesting, 6071 acres (36%) of brood, 3632 acres (21%) of winter and 290 acres (2%) of non-habitat. At best, this allotment has the potential to have 10872 acres (64%) of nesting, 6071 acres (36%) of brood, and 71 acres (<1%) of non-habitat. No conflicts exist between livestock and sage-grouse within this allotment.

Habitat is present for pygmy rabbit, but no known locations exist within this allotment. No inventories have been conducted for this species within these allotments. The nearest known populations of pygmy rabbits are over 15 miles to the south. It is suspected that pygmy rabbits could occur within portions of this allotment. There are no known resource conflicts for this species.

Mule deer inhabit all of this allotment year round. High concentrations of wintering mule deer also occur in this allotment. Wintering deer depend on bitterbrush and big sagebrush as winter forage. Both of these browse species are common within this allotment. Wintering deer will also utilize nearby agricultural fields when available. There is potential for conflicts to exist between mule deer and cattle grazing within this allotment. These conflicts arise with fall grazing systems, where livestock can turn their attention to green bitterbrush rather than dry grasses. If livestock densities are sufficient during these times, livestock use on bitterbrush can be extensive. High concentrations of wintering mule deer can also cause extensive use to bitterbrush. It is very difficult to determine the level of utilization when both livestock and deer occur in these pastures at the same time.

Because of the rest rotation and deferred rotation grazing systems within these allotments, the season of use can not be adjusted on all pastures. Livestock bitterbrush utilization within these allotments will not be allowed to exceed 15% of the current year's growth on two out of every three years. This can be accomplished by using rotational grazing systems. It is recommended that allotment utilization monitoring include shrub utilization to determine potential future conflicts. There are no major conflicts between livestock and mule deer at this time.

Pronghorn antelope occur in portions of this allotment. Pronghorn use is concentrated mostly in areas adjacent to private agricultural fields. No major conflicts exist between pronghorn and cattle grazing within this allotment.

Overall, this standard is being met for wildlife species within this allotment. Western juniper is not a major problem within this allotment. Overall wildlife habitats seem to be maintaining or improving within this allotment. Efforts to improve this standard should focus on continuing to manage livestock on a rotational grazing system.

#### Flora

There are no known special status plant species found in the allotment. This area has been surveyed and no plants were found.

### **III. CONFORMANCE TO GUIDELINES FOR LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT**

The Homestead Allotment is being provided with adequate growing season rest and is meeting the requirements of providing adequate cover for infiltration, moisture storage, and maintaining diverse plant communities. Providing rangelands with periodic rest during critical growth periods has, and will continue to promote plant vigor, reproduction and productivity in the allotment. Livestock grazing management in the Homestead Allotment is conforming to the guidelines of livestock grazing management (August 12, 1997).

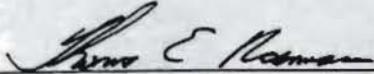
**IV. TEAM PARTICIPANTS AND TITLE**

Jayna Ferrell	Rangeland Management Specialist
Todd Forbes	Wildlife Biologist
Erin McConnell	Natural Resource Specialist (NRS), Weeds
Alan Munhall	Fisheries Biologist
Lucile Housley	Botanist
Robert Hopper	Supervisory NRS

**V. DETERMINATION**

Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the Allotments promote achievement of significant progress towards the Oregon Standards for Rangeland Health and conform with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the Allotments will require modification or change prior to the next grazing season to promote achievement of the Oregon Standards for Rangeland Health and conform with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Field Manager, Lakeview Resource Area

3/5/07  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Homestead Allotment # 905

★ Towns

roads 100 arc

Powerlines

Bureau of Land Management

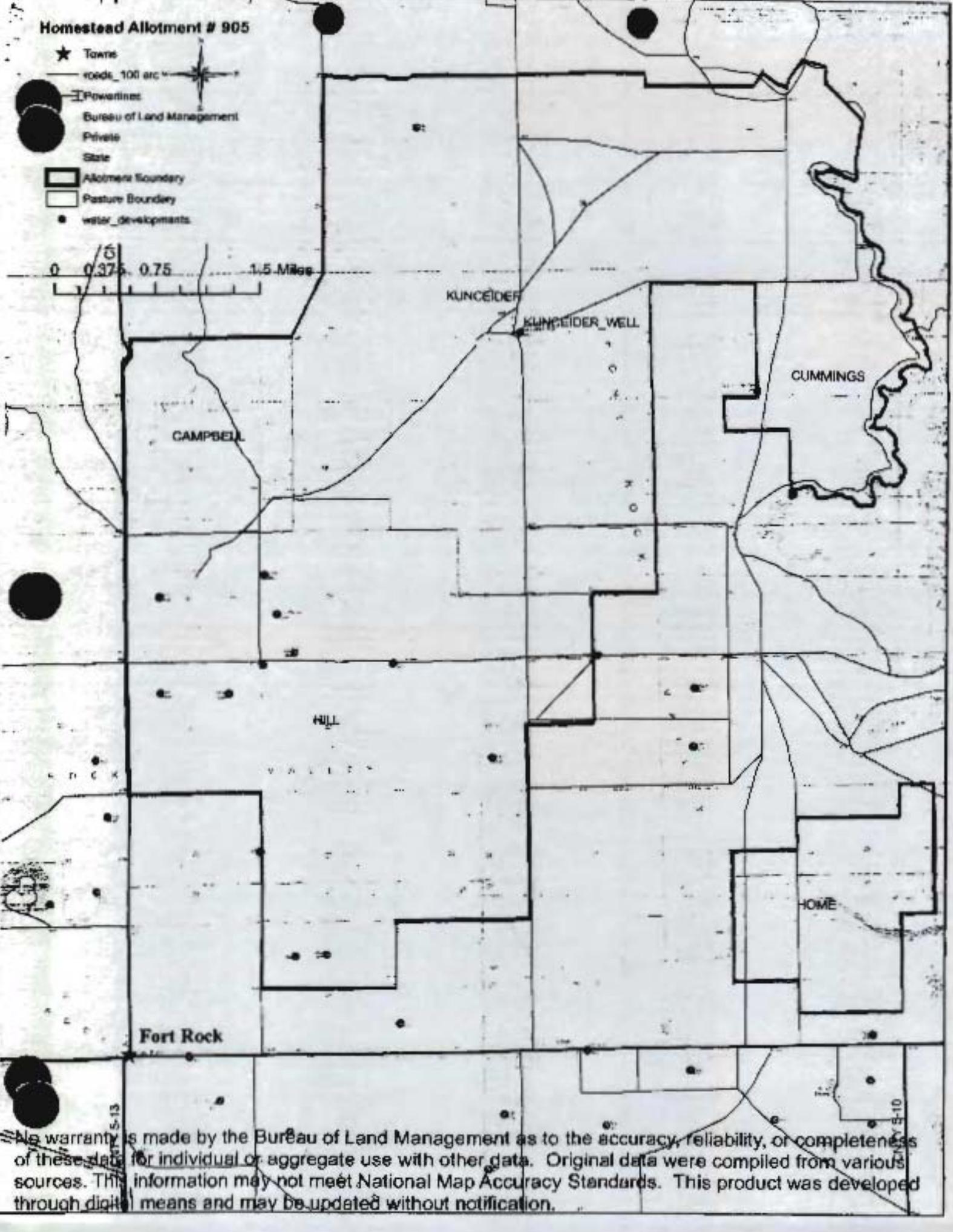
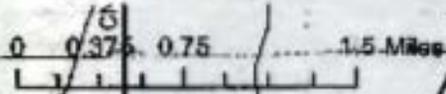
Private

State

□ Allotment Boundary

□ Pasture Boundary

● water\_developments



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Summary of ESI Data - Homestead Allotment # 905

Vegetation Community	Total Acres	% of total acres	SSF Acres					OAT Acres			Acres of Vegetative Community in Scral Stage				
			Stable	Slight	Moderate	Critical	Severe	Down	Static	Up	PNC	Late	Mid	Early	
ARTR/ELEL5 Basin big sagebrush/Squirreltail	170	2			170			170						170	
ARTR/STTH2 Basin big sagebrush/Thurber's noodlegrass	293	3		63	230			230	63				230	63	
ARTRV/FEED Mountain big sagebrush/Idaho fescue	652	7		652					230	422			422	230	
ARTRV/STOC2 Mountain big sagebrush/Western needlegrass	5,219	55	98	5,121					5,149	70			2,018	3,201	
CFINA2/ELEL5 Grey rabbitbrush/Squirreltail	1,934	21	3	1931					1,845	89				1934	
CHNA2/STTH2 Grey rabbitbrush/Thurber's noodlegrass	184	2	157	27						184					184
CTIVR/STOC2 Green rabbitbrush/Western needlegrass	266	3		266					266					266	
JUCC/ARTR/BRTE Juniper/Basin big sagebrush/Cheatgrass	45	.5		45				45					45		
JUCC/CHNA2/ELEL5 Juniper/Grey Rabbitbrush/Squirreltail	42	.4		42						42				42	
JUCC/CHNA2/PSSPS Juniper/Grey rabbitbrush/Bluebuck wheatgrass	3	.03		3						3				3	
JUCC/RIVE/PSSPS Juniper/Desert gnceberry/Bluebunch wheatgrass	47	.5	47						47				47		
PIJTR/ELEL5 Antelope bitterbrush/Squirreltail	576	6		576				576					576		
Total	9,431	100	305	8,726	400	0	0	1,021	7,600	810	0		3,338	5,909	184