STANDARD AND GUIDELINES ASSESSMENT
LANE PLAN II ALLOTMENT NUMBER 206

Standard and Guidelines Assessment
Lane Plan II Allotment (0206)

January 99

Standard 1 - Upland Watershed -Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage, and stability that are appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

This standard is being met on the allotment. The indicators used to evaluate this standard are Soil Surface Factor (SSF), which documents accelerated erosion; plant community composition, which indicates root occupancy of the soil profile; and trend.

Soil Surface Factor & Erosion

Soil surface factor is a method of recording observations used as an indicator of accelerated erosion. Of the 12,625 acres in Lane II allotment, 11, 454 (91%) have an SSF rating of stable and 1074 acres are rated as Slight. The remaining 97 acres are unknown.

Trend

Observed Apparent trend from the Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) transects identified; 4,282 acres (34%) as having upward trend, 8,246 acres (65%) as being static, and trend is unknown on 97 acres (1%). The unknown acres are the inclusions within a vegetation community that include transition areas and plant communities too small to be mapped separately. Table 1 below summarizes trend in each erosion class for the allotment.

Table 1

Erosion Control Class (SSF)	Upward Trend Acres	Static Trend Acres	Total Acres
Stable	3,734	7,720	11,454
Slight	548	526	1,074
Unknown	-	-	97
Total	4,282	8,246	12,625

Plant Community

Another indicator of Upland Watershed Condition is plant composition and community structure. The major vegetation types in this allotment and their approximate percentages in the allotment are shown below.

low sagebrush, with an understory of Sandberg's bluegrass	50%	
low sagebrush with Idaho fescue or bottlebrush squirreltail	28%	
western juniper, with low or big sagebrush		13%
big sagebrush, with grass understory	9%	

Other common plants within the allotment include Thurber's needlegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass with a variety of annual and perennial forbs.

Range Condition

Range condition as determined in the 1988 Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) is listed in the following table (Table 2). Using this method, current plant composition is compared to a defined Potential Natural Community(PNC) for the identified soil type and precipitation zone.

Table 2

Seral Stage	Percent Comparability to PNC	Acres of Allotment in Seral Stage	Percent of Allotment in Seral Stage
Early	0-25%	none	0%
Mid	26-50%	12,158	99%
Late	51-75%	370	1%
Unknown		97	<1%

Standard 2 - Riparian/Wetland-Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning physical condition appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

This standard is not being met because one reach on Drake Creek was rated as non-PFC (Proper Functioning Condition) condition. Lotic PFC site inventories were completed in 1996 on Drake and Parsnip Creeks. The following table summarizes the non-PFC reach locations and their management status.

STREAM	REACH	PFC RATING	MANAGEMENT
Drake	Irish	FAR* Trend Not Apparent	Exclusion

*Functional At Risk

The Drake Creek reach has been excluded since 1986. The FAR rating was reached based on the unstable head cuts and erosive banks. This reach is being managed under consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on effects of grazing on the Threatened Warner sucker. While the existing conditions are largely a result of past grazing practices and natural conditions, current management of livestock is resulting in significant progress towards meeting the standard, and is not a significant factor in not meeting the standard.

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 hydrologic cycle.

This standard is being met, according to the trend, soil stability, plant and animal communities, and the monitoring studies shown in the Lane II Study Files.

Trend

The Observed Apparent Trend as describe in Standard 1 is static or upward on 99% of the allotment and soil erosion class is rated as slight to stable on 99% of the allotment. The remaining 1% of acres are unknown. The deferred rest rotation livestock grazing system, described in the table below, is designed to provide for plant health and to maintain vegetative conditions. The grazing system has been followed very closely. The system is effective in maintaining stable upland watershed conditions as well as ecological processes.

Grazing Management

Pasture	Number of Cattle	Preferred Use Period	Maximum Use Period	Maximum Days of Use	Maximum AUMs
Crump Reservoir(1)	200	4/16-6/14	4/1-6/14	4/1-6/30	500
Crump Reservoir(2)	Rest				
Thompson Lake(1)	Rest				
Thompson Lake(2)	200	4/16-5/31	4/1-6/15	60	400
Parsnip Seeding (1)	200	6/15-6/30	6/1-7/10	20	130
Parsnip Seeding(2)	200	6/1-6/30	5/15-7/10	45	300

(1-2) Represents the year of the 2 year grazing cycle

Monitoring Studies

Monitoring studies consisting of utilization, actual use, and compliance; show that the level of livestock use and the timing of this grazing use are within limits that maintain plant health and provide for nutrient cycling. Specifically, utilization levels are at or below 45% on grass forage species. The grazing management is designed for plant health which maintains sufficient cover and litter to provide for nutrient cycling.

Wildlife

The Lane Plan II Allotment supports most of the terrestrial animals common to the sagebrush steppe in the Great Basin. The allotment provides habitat for huntable populations of mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and sage grouse. The 146 AUM's allocated to wildlife are adequate to support the current wildlife populations, however, may need to be adjusted in the upcoming RMP to address the expansion of elk and potential competition with livestock for forage identified in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) elk management plan. There is currently no major competition between wildlife and domestic livestock for forage, either early green-up grasses and forbs or winter browse such as antelope bitterbrush and curl-leaf mountain mahogany which are both limited in distribution within the allotment.

The allotment lies within ODFW's Warner Big game Management Unit for deer, pronghorn antelope, and elk. Current populations are slightly below management objectives for mule deer and substantially below that proposed for elk. The allotment contains crucial winter range habitat for mule deer. Portions of the allotment are occasionally used by elk throughout the year. The allotment also contains year-round habitat for sage grouse and pronghorn antelope, however, no crucial habitat has been identified.

Standard 4 - Water Quality Standards- Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

This standard is not being met. Drake and Parsnip Creeks from the mouth to the headwaters do not meet state standards for temperature. On Drake Creek, alternate early season use and rest has resulted in an increase in stream side cover and vegetation. On Parsnip Creek, a short, early season use period has improved conditions. Because of grazing changes to better manage riparian vegetation, it is felt that current management of livestock is resulting in significant progress towards meeting the standard, and is not a significant factor in not meeting the standard.

Standard 5 - Biological Diversity-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 is currently being met. The diversity of the wildlife and plant species is and indication of health and productivity found in the different habitats within the allotment.

Animal Species

The Warner sucker is listed as a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act. There is no occupied habitat currently being grazed in the allotment. Because Drake and Parsnip Creeks flow into occupied habitat below the grazed pasture, it was determined in Section 7 consultation that grazing was having an adverse effect on suckers. This effect has been minimized by restrictions placed on riparian grazing and the Service issued a Biological Opinion to authorize "take" of the species. Warner red-band trout, a Bureau Sensitive Species is found in both streams in the allotment. Their populations appear to be strong in both.

There are no big game habitat transects set up in the allotment due to the limited distribution of key browse (bitterbrush and mountain mahogany), however, condition of the bitterbrush stands within the allotment (like most of the Resource Area) demonstrates what years of fire suppression and previous livestock grazing practices in the past does to mule deer winter range. There are numerous decadent or dead bitterbrush plants within the allotment which are still providing valuable forage and cover for deer, however, recruitment of young plants is relatively low. Overall the bitterbrush shows some improvement in bitterbrush vigor and stand replacement over the past 10-12 years.

The habitat provided within the allotment is crucial to wintering deer in that it adjoins with winter range on the forest to the west and to BLM - administered winter range to the north and south. It provides habitat connectivity, as well as, a spatial distribution of lower elevation range critical during high snowfall years.

The deer and pronghorn populations are healthy and increasing in number within the allotment - habitat quantity and quality do not appear to be limiting population size or health. Coyote predation is thought to be depressing mule deer recruitment, however, deer and pronghorn populations continue to fluctuate at or slightly below ODFW's Management Objective for the unit. A general hunt season is slowing the population expansion of elk within the unit, however, if ODFW, is unable to limit future expansion to the proposed Management Objective for the area competition with domestic livestock may occur and depredation on private lands may become an issue. Elk expansion will be addressed in the upcoming RMP.

The allotment also provides habitat for numerous small and nongame birds and mammals common to the Great Basin, as well as, sage grouse and marginal California bighorn sheep habitat. There are four known sage grouse leks found within the allotment. Sage grouse populations like the rest of southeastern Oregon are stable to declining. The allotment also provides habitat for raptors and some BLM and state sensitive wildlife species and federally listed species. No critical habitat or limitations have been identified for any of these species which include wintering bald eagles, and possibly pygmy rabbits and various sensitive bat species.

Plant species and special status species

This allotment supports a diverse plant community as shown in Standards 1 and 3.

One special status plant Dwarf lousewort (Pedicularis centranthera) is present in the area. Dwarf lousewort was found in this area in 1978. It occurs in Lake County on alluvial fans of volcanic soils. There are five known populations of dwarf lousewort on the Lakeview District. The species has a limited spotty global distribution, occurring in Lake and Harney Counties, Oregon; south and east across Nevada, through Utah; north and east Arizona to west Colorado and central and western New Mexico.

The current level of livestock use in the allotment does not appear to be adversely affecting the species, but should not be increased. The plants grow in bare areas where little livestock feed is growing. To maintain the habitat of Pedicularis centranthera on the Lane II allotment surface disturbance should be avoided at the site and in the general vicinity of the population. Fire has a positive effect upon the plants, increasing the vigor and enhancing germination.

Noxious weeds are known to occur in the allotment. Weeds are concentrated along roads, riparian areas, and the powerline right of way. The deferred grazing system and non rest in the Parsnip Seeding pasture will make the prevention of weed spread more difficult as the cattle are grazing when the weeds are beginning to set seed, thus they have the potential for contributing to the weeds' spread. Also, the cattle may be turned out before weeds are in the optimum phenologic stage for early season chemical control.

Current Management and Recent Management Changes

The current management is a three pasture deferred/rest rotation system and the Allotment Management Plan has been in place since 1971. There was an allotment evaluation in 1993 and no changes in the grazing allocation or the season of use were made. There was a Biological Evaluation completed in 1994 and a Biological Opinion issued by the USFWS that the proposed grazing authorizations in the Thompson and Parsnip Seeding pastures are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the threatened Warner sucker or result in the destruction or adverse modification of its designated critical habitat as long as actions outlined in the biological evaluation are followed.

Team Members	**Title**
Theresa Romasko	Range Management Specialist
Alan Munhall	Fishery Biologist
Vern Stofleth	Wildlife Biologist
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Walt Devaurs	Wildlife Biologist
Bill Cannon	Archaeologist
Erin McConnel	Weed Specialist
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Determination

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

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

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Date