

Rangeland Health Standards Assessment

Allotment #406 West Clover Flat

Allotment Overview:

Allotment boundaries: refer to attached map.

7.5 Minute Topographic Maps: Tucker Hill.

AUMs of Authorized Use: 15 AUMs

Permitted Season: 5/1-9/30

Allotment Category: M

Total Acres: 748 acres BLM, 2,776 acres Private

Allotment #406 is primarily private lands; the BLM portion of the allotment consists of primarily native pasture on steep rocky hillsides. Approximately 100 acres of the BLM adjacent to the private was sprayed and seeded to crested wheatgrass and dryland clover some time in the early 1960's; no records exist as to the original planting. The seeded portion of the allotment was sprayed to control sagebrush in 1974. During the allotment tour in November of 2004 very little sagebrush had encroached into the seeding.

Two developed springs exist on the BLM portion of the allotment: Medusa Head Spring in section 31 is still functioning to supply water for wildlife and livestock (refer to standard 2 for additional comments), while the condition of Rimrock Spring is not known and has not been located as of the writing of this report. During an allotment inspection and evaluation in 1966 the following quote about Medusahead Spring was noted in the evaluation "This spring was named for the heavy infestation of Medusahead which grows in the drainage area of the spring in a strip approximately 25 feet wide by 500 feet long. Medusahead is not apparent in the surrounding brush type." At present the Medusahead infestation appears to remain close to the same condition indicating that the infestation has been stable **in this portion of the Allotment**. Medusahead has been actively invading and spreading into other portions of surrounding allotments and is being actively treated by private land owners and the BLM.

Grazing Management:

Historically grazing management has consisted of primarily spring use. Ownership of associated private lands and permit recently changed in 2002. Current land owner has plans of incorporating the allotment into a rest rotation system along with his private parcels.

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

Meets Standard.

No Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) data is available for allotment #406. Indicator used to evaluate upland watershed condition is plant composition. Current plant composition is compared to a defined Potential Natural Plant Community (PNC) for the identified soil types and precipitation zone. PNC data is compiled using Ecological Site Descriptions for Oregon Rangelands 1998. Table 1 compares the current plant composition with the PNC.

Table 1

Range Site	Dominant Vegetation on allotment	PNC Dominant vegetation	Plant species that occur on the allotment and are identified in the PNC description
021XY306OR and 021XY216OR	Artemisia arbuscula, Festuca idahoensis, Pseudoroegneria spicata spicata, Poa secunda , Purshia tridentate, Stipa thurberiana, Agropyron cristatum, Sitanion hystrix	Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis, Achnatherum thurberianum, Festuca idahoensis, Pseudoroegneria spicata spicata, Poa secunda	Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis, Achnatherum thurberianum, Festuca idahoensis, Pseudoroegneria spicata spicata, Poa secunda

Weeds Report:

Noxious weeds are known to occur in the West Clover Flat Rangeland Health Assessment area. Medusahead rye poses the biggest threat and is present over much of the allotment. Treatment of medusahead over large acreages on BLM is difficult. Under a 1987 Court injunction on herbicide use in Oregon, selective chemicals for medusahead treatment are not available and there are no proven biological control agents. Mechanical treatment is not practical over large acres of rugged terrain, and would need to be used in combination with some other method such as chemical or biological. Prevention measures are in place to reduce the likelihood of spreading medusahead to new areas and research is underway to explore treatment and restoration of nearby medusahead infested sites. Much of the medusahead infested area in this allotment occurs on an easily drillable slope with favorable access for equipment. If selective chemicals become available in the future or if current experiments involving the use of prescribed fire as part of an integrated approach are successful, this area would be a good candidate for a restoration project.

Mediterranean sage is common in the assessment area in the larger draws but the population density is low. Known sites will be treated manually and monitored, on an annual basis beginning in 2005.

STANDARD 2- Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning physical conditions appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

Meets Standard.

There is one developed spring in the allotment that has not been assessed thru the PFC process. On the field visit/tour November 9, 2004 the spring appeared to be functioning within its capabilities. The outflow riparian is dominated by medusa head that is preventing the establishment of native vegetation that would be more desirable as riparian habitat. The current grazing management is not the cause of the poor riparian condition of the outflow site.

STANDARD 3- 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.

Meets Standard.

Botanist report:

During the team visit, it was decided that livestock at this time have little to no effect on the allotment. The major disturbance in this allotment is the noxious weed encroachment of medusahead rye (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) which is being evaluated. Treatment projects elsewhere on Clover Flat may help in the containment or elimination of medusahead.

Wildlife report:

Medusahead rye, a noxious weed, has been established within this allotment for several years. This species has spread over the years to several areas within this and nearby allotments. Ecological processes are at risk within this allotment due to the potential for medusahead to increase after disturbance. If left untreated, this noxious weed could threaten both nutrient cycling, and energy flow within this allotment. Currently, there are projects underway to treat this noxious weed on both public and private lands within the allotment and surrounding area. Standard 3 is not being met in those areas heavily infested by medusahead rye. This accounts for approximately 100 acres within the allotment. **Current livestock grazing is not a significant factor contributing to this standard not being met.**

This area supports healthy diverse wildlife populations that are appropriate for the type of habitats available within the allotment. The majority of habitats within the allotment are in good ecological condition, with the exception of a few patches of cheatgrass and medusahead rye. This standard is currently being met from the aspect of wildlife populations and diversity.

STANDARD 4- Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

Not Applicable.

There are no surface waters on the BLM in this allotment that have been listed by the state as being water quality impaired. Surface water is limited to some reservoirs and two springs that would not be measured for state water quality requirements due to their intermittent to ephemeral nature.

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.

Meets Standard.

Botanist report:

This area has been surveyed for Bureau special status plants and no plants were found. At this point in time, there are no known Bureau special status plants found within the allotment. Special Status Plants: None found, none suspected.

Plant list for area:

Shrubs/trees:

Artemisia tridentata tridentata
Artemisia arbuscula
Ericameria nauseosa (Chrysothamnus
nauseosus)
Tetradymia canescens
Lygodesmia spinosa

Grasses:

Elymus elymoides (Sitanion hystrix)
Poa segunda
Pseudoroegneria spicata (Agropyron
spicatum)
Leymus cinereus (Elymus cinereus)

Forbs:

Agoseris glauca
Astragalus lentiginosus
Astragalus purshii
Balsamorhiza hookeri
Antennaria dimorpha
Phlox hoodii

Weeds and introduced plants:

Bromus tectorum
Taeniatherum caput-medusae (Elymus
caput-medusae)
Symbrium altissimum

Microbiotic crusts:

None in infested med sage area
Tortula sp. (moss, limited areas, November)
Caloplaca sp. (lichen, very limited)

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

Wildlife report:

Special status wildlife species or their habitats that are present within this allotment include the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). There are also two species with high public interest. These are mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*).

No nesting or roosting habitat exists within this allotment for the bald eagle. Nesting and roosting does occur on U.S. Forest Service lands to the west. It is suspected that they are occasional visitors to the area. Bald eagle foraging could occur within the allotment; however it is probably restricted mostly to occasional scattered carrion. There are no resource conflicts for bald eagles.

Habitats for sage-grouse occur throughout the allotment and are dominated by low sagebrush. There are no known sage-grouse leks within the allotment. However, there are four known sage-grouse lek sites within the surrounding area. Two of these lek sites are active and two are inactive as of 2004. The active lek sites occur within the vicinity of Red Knoll and are currently being impacted by medusahead rye.

In order for sage-grouse habitats within this allotment to improve, restoration work would be needed to combat noxious weeds, specifically medusahead rye. This project is underway, but has not yet been implemented on-the-ground. No major conflicts exist between cattle grazing and sage-grouse within this allotment at this time.

Pronghorn antelope are common in this allotment. Pronghorn use is scattered across the allotment and surrounding areas. No major conflicts exist between pronghorn and cattle grazing within this allotment.

Mule deer inhabit much of the area. Moderate concentrations of wintering mule deer inhabit this allotment and surrounding areas. No conflicts exist between mule deer and cattle grazing within this allotment.

Overall, this standard is being met for wildlife species within the allotment. The occurrence of invasive noxious weeds appear to be the limiting factors for sage grouse and most sagebrush dependant wildlife habitats. Efforts to improve this standard should focus on sagebrush restoration. This could be accomplished through intensive restoration efforts with fire, seeding or herbicides.

Team Members**Title**

Lance Okeson	RMS
Todd Forbes	Wildlife Biologist
Lucile Housley	Botanist
Erin McConnell	Weed Management
Robert Hopper	Supervisory NRS
Ken Kestner	Supervisory NRS
Allan Munhall	Fisheries Biologist

Determination

Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the #406 West Clover Creek Allotment promote achievement of significant progress toward 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 #406 West Clover Creek Allotment will require modification or change prior to the next grazing season to promote achievement of the Oregon standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Thomas C. [Signature]
Field Manager, Lakeview Resource Area

6/21/05
Date

