

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

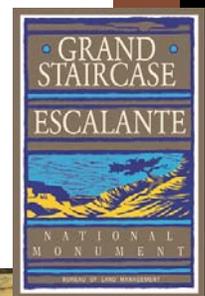
GRAZING ON THE MONUMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument is currently engaged in a public planning effort that will modify the 1999 Monument Management Plan, which did not include land use plan-level livestock grazing decisions. Once complete, this planning effort will result in decisions about which lands should be available for livestock grazing, how much forage should be available for livestock, and specific best management practices for grazing management on the Monument.

The Presidential proclamation designating the Monument in 1996 included language specifically providing for the continuation of grazing on the Monument. Although grazing use levels have varied considerably from year to year due to factors like drought, no reductions in permitted livestock grazing use have been made as a result of the Monument's designation nearly 20 years ago.

GRAZING ON THE MONUMENT: FACTS AND FIGURES

- When the BLM talks about the number of cattle permitted to graze on public lands, it uses the term “Animal Unit Month” or “AUM,” which is the amount of forage needed to sustain one cow and her calf, one horse, or five sheep or goats for a month.
- Overall permitted use within the Monument is at roughly the same level now as it has been since the early 1990s.
- No reductions have occurred as a result of the Monument's designation, though small reductions within limited areas have taken place under normal BLM procedures to protect riparian resources and to address other issues.
- In 1999, the BLM amended the Escalante Management Framework Plan—one of four older plans that cover the Monument and BLM-administered grazing allotments on neighboring Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.
- The amendment, which closed several allotments and pastures, protected riparian resources and reduced recreation conflicts along perennial streams.
- When the Monument was designated, there were 106,645 total AUMs. Of these, 77,400 were active AUMs. Today, there are 106,202 total AUMs and 76,957 are active. The number of active AUMs represents the most AUMs that may be used under ideal conditions.
- In contrast to active AUMs, actual use AUM levels—the number of cows put out on allotments each grazing season—vary from year to year as ranchers and the BLM work together to make voluntary use adjustments in response to drought conditions and variability in a rancher's livestock operations.
- Actual use levels on the Monument have averaged just over 41,000 AUMs annually. There is no clear trend in actual use levels and no evidence of “sharp” or “precipitous” declines in grazing on the Monument since designation.
- There are 79 active livestock grazing allotments, with 91 permittees currently authorized to graze cattle and horses on the Monument.



GRAZING ON THE MONUMENT: BLM RANGE STEWARDSHIP

- The Monument sits on the southwestern border of the Colorado Plateau in an area that has been losing native grasses for decades. Ongoing drought conditions that favor sagebrush, pinyon and juniper exacerbate this loss.
- The BLM supports improving rangeland conditions and the Monument Management Plan amendment currently underway will provide a framework for future restoration work and range improvements when finalized.
- More than 28,000 acres have been restored on the Monument since its designation, and ongoing restoration efforts continue as part of Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative. This initiative has funding support and acts in coordination with the State of Utah, the BLM and other members of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development.
- In 2016, restoration projects will continue to improve rangelands on the Monument as the Five Mile Initiative is completed, restoring more than 16,000 acres of sage grasslands. The nationally recognized Escalante River Watershed Partnership project will remove Russian olive from 4.5 stream miles. To date, this partnership has eradicated Russian olive on more than 70 river miles.
- Another way the BLM responsibly manages the range is by following best management practices for drought and adjusting range use according to resource conditions. Together, the BLM and livestock operators work to annually adjust AUMs by allotment based on the vegetation condition, soil moisture and projected amount of forage available for livestock and wildlife.

GRAZING ON THE MONUMENT: BLM PLANNING UPDATE

- Livestock grazing on the Monument is presently guided by four Management Framework Plans that were completed in the 1980s because the 1999 Monument Management Plan did not address grazing or make grazing decisions.
- The Monument is currently engaged in a transparent, public process to prepare a Livestock Grazing Monument Management Plan Amendment and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Preliminary issues related to livestock grazing that are likely to be addressed in the plan amendment and EIS include: lands available for livestock grazing within the planning area; forage available for livestock grazing; guidelines and criteria for future allotment-specific adjustments; seeding management; and impacts on local custom, culture and economy.
- A full range of preliminary alternatives for the EIS was developed in consultation with cooperating agencies and through extensive public input. In addition to considering an alternative that would increase grazing approximately 25 percent over current levels, the BLM will also evaluate a no grazing alternative and a conservation-focused alternative that would reduce grazing approximately 25 percent from current levels.
- For more information on the planning process, please visit: http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/grand_staircase-escalante/planning0/livestock_grazing.html.

