Standards for Rangeland Health
and
Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
for
Public Lands in Oregon and Washington

Rangeland Health Assessment Update for the

Burro Springs Allotment #00213

December 2013

The original Burro Springs Allotment Rangeland Health Assessment was conducted in 2004. The Burro Springs Allotment contains only one pasture. There are 2 long term trend photo plots in the allotment with a new vegetation transect being established at one of the plots in 2012.

There are currently 279 AUMs of forage allocated on 7,500 acres of public land to two permittees. In the Rangeland Health Assessment in 2004, standard 2 was not being met. Burro Spring is the only named spring on the allotment and was responsible for this failure to meet standard 2. The problems at the spring were corrected by enlarging the existing exclosure and repairing the over flow pipes to a second trough away from the spring, then returning that overflow the water back to the riparian area. Following implementation of these corrective actions, BLM determined that all Standards are now being met. A summary of the assessment of the Standards in 2004 and an updated assessment is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Rangeland Health Assessments for Burro Springs Allotment (BLM 2004, 2013)

Standard	2004	2013	Comments
1. **Watershed Function – Uplands**	Met	Met	The 2004 RHA found upland soils in the allotment exhibited infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage, and stability appropriate for soil, climate, and land form. Root occupancy for the soil was appropriate. In 2004, there was little or no active soil erosion or evidence of past erosion. ESI data showed 58% of the allotment had a Slight SSF rating and no acres in the moderate or higher classes. OAT showed 10% of the allotment in upward trend and 51% in static trend and no acres in downward trend. Low average utilization levels on native species (25%) taken between 1989 and 2004 indicate that ample standing crop was being left behind to protect soils from erosion. The annual actual use averaged 159 AUMs out of the 279 AUMs of authorized use. This low actual use and the spring grazing was the reason for the low utilization levels. The current winter/spring grazing system takes advantage of the green cheatgrass when it is palatable, before it has a chance to go to seed. From observation the two native perennial grasses, salt grass and basin wildrye, are benefiting from this winter/spring grazing, as they receive very little use. Since 2004, actual use has remained low (83 AUMs) and the average utilization level is still only 40% on the perennial grasses. The main forage in the winter/spring grazing system is still cheatgrass and this continues to benefit the perennial grasses and limits the potential for soil erosion. Another indicator of Upland Watershed condition is plant composition and community structure. About half of the vegetation communities have perennial grass dominating the understory and the other half has cheatgrass dominating the understory. The two trend plot photos, taken in the big sagebrush/cheatgrass type, show perennial grasses present. There is no apparent trend except in drier years when the grass plants are shorter and less robust. The current winter/spring

			grazing system takes advantage of the green cheatgrass. The plant community and structure appears stable and may be improving because of low utilization levels and a grazing system that utilizes the green cheatgrass. In 2004, about 38% of the allotment was in the late seral stage and 23% was in the mid seral stage. Monitoring data collected since 2004 (photo trend plots and utilization) indicate very little change since 2004. Therefore, the vegetation appears stable, is not affected substantially by the current grazing management, and the standard continues to be met.
2. **Watershed Function - Riparian/ Wetland Areas**	Not Met	Met	In 2004, there were 4 acres of palustrine wetlands and 197 acres of lacustrine wetlands all in PFC. In 2004 the ID team determined that grazing at Burro Spring was contributing to the failure to function at site potential and, therefore, Standard 2 was not being met in this small area. The problem at this spring was corrected by enlarging the existing exclosure and repairing the overflow pipes to a second trough away from the spring, then allowing that overflow to return the water to the riparian area (Memo to Grazing File, BLM 2004b). After completion of these repairs, BLM determined this standard was being met or substantial progress towards meeting the standard had been made. In 2013, there is no change in this assessment.
3. **Ecological Processes**	Met	Met	In 2004, an interdisciplinary team made the following observations about the plant community: vegetation appeared healthy and productive and livestock did not appear to be having a negative effect on vegetation. Plant growth and decomposition processes were normal. Based on 1987 ESI data, OAT for the vegetation communities on public land showed 10% of the allotment was in upward condition (big sagebrush/blue bunch wheatgrass type which occurs in the higher elevations and has always received lighter utilization (<30%) than the lower elevation types). With even lower stocking rates now than before 1987, BLM assumes that the upward trend in the bluebunch wheatgrass sites is continuing, except for an increase in invasive juniper, which is the result of fire suppression. OAT for the remaining vegetation types has a static trend. The 2 photo trend plots taken in the 2001, 2006, 2009 and 2012 and appear to show the vegetation composition and production is stable at these sites. The grazing management, actual use and utilization have remained similar since 2004. Therefore, the 2004 findings remain accurate in 2013.
4. **Water Quality**	Met	Met	No surface water or groundwater within the allotment has been listed for exceeding State Water Quality standards.
5. **Native, Threatened & Endangered, and Locally Important Species**	Met	Met	The 2004 RHA noted there were no known conflicts existing between cattle grazing and wildlife species within the allotment. There were no known sage-grouse leks in the allotment at that time. Since 2013, sage-grouse studies have determined there is 1 “occupied pending” and 1 “unoccupied pending” lek within the allotment. Based on the distance from the nearest active lek and the sagebrush cover heights associated with the current dominant vegetation types, the allotment contains no suitable nesting and yearlong habitat. Based on the cover heights

			associated with the current dominant sagebrush vegetation types, approximately 1,700 acres (24%) of the Burro Springs Allotment contains marginal nesting, summer habitat, and yearlong habitat. Due to the lack of suitable habitat within the allotment, continuing grazing under current management would have minor effects on sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing/summer habitat within the allotment. No noxious weeds or special status plant species were known in the allotment in 2004. Currently, two special status species and one noxious weed are present.

Guidelines for Livestock Management

Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the Burro Springs Allotment are consistent with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (August 12, 1997). This pasture continues to be grazed under a winter/spring grazing system at low stocking rates and growing season rest every 5th year. The winter/spring grazing at the low stocking rates allows the utilization of the cheatgrass when it is green and palatable. This spring grazing schedule allows the perennial grasses such as inland saltgrass and basin wildrye to maximize growth and seed production during the summer months. This winter/spring grazing provides summer rest which enables the perennial grass species to provide adequate cover for infiltration, moisture storage and maintains diverse plants communities.

2013 Determination

(X) Existing grazing management practices of levels of grazing use on the Burro Springs Allotment 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 Burro Springs Allotment 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.

Thomas E. Rasmussen, Field Manager — Date 12/4/13

Burro Springs Allotment Monitoring Summary 2013 (see Lakeview Resource Area Monitoring Files for Raw Data):

In 2013, Burro Springs Allotment was utilized from April 10 to May 29, 2013. The Burro Springs Allotment has 279 Active AUMs. The average actual use from 2002-2013 is 80 AUMs, average utilization rate was 41% and target utilization level is 50%.

Table 2. Actual Use and Utilization Burro Springs Allotment

Year	Burro Springs Pasture	
	AUMs	**% Utilization**
2013	115	
2012	39	36%
2011	52	33%
2010	99	36%
2009	REST	
2008	166	
2007	95	57%
2006	44	
2005	56	
2004	77	
2003	138	
2002	84	43%
Total	**965**	
Ave.	**80**	**41%**

The total active AUMs (averaged 80) did not exceed the permitted AUMS (279) during any year since 2002 (Table 2). The highest AUMS use was 166 AUMs in the 2008 and the lowest was 39 AUMS in 2012.

Utilization in the Burro springs Allotment only exceeded the target utilization rate of 50% in one year (2007). The reason for the higher utilization (57%) in 2007 was the low precipitation (49% of average) in the 12 months preceding the 2007 grazing season (April-June). This resulted in below average forage production in the spring and therefore higher utilization levels.

There are 2 permanent long term photo trend plots in the Burro Springs Allotment with one new vegetation transect established in 2012. The species composition and the production appear to be stable in the photo plots from the 1970's to the present. All the photos for the 2 trend plots in the allotment are on file at the Lakeview Resource Area office.

Table 2. Dominant Vegetation in Burro Springs Allotment 00213

Vegetation Type	Acres	% of Allotment
Shrubs/Grasses		
ATCO-BRTE* Shadscale saltbush/cheatgrass	1,592	23%
ATCO-SIHY Shadscale saltbush /bottlebrush squirreltail	337	5%
SAVE-DISP Greasewood/ Inland saltgrass	810	12%
Shrub/Grass TOTAL	**2,739**	**40%**
Low sagebrush/Grass		
ARAR-POSE Low sagebrush/Sandberg bluegrass	2	T
BIG SAGEBRUSH/GRASS		
ARTR2-AGSP Big Sagebrush/blue bunch wheatgrass	732	11%
ARTR2-BRTE Big Sagebrush/cheatgrass	940	13%
BIG SAGEBRUSH/GRASS TOTAL	**1,672**	**24%**
TOTAL VEGETATION	**4,413**	**64%**
Playa	650	9%
Rockland	519	7%
Inclusions**	824	11%
Incomplete	598	9%
ALLOTMENT TOTAL	**7,004**	

** The plant codes represent genus-species abbreviations adopted by USDA-NRCS; see also Plants Database available at http://www.plants.usda.gov).*

*** Every Site Writeup Area (SWA) has a 10-15% portion of that area that is considered inclusions of different (often unknown or unmapped) vegetation communities.*