

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LIVESTOCK GRAZING AUTHORIZATION

EA # CA-180-07-55

Granite Springs

Folsom Field Office
June 13, 2007

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The Granite Springs allotment is authorized for 97 cattle March 1 - April 30 of each year, for a total authorization of 195 Animal Unit Months (AUMS). The lease expires on July 31, 2007.

The Granite Springs allotment consists of 982 acres of BLM land, located just North of Lake McClure (Exchequer Reservoir) about 1 mile south of Granite Springs, California in Mariposa County (T3S, R15E, portions of Sections 13, 14, and 15. See also Maps 1 and 2). The privately owned base property consists of approximately 1,280 acres. The allotment is characterized as grazable/potentially grazable.

Purpose and Need for the Action

The purpose of the action is to respond to an expiring permit and consider whether to authorize grazing on this allotment. If authorized, grazing would be in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The purpose of the action is also to ensure that the authorization would be in compliance with the Sierra Management Framework Plan and the Secretary of the Interior-approved Rangeland Health Standards.

Scoping and Issues

The proposed action underwent internal, interdisciplinary scoping and no issues surfaced.

Prevention of Unnecessary or Undue Degradation

In addition to the management prescriptions discussed in this EA, including all terms and conditions, BLM may use its authority to close an area of the allotment to grazing use or take other measures to protect resources at any time, if needed. Therefore, issuance of a grazing lease with appropriate terms and conditions is consistent with BLM's responsibility to manage the public's use, occupancy, and development of the public lands and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands (43 USC 1732(b)).

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Plans

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires federal agencies to complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for any action that "may affect" federally listed species or critical habitat. The ESA also requires federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species.

In August 2004, the State Director, California Bureau of Land Management and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) addressed the issue of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance procedures for processing grazing permit lease renewals for livestock as defined in 43 CFR 4100.0-5. The State Director and the SHPO amended the 2004 State Protocol Agreement between California Bureau of Land Management and The California State Historic Preservation Officer with the 2004 Grazing Amendment, Supplemental Procedures for Livestock Grazing Permit/Lease Renewal. This amendment allows for the renewal of existing grazing permits prior to completing all NHPA compliance needs as long as the 2004 State Protocol direction, the BLM

8100 Series Manual Guidelines, and specific amendment direction for planning, inventory methodology, tribal and interested party consultation, evaluation, effect, treatment, and monitoring stipulations are followed.

Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the Sierra Management Framework Plan (MFP), as amended, July 15, 1988, and is in conformance with the Secretary-approved Rangeland Health Standards. The proposed action would occur in an area identified as available for livestock grazing in the MFP. The proposed action is consistent with the land use decisions of the plan (MFP pp. 29). An existing MFP decision still in effect in the amendment is to manage for livestock grazing to provide a yearly average of 3,108 AUMs for livestock and residual mulch of 700 lbs/acre.

Rangeland Health

Based on a rangeland health assessment (April 2003), the allotment meets the Secretary of the Interior-approved Rangeland Health Standards for soils, special status species, riparian habitat, and water quality.

CHAPTER 2: PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action (continuation of current management)

A new, 10-year permit would be issued with the same terms and conditions as the soon-to-be expired authorization:

Allotment Name	Number of Livestock	Kind	From	To	AUMs
Granite Springs	97	Cows	March 1	April 30	195

Alternative 2 - No Grazing

The permit on the Granite Springs allotment would be cancelled; grazing would not be authorized. BLM would initiate the cancellation process in accordance with 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on the allotment.

Livestock Management

A spring that was receiving heavy grazing pressure was fenced in 2003 to exclude cattle. The riparian vegetation is now abundant, diverse, and thriving around the spring. Grazing is also occurring in the southern portion of the lease. The cows are not actively herded, and simply drift through the allotment. Livestock use the open areas of grassland that remain from a 1960s herbicide/grass seeding project. The allotment is used in March and April annually. The proposed action will not change from the current management.

CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The following supplemental authorities are not relevant to this project because related resources or conditions are not present: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); essential fish habitat; threatened or endangered plant or animal species; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; Native American cultural values; Wild and Scenic Rivers; wilderness; wild horse and burro herds; solid or hazardous wastes; or environmental justice.

Air Quality

Affected Environment

The project area is in the Mountain Counties Air Basin in an area classified as federal non-attainment for ozone under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm.htm). A state implementation plan (SIP) for California identifies sources of emissions which include motor vehicles, consumer products, and pesticides (www.arb.ca.gov/planning/sip/94sip/sipvol1.htm). The SIP also includes control measures to reduce emissions.

Impacts of the Proposed Action

The small livestock operation and slight vehicle use do not affect air quality.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

The No Grazing alternative also would not affect air quality.

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

During a cultural resource survey by a BLM archeologist, one site was found: a rock foundation for a small cabin and a couple of fragments of metal debris. Another survey on May 29, 2007 revealed a second site consisting of mine workings, waste rock, and roads, all probably associated with the Brushci Mine. Approximately 10 acres of the allotment were covered in the combined surveys. One survey focused on the area around a spring. Since the spring is a permanent water source, it is the most likely area to support human habitation, and thus have artifacts. The present survey focused on Brushci Mine, since it would likely contain old mining artifacts and possible human habitation. In addition, federal land office records and survey plats, topographic and historical maps, aerial photos, and other information were examined.

Impacts of the Proposed Action

The proposed action would not affect the two known properties due to the aridness of the site, the dense chamise, previous disturbance from rangeland conversion, and the low intensity of grazing.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing would not affect cultural resources.

References

Barnes, J. 2007. Cultural Resource Inventory Report. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California. 26 pp.

Invasive, Non-native Species

Affected Environment

Medusahead, Italian thistle, and tocalote are present in small amounts on the allotment. Because of their scarcity, non-native species are not affecting native species or contributing to other potential environmental problems, such as fire hazard or erosion. See Map 3.

Impacts of Proposed Action

Because grazing has occurred in the allotment over the past 40 plus years, and because invasive species are currently at low, apparently stable levels, livestock grazing does not appear to be contributing to the spread of these non-native plant species in the allotment.

Impacts of No Grazing

Because current, low levels of grazing do not appear to be affecting weed spread, elimination of grazing would not be expected to noticeably reduce invasive species in the allotment.

References

Franklin, A. 2002. Botanical Resource Inventory Report. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

Recreation

Affected Environment

The allotment is isolated from the general public. Vehicular access is through private property. The only other access would be from the lake. Very little or no recreation is occurring on the allotment. Potential recreation could include hiking, birding, and hunting.

Impacts of Proposed Action

The primary impact of grazing on primitive recreation opportunities will be the presence of domestic livestock and the livestock operator in the area during the grazing season. Due to limited access, types of potential recreation that would not necessarily conflict with grazing, and the short duration of grazing (two months), the proposed action would not likely impact recreational opportunities.

Impacts of No Grazing

Due to limited access and short duration of existing grazing (two months in early spring) elimination of already low/no impact grazing is not expected to affect recreation in the allotment.

Soils

Affected Environment

Four soil types on the allotment include: Auburn stony loam, 30 to 75% slopes, eroded; Auburn rocky loam, 30 to 75% slopes, severely eroded; Auburn very rocky loam, 30 to 75% slope, eroded; and Maymen gravelly loam, 30 to 75% slopes, severely eroded. Predominant soil types are Auburn stony loam and Auburn rocky loam. Auburn loams are well-drained soils underlain at a depth of 20 inches by basic igneous rock. This soil is on uplands. Runoff is rapid to very rapid, and the hazard of erosion is high to very high on the predominant soils (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>). See Map 4. The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health. It has good ground cover with a residual dry matter of 700-1,000 lbs/acre and no evident erosion.

Impacts of the Proposed Action

There is no evidence of erosion or compaction on the allotment. Therefore, livestock grazing does not appear to be impacting soils on this allotment.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing will not affect soil productivity or stability.

Water Quality

Affected Environment

The allotment is in the Upper Merced River watershed and is not identified as a State 303d impaired water body. There are six intermittent creeks and a permanent spring on the allotment. Beneficial uses identified in the basin plan for this area are agriculture (irrigation), industry (hydropower generation), recreation, freshwater habitat (warm and cold water ecosystems), and wildlife habitat. A beneficial use identified as potential for the area is municipal and domestic water supply. No water quality monitoring/inventory has taken place on the allotment. There is no evidence of water quality degradation occurring on the allotment.

Impacts from the Proposed Action

Because water quality is not impaired, there appear to be no impacts from cattle grazing on water quality or beneficial uses of the basin.

Impacts from the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing is not expected to impact water quality on the allotment.

References

California Regional Water Quality Board, Central Valley Region. Revised 2007. The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins.

Wetlands/Riparian

Affected Environment

There are 6 intermittent streams and 1 permanent spring on the allotment. The spring is the only source of perennial water on the allotment. The spring has been assessed as in proper functioning condition (April 28, 2003). The spring has abundant, diverse, and thriving riparian vegetation.

Impacts of the Proposed Action

Existing livestock grazing is having no impact on riparian habitat because one spring is fenced away from cattle. The intermittent streams do not exhibit riparian characteristics.

Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing on the allotment will not improve riparian condition of the spring, which is already fenced away from cattle.

References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2003. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

Wildlife

A mosaic of non-native annual grassland and chaparral dominates much of the allotment. There are also oak woodland and riparian stringers in the drainages. Available forage is abundant, with no apparent competition between wildlife and livestock. The allotment is within the yearlong range of the Mariposa deer herd. It is not considered a critical area for the herd. No special status species occur within the allotment. Surveys of the allotment indicate a diversity of typical, native wildlife species for the area, such as coyote, deer, and several species of songbirds. The species standard for rangeland health is being achieved. Neither existing grazing nor elimination of grazing are expected to impact wildlife because grazing does not appear to be adversely affecting vegetation/habitat and there are no special status species known in the allotment.

References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1982. Proposed livestock grazing management for the Sierra Planning Area draft environmental impact statement. Bakersfield District Office, Bakersfield, California. 145 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2003. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

Vegetation

Dominant woody upland species include chamise, white leaf Manzanita, common Manzanita, buckbrush, yerba santa, blue oak, and gray pine. Interior live oak, California buckeye, willow, and poison oak are often associated with drainages. Filaree is prominent in the grasslands. No special

status plant species occur on the allotment. The allotment is meeting the species standard for rangeland health; therefore, neither existing, authorized grazing nor elimination of grazing are expected to impact vegetation.

References

Franklin, A. 2002. Botanical Resource Inventory Report. Unpubl. rep. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2003. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

Cumulative Impacts

Because no site specific adverse impacts are expected for any resources (described above), cumulative impacts at the larger, watershed scale are not anticipated.

CHAPTER 4: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

- American Indian Council of Mariposa County
- Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk
- Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk
- Jim Loeser (employee of John Bordenave, the Granite Springs grazing lessee)

Public Participation

The EA will be available on BLM's website for a 15-day public review period. It will also be sent to the lessee and those identified as interested publics for this allotment.

List of Preparers and Reviewers

- Peggy Cranston, Wildlife Biologist and Range Program Lead
- Al Franklin, Botanist
- James Barnes, Archaeologist
- Sandra McGinnis, NEPA Coordinator

References Cited

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2003. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment CA-180-07-55

Finding of No Significant Impact

Granite Springs Livestock Grazing Authorization

Location: Just North of Lake McClure (Exchequer Reservoir) about 1 mile south of Granite Springs, California in Mariposa County (T3S, R15E, portions of Sections 13, 14, and 15. See also Maps 1 and 2).

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Folsom Field Office
63 Natoma Street
Folsom, CA 95628
Phone: (916) 985-4474
FAX: (916) 985-3259

June 14, 2007

Finding of No Significant Impact

Folsom Field Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I find that the project is not a major federal action, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Sierra MFP. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context: The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 1000 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would have no adverse impacts to resources as described in the EA.
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** No health and safety issues are associated with the proposed action.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The historic and cultural resources of the area have been inventoried and no adverse impacts were identified. The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); essential fish habitat; threatened or endangered plant or animal species; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; Native American cultural values; Wild and Scenic Rivers; wilderness; wild horse and burro herds; solid or hazardous wastes; or environmental justice. In addition, the following Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues, although present, would not be affected by this proposed action for the reasons listed in the EA: air quality; invasive, non-native species; recreation; soils; water quality; wetland/riparian; wildlife; and vegetation. Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resource Issues were analyzed in detail in Chapter 4. None of these would be significantly impacted because of the small size of the livestock operation, low intensity of grazing, short duration of grazing permitted on the allotment, dense brush, limited access, and fencing of the spring.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Because no site specific adverse impacts are expected for any resources, cumulative impacts at the larger, watershed scale are not anticipated. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 4 of the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated

the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory has been completed for the proposed action, and consultation with SHPO has been completed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). A finding of “no effect” on cultural resources completes BLM’s obligations under Section 106 of the NHPA, pursuant to the statewide Protocol Agreement (2004) between BLM California and the State Historic Preservation Officer. This report is on file with BLM.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM’s sensitive species list.** No special status species occur on the allotment, therefore, the proposed action has no effect on endangered or threatened species or their habitat.
10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.** The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to three Native American tribes concerning consulting party status, and there was no response from any of the tribes. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

Authorized Officer

Date