

Land Health Evaluation Report
Jefferson City Allotment
Bureau of Land Management
Butte Field Office

Introduction and Assessment Process

This report documents whether land health standards were achieved for the Jefferson City Grazing Allotment administered by the Bureau of Land Management's Butte Field Office. Standards for Rangeland Health were evaluated utilizing an interdisciplinary team (ID team) of resource specialists.

Rangeland Health Standards for Western Montana are described in detail in the Record of Decision (ROD) issued for Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota (August 1997). The preamble of the Western Montana Standards states: "The purpose of the S&Gs (Standards and Guidelines) are to facilitate the achievement and maintenance of healthy, properly functioning ecosystems within the historic and natural range of variability for long-term sustainable use." Standards are statements of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy sustainable lands. Achieving or making significant progress towards these functions and conditions is required of all uses of public land as stated in 43 CFR 4180.1.

This report contains an evaluation of each of the five standards:

- Standard #1 Upland Health
- Standard #2 Riparian/Wetland Health
- Standard #3 Water Quality
- Standard #4 Air Quality
- Standard #5 Biodiversity

Available monitoring data from both upland and riparian sites, existing inventories, historical photographs and standardized methodology are used by an ID team to assess condition and function. Condition/function declarations regarding are expressed as:

- Proper Functioning Condition (PFC)
- Functioning at Risk (FAR), which is assigned a trend of up, down, static or not apparent
- Nonfunctioning (NF)

Standards are met when conditions are at PFC or FAR with an upward trend. This is dependent on scope and scale. The BLM will consider the information contained in this report, along with public scoping and other sources of information, to make a determination regarding causal factors and courses of action to be analyzed in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

General Allotment Summary

Allotment Name/Number: Jefferson City #00939
Current Management Category: C (Custodial)
Location: T. 8 N., R. 3 W., Sec. 32, NW ¼ NW ¼ NW ¼
 Jefferson County
Public Acres: 10 acres
Season of Use: 06/01-08/31
Public Animal Unit Months: 3
Assessment Date/Period: 07/21/2011

Prior to 2004 these ten acres of BLM land were included in the Clancy Gulch allotment as part of the 862 acres that provided for 161 AUMs. In 2003 the current permittee applied to have this parcel of land separated from the Clancy Gulch allotment since it was fenced in with his private land in order to comply with the law. Very little use actually occurs on the public land portion of the pasture and the lease is for two cattle. Average precipitation around the allotment averages 11 to 12 inches annually. Elevation on the allotment ranges between 4500 and 4580 feet.

Three different soil mapping units compose the 10 acre Jefferson City allotment. The ID team chose to perform the assessment within the largest of the mapping units, Baxton, stony-Breton, bouldery-Catgulch, very stony, complex, 15 to 35 percent slopes (1246E). A verification soil pit was dug on the shoulder of a southwest facing hillslope to determine the ecological site. The soil matched the major map component Baxton, stony and similar soils, placing it in the Sandy-Droughty (SyDr) 15-19" ecological site. The soils within this map unit are classified as Mollisols (grassland soils) with loamy sand textures which form in sandy colluvium derived from granite over residuum. They occur on alluvial fans, hillsides, mountain sides, and ridges. Depth to bedrock is 31 inches. These soils are well drained (i.e. not hydric).

Summary of Standards Achieved						
--Yes, No, N/A (Not Applicable)--						
Allotment Name	Allot #	1. Upland	2. Riparian	3. Water Quality	4. Air Quality	5. Biodiversity
Jefferson City	00939	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No

Rangeland Health Standards Evaluation and Rationale

The issue of scope and scale must be kept in mind when evaluating each standard. It is recognized that isolated sites within a landscape may be Functioning at Risk (FAR) and not meeting the standards; however, considering broader scope and scale, the area may be deemed in Proper Functioning Condition (PFC). Likewise, isolated sites may be in PFC, but, overall, the resource within the allotment or area could be FAR and not meeting standards. Therefore, no single indicator provides sufficient information to determine

rangeland health. Indicators are used in combination to provide information necessary to make rangeland health determinations.

Western Montana Standard #1
“Uplands are in Proper Functioning Condition”

Finding Standard is not met.

Rationale The uplands within the allotment boundary are inundated with six different species of invasive/noxious weeds. These weeds are prevalent throughout the site and have taken over in relative dominance. The remaining overstory of ponderosa pine trees have been heavily impacted by mountain pine beetle. Most mature trees show some sign of stress if not already dead.

The IDT found that the excessive amount of weeds and viability of the overstory displayed a moderate to extreme departure from expected. Very few native plants were found in the understory. The team did not find that the soil or hydrologic functions were impaired as there was no direct erosion from wind or water. There were no signs of overland flow of water or soil degradation.

Western Montana Standard #2
“Riparian and Wetland Areas are in Proper Functioning Condition”

Finding Not Applicable

Rationale No riparian areas, springs or wetlands occur within the allotment.

Western Montana Standard #3:
“Water Quality Meets State Standards.”

Finding Not Applicable

Rationale There is no surface water, or ground water development within the allotment.

Western Montana Standard #4
“Air Quality Meets State Air Quality Standards.”

Finding Standard is met

Rationale Although the actual air quality in the allotment is unknown; there is no evidence to suggest that the current allotment conditions would be contributing to any air quality problems in terms of a source of smoke or dust particulates. No visual impairment was observed.

Western Montana Standard #5
“Provide habitat as necessary, to maintain a viable and diverse population of native plant and animal species, including special status species.”

Finding Standard is not met.

Rationale The following indicators were used to assess whether existing habitat conditions are at a condition to support viable and diverse populations of native plant and animal species, including special status species.

- Plants and animals are diverse, vigorous, and reproducing satisfactorily
- Noxious weeds are absent or insignificant in the overall plant community.
- Spatial distribution of species is suitable to ensure reproductive capability and recovery.
- A variety of age classes is present.
- Connectivity of habitat or presence of corridors prevents habitat fragmentation.
- Diversity of species (including plants, animals, insects, and microbes) are represented.
- Plant communities in a variety of successional stages are represented across the landscape.

Native plants were severely reduced and replaced by invasive and noxious species. The overstory of ponderosa pine is significantly affected by the mountain pine beetle outbreak. This small parcel of land, which is on the list for Potential Disposal Properties, This land is bordered by a paved road on the east, a two track on the west, and surrounded by subdivisions, which negatively impact the connectivity indicator.

Preliminary Identification of Causal Factors and Recommendations

Based on the field review and observations, it appears the following factors may be contributing to land health standards not being achieved:

- Lack of Integrated Weed Management (IWM)
- Small, isolated parcel surrounded by private lands
- Roads

Final determinations will be made upon assessment of further information. It should be noted that if changing a current management or use will not result in progress toward meeting the standards, then the current management or use should not be considered a significant causal factor.

The following actions may be necessary in order to make significant progress in achieving the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health:

- Concentrate IWM efforts within the allotment
- Allow the mountain pine beetle to run its’ course

How This Information Will Be Used

If the information in this Evaluation Report indicates that the allotment meets the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health, BLM will issue grazing decision(s) (subject to protest and appeal) to renew or issue associated grazing authorizations as necessary, with the appropriate level of NEPA documentation and public involvement in accordance with CEQ guidance and BLM direction. No additional final determinations are necessary.

For allotments not meeting the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health, BLM will use the information in this Evaluation Report along with any other relevant data or information, including input from interested parties, to make a final determination whether or not current grazing management or levels of use are a significant causal factor in not meeting rangeland health standards on the allotment. If current grazing management and/or levels of use appear to be a significant causal factor, BLM will use the NEPA process to document the affected environment and develop alternatives to propose changes to grazing management to facilitate achieving rangeland health standards. These changes or actions will be addressed with an appropriate level of NEPA documentation and public involvement in accordance with CEQ guidance and BLM direction. A Final Determination Document will be prepared in concert with the NEPA analysis and associated decision(s). Pursuant to 43 CFR 4180.2(c), the Authorized Officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable, but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards. Any grazing decisions, however, are subject to protest and appeal.

If current grazing management or levels of use do not appear to be a significant causal factor, changes or activities in other program areas or activities that appear to be significant causal factors may or may not be undertaken through a NEPA process, dependent on program and office priorities. However, a Final Determination Document will be prepared to document and outline the significant causal factors.

Involvement of Permittees, State Agencies and Interested Publics

The following groups/individuals were notified of the Jefferson City Allotment Assessment:

Permittee authorized to graze on the allotment

Western Watersheds Project

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Butte and Whitehall Ranger Districts

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

BLM Staff Participants

The following BLM staff participated in the preparation of this report:

Assessment Team Member	Title	Signature	Date
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Review	Title	Signature	Date
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