

Red Rock Allotment – Term Grazing Permit

Environmental Assessment

EA-NV-030-07-10

April, 2007

U.S. Department of Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Carson City Field Office  
5665 Morgan Mill Road  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

## I. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE AND NEED

### A. Introduction:

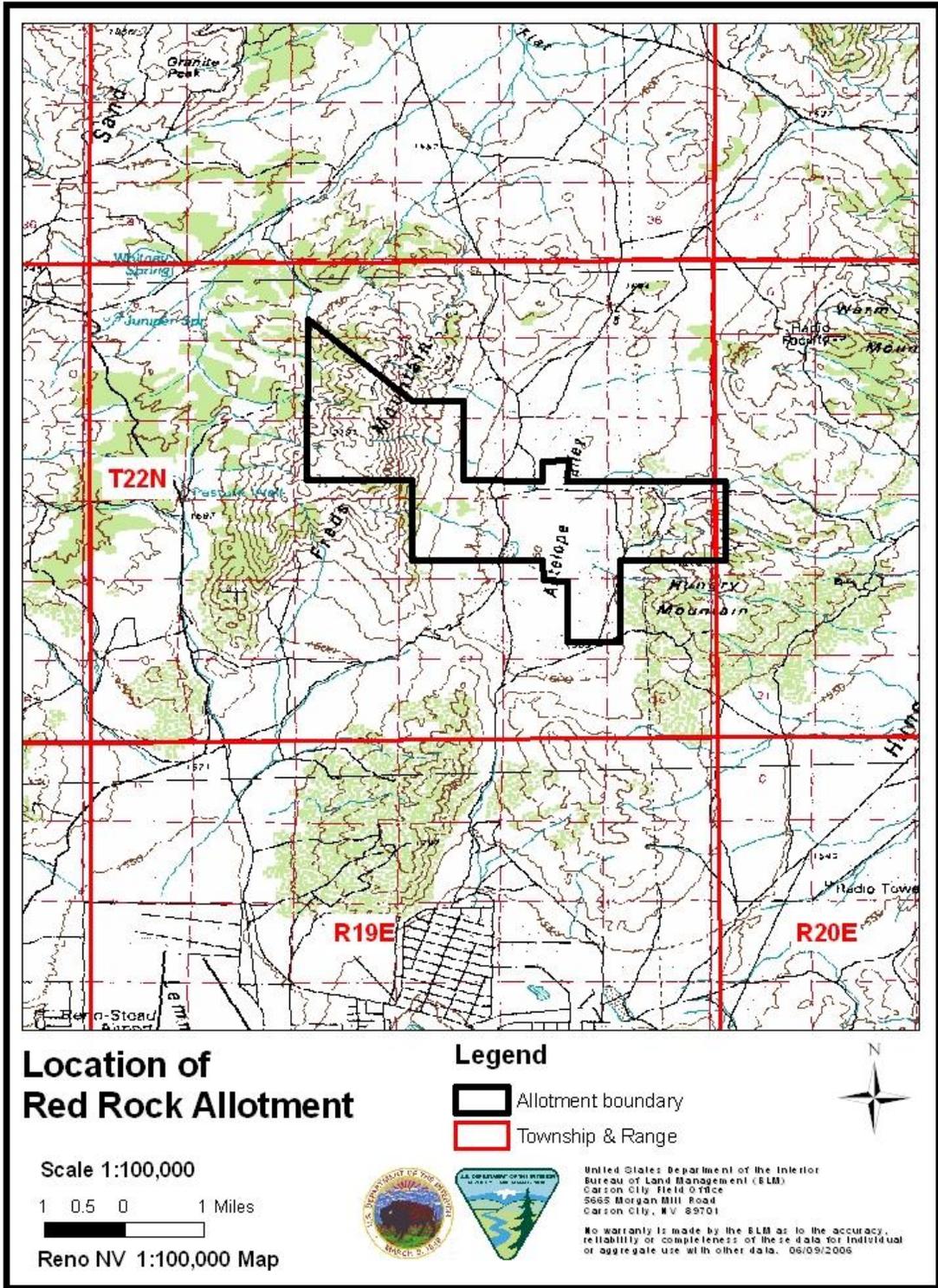
The Red Rock Allotment is located approximately 20 miles north of Reno, Nevada, and is within the boundaries of the Carson City Field Office (CCFO) of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It is located in Washoe County and encompasses approximately 3560 acres of public lands which are mingled with private lands in the area. The BLM is currently considering the renewal of the term livestock grazing permit for this allotment.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes the impacts resulting from the use of the Red Rock Allotment (Figure 1) for grazing purposes. It analyzes the impacts that are anticipated to result from the implementation of the proposed action, modification of the existing utilization levels by adoption of the technical recommendations presented in the Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis (2005), the No Action Alternative, and No Grazing alternative. This EA relies on and incorporates by reference a large portion of the recent Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis (2005), which is on file at the Carson City Field Office.

On February 12, 1997, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt approved the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health and Grazing Management to be applied to BLM public lands in the State of Nevada. These standards and guidelines were developed in consultation with the Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Nevada to help ensure that grazing use of these public lands results in productive and sustainable rangelands for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Standards and Guidelines are being implemented through two processes; (1) determination that the terms and conditions of the grazing permit are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines applicable to the allotment and (2) the allotment evaluation process to determine whether or not the current grazing utilization is expected to achieve the specific resource goals and objectives identified for the Red Rock Allotment in the applicable Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Rangeland Program Summary (RPS).

The EA references parts of the 2005 Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis and Standards and Guidelines developed for the Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Area (the specific area that includes the Red Rock Allotment).



**Map of Allotment Boundaries**

B. Purpose and Need:

The purpose of the proposed action is two fold; (1) Administer grazing and implement grazing practices on the Red Rock Allotment in a manner consistent with the attainment of site specific objectives for the allotment, found in the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan 2001 and (2) Implement grazing practices that would ensure compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health and Grazing Management.

The need for the proposed action stems from BLM mandates to conduct grazing activities in an ecologically sound manner. Grazing use of the Red Rock Allotment as well as requirements to conduct grazing activities in a manner consistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield and in an ecologically sound manner are found in the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the 1995 Standards and Guidelines for the Rangeland Health and Grazing Management, as well as various other federal laws and regulations.

C. Land Use Plan Conformance Statement:

The proposed action and alternatives described below are in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan, pages LSG-1.

- A. Maintain or improve the condition of the public rangelands to enhance productivity for all rangeland and watershed values.
- B. Initially, manage livestock use at existing levels.
- C. Provide adequate, high quality forage for livestock by improving rangeland condition.
- D. Improve overall range administration.

The Land Use Plan identified the lands within the Red Rock Allotment as available for livestock grazing.

Additional Guidance: Standards and Guidelines for Nevada's Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Area (2003).

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### A. **Proposed Action:**

Issue a new Term Grazing Permit for the Red Rock Allotment in order to implement the technical recommendations in the 2005 Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis, and/or other changes to provide for improved livestock management and condition of the range resource.

1. In the Red Rock Allotment, 69 cattle would be grazed with a period of use (April 15 to October 31) each year, for a total of 454 AUMs.
2. Limit utilization on desirable shrubs such as Antelope bitterbrush and Spiny hopsage so as not to exceed 45% in the upland key areas in the allotment. The utilization levels would be checked and when maximum utilization is reached, animals would be removed from the area.
3. Limit utilization on desirable grasses: Indian ricegrass, Thurber's needlegrass, Desert needlegrass, Needle-and-thread grass, and Great Basin wildrye so as not to exceed 45% in the upland key areas in the allotment. The utilization levels would be monitored, and when maximum allowable utilization is reached, animals would be removed from the area.
4. Water hauling in the allotment would be required each year in order to improve livestock distribution and lower overall utilization.
5. Control and eradicate noxious weed infestations, should they occur.
6. Improve existing ecological condition and trend.

### B. **Alternatives:**

#### No Action

Maintain current management and status of the Red Rock Allotment.

1. In the Red Rock Allotment, 69 cattle would be grazed with a period of use (April 15 to October 31) each year, for a total of 454 AUMs.

2. Utilization standards were set at 55% for all vegetation in the 1989 Rangeland Program Summary.
3. No formal grazing system or water hauling required.
4. Maintain existing ecological condition and trend.

No Grazing

Under this alternative, no Term Grazing Permit would be issued, and no grazing would occur on this allotment in the future. There would be no further range improvements constructed on the allotment, and no grazing permittee to maintain current range improvements, including fences and water sources. A permittee would not be present on the allotment to continue proper day-to-day management, so these vital activities would no longer be performed.

**Table 1 – Comparisons of the Different Alternatives.**

	<u>Proposed Action</u>	<u>No Action</u>	<u>No Grazing</u>
<b>Number of Livestock</b>	69	69	0
<b>AUM's</b>	454	454	0
<b>Period of Grazing</b>	4/15 -- 10/31	4/15 -- 10/31	N/A
<b>Max. Utilization (Shrubs)</b>	45%	55%	0
<b>Max. Utilization (Grasses)</b>	45%	55%	0
<b>Grazing System</b>	None	None	N/A
<b>Range Improvements</b>	Water Haul Sites	None	N/A
<b>Max. Utilization Reached</b>	Removed	N/A	N/A

### III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

#### A. SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION:

On November 9, 2006, a letter was sent to possible interested publics to identify those individuals and organizations interested in specific actions on specific Allotments under the jurisdiction of the Carson City Field Office. The purpose of the scoping letter was to gather information and determine who would be further interested in participating in the evaluation process on the Carson City Field Office grazing allotments.

The Environmental Assessment for the Red Rock Allotment Term Grazing Permit issuance will be sent out for public review. A copy will be sent to the Nevada State Clearinghouse for distribution amongst state agencies. In addition, copies will be sent to the following:

D.S.Ranches, LLC  
Western Watersheds Project  
RCI

Internal scoping with the BLM staff occurred from September of 2004 through April, 2007, which included the Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis, Rangeland Health Assessment, and this Environmental Assessment.

#### B. PROPOSED ACTION:

##### 1. General Setting:

The Red Rock Allotment is a small allotment and is primarily arid-land fan with some rugged mountain foot hills and mountains. Grazing occurs primarily on the slopes of Fred's Mountain and Hungry Mountain. This allotment has historically been a cattle allotment during the spring, summer, and fall. The area is mostly Wyoming Big Sagebrush and Mountain Big Sagebrush plant communities. There are no natural water sources on this allotment.

##### 2. Critical Elements of the Human Environment:

**The following critical elements are not present or would not be affected by the analyzed alternatives:** Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Floodplains, Hazardous or Solid Wastes, Invasive, nonnative species, Wetlands/Riparian, Water Quality, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Environmental Justice, Paleontology, and Forestry.

Both **Cultural Resources** and **Native American Religious Concerns** are also present, but would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives. The analyses conducted to reach these conclusions are discussed.

Cultural Resources:

Following BLM regulations (43 CFR 8100) and other federal laws including the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470f) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), as amended, BLM reviewed the immediate region for historic properties prior to a federal undertaking (issuance of a federal permit). By definition, an historic property is a “prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places” and includes “artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties” (36 CFR 800.16(1)(i)).

Based on research of files at the Carson City Field Office and the Nevada State Museum, known historic properties represent significant past human use of the landscape in and immediately adjacent to the BLM-managed lands of the Red Rock Allotment. These include prehistoric period lithic scatters, stone alignments, and camp sites of an extensive period of time ranging from the Paleoarchaic (over 8500 years ago) through the nineteenth century. Also present are historic period debris scatters, stone structures and buildings, roads associated with mining, limited settlement, and transportation. The area continues to be a place of ranching and mining activities, but some historic era features and sites remain (Carter 2006; Pendleton et al. 1982; Young and McGuire 2003).

Based on review of the reports on areas previously inventoried in or near the allotment, and a visit to the allotment by a BLM archeologist, livestock grazing is not a significant impact to historic properties. Based on review of range use data, use of the allotment landscape is slight to not present. Field reconnaissance in 2006 revealed no cultural resources at risk. Based on this review, and review of these locations for cultural resources, grazing is not likely to be a significant impact to currently unknown cultural resources. Therefore, relative to cultural resources, there exists no need to alter the proposed action for reissuing a term grazing permit for the Red Rock Allotment.

Additional allotment improvements may be part of the issuance of this grazing permit, but all proposed project improvements have the potential to adversely affect cultural resources. Per 36 CFR 800 and 43 CFR 8100, as amended, BLM is required to identify and evaluate cultural resources within the area of potential effect from an undertaking such as a waterline, fence, creation of new water haul locations, or other features that may concentrate livestock. Any historic properties within a proposed improvement project area will be avoided by proposed improvements. If this cannot be accomplished, specific project undertakings will be cancelled, or the allotment use will be modified to result in no adverse effect to the historic property(ies) pursuant to 36 CFR 800, and in consultation with the local tribal entity and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

### Native American Religious Concerns

The Native American tribes that have cultural affiliation with the area within the allotment are the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, and the Susanville Indian Rancheria Tribe. Per 36 CFR 800 and 43 CFR 8100, as amended, a consultation letter with a general summary of the proposed permit renewal, and a map of the allotment location were sent to the tribe on June 26, 2006 concerning the Red Rock Allotment grazing permit reissuance. During various face to face meetings and phone calls since that date, the Tribes have shared information concerning grazing activities within their aboriginal territory. The Tribes have each stated that any impacts to cultural resources should be avoided. However, to date there have been no Native American Religious concerns relative to this grazing permit reissuance.

Any proposed improvements may potentially have an effect on tribal concerns. Per 36 CFR 800 and 43 CFR 8100, as amended, BLM would review known tribal concerns and conduct Native American coordination and consultation, as necessary.

### **References Cited:**

Carter, J.A. 2006. *A Cultural Resource Summary for the Red Rock Allotment Term Permit Renewal, Washoe County, Nevada*. Report on file at Bureau of Land Management, Carson City Field Office (CRR-3-2341).

Pendleton, L.S.A., A.R. McLane, and D.H. Thomas. 1982. *Cultural Resources Overview, Carson City District, West Central Nevada*. Cultural Resource Series No. 5, Part 1. Nevada State Office of the Bureau of Land Management, Reno.

Young, D.C., and K.R. McGuire. 2003. *A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of Six Alternative Routes for the Proposed Tracy/Silver Lake 120kv Transmission Line, Washoe County, Nevada*. Report prepared for Tetra Tech, Inc., and Sierra Pacific Power Company. Report on file at Bureau of Land Management, Carson City Field Office (CRR-3-2113).

3. Resources Present but not Affected: (other than critical elements)

The following elements are present but would not be affected by the proposed action, no action and no grazing alternatives: Geologic Resources and Lands, Wild Horses and Burros, and Socioeconomic.

4. Resources Present and Brought Forward for Analysis:

**Livestock:**

454 AUMs are currently authorized on the Red Rock Allotment. Grazing on this small allotment occurs on the slopes of Fred's Mountain and Hungry Mountain, and a small portion of Antelope Valley in between. This allotment has historically been a cattle allotment during the spring/summer/fall.

There are no formal pastures designated, and no water hauling is currently done on the allotment.

Livestock grazing is authorized as a cow/calf operation. In the allotment, 69 cattle are permitted from April 15 to October 31, as per the Term Grazing Permit.

**Wildlife:**

The allotment area has limited general wildlife diversity potential due to the small size of the allotment. Only a couple of terrestrial wildlife habitats occur within the allotment area (Suminski 2007).

This allotment is currently a key deer wintering area and

does provide year long habitat (Axtell 2007). Deer are associated with the woodland habitat in this allotment, although a few can be found at lower elevations on the fringes of valleys (Suminski 2007). In late summer, cattle may use bitterbrush because it is the only high protein forage available. The ripe seeds are especially relished. When this occurs, there may not be enough left for mule deer in fall or winter, and browse reproduction may be affected. Fawn survival declines steeply when bitterbrush use exceeds 34% (NDOW 2004). The Consolidated Resource Management Plan for the Carson City Field Office of the BLM doesn't recommend an exact use level on bitterbrush. However, an often cited handbook recommends up to 45% (Nevada Range Studies Task Group 1984).

Historically, antelope were present in all valleys of Nevada (BLM 1988). Yearlong pronghorn habitat is found throughout the allotment (Axtell 2007). No key pronghorn areas have been identified.

There are no sage grouse resources in this allotment (Axtell 2007).

California quail are present in this allotment. A few mourning doves can be found in the allotment (BLM 1988).

The exotic species, chukar, can be found on the allotment.

### **Soils:**

The soils within the Red Rocks Grazing Allotment vary considerably in physical, chemical, and biological characteristics. Parent material, surface and subsurface textures and rock fragments, elevation, aspect, and slope determine the inherent productivity. Erosion and runoff potential, while affected greatly by these factors, are also dependant upon the basal and canopy cover of the vegetation on site. Also, roads, livestock and horse use, mining and other overland activities, and general motorized vehicle use have impacted soils in certain areas. Generally the soils found within this allotment are classified as either Aridisols or Mollisols, with much of the area in the eight to ten inch precipitation zone. Soil reactions range from near

neutral to moderately alkaline. Detailed descriptions of the soils within the allotment can be found within the Washoe County Soil Survey-South Part, issued in 1983 by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Soil Conservation Service.

### **Vegetation:**

Key upland species on the Red Rock Allotment include two shrubs and five grass species. They are Antelope bitterbrush, Spiny hopsage, Indian ricegrass, Thurber's needlegrass, Desert needlegrass, Needle-and-thread grass, and Great basin wildrye. See page 2 of the 2005 Red Rock Allotment Standards and Guidelines Analysis.

Most of the utilization monitoring on this allotment has been measured on Indian ricegrass, Thurber's needlegrass, Desert needlegrass, and Great Basin wildrye. Since this is a spring/summer/fall allotment, it is important to consider grasses in the management of the allotment. During the growing season, grasses and shrubs could be detrimentally affected by heavy levels of grazing. Sufficient foliage must remain in order to develop and supply the root systems with the proper nutrients.

During the summer, livestock graze primarily on grasses, with shrubs being more important during the early spring and later in the fall. Shrubs are higher in protein and certain other nutrients, while grasses are superior in energy-yielding qualities.

### **Recreation:**

The area encompassed by the Allotment is very popular with hunters and recreationists, because of its proximity to Reno and Sparks. Off-road racing occurs on the allotment, and OHV use of this entire area is becoming quite heavy. Access to the public lands is limited in many areas because of lack of roads.

## **Special Status Species:**

### Federally Listed Species

In October, 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's electronic listing of federally listed threatened, endangered, proposed for listing and candidate (TEPC) species was reviewed to determine which species might be associated with this grazing allotment ([www.fws.gov/nevada/protected\\_species/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/nevada/protected_species/index.html) 2006). The bald eagle is the only federally listed (threatened) species that likely occurs within the allotment. Bald eagles may fly across this allotment and may use it for foraging (BLM 1988). This bird uses fish but will also utilize carrion. No nesting occurs in the allotment and no habitat exists that would support bald eagle nesting.

The Nevada Natural History Program (NNHP) database has no record of any plant species proposed for federal listing, plant species listed as endangered or plant species listed as threatened (Tonenna 2007).

### BLM Sensitive Species

BLM Manual 6840 defines sensitive species as "...those species not already included as BLM Special Status Species under (1) Federal listed, proposed or candidate species; or (2) State of Nevada listed species. Native species may be listed as "sensitive" if it: (1) could become endangered or extirpated from a state or significant portion of its range; (2) is under review by the FWS/NMFS; or (3) whose numbers or habitat capability are declining so rapidly that Federal listing may become necessary, or (4) has typically small and widely dispersed populations; (5) inhabits ecological refugia, specialized or unique habitats; (6) is state-listed, but is better conserved through application of the BLM sensitive species status." It is BLM policy to provide sensitive species with the same level of protection that is given federal candidate species. The major objective of this protection is to preclude the need for federal listing (BLM 2003).

The NNHP database has no record of any BLM sensitive plant species (Tonenna 2007). Nevada BLM sensitive species expected, or found in or near the allotment are shown in Appendix A (BLM 2003).

### Neo-tropical Migratory Birds

On January 11, 2001, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13186 (Land Bird Strategic Allotment) placing emphasis on conservation and management of migratory birds. The species are not protected under the Endangered Species Act, but most are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. No BLM policies have been developed to provide guidance on how to incorporate migratory birds into NEPA analysis. However, advice based on past USFWS MOU's, list items the USFWS believes are fundamental for the analysis of impacts to and planning for these birds. These items are (1) effects to highest priority birds listed by Partners in Flight; (2) effects to important bird areas (IBA's); (3) effects to important over wintering areas.

Avifaunal Biomes that are found on the allotment are described by Partners in Flight (PIF) [Beidleman 2000], PIF-Nevada (Neel 1999) and Nevada Wildlife Action Plan (Nevada Wildlife Action Plan Team 2006). The Intermountain West is the center of distribution for many western birds. Over half of the biome's Species of Continental Importance have 75% or more of their population here. Many breeding species from this biome migrate to winter in central and western Mexico or in the Southwestern biome (Beidleman 2000). There are no Important Bird Areas (IBA) associated with this allotment. The species of concern listed by PIF that could occur in the allotment are shown in Appendix B.

#### 5. Alternatives:

The description of the affected environment for the No Action and No Grazing alternatives would be the same as that for the proposed action.

## IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

### A. Proposed Action:

#### **Livestock:**

The maximum number of 69 cattle would be run on the allotment. Implementation of the Proposed Action would not change the location and number of livestock utilizing the

allotment, nor the grazing season. A total of 454 AUMs would still be permitted on the allotment.

Water hauling would be implemented, which would greatly help to distribute grazing use across the allotment. Maximum utilization levels would be lowered by 10% on both grasses and shrubs. This will mean an increased need to look after the cattle, and more frequent moves from area to area. When the utilization level is met in any specific area, the cattle will be moved to another area of the allotment. This should help to prevent heavy or severe use in any small areas of the allotment. Water haul sites should also help to keep livestock use centered more on public lands in this checkerboard land ownership area. This would reduce complaints from adjacent private landowners about permitted livestock straying onto their properties.

**Water haul sites will be placed in the following locations:**

NE4 of Sec. 22, T. 22 N., R. 19 E.

NW4 of Sec. 24, T. 22 N., R. 19 E.

SE4 of Sec. 26, T. 22 N., R. 19 E.

**Wildlife:**

Because general wildlife habitat is in good, though drought affected condition, livestock grazing isn't impacting general wildlife habitats in the allotment.

Livestock grazing would not occur when wintering deer are on the allotment. The proposed decrease in maximum shrub utilization would be beneficial as during periods of drought, livestock use of shrubs could increase. Two proposed water haul sites are located in the valley and would not overlap deer use areas, especially the big winter herds. The third proposed water haul site occurs adjacent to a rougher foothill area that deer would use in winter (Suminski 2007). This water may open up new country to livestock grazing that could move deer to a less desirable area and/or use previously ungrazed forage (Peek and Krausman 1995, Axtell 2007).

Upland areas soils and vegetation are in functioning condition so livestock grazing isn't affecting pronghorn habitat (Suminski 2007). Livestock grazing at the moderate level can cause some rangelands to be in a sub-climax vegetative condition which is ideal for pronghorn (Yoakum et al 1983.) Forage competition in fall and winter between cattle and pronghorn on rangeland that is in fair to good condition is slight because pronghorn use forbs and shrubs, and cattle use grasses primarily (Yoakum et al 1995; Authenrieth et al 2006).

The proposed water haul sites may open up new country to livestock grazing that could move pronghorn to a less desirable area and/or use previously ungrazed forage. However, pronghorn will use water hauls and these would be available during the summer when water was most needed.

Moderate grazing levels on upland areas as have been practiced in recent years, and that are proposed for this action, would not have an effect on upland game bird species (Guthery 1995).

### **Soils:**

The implementation of this alternative could have a slight positive effect on the overall soils resource by creating better livestock distribution and preventing heavy use and/or soil trampling in localized areas.

### **Vegetation:**

The maximum utilization level would be reduced for both grasses and shrubs from 55% to 45%. There would be no change in the utilization category (Moderate Use Class - 41% to 60%). This reduction in use levels, when applied across the allotment, will be significant. This level of use will provide for better improvement in the vegetative component over time. More above ground foliage will remain on the plants, and this will result in more plant growth, and improved root reserves to see the plants through the harsh climatic conditions common in this area. Both ground cover, and species diversity should improve.

## **Recreation**

The proposed action should not affect the current situation in regards to recreation in the allotment. Grazing management will change in some aspects, but not in ways that will affect recreation. The same uses will be available and will not be limited by activities related to grazing.

## **Special Status Species:**

### Federally Listed Species

A determination of “No Effect” to bald eagle from re-issuing this grazing permit was made (Suminski 2007). Livestock grazing wouldn’t affect bald eagles flying over the allotment since the only use made would be scavenging.

### BLM Sensitive Species

Livestock grazing allows some species to respond positively, some to respond negatively and some to have a mixed response (Finch et al 1993). This means only that some species may use a grazed area more, some may use it less. It doesn’t necessarily preclude the presence of a species (Fagerstone and Ramey 1995). Livestock grazing in this allotment isn’t creating undue impacts to the BLM sensitive species that are associated with upland areas because this allotment is in acceptable functioning condition overall for soils and vegetation, and proposed utilization levels are moderate. The proposed water hauls wouldn’t affect most sensitive species that could occur on this allotment. However, bats will use water hauls to forage across. These projects would benefit some bat individuals, but not populations.

### Neo-tropical Migratory Birds

Livestock grazing allows some species to respond positively, some to respond negatively and some to have a mixed response (Finch et al 1993). This means only that some species may use a grazed area more, some may use it less. It doesn’t necessarily preclude the presence of a species. Livestock grazing was not listed as a threat to loggerhead shrike ([www.natureserve.com](http://www.natureserve.com)). Although overgrazing can be an issue for Brewer’s sparrow and sage thrasher

([www.natureserve.com](http://www.natureserve.com), Finch et al 1993), overgrazing is not occurring in this allotment. Upland areas are in functional condition for soils and vegetation. The proposed water hauls would not affect neo-tropical migratory birds since bird escape ladders are a standard design feature.

B. No Action Alternative

**Livestock:**

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would not change the current number of livestock utilizing the allotment, authorized AUMs or the season of use.

**Wildlife:**

Effects to general wildlife and game species would be the same as the proposed action from livestock grazing except that vegetation utilization would be higher in some areas. This would not be as beneficial as utilization levels in the proposed action alternative. There would be no new water sources for possible wildlife use, but the absence of these water haul sites would probably have an overall positive effect by not encouraging additional use in areas around the sites.

**Soils:**

Maintaining the current livestock operation on the allotment should result in little change to the soil resource. There are no signs of damage in the area, and as this would be a continuation of the situation that has been in place for many years, no change would be expected. Satisfactory soil conditions should persist.

**Vegetation:**

Under the no action alternative, grazing practices would remain the same as they have been for many years. Utilization levels would remain at 55% for all types of vegetation, and no water haul sites would be established to

help improve livestock distribution and prevent overuse in specific areas.

Vegetation conditions would remain pretty much static across the allotment. This would be acceptable, as the allotment conditions currently meet applicable Standards and Guidelines for grazing use. However, conditions would not improve as much, and at the same rate, as would be allowed under the proposed action.

### **Recreation:**

Effects of this alternative would be the same as the proposed action. There would be no impacts to recreation resources or opportunities as a result of the no action alternative.

### **Special Status Species**

#### Federally Listed Species

Livestock grazing wouldn't affect bald eagles flying over the allotment since the only use made would be scavenging.

#### BLM Sensitive Species

Effects to BLM sensitive species would be the same as the proposed action from livestock grazing except that vegetation utilization would be higher. This would not be as beneficial as utilization levels in the proposed action alternative. Not having the water hauls would be beneficial overall to sensitive species by disallowing any opening of new country to grazing. The lack of new water sources for bat foraging areas would not offset the effect of opening new country.

#### Neo-tropical Migratory Birds

Effects to neotropical migratory birds would be the same as the proposed action from livestock grazing except that vegetation utilization would be higher. This would not be as beneficial as utilization levels in the proposed action alternative. Not having the water hauls would be beneficial overall to wildlife by disallowing any opening of new country to grazing.

C. No Grazing Alternative

**Livestock:**

Implementation of the No Grazing Alternative would result in the removal of livestock grazing from the allotment. The loss of the grazing permit would have a negative effect on the permittee involved in this operation. Other grazing permits and leases are difficult to obtain in this area, and if a replacement could be found, it would no doubt be much more expensive than that currently in place.

This action would also result in a loss of improvement maintenance on the allotment. This would primarily be fence repairs. Without these repairs, trespass livestock from surrounding lands would have uncontrolled access to the allotment. Fences also tend to restrict access by OHV riders, although these users do have a tendency to cut fences and enter the allotment through various points. Again, these fences would no longer be repaired. In relation to this use, the permittee has alerted the BLM to past abuses by recreationists, and these alerts have prompted BLM to take certain actions to protect sensitive areas. This would no longer occur under this alternative.

**Wildlife:**

Any forage competition between livestock and game species, especially in drought stressed years, would be lessened. The response of BLM sensitive species and Neotropical migratory birds would be reverse of the grazing alternatives. Those species which responded positively to grazing might not be as abundant, while those that respond positively to no grazing might increase. The additional bat foraging sites and pronghorn water provided by the water hauls would not be developed, but this would not affect these species overall.

Any possible forage competition between livestock and game species, especially in drought stressed years, would be lessened. The additional pronghorn water provided by the water hauls would not be present, but this would not affect this species overall.

**Soils:**

The implementation of this alternative could have a small positive effect on the soils in the area, due to removal of permitted grazing.

**Vegetation:**

The No Grazing Alternative proposed would have a number of effects. The vegetation across the allotment would continue to improve. Ground cover and species diversity could increase at a faster pace than with any level of grazing. Eventually, some forage species on the allotment could reach an over mature stage of growth, and the vigor of the plants could suffer. Certain species of grass plants may become woody with dead crown centers. This alternative would also not allow for the proper use of a renewable resource (range forage) as provided for by various Federal Acts and in the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan 2001.

**Recreation:**

The No Grazing Alternative would be the same as the proposed action and the No Action Alternative. There would be no impacts to recreation resources or opportunities as a result of the No Grazing alternative.

**Special Status Species:**Federally Listed Species

There would be no effect to the bald eagle.

BLM Sensitive Species

The response of BLM sensitive species would be reverse of the grazing alternatives as those species which responded positively to grazing might not be as abundant while those that respond positively to no grazing might increase. The additional bat foraging sites provided by the water hauls would not be developed, but this would not affect these species overall.

### Neo-tropical Migratory Birds

The response of Neotropical migratory birds would be the reverse of the grazing alternatives, as those species which responded positively to grazing might not be as abundant, while those that respond negatively to grazing might see an increase.

#### D. Cumulative Impacts:

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

The issuance of a term grazing permit for the Red Rock Allotment is a discrete action, and would cause no known cumulative impacts to the environment when considered in combination with any known or anticipated actions on these or adjacent lands in the past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future. Any effects of the moderate grazing levels proposed would be limited to the project area.

The grazing levels considered under these alternatives are either no grazing or grazing at moderate levels. Grazing at these levels has not been shown to be injurious to plant or animal species in the area. The effects of grazing at moderate levels, along with associated activities in the management of this allotment such as maintenance or construction of range improvements, would be limited to the immediate area of the allotment. They would not combine with any known, or reasonably foreseen activities on these or adjacent lands to produce any detrimental cumulative impacts in the area.

#### E. Monitoring:

Range monitoring would continue for the Red Rock Allotment. The types of monitoring could include (1) Photo Point, (2) Utilization, (3) Use Pattern Maps, (4) Rangeland Health Assessments, (5) Actual Use Reports, and (6) Weather Data. Actual methods used would depend on monitoring needs, conditions, and resources available.

V. CONSULTATION & COORDINATION

A. List of Preparers:

- |     |                    |                                     |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Peter A. Raffetto  | Rangeland Management Specialist     |
| 2.  | Russell Suminski   | Senior Rangeland Management Special |
| 3.  | Jim Carter         | Archaeologist                       |
| 4.  | James T. DeLaureal | Soil Scientist                      |
| 5.  | Terry F. Knight    | Recreation Planner                  |
| 6.  | Jim Schroeder      | Hydrologist                         |
| 7.  | Rita Suminski      | Supervisory Wildlife Biologist      |
| 8.  | Terry Knutson      | Environmental Coordinator           |
| 9.  | John Axtell        | Wild Horse and Burro Specialist     |
| 10. | Dean Tonenna       | Plant Ecologist                     |

B. Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted:

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| D.S. Ranches LLC            | Western Watersheds Project   |
| Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe   | Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe |
| Nevada State Clearing House | RCI                          |

## APPENDIX A

### BLM Sensitive Species associated with Red Rock Allotment

#### Animals

Golden Eagle – *Aquila chrysaetos*  
Ferruginous Hawk - *Buteo regalis*  
Burrowing Owl - *Athene cunicularia*  
Short-eared Owl – *Asio flammeus*  
Long-billed Curlew – *Numenius americanus*  
Prairie Falcon – *Falco columbarius*  
Swainson's Hawk- *Buteo swainsoni*  
Western Snowy Plover- *Charadrius alexandrinus*  
Loggerhead Shrike- *Lanius ludovicianus*  
Juniper Titmouse - *Baeolophus griseus*  
Vesper Sparrow – *Pooecetes gramineus*  
Western Snowy Plover – *Charadrius alexandrinus*  
Pallid Bat – *Antrozous pallidus*  
Townsend's Big-eared Bat - *Corynorhinus townsendii*  
Western Pipistrelle Bat – *Pipistrellus hesperus*  
Brazilian Free-tailed Bat - *Tadarida brasiliensis*  
Fringed Myotis – *Myotis thysanodes*  
California Myotis – *Myotis californicus*  
Pygmy Rabbit – *Brachylagus idahoensis*

Source: [www.natureserve.com](http://www.natureserve.com), [www.heritage.nv.gov](http://www.heritage.nv.gov), CCFO Habitat Management Plans, misc. observ

## APPENDIX B

Neo-tropical Migratory Birds, Species of Continental Importance on Red Rock Allotment

Salt Desert Scrub (Beidleman 2000) – This biome experiences harsh climatic variation and is often dominated by salt-tolerant shrubs. Species of concern associated with this habitat type in the project area are:

Loggerhead Shrike – *Lanius ludovicianus* (Neel 1999, Nevada Wildlife Action Plan 2006)  
Burrowing Owl – *Athene cunicularia* (Neel 1999)

Issues related to this habitat type include physical destruction of salt desert shrubs, habitat conversion and use of rangeland pesticides (Neel 1999). Off-road vehicle activity and non-native species invasion has also been identified as an issue (Nevada Wildlife Action Plan 2006).

Western Shrublands (Beidleman 2000) – Shrub steppe was identified as the highest priority habitat for conservation for breeding birds. This habitat type supports the largest nesting-bird species list of any upland vegetation type in the West (Beidleman 2000). Species of concern associated with this habitat type in the plan area:

### Shrub-Steppe

Brewer's sparrow – *Spizella breweri* (Beidleman 2000)  
Sage Sparrow – *Amphispiza belli* (Neel 1999, Beidleman 2000, Nevada Wildlife Action Plan 2006)  
Sage Thrasher – *Oreoscoptes montanus* (Neel 1999, Beidleman 2000, Nevada Wildlife Action Plan 2006)

Issues related to this habitat type include fragmentation from man-caused activities. Threats to this habitat type include overgrazing of grasses and forbs that alter community structure, invasion of non-native grasses and fire suppression / crown-killing wildfire (Beidleman 2000). Loss of shrub understory, increasing human infrastructure which fragments and degrades habitat, and increases soil erosion was also identified (Nevada Wildlife Action Plan 2006).

## **REFERENCES**

Authenrieth, R. et al. compilers. 2006. Pronghorn management guides. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Pronghorn Workshop and Montana Department Game and Fish, Bismarck, North Dakota, USA.

Axtell, J. 2007. Specialist report for the Belleville Grazing Permit EA. Unpub. Doc. CCFO. Carson City, NV.

Beidleman, C. (ed) 2000. Partners in Flight Land Bird Conservation Plan, Version 1.0 Colorado Partners in Flight, Estes Park, Colorado.

----- . 1988. Lassen-Washoe Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, N3-WHA-T003. Unpub. Doc. CCFO  
Carson City, NV.

----- . 2003. Nevada BLM Sensitive Species List. Unpub. Doc. Signed 7-1-03. Reno, NV.

Fagerstone K. and C. Ramey. 1995. Rodents and lagomorphs in P.R. Krausman, ed. Rangeland wildlife. The Society for Range Management, Denver. pp 83-132.

Finch et al. 1993. Status and management of Neotropical migratory birds Gen. Tech Rep. RM-229. Ft. Collins, CO pp. 296-309.

Guthery, F. 1995. Upland gamebirds. IN P. Krausman, ed. Rangeland Wildlife. The Society for Range Management, Denver. p. 59.

Neel, L. (ed.) 1999. Nevada Partners in Flight, bird conservation plan. Unpub. Doc. BLM State Office, Reno, Nevada. 269 pp.

Nevada Range Studies Task Group. 1984. Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook. A cooperative effort by: SCS, USFS, BLM, Univ. of Nevada-Reno, ARS and Range Consultants. UNR. Reno, NV p. 23.

Nevada Department of Wildlife. 2004. Nevada's Mule Deer, Population Dynamics: Issues and Influences. Biol Bull No. 14. NDOW. Reno, NV.

Peek, J. and P. 1995. Krausman. Grazing and mule deer in P.R. Krausman, ed. Rangeland Wildlife. The Society for Range Management, Denver. pp. 192.

Suminski, R. 2007. Specialist report for the Red Rock Grazing Permit EA. Unpub. Doc. CCFO. Carson City, NV.

Tonenna, D. 2007. Specialist report, botany, for the Red Rock Grazing Permit EA. Unpub. Doc. CCFO. Carson City, NV.

Wildlife Action Plan Team. 2006. Nevada Wildlife Action Plan. Nevada Department of Wildlife, Reno.

Yoakum, J. 1983. Managing vegetation for pronghorns in the Great Basin. In: Monsen, Stephen B.; Shaw, Nancy, comp. Managing Intrmtn rnglands--impr of rng and wildlife habitats: proc. of symposia; G.T.R. INT-157. Ogden,UT: USDA,FS,Intrmtn F&R Ex Sta; p. 189-193.

Yoakum J. et al. 1995. Pronghorn on western rangelands in P.R. Krausman, ed. Rangeland wildlife. The Society for Range Management, Denver. pp. 211-226.

[http://www.fws.gov/nevada/protected\\_species/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/nevada/protected_species/index.html)

