



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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[http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko\\_field\\_office.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office.html)

In Reply Refer To:  
4130 (NVE02000)

### **Final Determinations Wilson Mountain Allotment Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health September 2013**

This document makes final determinations regarding:

- A. Progress towards or attainment of the standards for rangeland health,
- B. Whether livestock management is in conformance with the guidelines, and
- C. Whether existing grazing management or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards or conform to the guidelines.

#### **Standard 1. Upland Sites**

*Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and landform.*

As indicated by:

- Indicators are canopy and ground cover, including litter, live vegetation and rock, appropriate to the potential of the site.

#### Determination:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| X | Achieving the Standard  |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, but making significant progress towards achieving   |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, and not making significant progress toward standard |

#### Guidelines Conformance:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| X | In conformance with the Guidelines     |
|   | Not in conformance with the Guidelines |

**Rationale:** Interpretation of the existing cover and utilization data, along with recent field observations indicate that this standard is being met. The Wilson Mountain Allotment is in overall good ecological condition. Hydrologic function, energy flow, and nutrient cycling on the upland areas of the allotment appear to be well balanced with no obvious impediments. Data collected at key area WM-01 in 2010 and 2012 shows a vigorous plant community that is dominated by native shrubs, grasses, and forbs. The amount of cover and plant litter at the allotment is adequate to slow water infiltration and run off and provides good soil stability and

reduced erosion. The amount of biological soil crust is also sufficient to slow water infiltration and help reduce erosion. Data collected in 1992 compared to data collected in 2010 and 2012 shows more plant species biodiversity and unwanted plant species decline.

Utilization level recorded since the 1992 indicated that use levels have averaged slight use (1-20%). Monitoring data suggests that use levels of key species are adequate to ensure the maintenance of existing herbaceous plant cover needed to stabilize the site.

Appropriate use levels in conjunction with the appropriate seasons of use have resulted in healthy and vigorous upland vegetation. The vegetation cover required to stabilize soils and ensure appropriate infiltration and permeability rates is being maintained in the Wilson Mountain Allotment.

**Standard 2. Riparian and Wetland Sites**

*Riparian and wetland areas exhibit a properly functioning condition and achieve state water quality criteria.*

As indicated by:

- Stream side riparian areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, large woody debris, or rock is present to dissipate stream energy associated with high water flows. Elements indicating proper functioning condition such as avoiding acceleration erosion, capturing sediment, and providing for groundwater recharge and release are determined by the following measurements as appropriate to the site characteristics:
  - Width/Depth Ratio;
  - Channel roughness;
  - Sinuosity of stream channel;
  - Bank stability;
  - Vegetative cover (amount, spacing, life form); and
  - Other cover (large woody debris, rock).
- Natural springs, seep, and marsh areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation is present to facilitate water retention, filtering and release as indicated by plant species and cover appropriate to the site characteristics.
- Chemical, physical and biological water constituents are not exceeding the state water quality standards.

Determination:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| X | Achieving the Standard  |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, but making significant progress towards achieving   |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, and not making significant progress toward standard |

Guidelines Conformance:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| X | In conformance with the Guidelines     |
|   | Not in conformance with the Guidelines |

**Rationale:** Wetland/riparian area data was collected in 2009 and 2012. The 2009 PFC data shows that all, except for two, of the sites that were visited were considered to be in proper

functioning condition. One of the two sites that were not in functioning condition, was considered to be in an upward trend. The other site that was not functioning was influenced by livestock and wildlife hoof action, as well as extremely steep topography.

Water quality data was also collected by BLM specialists in 2012 to determine if the riparian/wetland areas are meeting state water quality standards. All of the springs that were sampled show no irregularities and fall within the standards that have been established by the state of Nevada.

From the data that has been collected, it is the determination of the BLM that livestock grazing is not the direct causal factor for any adverse effects on the wetland/riparian areas located within the allotment.

**Standard 3. Habitat**

*Habitats exhibit a healthy, productive, and diverse population of native and/or desirable plant species, appropriate to the site characteristics, to provide suitable feed, water, cover and living space for animal species and maintain ecological processes. Habitat conditions meet life cycle requirements of threatened and endangered species.*

As indicated by:

- Vegetation composition (relative abundance of species);
- Vegetation structure (life forms, cover, heights or age classes)
- Vegetation distribution (patchiness, corridors);
- Vegetation productivity; and Vegetation nutritional values.

Determination:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| X | Achieving the Standard  |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, but making significant progress towards achieving   |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, and not making significant progress toward standard |

Guidelines Conformance:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| X | In conformance with the Guidelines     |
|   | Not in conformance with the Guidelines |

**Rationale:** Crucial mule deer winter range habitat has been rated to be in “Good” condition as indicated by monitoring completed in 2002 and 2010. Bitterbrush has been maintained in satisfactory age and form class. This helps to allow for maintenance of this shrub, which is an important species needed for forage and cover diversity for mule deer and other game and nongame species, and ongoing ecological site dynamics. (Note: Fence modifications are needed to facilitate big game and other wildlife movements.)

Monitoring data collected in 2010 indicate that sage-grouse Breeding Habitat (nesting), Brood-Rearing Habitat and Winter Habitat quality is within appropriate WAFWA guidelines when considering the mountain shrub vegetation type shrub height and umbrella-type shrub foliar cover, and perennial native species “grass-forb” height to support height recommendations and foliar cover values for nesting and brooding. Eight of ten monitoring locations on riparian/meadow

areas were rated as being in PFC with an additional area rated as being in an upward trend. Sage-grouse late (riparian/meadow) habitat has been maintained with these PFC ratings.

Vegetative monitoring indicates that wildlife habitat values are being maintained for wildlife species including those designated as Special Status Species and Migratory Birds when considering sage-grouse as an “umbrella” species.

Habitat conditions for the prey species of golden eagles, burrowing owls and other raptors designated as BLM and State Special Status Species would also be expected to be maintained.

#### **Standard 4. Cultural Resources**

*Land use plans will recognize cultural resources within the context of multiple-use.*

##### Determination:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| X | Achieving the Standard  |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, but making significant progress towards achieving   |
|   | Not Achieving the Standard, and not making significant progress toward standard |

##### Guidelines Conformance:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| X | In conformance with the Guidelines     |
|   | Not in conformance with the Guidelines |

**Rationale:** Based on the evaluation of existing information pertaining to range improvements and grazing, cultural resources are being recognized within the context of multiple use management in the Wilson Mountain Allotment. Because grazing on public lands requires a permit issued by the BLM, grazing and other associated range activities are considered to be an undertaking and thus require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as implemented using the Protocol between the BLM and State Historic Preservation Office in Nevada. BLM Archaeologists found little evidence that grazing or other grazing improvements were adversely impacting or effecting historic properties within the allotment.

There is unfortunately little baseline data to work with in making determinations of impacts from cattle grazing. However, it is likely that a century and a half of sheep and cattle grazing has adversely affected some archaeological sites. Other impacts to cultural resources may have also occurred as a result of off-road vehicle use, illegal artifact collecting, grazing (by pronghorn, deer, cattle, domestic sheep, and wild horses), and natural erosive forces such as rain, wind, flooding etc. These impacts generally cannot be separated and singled out as a primary impact to cultural resources on a site specific basis. Additionally, regarding domestic cattle and sheep grazing, it is well known that the number and intensity of grazing animals was far greater in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (generally before passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in the 1930’s) than the intensity of grazing which occurs today. As a result, impacts to cultural resources generally have lessened over the course of the past 50+ years compared to earlier impacts. It is not feasible to quantify and compare current impacts in order to make judgments regarding the degree of impacts that may go beyond those already inflicted during days of unregulated grazing. Thus, the focus of inventory efforts is placed on site specific project designs in which both the agent of impact and the location of impact are knowable.

