

# AZ STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES EVALUATION LIMESTONE ALLOTMENT #4508

## SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine if existing multiple uses are meeting the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for grazing administration along with appropriate land use plan and activity plan objectives. Standards are goals for the desired condition of the biological and physical components and characteristics of rangelands. Guidelines are management approaches, methods, and practices.

## ALLOTMENT PROFILE:

The Limestone Allotment is located on both sides of Highway 77 between Winkelman and Globe in Cochise County.

Percent Public Land (Billing):	<u>92%</u>
Grazing Preference:	<u>596 AUMs</u>
Suspended Preference	<u>123 AUMs</u>
Rangeland Classification:	Perennial <u>X</u> Ephemeral <u>   </u>
Custodial	<u>X</u>

## LAND STATUS

PUBLIC	<u>8,291</u>
STATE	<u>910</u>
PRIVATE	<u>250</u>
TOTAL	<u>9,451</u> acres

Terms and Conditions of current Lease: Standard Terms and Conditions

**GRAZING MANAGEMENT:** There is not an activity plan for this allotment. The allotment is divided into two pastures by the private lands in the valley bottom and Highway 77. Grazing occurs mainly on the pasture on the north side the allotment as it is the larger pasture. The pasture on the south side of the allotment is steeper hillsides of the Dripping Springs Mountains.

## Custodial Grazing Management

The management category given to the allotment is custodial (C). "Custodial grazing management is applied to areas having acceptable range condition and a stable or improving trend. Under custodial management BLM management actions are limited to licensing livestock use based on the AUMs available on the public lands, and the individual ranch operator determines the livestock numbers and the grazing system (if any) to be used. BLM checks these grazing units to ensure that the utilization on public lands is not excessive, that range condition and trend are being maintained, and that applicable regulations are being followed. If utilization is found to be excessive or the range trend to be down, BLM will work with the operator to adjust livestock numbers on the total grazing unit. Grazing units managed custodially include

areas where the effects of livestock use on the public land resources are anticipated to be minimal. Selection of public land areas for custodial management is based on the following criteria:

- (1) Public land areas where management is significantly compromised by other land ownership.
- (2) Conflicts with other resources not identified in inventory and planning process.
- (3) Good to excellent range condition and stable or improving range trend.
- (4) Satisfactory range management practices.

### **SOILS/VEGETATION:**

The Limestone allotment is located in the middle elevation of the Sonoran Basin and Range province in southeastern Arizona. The potential plant community is a diverse community of desert trees, shrubs, cacti, and perennial forbs and grasses. With continuous heavy grazing, herbaceous and suffrutescent forage species are replaced by increases in shrubs, cacti and trees. Well-developed gravel covers help protect the soil from erosion. This site has a cycle of dominance by saguaro, alternating with large shrubs and trees that act as nurse plants for the giant cacti. This cycle takes approximately 300 years and starts from exceptionally wet years (El Nino) where saguaro establishes in large numbers. Trees present in the current plant community on the allotment include *Canotia* (*Canotia holacantha*), Ironwood (*Olneya spp.*), foothill Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia microphylla*), and velvet mesquite (*Prosopis velutina*). Shrubs include whitethorn acacia (*Acacia constricta*), ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentate var. tridentate*) with the dominant half shrubs being triangle bursage (*Ambrosia deltoidea*), white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*), white brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), rayless brittlebush (*Encelia frutescens*), and threadleaf snakeweed (*Gutierrezia microcephala*).

Native perennial grasses include black grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*), bush muhly (*Muhlenbergia porter*), purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*), blue threeawn (*Aristida purpurea var. nealleyi*), red grama (*Bouteloua trifida*), and fluffgrass (*Dasyochloa pulchella*)

### **WATER QUALITY**

There is no Section 303d Water Quality Limited Stream Segment associated with the allotment. Based on current information, there are no other concerns about water or water quality that should be considered before lease issuance

### **PRECIPITATION**

Precipitation in this area ranges from 10-13 inches per year, with elevations from 2300-5100 feet. The average precipitation recorded at the Kearny station for the 30 year data is 13 inches. Approximately 40% of moisture comes as gentle rain or snow during the winter-spring (October – April) season, originates in the north Pacific and Gulf of California, and comes as frontal storms with long duration and low intensity. The remaining 60% falls in the summer season (May – September), originates in the Gulf of Mexico, and is convective, usually brief, and intense thunderstorms. Snow is uncommon from December – March, but rarely lasts more than a day. May and June are the driest months. The Southwest region has been in a severe drought situation beginning in 1995, the southeastern portion of Arizona has been in a serious drought for

7 to 10 years, dependent upon the locality. Most of the precipitation stations have experienced up to seven years of below average moisture. The last four years produced exceptionally limited amounts of precipitation at many stations. Precipitation data is collected from BLM, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency and rancher rain gauge stations within the BLM Administrative Area. The data presented below came from the Western Regional Climate Center rain gauge station which is nearest to the allotment. (KEARNY, ARIZONA (024590)).

Western Regional Climate Center Rain Gauge Data for Kearny AZ.

Period of Record: 6/ 1/1984 to 2/21/2013

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.72	1.56	1.29	0.43	0.24	0.17	1.40	2.12	0.94	0.80	0.97	1.58	13.21

## WILDLIFE RESOURCES

### THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

BLM has reviewed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's list of threatened and endangered species for Gila County (<http://arizonaes.fws.gov/>) and the following effect determinations are made.

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>	<u>Effect Determination</u>
Apache (Arizona) trout	<i>Oncorhynchus gilae apache</i>	T	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Arizona hedgehog cactus	<i>Echinocereus triglochidiatus arizonicus</i>	E	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Chiricahua leopard frog	<i>Lithobates [Rana] chiricahuensis</i>	T	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Colorado pikeminnow	<i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>	E	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Gila chub	<i>Gila intermedia</i>	E	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Gila topminnow	<i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis</i>	E	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
Lesser long-nosed bat	<i>Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena</i>	E	No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 40 miles away
Loach minnow	<i>Tiaroga cobitis</i>	T	No Effect-- Known locations

			and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away
<b>Mexican spotted owl</b>	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	<b>T</b>	<b>No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Mexican gray wolf</b>	<i>Canis lupus baileyi</i>	<b>E</b>	<b>May Effect, not Likely to Adversely Affect per <i>Biological Opinion on the Gila District Livestock Grazing Program</i></b>
<b>Ocelot</b>	<i>Leopardus (=Felis) pardalis</i>	<b>E</b>	<b>May Effect, not Likely to Adversely Affect per <i>Biological Opinion on the Gila District Livestock Grazing Program</i></b>
<b>Razorback sucker</b>	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	<b>E</b>	<b>No Effect— Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Spikedace</b>	<i>Meda fulgida</i>	<b>T</b>	<b>No Effect— Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Yuma clapper rail</b>	<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>	<b>E</b>	<b>No Effect— Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Desert tortoise, Sonoran population</b>	<i>Gopherus morafkai</i>	<b>C</b>	<b>May affect individuals but is not likely to cause a trend to Federal listing or loss of viability to Sonoran desert tortoise.</b>
<b>Headwater chub</b>	<i>Gila nigra</i>	<b>C</b>	<b>No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Northern Mexican gartersnake</b>	<i>Thamnophis eques megalops</i>	<b>C</b>	<b>No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Roundtail chub</b>	<i>Gila robusta</i>	<b>C</b>	<b>No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>
<b>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</b>	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	<b>C</b>	<b>No Effect – Known locations and suitable habitat are greater than 10 miles away</b>

E – Endangered  
T – Threatened  
PE – Proposed Endangered  
C – Candidate

The occurrence of any listed or proposed species has not been documented. There is no designated critical habitat. However, potential habitat does occur on the Limestone allotment for lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena*). The allotment does contain agave and Saguaro at the lower elevations on south facing slopes and may provide habitat for foraging lesser long-nosed bat. There has been no construction or maintenance of structures or improvements on the allotment that could affect food plants.

BLM conservation measures in the grazing BO included the following for lesser long-nosed bat:

1. Livestock grazing will not disturb or modify roost sites in the action area.
2. Construction and maintenance of livestock management structures and implementation of rangeland improvements will avoid or minimize the damage or destruction of bat food plants within 40 miles of a roost site.
3. Within 40 miles of roost sites, livestock management guidelines and prescriptions will be implemented that facilitate the regeneration and maintenance of bat food plants, including implementing the appropriate drought management policies and managing to meet the standards and guidelines. This includes minimizing damage to bolting agaves, especially in low flowering years.

After reviewing the status of the lesser long-nosed bat, the environmental baseline for the action area, and the effects of the proposed action, FWS concurred that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the lesser long-nosed bat based upon the following:

1. The known roost sites are not expected to be disturbed or modified by the proposed livestock management because of inaccessibility or distance from actions. The BLM will make necessary management changes to protect any roosts found in the future that are in or near an allotment. Therefore, the effects to roosts are discountable.
2. Effects from the construction and maintenance of structures and improvements to forage plants will be minimal because the BLM will survey before the actions are implemented and minimize effects to forage plants. This will result in relatively few forage plants being affected, and will leave the majority of forage plants in the area unaffected. Therefore the effects are insignificant, and, as a result, will not limit the use of the area for bats.
3. Livestock management guidelines and prescriptions will be implemented that facilitate the regeneration and maintenance of bat food plants, including implementation of appropriate drought management policies and managing to meet the standards and guidelines. This includes minimizing damage to bolting agaves, especially in low flowering years, through changes in management, including implementing drought management guidelines and managing to meet the standards and guidelines. These actions may result in some individual plants and bolts being affected in some years, but most foraging plants and bolts will be unharmed, and therefore, the effects are insignificant. Foraging areas will continue to be used by bats.

4. No critical habitat has been designated for these species, so no critical habitat will be affected.

In 2009, an ocelot was documented in Arizona (in Cochise County) with the use of camera traps. Additionally, in 2010, an ocelot was found dead on a road near Globe, Arizona. In 2011, an ocelot was documented in the Huachuca Mountains. In addition to the recent Arizona sightings, a number of ocelots have been documented just south of the U.S. border in Sonora, Mexico. At least four ocelots have been documented since February 2007 in the Sierra Azul, 30-35 miles southeast of Nogales; and one ocelot was documented in 2009 in the Sierra de Los Ajos, about 30 miles south of the U.S. border near Naco, Mexico. The closest U.S. documented ocelot occurrence from the Limestone allotment is approximately 20 miles west of the allotment.

Recent U.S. ocelot locations are near the action area, especially since one ocelot was known to travel a significant distance (Globe, Arizona). BLM allotments that are scattered in southeastern Arizona may provide dense vegetation for the ocelot, especially for travel between mountain ranges. Some BLM lands may also provide habitat for foraging and hiding.

The effects to the ocelot are expected to occur by altering their travel and foraging cover, and prey availability, and inadvertently through predator control activities. However, no predator control activities are expected on the Limestone allotment or other allotments within TFO.

The proposed action is not anticipated to result in significant changes to habitat quality or quantity because the allotments will be managed to meet the standards and guidelines. This management will not result in clearing of habitat, destruction of riparian areas, or fragmentation. Any changes to prey habitat are likely to be localized, and livestock management is not expected to significantly change prey availability throughout the areas in which jaguars or ocelots may occur. These effects on ocelot foraging and travel cover, and on prey habitat, are expected to be small, not measurable, and insignificant.

After reviewing the status of the ocelot, the environmental baseline for the action area, and the effects of the proposed action, FWS concurred that the proposed action of grazing on BLM allotments may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the ocelot based upon the following:

1. The proposed action is not anticipated to result in significant changes to habitat quality or quantity because the allotments will be managed to meet the standards and guidelines, which will not result in clearing of habitat, destruction of riparian areas, or fragmentation.
2. Any changes to prey habitat are likely to be localized, and not expected to significantly change prey availability throughout the areas where jaguars or ocelots may occur.
3. The likelihood of a jaguar or ocelot occurring in the same area where predator control activities are occurring is small, and if such activities are authorized by the BLM, it shall require identification of the target animal to species before control activities are carried out. If the identified animal is a jaguar or ocelot, that individual shall not be subjected to any predator control actions.

In 1998, Mexican gray wolves were reintroduced to parts of Arizona and New Mexico under the authority of section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act (63 FR 1752). This set forth

management directions and limitations within a defined boundary known as the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area. Within the experimental boundary is a primary and secondary recovery zone known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area. Because of their status as an experimental, non-essential population, wolves found in these recovery zones are treated as though they are proposed for listing for section 7 consultation purposes. By definition, an experimental non-essential population is not essential to the continued existence of the species. Therefore, no proposed action impacting a population so designated could lead to a jeopardy determination for the entire species. As of 2011, the minimum population estimate of wolves within the experimental population area was 58.

No wolves occur within the action area. If individual wolves disperse from the experimental population south or north into the action area, humans working near individuals could disturb the wolves, but they would only move to other areas. Livestock grazing would be managed to improve or maintain the productivity of the area, and would not affect the native prey base of the wolf.

#### Conclusion

We concur with your determination that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Mexican gray wolf. No critical habitat will be affected because none has been designated. Our concurrence is based on the following:

- Any wolves likely to be found in the action area are considered part of the experimental, non-essential population, so no action could lead to jeopardy for the species.
- The survival and reproduction of any wolves that may disperse from the experimental population into the action area would not be affected because the wolves would move to another area if disturbed, and the prey base is unlikely to be adversely affected by livestock management.

Most of the allotment is classified as category 2 desert tortoise habitat, with the upper elevations being classified as category 3 habitat. Arizona Standards For Rangeland Health And Guidelines For Grazing Administration require in Guideline 3-2. "Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, proposed, candidate, and other special status species is promoted by the maintenance or restoration of their habitats." Implementation guidance for the Standards and Guidelines (S&G) states "The authorized officer will review existing permitted livestock use, allotment management plans, or other activity plans which identify terms and conditions for management on public land. Existing management practices, and levels of use on grazing allotments will be reviewed and evaluated on a priority basis to determine if they meet, or are making significant progress toward meeting, the standards and are in conformance with the guidelines." As part of this review, the "Tortoise Habitat Management On The Public Lands: A Rangeland Plan" is the guiding document for management.

Objective 10 of the plan deals with livestock grazing within desert tortoise habitat. The pertinent

parts of the objective are Objective 1O. Ensure that livestock use is consistent with the Category Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions of this Rangewide Plan. This may include limiting, precluding, or deferring livestock use as documented in site-specific plans.

- Management Action 10A. In every grazing allotment which includes tortoise habitat, manage livestock to allow adequate and suitable native forage, space, and cover to be available to tortoises throughout the year.
- Action 10B. Where site potential permits, manage livestock grazing to increase native perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs that are required by tortoises. Management Action
- 10C. Allow utilization of tortoise forage and cover plants by livestock only to levels which allow for long-term plant vigor and adequate standing vegetation for late summer-fall tortoise use.
- Management Action 10D. Management of livestock grazing would allow only those new range improvements for livestock in Desert Tortoise Category I and II Habitat Areas that would not create conflicts with tortoise populations. Mitigation for such conflicts is permissible to make the net effect of the improvements positive or neutral to desert tortoise populations. Conflicting existing improvements should be eliminated as opportunities arise. Where range improvements are necessary and/or permitted, access and activities would be located and implemented to minimize additional disturbance to resources.

**OTHER WILDLIFE**

Common wildlife species found in the area include Coues whitetail and mule deer, javelina, coyote, fox, jackrabbit, cottontail rabbit, small rodents, quail, mourning dove, and songbirds. The ecological site description states that the site provides excellent habitat for Mule deer and javelina, with natural water areas occurring infrequently as springs or seeps. Deer pellet groups were observed at the evaluation sites on 6 March 2013, as well as soil disturbance from rooting javelina. Gila woodpecker, cactus wren, and a Sonoran whipsnake were observed near the BLM lands on the allotment.

**FISHERY RESOURCES**

There are no fishery issues in this allotment due to lack of suitable aquatic habitat.

**SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS**

There is one special area or designation that occurs within the allotment.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date Established</b>	<b>No</b>
Wild & Scenic Rivers				X
Wilderness				X
Unique Waters				X
ACECs	<b>XX</b>	Desert Grasslands(Mescal Ridge unit)	1991 Safford RMP	
Other				X

The Desert Grasslands ACEC was established with the following prescriptions: Mineral withdrawal (part of ACEC), closed to OHVs, acquire state/private lands if available, no livestock, prescribed fire plan. The management prescription for the exclusion of livestock from

the Desert Grasslands Area of Critical Environmental Concern affects only lands not currently accessible to livestock or those that are not presently being used for grazing. The other prescriptions will be as stated in the Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, Partial ROD II. page 5. II

### **RECREATION RESOURCES:**

There are no developed recreation sites on the allotment. Recreation use is limited and consists primarily of off-highway vehicle driving and small game hunting. Access to public land is difficult due to surrounding private property and rough terrain.

### **VISUAL RESOURCES**

Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes I \_\_\_\_\_ II \_\_\_\_\_ III X IV \_\_\_\_\_

VRM Class III includes areas where changes in basic elements caused by management activities may be evident in the characteristic landscape. The changes, however, should remain subordinate to the existing landscape character.

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Issuance of the permit constitutes a Federal Undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The Area of Potential Effect (APE) has been determined to be the public lands within the grazing allotment.

In compliance with the BLM Cultural Resources Programmatic Agreement, the Arizona BLM-SHPO Protocol, the 1980 Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between the BLM, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers Regarding the Livestock Grazing and Range Improvement Program, and the BLM 8100 Manual series, the following actions have been taken to identify cultural resources located in the APE, evaluate the eligibility of cultural resources for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), determine the effect of the undertaking on eligible cultural resources, and design mitigation measures or alternatives where appropriate.

The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Indian tribes having historical ties to Arizona public lands were consulted during the preparations of the Upper Gila/San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (9/86) and the Safford Resource Management Plan (9/78). Indian tribes were consulted at the beginning of the permit renewal process. There were no areas of Native American concern, Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP), or Sacred Sites identified during consultations.

Allotment case files, AMP files, range project files, Water Source Inventory files, and/or Cultural Resource files were reviewed to determine areas of livestock congregation and whether these areas have been previously inventoried for cultural resources. Because no historic properties were identified in areas of livestock congregation, no mitigation is recommended as a BLM responsibility or as a term or condition of the permit, to protect cultural values identified

above.

As required by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act regulations at 43 CFR 10.4(g), the following should be added to the grazing lease/permit as a term and condition:

If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization, any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601; 104 Stat. 3048; 25 U.S.C. 3001) are discovered, the permittee shall stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect the remains and objects, and immediately notify the Authorized Officer of the discovery. The permittee shall continue to protect the immediate area of the discovery until notified by the Authorized Officer that operations may resume.

\* Properties refer to archaeological sites, Traditional Cultural Properties, and Sacred Sites.

## RIPARIAN

There are no riparian or wetland areas on the BLM portions of this allotment.

## MONITORING STUDY ANALYSIS:

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State General Soil Map for this area was completed in 2009. The reference sheet for the Limy Slopes 10-13" p.z. was created in 2003, and for Limy Upland in 2002. Rangeland health assessments were conducted on March 6, 2013. In addition, species composition and utilization monitoring was conducted March 6, 2013. Monitoring data from the rangeland health assessment is available at the Tucson Field Office.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>No</b>
Rangeland Health Assessment	X	3/6/2013	
Pace Frequency			X
Dry Weight Rank			X
Point Cover			X
Line Intercept			X
Photos	X	3/6/2013	
Utilization	X	3/6/2013	
Actual Use			
Climate	X	6/ 1/1984 to 2/21/2013	

Rangeland Health Evaluations were completed on three ecological sites on the allotment on March 6, 2013. The evaluations' preponderance of evidence indicated that there was a "none to slight" rating for departure from the ecological site description and ecological reference area for soil/site stability and hydrologic functions. Rills, water flow patterns, pedestals and/or terracettes, bare ground, gullies, and litter movement were "none to slight" for departure from expected reference conditions. Rocky outcroppings and ground cover contributed to the absence of rills, gullies, and water-flow patterns. Plant community composition and distribution relative to infiltration was also "slight to moderate" for departure from expected reference conditions. Biotic integrity was rated "moderate to slight to moderate" for the three evaluations, because of the loss of plants and production on all sites due to drought conditions on the allotment.

### Limey Slopes 3/6/2013

Rangeland Health Attribute	Departure From Ecological Site Description				
	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil/Site Stability			1	2	7
Hydrologic Function			2	4	5
Biotic Integrity			2	2	3

### Clay Loam Upland 3/6/2013

Rangeland Health Attribute	Departure From Ecological Site Description				
	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil/Site Stability				3	7
Hydrologic Function				5	5
Biotic Integrity			4	4	1

### Limey Upland 3/6/2013

Rangeland Health Attribute	Departure From Ecological Site Description				
	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil/Site Stability				2	8
Hydrologic Function				3	7
Biotic Integrity			1	3	5

Utilization monitoring was conducted on 6 March 2013. Species chosen for monitoring were listed in the ecological site description as plant preferences for livestock cattle. Jojoba, ephedra, and rataney were chosen as the three species for monitoring because the other listed species either were not present at the BLM evaluation site, or had no utilization (e.g. Mesquite). A total of 22 jojoba, 10 ephedra, and 15 rataney plants were monitored for utilization. Average utilization for Jojoba, ephedra, and rataney is given in the following table. Utilization was below 10% for all species. Utilization on jojoba and rataney was probably from deer (pellet groups were observed), as no cattle sign were observed on the slope.

Species	Utilization (%)
Jojoba	1.8
ephedra	0.0
rataney	4.0

### **PERTINENT OBJECTIVES AND DECISIONS:**

Eastern Arizona Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), 1986  
 Safford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement, 1991  
 Safford District Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, Part 1 - 1992, Part II - 1994

### **LUP/RMP OBJECTIVES:**

There are no specific objectives listed for this allotment in the above plans. A land use plan conformance review and environmental assessment (EA) will be completed prior to lease renewal. However, general objectives from the Phoenix RMP and FEIS include the following.

The following objectives are from the Eastern Arizona Grazing FEIS.

Management of rangeland resources is guided by the Range Program Summary – Record of Decision (RPS/ROD) which selected the Preferred Alternative analyzed in the 1987 Eastern Arizona Grazing FEIS.

The Eastern Arizona Grazing RPS/ROD complies with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and FLPMA and covers all land within the RMP area. This RPS/ROD provides guidance for the RMP area’s grazing management program with the following objectives: 1) to restore and improve rangeland condition and productivity, 2) to provide for use and development of rangeland, 3) to maintain and improve habitat and viable wildlife populations, 4) to control future management actions and 5) to promote sustained yield and multiple use.

The Eastern Arizona Grazing Final FEIS provides information about ecological condition and apparent trend for all RMP area allotments. The EIS also identifies the current carrying capacity, in animal unit months (AUMs), and the expected AUM capabilities of each allotment as the EIS range program is implemented. This information is shown in Appendix 3 of the draft RMP/EIS.

**The following objectives are from the Safford District RMP and EIS.**

The objective for management of upland vegetation is to restore and maintain plant communities for wildlife, watershed condition and livestock. The desired plant communities will be determined in the preparation of activity plans (allotment management plans, habitat management plans, etc.). An ecological site inventory will be completed as new allotment management plans are prepared or existing plans revised (page 45).

The District range program manages 129,037 animal unit months of authorized active use and 10,150 animal unit months of non-use in 262 allotments. There are 109 allotments being managed under the guidelines of an implemented allotment management plan. Priorities for managing livestock use are determined through an allotment categorization process that helps determine management priorities. There are currently 60 allotments in the “Improve” category, 37 in “Maintain,” and 165 in “Custodial” (pages 137 and 140).

The three categories of improve, maintain, and custodial are explained (pages 140-141).

**ACTIVITY LEVEL PLAN OBJECTIVES:**

An allotment management plan has not been prepared for this allotment and no activity level plan objectives have been developed. There has not been a previous evaluation conducted.

**CONCLUSIONS**

**AZ STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES:**

**STANDARD 1:** Upland Sites – There are no concerns about soils that should be considered

before lease issuance. Upland soils exhibit infiltration, permeability, and erosion rates typical for this soil type, climate and land form. According to the rangeland health evaluation, soil/site stability, hydrologic, and biotic functions meet expectations for reference conditions. The only exception is due to the loss of grass species due to drought on the site. However, native perennial shrubs and forbs are present and their composition is what is expected for the site. Therefore, Standard 1 is being met for the allotment.

STANDARD 2: Riparian – There are no riparian areas on the allotment. Therefore, Standard 2 is not applicable.

STANDARD 3: Desired Resource Condition - There are no vegetative resource concerns that should be considered before lease issuance for the allotment. The rangeland health evaluation indicates the soil/site stability, hydrologic, and biotic integrity functions are meeting expectations for the site. There are losses of native perennial grass species due to drought and the allotment is currently in non-use for drought which has been prevalent in this part of the state for the last 8 years. Shrubs and forbs are present and their composition is what is expected for the site. The shrub and forb composition and density is sufficient to provide forage and shelter for the desert tortoise, therefore, Standard 3 is being met for the allotment.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The 10-year grazing lease may be renewed with the following terms and conditions:

- 1) For a term of 10 years for a preference of 596 AUMs (No suspended AUMs)
- 2) Standard conditions (Attachment A).
- 3) Wildlife mitigation (Attachment B).
- 4) If in connection with allotment operations under this authorization, any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601; 104 Stat. 3048; 25 U.S.C. 3001) are discovered, the lessee/permittee shall stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect the remains and objects, and immediately notify the Authorized Officer of the discovery. The lessee/permittee shall continue to protect the immediate area of the discovery until notified by the Authorized Officer that operations may resume.

**CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPANTS:**

Prepared by: Darrell Tersey, Natural Resource Specialist    Date:

<u>Staff Review</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Initial</u>
Darrell Tersey	Team Lead/ Natural Resource Specialist	_____
Heather Swanson	Natural Resource Specialist	_____
Kristen Duarte	Rangeland Management Specialist	_____

**AUTHORIZED OFFICER CONCURRENCE:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I concur with the conclusions and recommendations as written.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not concur.

\_\_\_\_\_ I concur, but with the following modifications.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Attachment A

**Limestone Allotment No. 4508**

**Grazing Lease - Terms and Conditions**

This Grazing Lease is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. Any changes in grazing use must be applied for prior to the grazing period.
2. Each year billing notices are issued which specify, for the current year, the allotment(s), number and kind of livestock, period(s) of use, animal unit months of use, and the grazing fees due. These billing notices when paid, become a part of this grazing permit/lease.
3. Grazing fees are due upon issuance of a billing notice and must be paid in full prior to making any grazing use under this grazing permit/lease, unless otherwise provided for in the terms and conditions of this grazing permit/lease.
4. This grazing permit/lease is subject to the terms and conditions of an allotment management plan if such plan has been prepared. If an allotment management plan has not been prepared, it must be incorporated in this permit/lease when completed.
5. No grazing use can be authorized under this grazing permit/lease during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due in settlement for unauthorized grazing use.
6. Grazing use authorized under this grazing permit/lessee may be suspended, in whole or in part, for violation by the permittee/lessee of any of the provisions of the rules or regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
7. This grazing permit/lease is subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
  - a. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
  - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based.
  - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party.
  - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described herein.
  - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use.
8. This grazing permit/lease is subject to the provisions of executive Order NO. 11246 of September 24, 1965, as amended, which sets forth nondiscrimination clauses. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.

9. The permittee/lessee must own or control and be responsible for the management of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.
10. The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional or special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.
11. The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
12. Actual Use information, for each use area, will be submitted to the authorized officer within 15 days of completing grazing use as specified on the grazing lease and/or grazing billings in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(d).
13. In order to improve livestock distribution on the public lands, all salt blocks and/or mineral supplements will not be placed within a 1/4 mile of any riparian area, wet meadow, or watering facility (either permanent or temporary) unless stipulated through a written agreement or decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(c).
14. In Accordance with 43 CFR 4130.8-1(F): Failure to pay grazing bills within 15 days of the due date specified in the bill shall result in a late fee assessment of \$25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, but not to exceed \$250.00. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date, shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR Sec. 4140.1(b)(1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR Secs. 4150.1 and 4160.1-2.
15. Grazing in this allotment shall strictly adhere to the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration, the Safford Upland Livestock Utilization and Drought Policies.

## Attachment B

### “Tortoise Habitat Management On The Public Lands: A Rangewide Plan”

Objective 10 of the plan deals with livestock grazing within desert tortoise habitat. The pertinent parts of the objective are Objective 10.

Ensure that livestock use is consistent with the Category Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions of this Rangewide Plan. This may include limiting, precluding, or deferring livestock use as documented in site-specific plans.

- Management Action 10A. In every grazing allotment which includes tortoise habitat, manage livestock to allow adequate and suitable native forage, space, and cover to be available to tortoises throughout the year.
- Action 10B. Where site potential permits, manage livestock grazing to increase native perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs that are required by tortoises. Management Action
- 10C. Allow utilization of tortoise forage and cover plants by livestock only to levels which allow for long-term plant vigor and adequate standing vegetation for late summer-fall tortoise use.
- Management Action 10D. Management of livestock grazing would allow only those new range improvements for livestock in Desert Tortoise Category I and II Habitat Areas that would not create conflicts with tortoise populations. Mitigation for such conflicts is permissible to make the net effect of the improvements positive or neutral to desert tortoise populations. Conflicting existing improvements should be eliminated as opportunities arise. Where range improvements are necessary and/or permitted, access and activities would be located and implemented to minimize additional disturbance to resources.

The BLM has committed to implementing all conservation measures and reasonable and prudent measures in the 2012 Biological Opinion on the Gila District Livestock Grazing Program. For the Lesser Long-nosed bat these measures include:

- Livestock grazing will not disturb or modify roost sites in the action area.
- Construction and maintenance of livestock management structures and implementation of rangeland improvements will avoid or minimize the damage or destruction of bat food plants within 40 miles of a roost site.
- Within 40 miles of roost sites, livestock management guidelines and prescriptions will be implemented that facilitate the regeneration and maintenance of bat food plants, including implementing the appropriate drought management policies and managing to meet the standards and guidelines. This includes minimizing damage to bolting agaves, especially in low flowering years.

BLM policy requires that wildlife escape ramps will be installed on all water troughs to prevent mortalities of small wildlife species being trapped in the troughs.