

DETERMINATION
For Achieving Standards for Rangeland Health
and
Conforming with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

May 9, 2014

Field Office: Sierra Front

Grazing Allotment: Paiute Canyon

Data Collection and Assessment Dates:

- Rangeland Health Assessments (RLHA): eight conducted in 2009; three conducted in 2012.
- Photo Trend Plots: five read in 1975 and 1979; one read in 1980; one read in 1981; two read in 1984; one read in 1988; four read in 1999; five read in 2009.
- Frequency Transects: three read in 1982; two read in 1985; two read in 1988; two read in 1991; four read in 1992; one read in 1993; four read in 1999; three read in 2000; seven read in 2009.
- Production Plots: forty-two plots read in 2013.
- Riparian Assessments: seven areas assessed in 2009; one area re-assessed in 2013.

Standard Determination Participants (Name and Specialty):

Nicole Cutler, Hydrologist
Ryan Leary, Range Management Specialist
Dean Tonenna, Botanist
Pilar Ziegler, Wildlife Biologist

All of the discussion in this Determination is derived from the Paiute Canyon Grazing Allotment Evaluation 2000 – 2013 (Evaluation) and supporting documentation, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Standard 1 (Soils)

Check those that apply (one or more must be checked):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard does not apply | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting standard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are not significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but making significant progress towards | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but cause still being determined |

Rationale:

Soil types and conditions vary throughout the Paiute Canyon Grazing (Allotment). Based on NRCS data, there are 29 different ecological sites on the Allotment. Most of the Allotment is comprised of varying types of loamy, granitic, gravelly, claypan, and sandy ecosites. Soil surface textures are primarily loamy and sandy.

Soil / Site Stability, however, has remained relatively stable with nine of the eleven rangeland health assessments (RLHAs) showing an overall departure of None to Slight from reference state conditions as described in the Rangeland Ecosystem Site Descriptions (RESDs). Eight of the RLHA sites did show departures in specific indicators showing that soil erosion was occurring. These departures were mostly Slight to Moderate. The most notable departures are shown in the Virginia Range Population Management Unit (PMU) RLHAs 13 and 16 within the Tule pasture, which had Moderate to Extreme and Extreme to Total departures respectively for “Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion”. The overall departure recorded for Virginia PMU 16 for this attribute was Moderate to Extreme. The area represented by Virginia PMU 16 had been burned in 1999, and portions heavily grazed in the early to mid-1980s.

The following discussion relates to the specific indicators of soil conditions.

Surface litter is appropriate to the potential of the site.

Surface litter was normal for much of the Allotment. Eight of the RLHAs showed a None to Slight departure in “Litter Amount;” however, most of the litter was generated from cheatgrass and annual forbs such as tumble mustard. In Tule Pasture, Virginia PMUs 13 and 16 showed a Moderate departure in “Litter Amount.”

Soil crusting formations in shrub interspaces, and soil compaction are minimal or not in evidence, allowing for appropriate infiltration of water.

Soil crusting formations and soil compaction were within normal ranges throughout the Allotment.

Hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle and energy flow are adequate for the vegetative communities.

Seven of the RLHAs showed an overall departure in Hydrologic Function of None to Slight, indicating that much of the Allotment is reasonably consistent with reference state conditions relating to Hydrologic Function. Two showed overall departures of Slight to Moderate. Virginia PMUs 13 and 16 showed an overall Moderate departure for this attribute. Five of the sites showed Slight to Moderate or Moderate departures relating to the indicator “Plant Community Composition and Distribution Relative to Infiltration and Runoff.” However, given the lack of perennial grasses, especially deep rooted perennial bunchgrasses, and the abundance of cheatgrass and annual forbs such as tumble mustard, as shown in the 42 production plots, it appears that this departure is more widespread and substantial than indicated by the RLHAs. Of the 42 production plots, 35 showed cheatgrass and annual forbs as the dominate vegetation. Only twelve of the 42 plots had perennial grass production, and only seven had production by deep rooted perennial bunchgrasses. Most of the production plots are located within moderate to heavy use zones that were documented in the 1989 Allotment Management Plan (AMP), and most are located in fire scarred areas. The plant community imbalance is having a negative effect on hydrologic cycles, nutrient cycles and energy flows within large areas of the Allotment.

Plant communities are diverse and vigorous, and there is evidence of recruitment.

Diversity and vigor of plant communities varies throughout the Allotment. Some areas show adequate diversity and vigor, but large areas of the Allotment do not. Departures in Biotic Integrity were recorded in eight of the eleven RLHAs. Five had Slight to Moderate departures; one had a Moderate departure; and the Virginia PMUs 13 and 24 had Moderate to Extreme departures. The imbalance in Functional / Structural Groups is evident throughout the Allotment when compared to the RESDs. Recruitment of key species varied at the eleven monitoring locations with some locations showing little to no recruitment and others showing adequate recruitment. At eight of the RLHAs, reproductive capability of perennial plants was rated as being consistent with reference state conditions. Two sites had Slight to Moderate departures and one site had a Moderate departure. However, the lack of perennial grasses, particularly deep rooted perennial grasses, as recorded in the 42 production plots, shows a reduction in expected diversity and a lack of recruitment throughout large areas of the Allotment. This suggests that the lack of diversity, vigor, and recruitment is more widespread and substantial than indicated by some of the long-term monitoring and RLHA locations.

Basal and canopy cover (vegetative) is appropriate for site potential.

Basal and canopy cover also varies throughout the Allotment. Some areas have appropriate cover but large areas of the Allotment do not. Areas that have burned and are now dominated by cheatgrass and annual forbs are lacking in appropriate basal and foliar cover. Six of the eleven RLHAs showed a None to Slight departure in in “Plant community composition and distribution relative to infiltration and runoff.” Four showed a Slight to Moderate departure. The Virginia

PMU 13 showed a Moderate departure. Several of the long-term monitoring sites show a grass/shrub imbalance based on reference state conditions. The 42 production plots show substantially less perennial grass production than expected. Average perennial grass production for the 42 production plots was 60 pounds per acre. Thirty of the plots showed zero perennial grass production. Average production of annual grasses and forbs was 228 pound per acre. Expected production of key grasses varies by ecological site, but production of expected perennial grasses should range from 100 to over 600 pounds per acre. Consequently, basal and canopy cover is not appropriate for many of the ecological sites within the Allotment.

In summary, some of the standards for soils are being met and some are not. With some exceptions, departures in Soil / Site Stability and Hydrologic Function are mostly in the None to Slight or Slight to Moderate categories. The primary drivers of not meeting the Soils standard are: (1) reduced diversity and vigor of plant communities and lack of recruitment of key species and; (2) basal and canopy cover is not appropriate for site potential over large areas of the Allotment. Soils have remained relatively stable, but localized areas of soil disturbance and loss have occurred. Large fires and in some areas, recurring fires, have resulted in long term changes in the vegetative communities with resulting soil exposure to erosion. Past livestock grazing practices have contributed, along with wild horse use in and around Dogskin Pasture.

As discussed in the Evaluation, there are a number of factors contributing to soil erosion on the Allotment. Past use by livestock, prior to the 1999 Modification of the AMP and documented in the 1988 Allotment Evaluation, was heavy throughout large areas of the Allotment. Use by wild horses contributed to the excessive use within and around Dogskin Pasture. Soil conditions have been exacerbated by large fires, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and drought conditions. Large areas of the Allotment were affected by wildfires in 1985, 1988, 1999, and 2000. OHV use, particularly within the Hungry Valley Recreation Area, has been and continues to be a source of soil disturbance and subsequent erosion. The extent and degree of disturbance has not been thoroughly assessed, but it has been documented as a problem since the 1989 AMP. In addition, from 1999 through 2012, the Allotment has had less than average precipitation for seven of those fourteen years.

Standard 2 (Riparian Zones/Wetlands)

Check those that apply (one or more must be checked):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard does not apply | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting standard | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are not significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but making significant progress towards | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but cause still being determined |

Rationale:

Nine riparian assessments were conducted on the Allotment in 2009. One was re-assessed in 2013. Two assessments were conducted immediately adjacent to the Warm Springs Pasture in the Carson Wandering Skipper ACEC. This area is fenced from livestock grazing. The other seven assessments were conducted in the northern pastures of the Allotment.

Table 1 shows the riparian assessments conducted in 2009 and the one re-assessed in 2013 along with the functional status, trend and associated comments.

Table 1 – Riparian Assessments

Pasture	#	Area	Status	Trend	Comments
Dogskin 2009	24	Settlemyer Spring	Functional - At Risk	Not Apparent	Area is fenced to protect it from wild horses. Area de-watered due to pipeline and trough. Riparian area is contracting. Inadequate vegetative composition and diversity. Invasive plants are present.
Fall 2009	7	Salt Grass Meadow #7	Functional - At Risk	Upward	Area is fenced, but hoof action occurred due to downed fence. Adequate plant cover and vigor. Invasive plant species present.
Fall 2009	29	#29 (SE of DV02)	Functional - At Risk	Not Apparent	Area is fenced. De-watered by pipeline and trough. Invasive plants are present. Upper section has inadequate plant cover.
Tule 2009	1,2	Cove Springs 1&2	Proper Functioning Condition	Not rated	Some hoof action. Some entrenchment and head cutting. Willows and cottonwood present. Adequate vegetative cover except in burn area.
Tule 2009	6	Simple Spring	Non Functional	Not rated	Channel in disequilibrium. Head cutting. Severe down cutting. Hoof action. Wetland area is shrinking. Loss of riparian vegetation.
Tule 2009		Unnamed Spring PC01	Functional - At Risk	Downward	Significant juniper increase. Lost cover in area affected by hoof action. Road bisects system, sediment below road.

Pasture	#	Area	Status	Trend	Comments
Tule 2009		Lotic between Cove Sp. & Simple Sp.	Proper Functioning Condition	Not rated	Some head cutting. Adequate vegetative composition, vigor, and cover.
Tule 2013		Lotic between Cove Sp. & Simple Sp. June 26, 2013	Functional - At Risk	Not Apparent	Low end of Functional-At-Risk Low vigor in perennial vegetation. Heavy to severe grazing use and hoof action. Lack of willows. Not enough stabilizing vegetation.

As the table shows, only one lentic site, Cove Spring 1 & 2, is in Proper Functioning Condition (PFC). The lotic area between Cove Spring and Simple Spring was rated PFC in 2009, but the re-assessment in 2013 showed it to be Functional-At-Risk. Simple Spring was rated Non-Functional.

The following discussion relates to the specific indicators of riparian zones / wetlands conditions.

Sinuosity, width/depth ratio and gradient are adequate to dissipate streamflow without excessive erosion or deposition.

Sinuosity and width/depth ratio was adequate at six of the sites in 2009; however, five of those sites were experiencing some level of degradation. Simple spring, which was rated as Non Functional, showed severe down cutting and had active head cutting. The lotic area between Cove Springs and Simple Springs was downgraded in 2013 to Functional-At-Risk. Sinuosity and width / depth ratio was not adequate.

Riparian vegetation is adequate to dissipate high flow energy and protect banks from excessive erosion.

In 2009, three of the sites had adequate riparian vegetation, but the Lotic Area between Cove Springs and Simple Springs was downgraded in 2013. At the time of the reassessment, the site did not have adequate plant cover, particularly stabilizing woody material. Vigor was low for perennial vegetation and woody species were lacking. Three other sites also lacked adequate riparian vegetation. Hoof action was recorded at five of the sites. Tule #29 had a mixed rating for this indicator. This is a fenced site, but the upper section did not have adequate riparian vegetative cover.

Plant species diversity is appropriate to riparian-wetland systems.

As in the preceding section, plant species diversity was appropriate for three of the sites in 2009, but the lotic area between Cove Springs and Simple Springs was downgraded in 2013. At the time of the reassessment, riparian vegetation did not have diverse age classes or composition. Arctic rush was the dominant species. Three other sites also lacked appropriate plant diversity. Riparian obligate species were either under represented or missing. Willows and other woody riparian species were lacking at most sites, but black cottonwood and willow were present at Cove Springs 1&2. Invasive plants were recorded at three of the sites.

Standard 3 (Water Quality)

Check those that apply (one or more must be checked):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard does not apply | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are significant factors |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting standard | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are not significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but making significant progress towards | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but cause still being determined |

Rationale:

Criteria for assessing the Water Quality standard are as follows:

- Chemical constituents do not exceed the water quality Standards;
- Physical constituents do not exceed the water quality Standards;
- Biological constituents do not exceed the water quality Standards; and
- The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water located on or influenced by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands will meet or exceed the applicable Nevada or California water quality Standards. Water quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-degradation requirements set forth under State law, and as found in Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

No class waters or beneficial uses are designated within the Allotment. Therefore, only the descriptive water quality standards pertaining to all surface waters in Nevada (NAC 445A.121) apply to the various springs and riparian areas on the Allotment.

At each of the riparian assessment sites, water quality was rated as sufficient to support riparian – wetland plants. There were no concerns recorded relating to chemical, physical, or biological constituents affecting water quality standards.

Standard 4 (Plant and Animal Habitat)

Check those that apply (one or more must be checked):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard does not apply | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting standard | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are not significant factors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but making significant progress towards | <input type="checkbox"/> Not meeting standard, but cause still being determined |

Rationale:

The Nevada Department of Wildlife's (NDOW's) general recommendation for quality wildlife habitat is a vigorous and diverse perennial plant community appropriate to the soil type. As described under Standard 1, the vigor and diversity of plant communities varies throughout the Allotment, but there are large areas where plant communities are not as vigorous or diverse as expected and have departed from reference state conditions. While utilization by cattle was primarily light to moderate in the most recent utilization studies (2012) vegetative production measured across the Allotment in 2013 did not support the stocking rate authorized in the 1999 update to the 1989 AMP. While not definitive, this suggests that the current stocking rate may be contributing to the lack of deep rooted perennial bunchgrass recruitment.

Most of the public lands in the Allotment have burned at least once, which has changed the vegetative composition, diversity, and density. Eight of the eleven sites evaluated for Rangeland Health have burned at least once, and six of the eleven monitoring sites have burned at least once.

Heavy grazing use has occurred in the past in portions of the Allotment. The 1988 Allotment Evaluation documents large areas being subjected to heavy use from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. That situation contributed to deteriorated ecological conditions on those heavily used areas. Heavily used areas have diminished with the implementation of the 1989 AMP and subsequent 1999 Modification of the AMP, and authorized use has been reduced, but deteriorated conditions persist. Heavy use by wild horses in the Dogskin Pasture continues.

Also documented in the 1988 Allotment Evaluation, the 1999 Modification to the AMP, and other planning documents is the habitat and soil disturbance from OHV use, particularly within the Hungry Valley Recreation Area.

Drought conditions have also affected plant and animal habitats. Seven of the past 14 years have had below average precipitation, which exacerbated the conditions described above and limited the ability of vegetative communities to regain vigor, diversity and productivity.

The following discussion relates to the specific indicators for plant and animal habitats.

Representation of Life Forms and Numbers of Species

While a variety of shrubs, forbs and grasses occurs throughout the Allotment, large portions of the Allotment are less diverse than expected based on the variety of species in the Rangeland Ecological Site Descriptions (RESDs). Eight of the eleven sites evaluated for Rangeland Health showed overall departures in Biotic Integrity. Five were Slight to Moderate; one was Moderate; two were Moderate to Extreme. The imbalance in Functional / Structural Groups is evident throughout the Allotment when compared to the RESDs.

Deep-rooted perennial bunch grasses were present at ten of the eleven long term monitoring locations, but their density was low. Forty-two production plots were located throughout the Allotment. Deep-rooted perennial grasses were present at only 17 percent of those plots, which shows a lack of expected diversity throughout large areas of the Allotment. Invasive species, such as cheatgrass and tumble mustard, occur throughout much of the Allotment. Annual grasses and forbs were the dominant vegetation at roughly 70 percent of the production plots. Three of the RLHAs had Moderate to Extreme departures relative to invasive plants, and one had a Moderate departure. In the higher elevations and rocky slopes of the Allotment, juniper is expanding, which is a concern, particularly within greater sage-grouse habitat.

According to the 1989 AMP, there are 40 springs on public land within the Allotment. As discussed under Standard 2 (Riparian Zones / Wetlands), nine riparian assessments were conducted on the Allotment in 2009 and one was reassessed in 2013. Four of the nine assessments showed inadequate vegetative diversity. Riparian obligate species were lacking or missing in some areas, and woody vegetation such as willows was less than expected or missing. Hoof action was noted at six of the sites.

Diversity of Height, Size, and Distribution of Plants

The diversity of height, size and distribution of plants varies throughout the Allotment and has been affected by wildfires, OHV use, wild horse use, grazing practices and drought conditions.

Nine of the eleven RLHAs showed some departure in Functional / Structural Groups, although, six of those only had Slight to Moderate departures. One site had a Moderate departure and two sites had Moderate to Extreme departures. The six areas showing Slight to Moderate still had adequate diversity of height and size and distribution of plants.

Wyoming big sagebrush is absent or reduced due to fire and in some of the burned areas it has been replaced by rabbitbrush and Anderson peachbrush. Areas not affected by fires typically have a grass / shrub imbalance (less grass and more shrubs) compared to reference state conditions. Key grass species are less than expected for most areas and substantially reduced over large portions of the Allotment. Deep-rooted perennial grasses were present at only 17

percent of the 42 production plots. Cheatgrass and annual forbs, which are generally one height, were the dominant vegetation at roughly 70 percent of the production plots and do not provide the diversity of habitat needed for most wildlife species. Cheatgrass was the dominant species at Virginia PMU 13 RLHA, which is within preliminary priority habitat (PPH) for the greater sage-grouse. Juniper is increasing, which is also a concern in greater sage-grouse habitat.

As previously stated, riparian obligate species were lacking or missing at several of the riparian assessment sites; and woody vegetation, such as willows, was less than expected or missing.

Number of Wood Stalks, Seed Stalks, and Seed Production Adequate for Stand Maintenance

Based on the eleven Rangeland Health Assessments and eleven monitoring locations, recruitment in the plant communities on the Allotment varies between increasers in some locations and decreases in others. Needle-and-thread grass had stand maintaining recruitment at monitoring sites SS01, PC02 and PA02 but had little recruitment at site P154. Desert needlegrass had stand maintaining recruitment at monitoring site P154 and PC03, but had little recruitment at site PC02. Sagebrush species had stand maintaining recruitment at monitoring site HV02, but had little recruitment at site DV02. Antelope bitterbrush had stand maintaining recruitment at monitoring site LW13, but had little recruitment at site S01 or DV02.

At eight of the RLHAs, reproductive capability of perennial plants was rated as being consistent with reference state conditions. Two sites had Slight to Moderate departures and one site had a Moderate departure. However, the lack of perennial grass production, as shown in the 42 production plots, shows a substantial deficiency in reproductive capability of key grasses within large areas of the Allotment.

As previously stated, riparian obligate species were lacking or missing at several of the riparian assessment sites; and woody vegetation, such as willows, was less than expected or absent.

Vegetative Mosaic, Vegetative Corridors for Wildlife, and Minimal Habitat Fragmentation

Vegetative mosaics and corridors for wildlife occur on the Allotment, but a number of factors have contributed to fragmentation of wildlife habitat in the Allotment including wildfires, OHV use, pipeline and transmission line rights-of-way, roads, and mining activities.

The Allotment contains 89,780 acres of public and private land of which, approximately 45,000 acres burned in the 15 fires between 1984 and 2012. Some areas burned multiple times. These fires have changed the vegetative mosaic, but a mosaic of vegetative communities exists because of the topographic diversity of the Allotment.

The vegetative mosaic has also been altered by the amount of invasive and increaser vegetation. As previously described, cheatgrass and a variety of annual forbs dominate large portions of the landscape. Increaser plants like squirreltail, rabbitbrush, and juniper are more abundant compared to reference state conditions. Key grass and shrub species have declined.

The habitat for some wildlife species in the Allotment is somewhat fragmented with the 42 documented roads and trails leading into the Allotment, and new trails being created. The Winnemucca Ranch Road, which bisects the northern part of the Allotment, is the only paved road, and none of the roads have rights-of-way (ROW) fencing. Consequently, the roads are not habitat fragmenting for deer or pronghorn antelope.

Approximately 68 percent of the Allotment is designated for OHV use. The Allotment is home to the Hungry Valley Recreation Area, which provides open OHV access to about 27,400 acres. The Virginia Mountains Limited OHV Area provides OHV access to 19,038 acres within the Allotment on existing roads and trails. The level of OHV use, the creation of new trails, the associated vegetative disturbance and loss, and resulting soil loss has affected the vegetative mosaic and vegetative corridors.

Approximately 17 percent of the Allotment, 14,640 acres, is available for renewable energy leases. There are 15 abandoned mine sites within the Allotment, primarily for uranium and titanium. The major Tuscarora Gas Pipeline ROW runs through the bottom half of the Allotment. A water facility ROW for Washoe County and the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony are located in the south end of the Allotment. Transmission line ROWs run through the southern and middle portions of the Allotment. There are also Recreation and Public Purpose leases for recreational activities that occur in the southern end of the Allotment. Organized events occur on a periodic basis. There is an airport on the Allotment.

Standard 5 (Special Status Species Habitat)

Check those that apply (one or more must be checked):

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting standard
- Not meeting standard, but making significant progress towards
- Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are significant factors
- Not meeting standard, livestock grazing practices are not significant factors
- Not meeting standard, but cause still being determined

Rationale:

The only federally listed species associated with the Allotment is the endangered Carson Wandering Skipper. The Carson Wandering Skipper ACEC was designated in 2001 and is in the Warm Springs Valley just inside the eastern boundary of the Allotment off of Winnemucca Ranch Road. The occupied habitat has been fenced for protection and is no longer part of the Warm Springs Pasture.

Nevada BLM sensitive species and migratory birds that are associated with habitats on the Allotment are shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2

Common Name	Scientific Name	BLM Sensitive Species ¹	BLM Migratory Birds
Big brown bat	<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>	Y	-
Bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	Y	
Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>	Y	-
Brewer's sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	Y	Y
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Y	N
California myotis	<i>Myotis californicus</i>	Y	-
Dark kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops megacephalus</i>	Y	-
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Y	Y
Flammulated Owl			Y
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	Y	-
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Y	Y
Greater sage-grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	Y	N
Green-tailed towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>	N	Y
Hoary bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	Y	-
Loggerhead shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Y	Y
Long-eared myotis	<i>Myotis evotis</i>	Y	-
Long-legged myotis	<i>Myotis volans</i>	Y	-
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	N	Y
Pale kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops pallidus</i>	Y	-
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	Y	-

Pinyon jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	Y	
Sage sparrow	<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	N	Y
Sage thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	Y	Y
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	Y	-
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Y	N
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Y	-
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	Y	-
Western pipistrelle bat	<i>Pipistrellus hesperus</i>	Y	-
Yuma myotis	<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	Y	-

¹ Occurs on the 2011 NV BLM Sensitive Species statewide list or the Carson City District Office list.

Nevada BLM sensitive plants species that occur or may occur on the Allotment are Webber's Ivesia (*Ivesia webberi*) and Ames milkvetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*). Webber's Ivesia (*Ivesia webberi*) has been identified in the southern part of the Allotment within the Shovel Springs Pasture and is proposed for listing as a threatened species. Critical habitat has been identified on the Allotment and is threatened by OHV and recreation use, livestock grazing and trampling, wildfire and suppression activities, and displacement by nonnative, invasive plant species. Given the location and topography of the critical habitat, it does not appear to be subject to heavy grazing impacts.

Ames milkvetch (*Astragalus pulsiferae* var. *pulsiferae*) is known to occur in Washoe County, and though it has not been specifically identified on the Allotment, the habitat for this species is known to occur within the Allotment and is potentially threatened by OHV use, exotic species, grazing and trampling, and other development (NatureServe. 2013).

As shown in Table 2, there are several Nevada BLM sensitive wildlife species that may occur on the Allotment because they are associated with the key habitats that are described in the recent Allotment Evaluation (BLM. 2014). Three important species are mentioned below.

Bighorn Sheep – The northeastern part of the Allotment that includes the Virginia Mountains is within the Virginia Mountains herd unit area. In 1990, California bighorn sheep were reintroduced at Tule Mountain in the Virginia Mountains. Bighorn sheep currently occupy the Tule Mountain area in the northern most part of the Allotment (NDOW, Fresse, Mark, June 7, 2013, personal phone interview). Approximately 12,490 acres of the herd unit area lie within the Allotment (17 percent of the Allotment). The Dogskin Mountains are regarded as potential habitat for bighorn sheep. Approximately 11,170 acres of this habitat is within the Allotment (16 percent of the Allotment).

Pygmy Rabbit – Areas of big sagebrush with deep, friable, loamy soils occur on the Allotment, but there have been no observations of pygmy rabbits nor have areas of potential habitat been identified.

Greater Sage-Grouse – The greater sage-grouse is also a candidate species for federal listing. preliminary priority habitat (PPH – approx. 2,906 acres) and preliminary general habitat (PGH – approx. 12,566 acres) have been identified for the greater sage-grouse within the Allotment. PPH comprises areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable greater sage-grouse populations. These areas would include breeding, late brood-rearing, and winter concentration areas. PGH comprises areas of occupied seasonal or year-round habitat outside of PPH. There are no known leks (traditional breeding grounds) on the Allotment.

Virginia PMU 13 and 16 RLHAs are located within the PPH. Virginia PMU 16 was discussed under the section on Bighorn Sheep. Virginia PMU 13 had an overall departure of Slight to Moderate for the attribute Soil / Site Stability, but the indicator Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion had a Moderate to Extreme departure. Hydrologic Function had a Moderate departure and Biotic Integrity had a Moderate to Extreme departure. This site showed Moderate to Extreme departures for the indicators Invasive Plants and Functional /Structural Groups. Cheatgrass made up 50 percent of the ground cover at this site, which shows a deteriorated condition for greater sage-grouse habitat. Both RLHA sites burned in 1999, and both sites are within areas that have been heavily grazed in the past. Grazing use recorded in 2012 showed moderate use (41-60 percent) in the area around Virginia PMU 13 and slight to light (< 20-40 percent) use around Virginia PMU 16. There was a moderate use area recorded south of Mahogany Flats within the PPH.

The following discussion relates to the specific indicators for plant and animal habitats.

Habitat areas are large enough to support viable populations of special status species.

Habitats are large enough to support viable populations of special status species. The condition of the habitats has been affected by numerous factors as described above.

Special status plant and animal numbers and ages appear to ensure stable populations.

There is little to no current data on plant and animal numbers to assess this indicator.

Diversity of height, size, and distribution of plants.

See Standard 4 – Plant and Animal Habitat

Number of wood stalks, seed stalks, and seed production adequate for stand maintenance

See Standard 4 – Plant and Animal Habitat

Vegetative mosaic, vegetative corridors for wildlife, and minimal habitat fragmentation.

See Standard 4 – Plant and Animal Habitat

DETERMINATIONS

I have determined that all of the applicable Standards for Rangeland Health:

are are not being met.

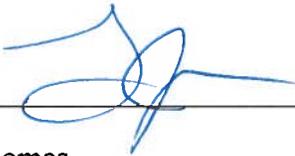
If the Standards are not being met, I have determined that they:

are are not making significant progress towards meeting those Standards.

Livestock grazing practices :

are are not a significant factor in not achieving Standards for Rangeland Health, and

conform do not conform to the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.



Leon Thomas
Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office

5-9-14

Date

References

- BLM. 1988. *Paiute Allotment Evaluation Summary*. Lahontan Resource Area. Carson City District. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.
- BLM. 1999. *Memorandum*. Subject: Modification of the Paiute Grazing System. To Jim Gianola, Lead Range Specialist from Tracey Jean Wolfe, Rangeland Management Specialist. Carson City District. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.
- BLM. 2007. *Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Grazing Management, Sierra Front Northwestern Great Basin Area*. Reno: US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office.
- BLM. 2014. *Paiute Canyon Grazing Allotment Evaluation 2000 – 2013*. Sierra Front Field Office, Carson City District, US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. April.
- NatureServe. 2013. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: December 7, 2013).
- Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). Fresse, Mark (June 7, 2013). Personal phone interview by William Britton, Range Conservationist, FS Teams Enterprise.