



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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FINAL DETERMINATIONS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES ASSESSMENT CURTIS SPRING ALLOTMENT

This document makes final determinations regarding:

1. Progress towards or attainment of the standards for rangeland health
2. The role of livestock as a contributing factor in not meeting the standards
3. Whether livestock grazing management is in conformance with guidelines

The full analysis of these determinations can be found in the 2015 Draft Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health Assessment for the Curtis Spring Allotment.

Standard 1. Upland Sites

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

1. Achieving the Standard
2. n/a
3. Livestock grazing management is in conformance with Guidelines

Cover data were collected at four key areas between 2011 and 2013. These cover data were compared to reference rangeland ecological site description (ESD) data to determine whether or not the standard was being met. Production and frequency data were also collected at two key areas to further inform this discussion. Production data were collected in 1993 and 2014; frequency data were collected in 1993 and 2011.

All live vegetation cover values collected at the four key areas were above the maximum value estimated for each of their respective ecological sites. When this is considered in conjunction with the erosive potential of this site, these data support the assertion that Standard 1 is being met in all key areas. In addition, although final monitoring data are not yet available, rehabilitation efforts on the North Valley fire appear to be successful. Additional indicators of infiltration and permeability rates are appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form based on professional observation.

Standard 2: Riparian and Wetland Sites

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

This standard does not apply to the Curtis Spring Allotment. Riparian and wetland sites are not present in the Curtis Spring 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.

1. Not Achieving the Standard, and not making significant progress toward Standard
2. Livestock are not a contributing factor
3. Livestock grazing management is in conformance with Guidelines

Data collected at two key areas in salt desert shrublands indicate that winterfat and associated communities in the Allotment are lacking in grasses and forbs, key structural components for wildlife. Although vegetation composition is not optimal, vegetation cover data indicate that these sites are not lacking cover. Data collected at these key areas indicate that the present state of shrub dominance found in winterfat communities in the Allotment has not been brought about recently, i.e. winterfat and other associated communities in the Allotment have remained largely unchanged over the last 20 years.

Data collected at two key areas in sagebrush shrublands show that these shrubland communities are heavily shrub dominated with a limited to nonexistent herbaceous understory. When these data are considered in conjunction with the photographs taken at these sites it is clear that the present vegetation communities are significantly different from the current potential of these communities. Professional observations at all four key areas support the collected quantitative data: grasses and forbs are lacking in the Curtis Spring Allotment, while sagebrush and other shrub species dominate. The limited presence of native grass and forb species indicate that wildlife habitat quality has declined significantly from historic levels; this is especially the case for species that benefit from structurally diverse vegetative communities (e.g. pronghorn antelope, small mammals, migratory birds, and sage-grouse).

Seasonal habitat suitability indicators for sage-grouse were found to be primarily in the 'marginal' or 'unsuitable' categories, with a smaller proportion in the 'suitable' category. Overall, monitoring data and professional observations indicate that habitat within the Allotment is not meeting the needs of sage-grouse during at least three critical life stages or the needs of other species that fall under the sage-grouse "umbrella".

The aggregate evaluation of vegetation composition, structure, and productivity indicate that the Allotment is not meeting the Habitat Standard, but that plant communities most strongly affected by livestock within the Allotment are largely stable. Shrub species dominate vegetation communities to the exclusion of herbaceous species, limiting habitat quality for big game, raptors, and other wildlife species. Sage-grouse habitat in particular is limited by the current composition of vegetation communities in the Allotment; breeding, late brood-rearing and wintering habitat quality are below their potential. The lack of change in these vegetation communities under current management indicate that it is unlikely that current grazing management is a causal factor in the failure to meet this standard. It is most likely that historic

overgrazing by livestock shifted plant community composition from its reference state to the current shrub-dominated stable state.

Standard 4: Cultural Resources

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

1. Achieving the Standard
2. n/a
3. Livestock grazing management is in conformance with Guidelines

Rangeland management plans, including term grazing permit renewals will consider listings of sites that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or considered to be of cultural significance as well as new NRHP eligible sites as they become known. 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 Curtis Spring Allotment.

Standard 5. Healthy Wild Horse and Burro Populations

Wild horses and burros exhibit characteristics of a healthy, productive, and diverse population. Age structure and sex ratios are appropriate to maintain the long term viability of the population as a distinct group. Herd management areas are able to provide suitable feed, water, cover and living space for wild horses and burros and maintain historic patterns of habitat use.

This standard does not apply to the Curtis Spring Allotment. The Curtis Spring Allotment is not located within a wild horse Herd Management Area.

/s/ Marc Jackson

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Date