

2000
REPORT OF CATTLE GRAZING IN WARNER, LOST RIVER, and SHORTNOSE
SUCKER HABITAT and BULL TROUT HABITAT ON THE
FREMONT NATIONAL FOREST

I. Introduction

This report will address the 2000 grazing use of allotments under consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Lakeview, Paisley, Silver Lake, and Bly Ranger District of the Fremont National Forest in Southeastern Oregon. There are 15 allotments containing 35 pastures on the Lakeview RD, 7 allotments containing 11 pastures on the Paisley RD, 2 allotments containing 2 pastures on the Silver Lake RD, and 18 allotments with 39 pastures on the Bly RD. The special use pastures were incorporated into the appropriate allotments in 1999 and fall under the grazing standards of the biological opinion. These allotments are in the headwaters of Honey, Deep, and Twentymile Creeks which drain the Warner watershed, in the N.F. Willow, Strawberry, Pitchlog, Four Mile, Wildhorse Creeks and North Forks and South Fork of the Sprague River which drain the Lost and Sprague River watersheds, and also in the Upper and Lower Sycan River watersheds. This is the fourth year of consultation covered by the Fremont Grazing Programmatic Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service May 22, 1997. This consultation was amended in 1998 to include grazing activities within the range of bull trout. Based on direction found in BO# 1-10-00-71-1-F, grazing was permitted in the Silver Creek Pasture of the Foster Butte Allotment, Silver Lake RD. A short reach of Coyote Creek runs through this unit. Livestock were managed in accordance with BO conditions and end of season monitoring show no use by livestock.

II. 2000 Grazing Season Report

Weather Influences:

Precipitation by turn-on was 75% of the yearly average and the range was ready when livestock entered the forest. Between the first of June and the end of August 1.07 inches of rain were recorded at the Lakeview RD office. Although the forage was drying up as summer progressed, the utilization standards were still being met. But, by the middle to the end of August cattle were being required to be moved to later pastures or be removed from their allotments because of the increasing dryness of the forage and lack of potential regrowth. During the first 5 days of September 2.5 inches of rain was recorded at the Lakeview RD office. This stimulated regrowth and softened the dry forage and stock that had naturally bunched up to come home, scattered back out onto the allotments. With the new growth and cooler conditions the stock stayed scattered, which intensified and prolonged the fall gather.

Reasonable and Prudent Measures:

The Service believes the following reasonable and prudent measure is necessary and appropriate to minimize incidental take authorized by this biological opinion.

The Forest Service shall minimize adverse impacts of grazing activities to riparian habitats that contribute to or provide for essential physical and biological components necessary for the conservation of the Shortnose, Lost River and Warner suckers and Bull Trout.

To implement the Reasonable and Prudent measure, the following terms and conditions shall be adhered to:

- a. Strict adherence to pasture use guidelines such as maximum utilization levels, stubble height, prescribed grazing system, or others, as stipulated in the biological opinion. Table (1a) provides a summary of the proposed versus actual use on consultation allotments for allotments on all Districts.
- b. Outside the authorized period of grazing use, each pasture (and exclosures within or adjacent to them) covered by this biological opinion will be monitored for unauthorized and excess livestock as often as necessary to ensure the above reasonable and prudent measure is met when cattle are in adjacent public or private pastures. Excess use must not result in more than a five percent noticeable use level, nor can it result in a failure to meet end of growing season utilization and/or stubble heights. Unauthorized livestock use will be reported to law enforcement for appropriate action.

There were some incidences of excess use this season and incidences of use exceeding the utilization standards. During the grazing season when permittees were notified of excess stock, the stock was moved within two days at the latest.

The following is the excess use, by allotment for the 2000 season.

- Barley Camp: 8/25- 15 head in the Dismal Ck Rip. Past. Told the rider and he moved them out on 8/26. Gates were left open into the riparian pasture.
- Bly Ridge: This is a vacant allotment that has not had any permitted use since 1995 but has been grazed by unauthorized and trespass livestock. The cattle get on this allotment by crossing down boundary fences that are not being maintained.
9/13- 3 cows and 1 calf in the Barley Camp pasture. Told the rider and he moved the cattle to private land in Big Valley.
- Crane/Kelly: 9/13- 3 head in the Willow Ck. Rip. Past. Permittee removed them 9/14 to adjacent rented pasture. Also found cattle along Willow Creek and moved them into the rented pasture. Will re-establish transect in this area to monitor use.
- Dry Prairie: 11/9- BLM contacted Bly range technician of 50+ head of cattle in and around the Dry Prairie allotment. Investigation found cattle owned by different people were being run by an individual who leased/rented some adjoining private lands. After the cattle were removed from the federal lands the private cattle found "holes" or "open gates" in the boundary fences and were on the federal lands. This matter was turned over to the FS and BLM law enforcement who contacted the owners of the cattle, the renter/lessee, and owners of the private lands and stopped this operation.
- Pothole: 9/11- Contacted about cattle (no number) on Brownsworth Creek. Called Wayne Baio, Blaisdel Allotment permittee, he believed they were his and he got them that day.

9/25- Found 4 calves along Whitworth Creek and 23 head in Upper Basin of Drews Creek. Contacted permittee and they were going to get the cattle that day.

10/3- Cattle again reported at the Blaisdale bridge on Brownsworth Ck. Contacted permittee and he will get them.

11/01-Reports from hunting public and USTimberland employees of cattle at head of Whitworth Creek. USTimberlands varied and sent permittee notice.

Sage: This allotment was identified to be rested in the 2000 monitoring schedule but was scheduled to be grazed 7/20-8/18 by 43 yearlings in the aop. This use did occur but there was also late season unauthorized use on this allotment.

10/17- 10 pair in Camas Ck Rip Past. Could not determine ownership of the cattle. Contacted permittee on the Sage allotment and the ones on the adjoining allotments. All were going to get the cattle that day.

Whitepine: 9/14- Found 6 pair on the Sherman Valley pasture. Contacted permittee and they were removed 9/16.

On the Bly district there were no recorded incidences of over-utilization in the 2000 grazing season. On the Lakeview district there were 3 over-utilization incidences.

The Camas Riparian Pasture of the Sage allotment got heavily grazed during the 2000 season. This was due a fence not getting built on the north boundary of the pasture. This pasture was also scheduled for rest until the fence was built. Cattle from adjoining private lands and also allotments got on the pasture across the unfenced boundary and through poorly maintained fences. A letter has been sent to the trustee administering the property stating no cattle are to be on this pasture until it is securely fenced and rested for two growing seasons after that to allow for regrowth and healing of the scars from rehabilitation work.

The Honey Creek allotment had two incidences of non-compliance. On the Big Honey pasture the stubble height standard was met but the utilization standard was exceeded by 3%. In the Blue Springs riparian pasture the utilization was satisfactory but the stubble height was exceeded by .25 of an inch. A letter was sent to the permittee telling of these infractions and warning them to be more aware of needing to meet the grazing standards.

On the Paisley RD there was one pasture, Skull Creek on the Currier Camp Allotment, where utilization exceeded the standard, however stubble height measured along Skull Creek was 5", with the standard being 4".

III. 2000 Summary

The grazing monitoring was conducted under the guidelines set forth in the programmatic Biological Opinion of May 22, 1997.

All the year-end monitoring was completed this year but help was requested and received from personnel from an adjoining district.

IV. 2000 Range Improvement Projects

On the Bly district the route was flagged and a cattleguard installed to re-route the fence between the Pothole and Coleman Rim allotments.

On the Lakeview district 1 ½ mile of boundary fence between the Porcupine and Whitepine allotments was rebuilt by the Porcupine permittee. This should stop the problem of his cattle getting onto the adjoining allotment.

A new trough was set at Tom Spring on the Little Cove allotment. The two previous fiberglass trough were broken over the winter. The newest trough is fabricated from a tractor tire with a cement bottom. Up until the area was snowed in, this trough was holding water.

A spring protection fence was reconstructed at Mud Springs on the Sycan Allotment, Paisley RD.

V. 2001 Grazing Changes

On the Paisley and Silver Lake RD's, permittees on the Sycan and Winter Rim/Riverbeds Allotments proposed trading grazing areas. Details were described and Rangers. Districts agreed to a 1 year trial to assess management and short term conditions before opening a NEPA exercise. These allotment are scheduled for reissuance under NEPA in 2002 so it this trial will determine the value of assessing this alternative. The details are:

ZX /Withers Ranch Allotment Swap

Withers Proposal: Trade their Winter Rim and Riverbeds allotments for ZX Sycan allotment

Consolidates their operation, facilitates their management, gathering etc. . They would plan to gather out of both Currier Camp and the Sycan allotment at roughly the same

Withers would combine their Winter Rim and Riverbeds herd and go to the Sycan allotment (6/1-9/20) and then would move their Currier Camp herd up (6/15-9/15). This would eliminate their having to move their cattle through a neighboring allotment.

Winter Rim

282 6/25 9/24 852 HMs

Riverbeds

90 6/1 9/30 360 HMs

142 6/27 9/30 448 HMs

Total permitted HMs: 1660

ZX Proposal: Trade up Sycan allotment for Winter Rim and Riverbeds allotments

ZX would be able to truck cattle to Winter Rim mid-June; if range is not ready would put cows in private Lamb Field until Winter Rim is ready. ZX cows would use Winter Rim for approximately 45 days and then would gather Winter Rim cattle with the Foster Butte herd end of July.

ZX would use Riverbeds with a HILF grazing system. As they gather off of their Meryl Creek allotment (Bly), they would push these cows to Riverbeds and leave them in mid-September through mid-October. Cattle would be gathered off Riverbeds to TNC, so actual use (#s) would be staggered.

Sycan

160	5/15	8/15	489	HMs (Term Private)
419	6/1	9/20	1542	HMs

Total permitted HMs: 2031

All three allotments will be monitored for compliance this grazing season. Standard that are found in the Programmatic are applied.

IV. Change in Baseline Conditions

Bull Trout

Silver Creek Pasture

In 2000, the Fremont National Forest consulted on the effects of grazing on bull trout within the Silver Creek pasture of the Foster Butte Allotment (1-10-00-71-1-F). Under this consultation, grazing was permitted under the following Terms and Conditions:

1. Grazing was permitted between May 15 through July 31 with a maximum of 215 head.
2. Livestock use in the floodplain adjacent to Coyote Creek would be limited to no more than 20% use; no use on willows.
3. Livestock found adjacent to Coyote Creek will be removed within 24 hours.
4. A stream habitat monitoring site will be established along Coyote Creek.
5. Final utilization monitoring will be conducted immediately following livestock removal.

Results

Administrative

Silver Creek pasture was monitored weekly beginning May 15 through the end of the grazing season. No livestock were detected within the Coyote Creek watershed. During August and September fisheries biologists from the forest walked Coyote Creek twice and found no evidence of livestock use on herbaceous or woody shrubs.

In October 2000, a field review of Coyote Creek was conducted with Fish and Wildlife (John Bowerman

and Leonard LeCaptain), ODFW and Forest Service personnel. Year-end results were determined to be exceptional. The Level I Team agreed that limited grazing within the Silver Creek pasture could continue in 2001 and 2002 under Terms and Conditions described in the 2000 Biological Opinion.

Monitoring

Coyote Creek

In October 2000 a long-term effectiveness monitoring site was established on Coyote Creek in accordance with the Forest monitoring strategy described in BO #1-10-97-F-017 for the Forest grazing program. The established long-term site will be reevaluated in a few years to determine condition and trend of channel and vegetative conditions along Coyote Creek. Sediment data was also collected in July both upstream and downstream of the grazing allotment. Five cores were obtained from pool tail-outs, dried in ovens, seived and percent by weight determined. Table 1 are the results from this monitoring effort.

Table 1. Fine sediment (<6.4mm) by percent weight for Coyote Creek, Fremont National Forests.

Sampling Location	Land Ownership	Collection Date	Percent fine sediment	Bull trout standard
T. 31S. R. 13 E. Sec. 17; Upstream of Rd. 255	U.S. Timberlands	October, 2000	78%	20%
T. 31 S., R. 13E. Sec. 21; @ Forest boundary with Nature Conservancy	U.S. Forest Service	October 2000	65%	20%

Fine sediment (<6.4mm) in Coyote Creek is high at all sampling locations. Upstream of Forest road 255 on U.S. Timberland property, fine sediment is 78%. Intensive timber management has occurred on U.S. Timber lands property which is the upper 1/3 of the watershed over the past 30 years which could account for the high fine sediment levels. Livestock have also been allowed to graze U.S. Timberlands in the past further adding to fine sediment inputs to the channel. However, grazing was discontinued 6 to 8 years ago do to concerns about bull trout. In 1998 limited grazing was allowed to occur as long as livestock were kept away from Coyote Creek (Neville, pers, comm.). This required intensive riding to accomplish and the practice was discontinued following the 1998 grazing season.

Sediment samples collected at the Forest boundary averaged 65% fines. Upstream of this sampling site is approximatley 2 miles of C/E channel type with numerous old beaver ponds that have begun to fail releasing sediment to downsteam areas. Currently there is little or no evidence of beaver activity in the areas and dam breaching has been excelerated due to high sediment loading from upstream sources. Along Forest Service administered reaches, banks are over 95% stable and appear to be attributing little to inchannel sediment levels.

Table 2. Woody Species Counts along 367 feet (both banks) of Coyote Creek, October 2000.

Species	0-3 feet	>3-6 feet	>6-10 feet	>10 feet
Willow	5	13	0	0
Dog Wood	1	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	6	13	0	0

Table 2 summarizes data from a 6-foot wide transect conducted along a 367 foot transect along both banks of Coyote Creek. Woody species are rare with a total 19 of plants counted. All woody plants were less than 6 feet tall. Woody species recruitment is low due the presence of a dense mat of sedges that has limited willow recruitment. There was no sign of livestock use on any of the plants counted.

Skull Creek

Skull Creek did not meet floodplain utilization standards during the 2000 season (Table 3). Stubble height standards were met and little bank trampling was observed. Channel type is an E, lined with sedges and excellent width-to-depth ratio. Since the meadow is primarily a sedge meadow with a few large off – channel willow, no impact to willow was observed.

Change in baseline from 2000 Biological Assessment

Bull trout numbers in Coyote Creek were described to be extremely low (USDA 2000). The low numbers was attributed to high water temperatures, high fine sediment levels, moderate pool quality, lack of deep pools, altered hydrology from high road densities and compacted soils and interaction with non-native salmonids. All of these factors still limit bull trout abundance in Coyote Creek. Riparian vegetation, width to depth ratios, and streambank stability along Forest Service managed portions of Coyote Creek continue to improve under current management. Fine sediment from both the watershed and upstream inchannel sources will remain at high levels, limiting bull trout numbers in Coyote Creek for years to come.

Riparian vegetation along Coyote Creek has had limited grazing from livestock for several years. Forest Service administered section have a dense mat of sedges that provide suitable streambank stability. The channel is still incised in several locations resulting in reduced water tables in some areas. Reduced water tables coupled with reduced fire activity (suppression) have allowed young conifers to encroach the meadow. Sedges have also become very “rank” and unhealthy in some areas. Riparian vegetation has not changed since 2000. The Forest may be considering some limited use of prescribed fire to reduce conifer density and release nutrients tied up in the dense sedge mats in the floodplain adjacent to Coyote Creek.

Excess use in Skull Creek, Upper Sycan watershed, did not appear to have an adverse effect on channel shape nor riparian vegetation. There is no change in the environmental baseline described in the Biological Assessment for bull trout (USDA 1998).

Warner Sucker

Honey Creek watershed

There were 3 incidences of non-compliance with watersheds flowing into areas occupied by Warner sucker (two in Honey Creek watershed and 1 in Camas Creek watershed). The Honey Creek watershed was determined to have a high risk of cumulative effects due to high road density (5.3 mi/mi²) and stream channel habitat conditions rated as fair (USDA 1997). Since 1997 no new road construction has occurred in the Honey Creek watershed. Conversely no road decommissioning has occurred and all roads have received routine road maintenance. No additional timber harvest has occurred since 1997. Therefore the watershed remains at a high risk of cumulative effects.

Table 3. Grazing history for 4 pastures in Bull trout and Warner sucker, Fremont National Forest.

Pasture	B.O. standard	Actual use by year			
		1997	1998	1999	2000
Big Honey	45% and 4 inches	Not measured	31% and 4.9 inch stubble	Not measured	48% and 4 inches
Blue Springs	45% and 4 inches	Not measured	25% and 9 inches	0% utilization	39% and 3.75 inches
Lower Camas Creek RIP	Rest – no grazing allowed	Rested	Rested	Rested	70% and 2 inches
Skull Creek	45% and 4 inches	Not consulted on until 1998	Not consulted on until 1998	45% and 4.2 inches	60% and 4.6 inches

Review of year-end grazing monitoring reports from 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 shows compliance with grazing standards in 1998 on Big Honey pasture but no data was collected in 1997 and 1999. Previous monitoring reports noted this over-sight and corrective measures described. In 2000, only utilization was exceeded and only by 3% within the pasture. While the over-use is not an acceptable outcome for the grazing season, it is doubtful that a 3% excess use will have a significant effect on channel and/or riparian conditions. The Forest will monitor Honey Creek again in 2001 to determine whether or not over-use is a trend requiring adjustments in timing, numbers or stocking of livestock on this pasture.

Blue Springs pasture has been in compliance every year since 1998 (pasture was not monitored in 1997). Riparian vegetation in this pasture is on an improving trend even with the excess use in 2000. As with the Honey Creek pasture, Blue Springs will be monitored in 2001 to assure compliance with BO standards.

Lower Camas Riparian Pasture was rested in 1997, 1998 and 1999. Since 1997, riparian vegetation and Camas Creek have undergone tremendous recovery. In addition, channel restoration work was completed in 1998, further reducing channel instability and improving habitat for fish. Heavy use in 2000 (70% utilization and 2 inch stubble height) resulted in excessive bank trampling and set back riparian vegetation recovery. However, given that the Forest Service only owns approximately 1.5 miles of Camas Creek and areas both upstream and downstream are privately owned and in degraded condition, the excess use does not significantly change the environmental baseline from 1997 levels. Corrective actions

described above will assure no over-use occurring during the 2001 season.