

APPENDIX I STOCKING RATE GUIDELINES

Geographic Area objectives for vegetation structure can be achieved through the adoption of stocking rate guidelines (AUMs/acre). Grassland and sagebrush structure requirements specific to individual MIS species are defined in Appendix H. Appendix H also defines and quantifies the use of VOR readings in monitoring grassland and sagebrush structure. Desired vegetation structure and species composition is a function of the intensity of livestock use. (Hanson et al. 1970, Hanson et al. 1978, Holechek et al. 1999, Jasmer and Holechek 1984, Lewis et al. 1956, Olson et al. 1985). These guidelines are designed to produce light, moderate and heavy grazing intensities that in turn provide for high, moderate and low structure respectively. Stocking rate guidelines responsive to providing for the three grazing intensities are defined below:

Light Grazing Intensity: A level of herbage utilization that, when growing conditions are normal or better, provides maximum opportunity to provide quality habitat for the management of indicator species needing high structure grasslands or sagebrush communities. This grazing intensity also provides an environment for maximizing production potential and meeting high seral condition objectives that are more capable of providing high structure. The stocking rate guideline for this grazing intensity is 30 to 60% of the stocking rate guidelines used by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (Natural Resources Conservation Service 1997) in the local area.

Moderate Grazing Intensity: A level of herbage utilization that, when growing conditions are normal or better, provides limited opportunity to provide habitat for the management of indicator species needing high structure grasslands or sagebrush communities. This grazing intensity may allow some movement toward a higher seral condition but provides minimal opportunity for the necessary structure on an annual basis. The stocking rate guideline for this grazing intensity is the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) stocking guides for the local area.

Heavy Grazing Intensity: A level of herbage utilization that, when growing conditions are normal or better, provides no opportunity for providing quality habitat for management indicator species requiring high structure grasslands or sagebrush communities. This grazing intensity encourages low seral conditions and does not permit movement toward a higher seral condition. This intensity provides quality habitat for those wildlife species at risk that require or use low structure habitats. The stocking rate guidelines for this grazing intensity is 110 to 120% of the NRCS stocking guides for the local area.

The stocking rate guidelines and local NRCS guidelines apply only to those portions of a pasture or allotment that are considered as suitable for livestock grazing. In addition to these stocking rate guidelines, annual rest from livestock grazing is an additional method for providing high structure on grasslands or in sagebrush stands that are dominated by mid and/or tall grasses.

Monitoring will be conducted to validate that the stocking rate guidelines are meeting or making measurable progress in meeting the desired vegetation objectives (see Chapter 4). If they are not, adjustments in the stocking rate guidelines will be made. Stocking rate guidelines may be adjusted through site-specific analysis if monitoring information is available for an allotment or pasture supports the need for adjustment. The monitoring information must have been collected using standard methods of determining production, composition, structure, or utilization. Photographs and videography are also useful in supplementing monitoring information and evaluating the guidelines.

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