

MEISS MEADOW GRAZING ALLOTMENT

MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 1995 FIELD MEETING

In Attendance:

Jim Cuneo	Rancher
Bill Frost	UC Coop
Jeff Reiner	USFS
Chris Knopp	USFS
Erich Walker	USFS
Fred Blatt	Lahontan
Tom Suk	Lahontan

Ex C4

The following is a capsulation of the major points of discussion during the field meeting of November 9, 1995 in Big Meadow.

- We began our discussion in Big Meadow as we observed several of the recent willow plantings which were made for stabilizing the streambanks. It was explained why the plantings were made and what the restoration was designed to achieve (i.e. streambank stabilization of eroding sites).
- The USFS explained their proposed standards for the 1996 grazing season. These are as follows:

Big Meadow: 40% utilization standard on grasses; 20% utilization on new willow growth; 20% streambank trampling and chiseling.

Meiss Meadow: 30% utilization standard on grasses; 20% utilization on new willow growth; 10% streambank trampling and chiseling.

The permittee expressed a desire to have a 50% utilization standard. The past utilization standard was approximately 40-50% on grasses across the allotment.

One item of concern expressed by Tom Suk was how the standards will be implemented, monitored and enforced. Statements were made by Bill Frost that indicated that cattle may not necessarily be removed from a unit of the allotment when these standards are met, and that the standards may instead be used to adjust operations in subsequent years. Lahontan staff view this as a potential problem that may allow grazing patterns and impacts to be simply shifted from place to place. Lahontan staff believes that whatever standards are ultimately selected, they need to be enforceable; that is, when the standards are met or exceeded, the cattle should be moved to another area. This is the typical procedure on most other forests.

- There was a lengthy discussion of utilization standards and what other type of standard might be applicable, such as stubble height, height/weight measurements, etc. Bill Frost explained what the utilization standard was developed for, namely to keep the desired vegetation species composition. Bill said that it was demonstrated in the literature that 40% utilization is adequate to protect range conditions and biodiversity. Jeff Reiner stated that 40% utilization has not been shown to maintain healthy stream channel conditions, or to allow degraded stream channels to recover.

At one point, the group discussed Dr. Gill's earlier suggestions that utilization standards be used as a surrogate for protecting water quality. The underlying assumption is that if the vegetation is overutilized, there will likely be adverse impacts to water quality and/or beneficial uses due to a number of livestock related factors. If adequate standards for range and riparian conditions are adopted and implemented, watershed conditions should improve and expensive, time-consuming water column monitoring can be minimized.

- The group moved to a headcut in the meadow and discussed what could be done to fix the problem.
- There was a general discussion of how to protect the willow plantings and any headcut repair. The group agreed that fencing is probably the only option. We discussed if any water developments would be necessary if partial fencing of the stream took place. Once the fencing proposal is firmed up, as far as location, duration, etc., the permittee will be in a position to determine if off stream water development is necessary.
- At one point in our discussions, Fred Blatt explained that Dr. Gill had expressed, at our September 18, 1995 meeting, he has discretion on when state water quality standards must be achieved. Furthermore, if we are moving forward in the right direction with management and BMPs designed to improve watershed conditions [and therefore ultimately water quality], he will use his discretion on when water quality standards will be met. If a good faith effort in the direction of improving the watershed is taking place, monitoring will take place only to see if the new management and BMPs are indeed achieving the goal of meeting state water quality standards. If standards are still not being met, new management alternatives and BMPs should be proposed as another incremental step towards protecting water quality. It was Fred Blatt's opinion that reducing the utilization standard from 40-50% to 30% in Meiss Meadow and 40% in Big Meadow, along with the new trampling and chiseling standard and willow utilization standard was a step towards improving management and watershed conditions.
- In the Big Meadow trailhead parking lot there was a general discussion on where we go from here. The USFS will be preparing several documents over the winter related to proposed fencing of the restoration areas, headcut repair, grazing plan for 1996, etc. The permittees will be kept informed and involved in proposed fencing and grazing for 1996. Lahontan is to work on monitoring protocol with assistance from the USFS.

Please review these minutes and call Fred Blatt at (916) 542-5423 with any corrections. Thanks for your assistance.