BIC Livestock, Grazing, Fisheries and Hydrology Subcommittee

Final Desired Conditions

Committee Focus:

How do we develop strategies that both maintain and increase grazing opportunities and improve fisheries and hydrology conditions?

Livestock Grazing and Rangelands

Desired Condition: Rangelands and forest understory contain healthy native plant communities to support native wildlife species, cultural food plants, and water and provide strategic, managed, and predictable livestock grazing opportunities that support sustainable ecological, economic, and social outcomes.

Range and forestland ecosystems provide a significant resource for livestock grazing, Understories contain a diverse array of native vegetation species distributed across the landscape. Perennial native bunchgrasses dominate most grasslands and shrublands. Native grasses, grass-like plants (sedges and rushes), forbs and various shrubs characterize the forest understory. Riparian zones and meadows are characterized by wetland species, including grasses, sedges, rushes, and riparian hardwoods. Establishing native species is a priority and should be the long-term goal. However, non-native species may be considered in planning efforts for reclamation of highly degraded areas if they support desired outcomes such as competition with invasive non-native plants, stabilization of soils, and providing forage and cover.

The distribution and abundance of vegetation within grasslands, shrublands, and forest understory create conditions that are ecologically resilient, sustainable, and compatible with maintaining desired disturbance processes. These conditions support the capacity of grasslands, shrublands and understory plants in forested environments to reproduce and persist on the landscape and remain resilient to potential changes in climate.

Sources of water are distributed on the landscape to assure appropriate forage utilization throughout the allotment as well as reduce livestock impacts to riparian areas.

Fisheries

Desired Condition: National Forest floodplain, aquatic and riparian habitats support the conservation, maintenance or restoration of native fish and contribute to abundant, productive, and diverse populations of species that provide for ecological, cultural, and economic benefits.

Hydrology/Watershed

Desired Condition: To have sufficient water quantity and quality to maintain watershed health, aquatic species, and support beneficial uses.

Watersheds are comprised of upland and riparian areas. Healthy watersheds have vegetative cover and soil characteristics that capture, store, and safely release water that is either stored as groundwater or expressed as surface flows in the forms of springs, creeks, and rivers.

Floodplains are critical landscape units that provide links between upland watershed processes and instream habitats and riparian zones.

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Riparian areas consist of native dominated riparian-dependent plants and animals free of invasive, non-native fish, wildlife and plants species and allows for dispersal and travel corridors, as well as connectivity.

Quality (e.g., temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen) and quantity of surface and groundwater provide for biological, physical, and chemical integrity of aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitat to allow for the survival, growth, reproduction, and mobility of individuals sufficient to support healthy, native aquatic communities and harvestable surpluses.

Vegetation is composed of the anticipated cover of plant species associated with the site environment; riparian, wetland species are present and are not replaced by upland species and sites are resilient to disturbance.

The ecological and hydrologic structure and function of springs, peatlands, runout channels and wetlands are maintained and restored.

The productive potential and hydrologic function of soils is maintained or restored, including post activity or disturbance, at natural or similar levels that contribute to long-term sustainability of ecosystems. Soil properties support a plant community typical of natural or desired conditions.

Soil physical and chemical properties (texture, porosity, strength, coarse fragment content, and fertility) and organic matter (surface woody debris, humus) are at levels that maintain potential soil productivity and hydrologic function (infiltration, percolation, and runoff).

Suggested Management Actions

The following are recommended suggestions for crafting guidelines or be included in the administration plan.

Domestic and wildlife herbivory and trampling (bank alternations). are appropriately identified and managed to enhance or maintain the resiliency of the sites.

Changing ecological conditions, weather patterns or disturbance events can create a need to modify the expected grazing pattern in any given year. These changes often require movement of livestock through a different rotation or time sequence than normally expected. It is important that clear understanding and continuous communications are being worked on, however at times livestock may not be the appropriate pastures. When this happens notification will occur with a reasonable time frame for the permittee to move the livestock.

Riparian management objectives are to include the control of invasive, non-native species, reduction in riparian tree fuel load, and maintaining and improving stream morphology to utilize flood plains when available. Open timber stands in the riparian area allow for increased vegetation to retain soil and support the life stages of aquatic and wildlife species as well as reduces the potential for catastrophic wildfire.

Actions may include targeted management activities to address over-stocked forests, treatment of invasive non-native plants, and fuels management.

Other Suggestions and Comments:

The following statement is to be added to background statement for socioeconomic summary and/or the desired conditions for Socioeconomic:

Sustainability of grazers includes; adequate forage and water for livestock health, weight gain, and reproduction of livestock. Livestock operators should be expected to maintain a reasonable amount of infrastructure, (fences, water troughs, trails, etc.). The Forest Service must carefully manage the changes to grazers due to unforeseen changing expectations by the Forest Service, whether by new T& E species, regulatory consultation, or as a result of litigation to prevent overburdening grazers with unreasonable costs of operation such as excessive infrastructure construction, and maintenance of range improvements. As grazing NEPA is completed it will ensure analysis addresses the financial viability of the allotments to ensure a successful, sustainable grazing environment for the permittee.

While these desired conditions do not directly address the recovery of ESA listed fish species, it is expected that this will be covered in the USFS standards and guidelines.

To be Included in the glossary and/or background section

Floodplains description that provide background for understanding. Healthy floodplains consist of 1) sufficient and appropriately timed flows across the water year to provide for physical, biological, and ecological processes; 2) flows connected longitudinally, laterally and vertically in the floodplain to shallow aquifers (hyporheic zones); 3) geomorphology (form) that is accessible by flows and topographically diverse to support surface and groundwater interactions, 4) diverse native riparian

vegetation in terms of both species and age classes. (and/or language that Emmitt Suggests from previous plan)

Culturally significant plants if a definition does not apply anywhere else

Water quality

Hydric species

Silvapasture

Beneficial Uses