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**INSPECTION-Creek
Woodhead, F. V.
October 11 to 15, 1941**

Albuquerque, New Mexico

November 28, 1941

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To: Regional Forester
From: F. V. Woodhead, Assistant Regional Forester
Subject: Inspection of the Rattlesnake Range Allotment

As stated in Mr. Scott's memorandum (G-PERMITS-CAN-Creek, Simms, Mitt; U-CLASSIFICATION-Creek, Caluso Wild Area) Mr. Mitt Simms was told that an inspection would be made of the Rattlesnake Range Allotment in the Caluso Mountains by a representative of the Regional Forester.

On the afternoon of November 11, Supervisor Woods, Ranger Johnson and I drove to the Deer Creek Cabin. We were accompanied by Mr. Warren B. Mattice, a member of the Creek Forest Grazing Advisory Board and a permittee with a preference for 95 cattle on the Squaw Basin allotment which joins the Rattlesnake area on the north. Mr. Simms had been informed of the date for the inspection and was to have joined us. (His ranch headquarters are about a mile south of the Deer Creek Cabin). On the morning of November 12, he sent two saddle horses with word that he was ill. The party, therefore, rode to the Povers Garden guard cabin without Mr. Simms.

We returned to Deer Creek on Saturday afternoon, the 15th, when Supervisor Woods and I went to Mr. Simms' ranch but found no one at home. I, therefore, left the Forest without contacting Mr. Simms although the inspection was made at his request. It is interesting to note that in making an application for restoration of grazing preference in the Rattlesnake area, Mr. M. O. Simms by letter of July 22, 1941 stated: "The idea being that we would like very much to sell the ranch and get money sufficient to pay his (Mitt Simms) debts and leave him some money and this is not possible unless he secures more grazing permits".

A map is attached showing the travel routes and other pertinent information.

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The conclusions of others who had examined the Rattlesnake area are summarized as follows:

Shoemaker - July 7, 1930:

"Cattle have been grazed in the Rattlesnake unit for a number of years until the last three or four by Mr. Simms although it is my understanding that they were not run at a profit. Several factors may have entered into the failure of using this range. Due to the fact that it is so rough, rocky, poorly watered and supports such a relatively poor stand of forage, and this, combined with an extremely rough and hazardous trail to market, it is doubted that cattle can be produced on it at a profit. The range, especially the brush, of which there is considerable in the Rattlesnake country, could be reserved for hard winters and drouth periods which, if used in connection with the Deer Creek unit, would make the latter a very safe range. Also, it would permit stocking the Deer Creek unit without the drouth margin of safety which is probably 10% to 15% since in drouth periods, a sufficient number of gentle cattle could be taken into the Rattlesnake country for 6, 12 or 15 months as necessary to give protection to the Deer Creek unit and to tide the cattle over extreme drouth periods.

"There is another characteristic of the Rattlesnake country which enters into this recommended management. It is, I believe, the wildest country that I have been in on any National Forest of the Southwest. It abounds in deer, bear and mountain lion. During the two days we rode this country, we observed slope after slope of brush range of which mountain mahogany and small Garrya constitute a considerable part of the forage. Invariably these two species were grazed as heavily as they should be under proper use of the range. This is the result of whitetail deer grazing since there are no cattle in the area excepting a very few wild individuals. It is evident, therefore, that any material use of this range by cattle would result in overuse of these two important browse forage plants.

"Management of cattle in this unit would have to be by trap corrals. This, together with the character of the topography and surface, would result in overgrazing of the canyon bottoms before anything like full use of the slopes were obtained. I do not consider it practicable, therefore, to graze cattle on this unit either from the standpoint of economic livestock production or from the standpoint of proper protection and the use of the forage and of other important National Forest interests. I refer especially to watersheds and wildlife.

J. Regional Forester--November 28, 1941

"In view of the conditions surrounding this country as briefly described, the fact that it is a very rough, scenic area, reached only by trail, a wonderful range for wildlife and an important watershed, I believe that it should be considered as a wilderness area with the understanding that part of the forage in it would be available for Mr. Simms' use when needed during drouth periods or hard winters."

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Supervisor King - July 12, 1939 - states in a letter to Mr. Mitt Simms that the grazing capacity of the Bear Creek allotment is 167 cattle yearlong and that 140 cattle could be placed on the Rattlesnake allotment without damaging any of the canyon bottoms. However, he states, "it seems to be advisable to consider Rattlesnake only as an emergency range in connection with the grass range on Bear Creek".

Supervisor Grabb - December 5, 1936:

"There is unquestionably some very limited areas of good range in Rattlesnake, but most of these spots are poorly watered, and it is believed that, were the range stocked to anywhere near its carrying capacity based on forage alone, the scarcity of water and the exceedingly rough topography would create serious overgrazing in the more accessible and better watered parts. The primitive area policy contemplates grazing only as an emergency proposition and, if Mr. Simms' preference in Rattlesnake Canyon is wiped out, I would favor keeping the area in its present condition. Mr. Simms advances as one argument for restocking that the grass is becoming a tremendous fire hazard. This point is conceded, but it is not believed that the grass could be sufficiently reduced by grazing to remedy this situation without badly overgrazing parts of the range".

Shoemaker - December 14, 1936: "***with reference to future use of the Rattlesnake allotment by Mr. Simms and in consideration of the fact that he is applying for the re-instatement of grazing privileges within a primitive area, which privileges he voluntarily abandoned some five or six years ago, it is the opinion of this office that his application for a regular permit in the Rattlesnake allotment should be disapproved. However, we see no objection to a continuation of the understanding that the area may be used for relatively short periods as emergency feed in connection with the Bear Creek range during periods of drouth, hard winters, or other similar emergencies and that the carrying capacity of the Bear Creek range be considered without the usual 10 to 15 percent margin of safety that is allowed where a supplemental reserve of forage is not available".

Miller - July 31, 1941:

"Four grazing permittees with a combined total preference of 675 head of cattle yearlong use the area for part of their permitted numbers, estimated to be 340 head yearlong. One permittee in Hedfield Canyon with a preference of 225 head of cattle yearlong grazes approximately 75% of this number within the area. The other three have ranges mostly outside of the area. The entire drainage of Rattlesnake is closed to grazing of domestic stock except as an emergency proposition in times of drought and for periods less than a year. Present grazing privileges will not be disturbed and the use of the Rattlesnake area as an emergency range will continue.

"I am not sure that fences are in existence that would prevent concentration of cattle along the canyon bottoms".

Grubb - August 4, 1941: Commenting on Mr. Miller's memorandum, the Supervisor said: "Ever since I have been on the Creek Mr. Simms has been trying to get restored the preference in Rattlesnake Canyon which he voluntarily relinquished in 1929 or 1930, and I have consistently declined to agree to it basing my refusal on the correspondence and memoranda which were prepared at that time. I am satisfied in my own mind that Mr. Simms' only reason for trying to increase his preference is to secure a greater sale value for the outfit, which I believe he will sell very shortly due to age and his wife's bad health. The range which Mr. Simms relinquished is very rough and poorly watered and unless there is a large outlay of funds made for developing water, putting cattle back in this area can result in but one condition — heavy overgrazing of the few areas adjacent to water and those which on account of topography are preferred by cattle as range. Mr. Simms has quite an appreciable area of range left in his allotment in Sycamore Canyon of which he makes practically no use. His present preference is 170, and since there are several other applicants for the Rattlesnake Range who are also below the present lower limit, it is not considered that we could increase his preference beyond 200 head, even if we gave him the range, but would then have to let in other applicants."

Conference with Mr. Mitt Simms, Albuquerque, N. M., August 4, 1941:

In his memorandum of this conference, Scott said: "Mr. King explained that at the time Mr. Simms' cattle were removed from the range and it was closed to the grazing of livestock except in emergencies, some portions of the range were badly overgrazed and it was necessary to close it for protection. He further referred to the fact that the area was placed in a primitive area since it was not considered as a range that could be profitably grazed by livestock.

"It was Mr. King's opinion that conditions had now changed, especially in regard to the primitive area feature and that since a portion of the area had been excluded from the present Galiuro Wild Area, which it is now called, he did not deem it necessary to exclude all livestock if the range had recovered to the point where it could be grazed.

6. Regional Forester--November 25, 1941

of the springs would supply very little water. Even this year, the flow from two of them was slight.

Horseback travel away from built trails is difficult. A well-planned system of trails has been constructed principally for fire control.

The general aspect of the country from Mailbox Canyon south is an oak type. At least 50% of the cover is oak with manzanita a close second. Other woody species include alligator juniper, mountain mahogany and Scaevola. Scattered ponderosa and Chinquapin pine and an occasional Douglas fir grow on favored sites. Grasses include four species of Muhlenbergia, side oats, sprucetop and hairy grama, Texas timothy, bromes, Stipanion, Andropogon, tangletand and Aristida. Among the grasses, the taller, coarser species predominate. The total of all herbaceous plants make up a small percentage of all the cover. North of Mailbox Canyon the amount of oak and manzanita diminishes except on the north slopes and the herbaceous species mentioned give the country more of a grass aspect.

The annual precipitation over the Rattlesnake basin must be 18 inches or more. However, it is difficult to evaluate watershed values. Whatever there is in the way of water yields goes into underground storage. The flood and silt relationships also are somewhat doubtful. The drainage is into the Aravaipa Valley which could hardly be in worse condition from a runoff control standpoint and one might say the flood situation could not be aggravated by grazing Rattlesnake basin. Nevertheless, if there is any justification for management of the Galunro Mountains by the Forest Service, it is from a watershed standpoint. The cover should be maintained in such condition that soils will remain in place and runoff will be minimized even though the water yield and flood control values cannot at this time be appraised quantitatively.

The reduction of fire hazard has been mentioned as a reason for re-opening the Rattlesnake basin to grazing. I agree with Frank Grubb that proper grazing would have little, if any, effect on fire hazard or control.

7-Regional Forester--November 24, 1941

The existence of an established wild area is in my opinion a secondary factor in determining whether or not the area should be grazed. If the area were grazed, some control fences and cattle traps would be necessary. Few of these fences would ever be seen by other than stockmen. The cattle traps would, of necessity, be in more accessible places but would be no more unattractive than the overgrazing which frequently occurs around water.

From the standpoint of the practical possibilities of range management I can find little reason to be enthusiastic over allowing another grazing preference to be built up in Rattlesnake basin. Even short season grazing of the south two-thirds of the area does not appear practical. If used at all, the basin as a whole could best be handled as a separate unit. It has little relationship to Mr. Simms' Deer Creek allotment. It is possible to move small bunches of cattle across the divide from Deer Creek but this route certainly is not a logical Rattle trail. I was told that when Mr. Simms did use the area, cattle were moved down the Rattlesnake to Aravaipa, then up the valley to Deer Creek. In those times, Mr. Simms had a holding pasture near the top of Powers Hill at the head of the south prong of Squaw Creek. After Mr. Simms voluntarily stopped using Rattlesnake, the special use permit was cancelled, fences were removed, and the area became a part of the Rattle Canyon Allotment. Mr. Mattice several times said that he considered the south end of the area worthless for cattle range. This may have been because he wants to have the north end of the Rattlesnake area added to the Squaw Basin allotment. Such an arrangement is a possibility from the standpoint of cover and handling cattle. However, there is little, if any, difference in slope and soil between the north and south ends of the Rattlesnake basin.

At the termination of the inspection, we told Mr. Mattice we would make a decision concerning further use of the Rattlesnake allotment by the first of the year. It was pointed out that Mr. Simms would have to be considered first since his application is of long standing. We also told Mr. Mattice that a close inspection would be made of the Deer Creek and Squaw Basin allotments to determine the relationship, if any, which exists between these allotments and the Rattlesnake area. After these inspections are made, the Supervisor will submit his recommendation.

Regional Forester—November 28, 1941

Status of Simms' Preference: According to a file memorandum by Rex King on October 30, 1930, the preference of the Graham County Cattle Company was 140 cattle when the outfit was transferred to Simms in 1930. A 20% transfer cut was taken for range protection, leaving a preference for 272 cattle.

On July 12, 1930, Rex King, in a letter to Mr. Simms, stated the estimated grazing capacity of the Deer Creek allotment was:

East Deer Creek	40 cattle yearlong
Deer Creek Pasture	46 cattle yearlong
West Deer Creek	51 cattle yearlong
Total for Forest - - - - -	137 cattle yearlong or "a breeding herd of 151 cattle".

"Four outside range 102 cattle yearlong".

The files contain reference to an estimated grazing capacity for the Rattlesnake allotment of "140 cattle".

September 14, 1933 - Case Memorandum - Rex King:

"Mr. John Rhodes" called at this office this morning and made application to put 300 to 400 head of cattle on the Galiuro Primitive Area, or on what was formerly the Rattlesnake Grazing Allotment. I told him there was no chance for a permit, even a temporary one, because it was closed to grazing. Moreover, it is in a primitive area in the management plan, of which there is a proviso that it is closed to grazing, with the exception of a certain equity held in the range by its former user, Mitt Simms. I told him that when the area was declared closed to grazing that Simms had a permit for it and the arrangement was that if Mr. Simms ever got into a position where, because of drought, he had to have some reserve feed, that we would consider giving him a temporary permit".

Mr. Shoemaker in a memorandum dated December 14, 1936, to the Creek stated: "My report (inspection report of July 7, 1930) mentioned the fact that the use of Rattlesnake Canyon by cattle had not been profitable to the operator. In this connection I recall very distinctly that Mr. Simms told Mr. Naylor and me that he had suffered severe losses in his attempts to use the Rattlesnake country and for that reason he was willing to give up the regular use of that range but that he would like to retain the privilege of using it during times of drought or hard winters and thus consider it as an emergency reserve in connection with the Deer Creek allotment."

9-Regional Forester--November 28, 1941

The Supervisor's record shows that Mr. Simms' preference was 170 cattle on June 22, 1937.

The 1941 grazing permit is for:

125 cattle yearlong - tern
42 cattle yearlong - nonuse
30 cattle April 1, 1941 to October 31, 1941 - temporary

The main question to be presently answered is, of course, Mr. Simms' request for an increased grazing permit through resumption of use on the Rattlesnake allotment. While a decision will not be made until recommendations are received from Supervisor Woods, my tentative conclusion is that this should not be done because: (1) the character of most of the area is clearly such that grazing cannot be successfully managed from a resource standpoint; (2) the applicant admits that he merely wants to have a larger permit to enhance the sale value of the outfit. If we concur, we will be a party to a sale of something of questionable value. (3) the Rattlesnake area has little relationship to the Deer Creek range now used by Mr. Simms.

If Mr. Simms' application is again disapproved, these other questions should be disposed of as the result of this and the inspections to be made by Supervisor Woods. (1) Should the emergency use "arrangement" - use of the area during drought periods in connection with Deer Creek - be taken off the book? I think it should. The area has little relationship to Deer Creek. (If the decision is that the arrangement should be kept on the books, the two other questions need not be answered); (2) Should a part of the Rattlesnake area be added to any of the existing north end allotments?; (3) If so, should Mr. Hattice, who has asked for the addition, be the only one considered?

Fowers Garden Pasture: This pasture at the guard station is a narrow strip along a mile or mile and a half of the bottom of Rattlesnake Canyon. On the west side, the fence is approximately at the toe of the slope. On the east side, natural barriers and short fences are such that an eighth to a quarter of a mile of the slope is within the pasture. Government mules, and burros and mules belonging to the fire guard or to prospectors have used the pasture pretty hard. About all that was on the canyon bottom was hoarhound (Harrubius) and Apache plums. The fact that mules and burros hang to the canyon instead of making equal use of the narrow strip of slope along the east side of the canyon seems to me to be further evidence that anything like uniform distribution of cattle on a range like Rattlesnake would be impossible.

10-Regional Forester--November 28, 1941

There is a small cultivated area near the cabin. Part of the area is in a sorghum this year but more than half (two or three acres) is bare except for weeds. This might be a good place to attempt reseeded with native grasses.

Squaw Basin Allotment: We rode along the entire south boundary of this allotment. The old allotment boundary fence is partly down. The range, even at this extreme end, doesn't look too good. Looking down across the area, it has the characteristically "black" appearance of an overgrazed range. Adjoining areas, apparently less heavily used, have the yellow color of cured grasses. Mr. Mattice said the forest boundary was not fenced. Cattle move back and forth between inside and outside ranges. Just what the condition of the range is will be determined by Supervisor Woods' inspection.

Deer Creek Allotment: As shown by the travel map, we saw a good cross-section of this range. The higher, rougher parts have apparently been lightly used for years with the lower part carrying the brunt of the use. On the lower areas, *Grindelia*, a worthless composite, is very prominent this year. If we can't get proper use of a comparatively accessible range such as Deer Creek, what device can be used to manage a range like the Rattlesnake?

The narrow neck shown on the map at the north end of the Deer Creek allotment is apparently cut off by a short fence and is not being used. I felt this was nothing to worry about. The drop from China Peak due west 5300 feet to the bottom of Sprengle Canyon is 1842 feet. The gradient between the two points is 35%. This is indicative of the topography as a whole.

Attachment

Approved Dec. 2, 1941

Walter H. Cheney
Acting Regional Forester

T.7 S.

T.8 S.

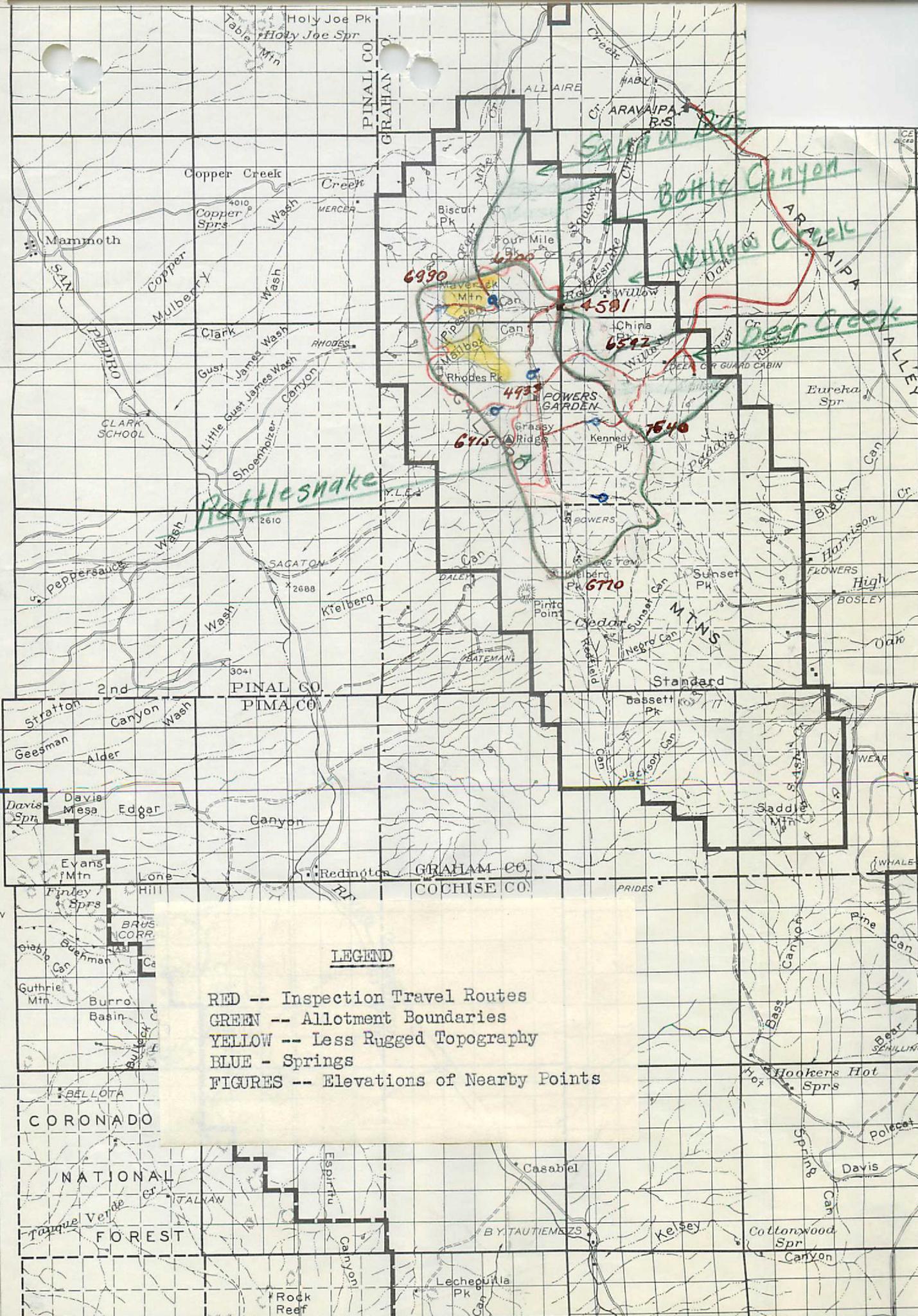
T.9 S.

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T.13 S.



LEGEND

RED -- Inspection Travel Routes
 GREEN -- Allotment Boundaries
 YELLOW -- Less Rugged Topography
 BLUE - Springs
 FIGURES -- Elevations of Nearby Points