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Reply to: 2210

Date: November 12, 1987

Subject: Dear Creek Allotment Inspection

To: District Ranger

On November 3 - 7, 1987 the wilderness portion of the Deer Creek Allotment was looked at by Chuck Duncan, Range, Wildlife and Watershed Staff; Allison Culver, Range Conservationist; Ken Bunt, Assistant Fire Management Officer; Cathy Kahlow, Fiscal Clerk; and George Ruyle, University of Arizona Range Extension Specialist. The permittee and his ranch manager were invited to accompany us but were unable to. The purpose of the ride was to evaluate the allotment management plan's utilization of the wilderness during the winter months with the entire herd.

Tuesday, November 3rd, we rode from Deer Creek Administrative Site to Powers Garden. Mud Springs was not functional, both troughs were dry and water was running across the trail. We continued down across upper Sycamore Canyon. The dam and trough in upper Sycamore Canyon were dry though there was a small amount of water throughout the canyon. We arrived at Powers Cabin to find a large accumulation of garbage and the cabin very dirty. Wednesday, November 4th, we rode down Rattlesnake and out over Sonora Basin. We observed five cows just above Sonora Basin Dam. Sonora Basin Dam is full of sand and gravel, but there was a pool of water below the dam where the cattle were watering. The five head looked in good condition and appeared to all be wearing ear tags. We continued down Sycamore Canyon observing approximately 30 head of cattle near Sycamore Spring. The spring was running with a good supply of water. The resource looked good and cattle had not been in this area long (utilization was very light). Forage production was good with a variety of grasses and browse. We rode on down Sycamore Canyon and found the gate into lower Sycamore up, but the fence just south of the gate was down and cattle have been going around the gate. We observed heavy use below the gate and saw approximately 80 head of cattle in this area. Cattle need to be moved out of lower Sycamore because of heavy utilization patterns. This high use is not acceptable within the wilderness. The management plan calls for spreading the herd out to minimize over grazing areas adjacent to water and main recreation trails. Keeping the cattle in one herd will accomplish our objectives if carefully planned. We continued down and out Sycamore Canyon trail to Rattlesnake Canyon. The fence and gate was up at the mouth of Pipestem Canyon. The rock dam in lower Pipestem was holding water and the trough in the corral was full. We rode up Pipestem, then crossed over into Mailbox Canyon. The resource looked good. We didn't see any

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Safford RD

signs of cattle in lower Pipestem. In Mailbox Canyon we observed sign cattle had been in the area, and fresh sign was seen on the way to Crooked Dam, which was dry. The area around Crooked Dam and up toward Northfield Canyon produced a large amount of forage. The area sustains a good variety of forage grasses (Buer, Bucu, Lyph). The dominate browse species are Quercus spp., Ceanothus greggii, and Cercocarpus (mountain mahagony).

Thursday we rode down Rattlesnake Canyon to Holdout Spring. This area looked good and the riparian has a large amount of ponderosa pine, sycamore, walnut, juniper, and poison sumac regeneration. There was very little utilization observed in the drainage bottoms, the only species showing moderate use was apache plume. We rode in Kielberg Canyon to Powers Mine. The first dirt tank held about six inches of water, the one below the mine was dry. We rode back to Powers Garden along the West Divide Trail and down Southfield Canyon. Grassy Ridge appeared to be used fairly heavily last year. Forage production in this area appears good, especially with below normal moisture this year. Grassy Ridge tank was holding water. The salt ground along the trail north of the tank looked bad. Cattle and wildlife have been digging for salt and a small rill has begun to erode. Salt can be used to improve livestock distribution and salt locations should be changed periodically to avoid beating out an area causing erosion.

Friday, November 6th, we rode back to Deer Creek through Corral Canyon. Corral Canyon showed signs of improvement. The past overgrazing of the canyon bottoms and around the spring has started to improve a little. There was more grass left standing than I've seen in a long time. There was sign that maybe one or two animals were left in the area. Johannes has shot or removed all cattle found in the area this summer.

During our wilderness ride we saw four white tail deer, several songbirds, and a lot of bear sign. Saturday, November 7th, I took a group of riders down Corral Canyon to Powers Garden and back out the Tortilla Trail. While in the Mud Springs Pasture, I observed five cows that were missed while moving cattle to the back country. I talked to Jack Burgess and he said he just moved them down Sycamore. Jack would like to let the fence down across the mouth of Pipestem in order to move cattle out of lower Sycamore and Rattlesnake Canyons. I told him it would be okay.

The structures observed during the inspection are deteriorating rapidly. The barns at Powers Garden, as well as the Powers Cabin at the Mine, are falling down. The roofs are caving in and the walls are beginning to drop. The Ball Mill, and the Stamp Mill are still standing. The entrance to the Powers Mine is still open, although the ceiling over the

Safford RD

entrance appears to be slowly caving in. The house at Powers Garden is in fair condition. The house was extremely dirty and cluttered with trash when we arrived. Ken Bunt installed Plexiglas windows in the house. The trails in the wilderness are poor. Most of the trails are overgrown and difficult to follow. Some of the trails are marked, others are not. The fences in the area need to be reconstructed. Most of the fences have areas where livestock can get through. This is the maintenance responsibility of the permittee.



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Range, Wildlife, & Watershed Staff