Argenta Cooperative Monitoring Group

Meeting Minutes

Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain District Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

November 14, 2017

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CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Mike Lunn, a Conflict Resolution Specialist with the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) at 8:08 AM by welcoming everyone and asking Mr. Mike Holbert, owner of Silver State Meeting Minutes to provide an overview of the process used in preparing the meeting's minutes.

Mr. Holbert introduced himself and described the process for recording the meeting's discussions and preparing minutes for the meeting. In summary, two recording systems are used to ensure the minutes accurately reflect the discussions. The minutes will not be a transcription of discussions, but will provide a summary of presentations, pertinent discussions, positions taken, decisions made, action assignments made, etc. Once the minutes have been finalized, the digital recordings will be deleted.

Persons attending the meeting are depicted in Attachment 1.

INTRODUCTIONS & MEETING EXPECTIONS

BLM WELCOME

Mr. John Sherve, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Mount Lewis Office Field Manager, welcomed everyone and noted that this year (2017) was the third and final full year of CMG activities as identified in the Argenta Settlement Agreement. As such, this will be the last face-to-face CMG meeting; although, like last year, there will be a virtual CMG meeting (February 5th) to discuss and resolve public feedback on the draft FY 2017 EOS report and finalize its contents.

With this being the last CMG meeting under the Settlement Agreement, which is scheduled to expire on August 1, 2018, Mr. Sherve noted that now is the time to begin thinking about fully transitioning oversight of the Argenta allotment from the NRST back to the Mount Lewis Field office. (This transition began in 2017). Draft guidelines for future coordination between the livestock grazing permittees and BLM have been developed, which should be discussed and finalized as soon as possible.

Mr. Sherve also noted the completion of the Round 2 range improvement work, including the Ferris Creek and North Fork of Mill Creek exclosures.

INTRODUCTIONS

Mr.Lunn asked each person to introduce themselves, describe their expectations for the meeting, and how they felt about being at the meeting.

The following is a summary of the expectations raised by participants.

- Hope for some good dialogue on moving forward in 2018, and developing an approach that will work over the long-term;
- Continue to build strong working relationships with all stakeholders (livestock permittees and others) interested in the resources on the Argenta allotment;
- Set the stage for a "post-NRST" future with good working relationships;
- Was involved with collection of the 2017 monitoring data and is looking forward to the monitoring data presentation;
- Believes this meeting will be similar to the 2016 meeting in terms of reviewing the End-of-Season (EOS) results; identifying successes (what worked) and failures (what didn't work), and learning from those; identifying options for moving forward into 2018; discussing current and future efforts associated with the Term Permit renewal process, which will eventually replace the interim management under the Settlement Agreement; and gaining clarity for moving forward;

- Looking forward to learning about where the process began and how it will move forward;
- Looking forward to continuing monitoring efforts and ways to move livestock between different areas of the allotment, which will segue into the permit renewal effort;
- Looking forward to continuing the lively and professional dialogue that occurred during monitoring data collection, as well as understanding different perspectives as we take the pulse of the past and think about moving forward;
- Expressed concerns about the condition of the allotment and wildlife habitat, as well as the CMG being involved in any way in the assessment and in the future management of the Argenta allotment. This group has excluded the general public from its meetings, which should not occur on public lands, and it should not be allowed to move forward as a closed door, secretive group.
- Looking forward to hearing how the group intends to move forward "post-Settlement" with appropriate coordination.
- Looking forward to hearing about the permit renewal process and the 2017 grazing season.
- Continue the pattern from previous meetings were everyone listens with respect and doesn't interrupt when others are speaking.

AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Lunn reviewed the agenda for the two-day meeting to which minor adjustments were made to accommodate presenters travelling to the meeting.

2017 END-OF-SEASON MONITORING REVIEW

UPLAND MONITORING DATA

HERBACEOUS SPECIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

Mr. Robert Burdick provided a summary of 2017 upland monitoring data collected using the *Height Weight* method[1] on 20 sites in 17 of the 19 use areas (Figure 1) within the Argenta allotment.

The minimum sample size considered to be sufficient was 15 or greater plants per species along a transect.

The herbaceous species monitoring threshold is 40 percent, except for the Mule Canyon Use Area, which is 50 percent.

Upland herbaceous species monitored in 2017 are depicted in Table 1.

As depicted in Table 2, the utilization threshold for all upland herbaceous species on 17 use areas were successfully met.

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[1] Outlined in Technical Reference TR-1734-3 entitled *Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements (1999)*.

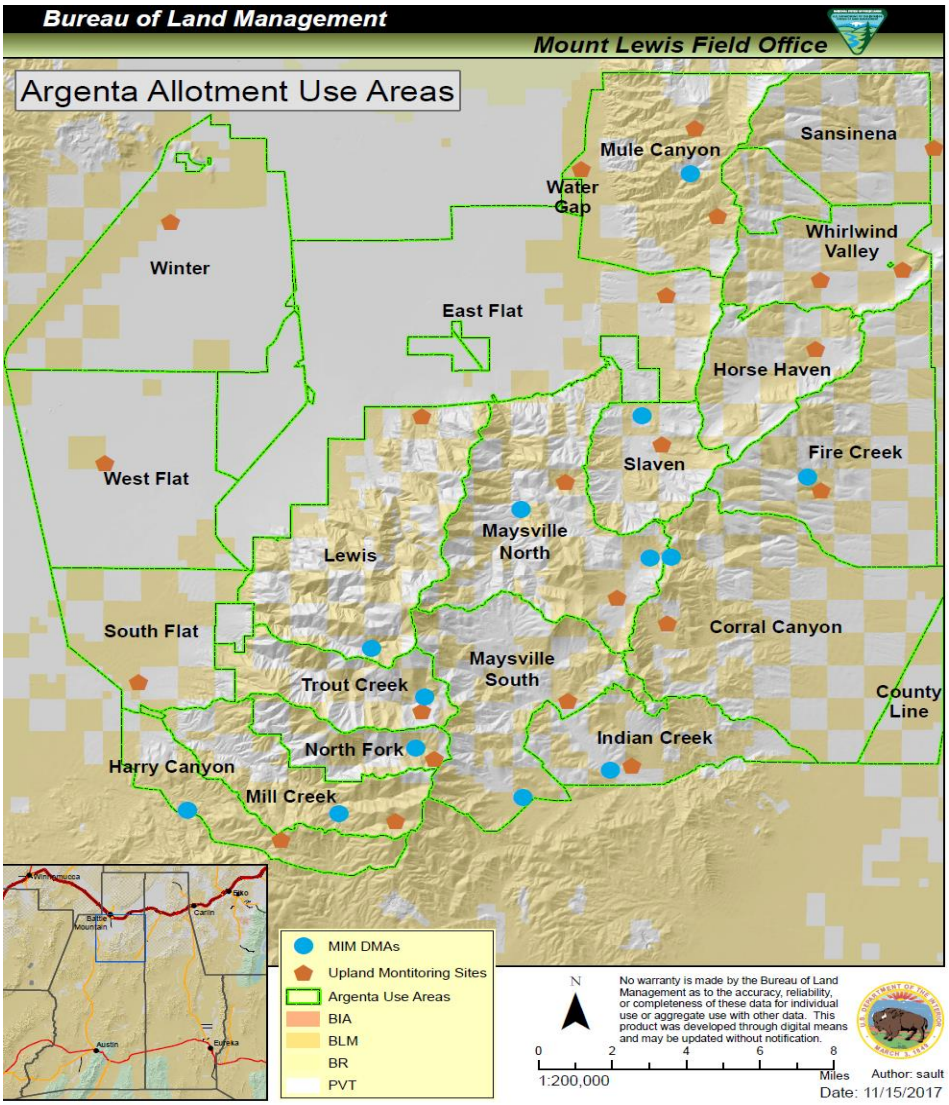

FIGURE 1 - ARGENTA USE AREAS

Plant Symbol	Common Name	Scientific Name
ACHY	Indian ricegrass	Achnatherum hymenoides
ACLE9	Letterman's needlegrass	Achnatherum lettermanii
ACTH7	Thurber's needlegrass	Achnatherum thurberianum
AGCR	Crested wheatgrass	Agropyron cristatum
BRMA4	Mountain brome	Bromus marginauts
ELEL5	Squirreltail	Elymus emymoides
ELTR7	Slender wheatgrass	Elymus trachycaulus
FEID	Idaho fescue	Festuca idahoensis
POSE	Sandberg bluegrass	Poa secunda
PSJU3	Russian wildeye	Psathyrostachys juncea
PSSP6	Bluebunch wheatgrass	Pseudoroengneria spicate
THIN6	Intermediate wheatgrass	Thinopyrum intermedium

TABLE 1 - UPLAND HERBACEOUS SPECIES LIST

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Use Area	Utilization & 95% Confidence Interval (CI)	Met/Not Met
Corral Canyon	5% ± 3%	Met
East Flat	12% ± 9%	Met
Fire Creek	4% ±2%	Met
Harry Canyon	18% ± 12%	Met
Horse Haven	10% ±8%	Met
Indian Creek	4% ± 2%	Met
Lewis	27% ± 12%	Met
Maysville North	8% ± 4%	Met
Maysville South	14% ± 7%	Met
Mill Creek	8% ± 6%	Met
Mule Canyon	26% ± 7%	Met
North Fork of Mill Creek	23% ± 6%	Met
Sansinena	6% ± 6%	Met
Slaven	22% ± 13%	Met
South Flat	26% ± 11%	Met
Trout Creek	12% ± 4%	Met
Whirlwind Valley	10% ± 4%	Met

(THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE WAS LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY.)TABLE 2 - UPLAND UTILIZATION SUMMARY

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A more detailed summary of upland herbaceous species utilization is depicted in Table 3.

Use Area	Site	Key Species	Sample Size	Average Ungrazed Height (inches)	Average Utilization	95% Confidence Interval
Corral Canyon	AG-02	Thurber's needlegrass	20	20.7	5%	± 3%
East Flat	East Flat	Sandberg bluegrass	20	15.0	12%	± 9%
Fire Creek	Fire Creek	Sandberg bluegrass	20	11.8	2%	± 2%
		Squirreltail	20	6.2	5%	± 4%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**40**	**9.9**	**4%**	**± 2%**
Harry Canyon	Harry Canyon	Sandberg bluegrass	20	17.0	18%	± 12%
Indian Creek	Indian Creek	Sandberg bluegrass	20	14.4	6%	± 3%
		Squirreltail	20	10.1	1%	± 3%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**40**	**12.2**	**4%**	**± 2%**
Horse Haven	AR-23	Sandberg bluegrass	20	11.1	10%	± 8%
Lewis	AG-10	Sandberg bluegrass	20	13.6	27%	± 12%
Maysville North	AG-03	Sandberg bluegrass	20	13.9	15%	± 10%
		Squirreltail	20	7.9	6%	± 5%
		AVERAGE	**40**	**10.9**	**10%**	**± 6%**
	AG-09	Bluebunch wheatgrass	20	27.1	2%	± 2%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**60**	**16.3**	**8%**	**± 4%**
Maysville South	AG-16	Sandberg bluegrass	20	12.1	3%	± 6%
		Squirreltail	20	13.2	25%	± 10%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**40**	**12.6**	**14%**	**± 7%**
Mill Creek	Mill Creek	Letterman's needlegrass	20	26.2	25%	± 10%
		Mountain brome	20	23.2	16%	± 11%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**40**	**24.7**	**21%**	**± 7%**
Mule Canyon	AG-01	Sandberg bluegrass	20	15.9	22%	± 14%
	AG-21	Crested wheatgrass	20	26.2	37%	± 12%
		Idaho fescue	20	16.0	20%	± 8%
		AVERAGE	**40**	**21.1**	**28%**	**± 8%**
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**60**	**19.3**	**26%**	**± 7%**
North Fork of Mill Creek	North Fork	Letterman's needlegrass	20	31.4	14%	± 6%
		Mountain brome	20	24.9	44%	± 13%
		Slender wheatgrass	20	27.0	11%	± 7%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**60**	**27.8**	**23%**	**± 6%**
Sansinena	AR-18A	Crested wheatgrass	20	25.7	6%	± 6%
		Russian wildeye	15	35.9	5%	± 5%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**20**	**25.7**	**6%**	**± 6%**
Slaven	AG-08	Crested wheatgrass	20	31.8	22%	± 13%
South Flat	AG-04	Sandberg bluegrass	20	11.5	26%	± 11%
Trout Creek	Trout Creek	Letterman's needlegrass	20	28.5	2%	± 4%
		Mountain brome	20	24.0	10%	± 10%
		Squirreltail	20	14.0	16%	± 7%
		Idaho fescue	20	18.6	18%	± 8%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**80**	**21.2**	**12%**	**± 4%**
Whirlwind Valley	Whirlwind 1	Sandberg bluegrass	20	13.6	0%	± 0%
		Squirreltail	20	9.0	25%	± 9%
		AVERAGE	**40**	**11.3**	**12%**	**± 6%**
	Whirlwind 3	Sandberg bluegrass	20	13.3	0%	± 0%
		Squirreltail	20	11.7	15%	± 7%
		AVERAGE	**40**	**12.5**	**7%**	**± 4%**
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**80**	**11.9**	**10%**	**± 4%**

TABLE 3 - SITE SPECIFIC UPLAND HERBACEOUS SPECIES UTILIZATION

Key points made in the presentation are summarized below.

East Flat

There was an insufficient sample size of Squirreltail to include in the overall herbaceous species utilization calculation.

Indian Creek

Indian ricegrass had been documented when collecting utilization data in previous years, but only six plants were observed on the transect in 2017, which was considered an inadequate sample size.

Mr. Paul Tomera asked if the Indian Creek site was on their side of the cattleguard or on the C Ranches side. Mr. Ault indicated that it was on the C Ranches side of the cattleguard.

Maysville North

There was discussion relating to how utilization data is depicted on the graph. If zero percent utilization is depicted (Figure 2), there was a sufficient sample size for that species, but the plants did not show any utilization. If the species is not depicted on the graph for a specific year (i.e., Intermediate wheatgrass in 2017), there was an insufficient sample size for that species and data was not collected that year.

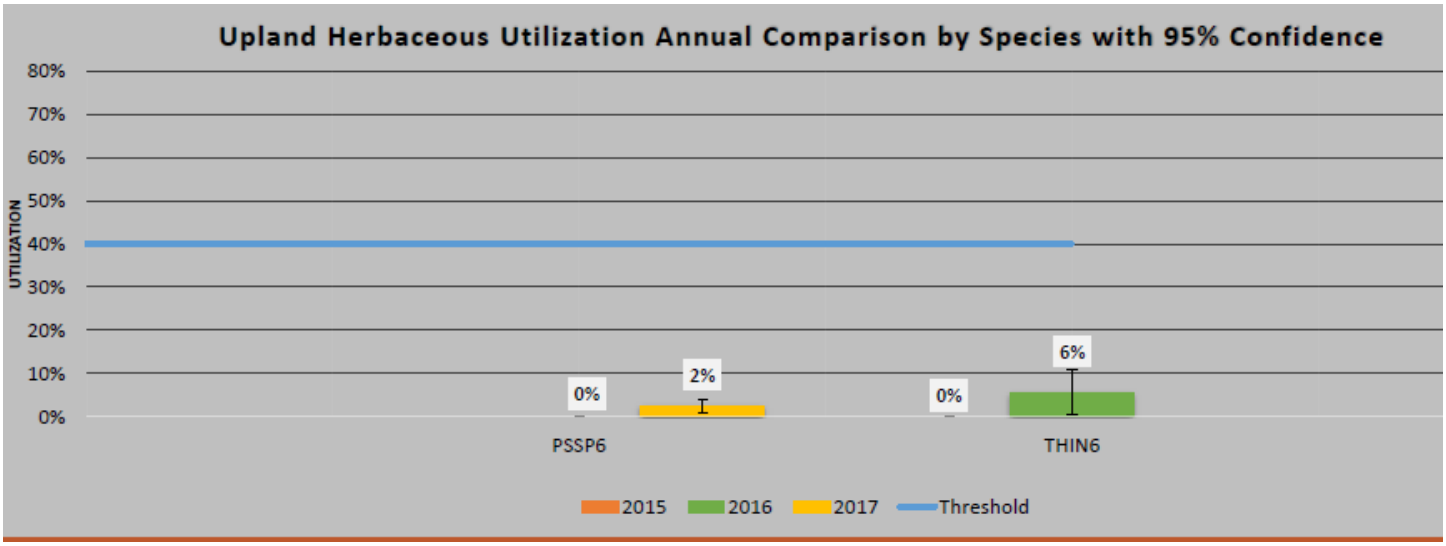

FIGURE 2 - UPLAND HERBACEOUS UTILIZATION COMPARISON FOR MAYSVILLE NORTH - AG-09

Maysville South

There was an insufficient sample size for Thurber's needlegrass; therefore, it was not included in the overall herbaceous species utilization calculation.

Mill Creek

There was snow on the ground when the utilization data was collected; therefore, the nearest species was considered regardless if it was covered by snow.

Mule Canyon

There was an insufficient sample size for Crested wheatgrass at the AG-01 site in 2017; therefore, it was not considered in the overall herbaceous species utilization calculation.

North Fork

There was an insufficient sample size for Squirreltail and Idaho fescue in 2017; therefore, they were not considered in the overall herbaceous species utilization calculation.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the North Fork monitoring site contains two or three different ecotones, a function of the soils in the area, which requires a precise transect to stay within the ecotones and the ecological site. Mr. Burdick noted that there was significant cover on the site and, depending on the transect route, there might be more (or less) inter-spaces where different species can fill the niche. Mr. Burdick noted that a limited number of Idaho fescue plants were observed toward the end of the transect, which was at the edge of the ecological site.

Sansinena

Mr. Burdick noted that there was a significant amount of rabbit use observed around the edges of Russian wildrye plants and that there was an insufficient sample size of Squirreltail in 2017.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the 2016 data indicates five percent utilization on Russian wildrye. Mr. Ault indicated he did not have a curve for Russian wildrye in 2016, but found one online for 2017. Ms. Dafoe noted that Intermountain Range Consultants had developed a curve for Russian wildrye in 2016, which she believes was shared with BLM, and that she utilized the curve in her 2016 monitoring efforts. Mr. Ault asked to have the 2016 Russian wildrye curve sent to him and he will adjust the 2016 monitoring data. **ACTION ITEM: Ms. Dafoe will send the 2016 Russian wildrye curve to Mr. Ault. ACTION ITEM: Mr. Ault will re-evaluate the 2016 herbaceous utilization data for Russian wildrye using the 2016 curve developed by Intermountain Range Consultants.**

Ms. Dafoe inquired as to who identified the plants as Russian wildrye, and if a dichotomous key was used. Mr. Burdick indicated that he keyed out the species, but did not use a dichotomous key. He was confident that he correctly identified the species as the plants. Mr. Cochran also noted that Russian wildrye was in the fire rehabilitation fire seeding mixture.

WOODY SPECIES

General Information

Mr. Burdick provided a summary of 2017 upland woody utilization data collected using the *Key Species* method on five sites in four of the 19 use areas within the Argenta allotment.

The utilization threshold for woody species is 30 percent.

Mr. Ault noted that under the *Key Species* protocol, a specific utilization value is not assigned, rather the level of utilization is placed in a utilization class. The lowest utilization level possible using the *Key Species* protocol is three percent. For example, if no woody browse utilization was observed, the average utilization would be depicted as 3% with a 95% confidence level of ± 0%.

Upland woody species monitored in 2017 are depicted in Table 4.

Plant Symbol	Common Name	Scientific Name
BAPR5	Forage Kochia	Kochia prostrata (Bassia prostrata)
ATCO	Shadscale Saltbush	Atriplex confertifolia

TABLE 4 - UPLAND WOODY SPECIES LIST

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As depicted in Table 5, the utilization threshold for all upland woody species on four use areas were successfully met.

Use Area	Utilization & 95% Confidence Interval	Met/Not Met
Mule Canyon	8% ± 2%	Met
Sansinena	13% ± 7%	Met
West Flat	4% ± 1%	Met
Winter	3% ± 0%	Met

TABLE 5 - UPLAND WOODY SPECIES UTILIZATION SUMMARY

Following the presentation, Mr. Burdick responded to questions.

Mr. Mariluch noted that with the low levels of utilization he hoped that the allotment will not burn in 2018, as was seen in Area 6 (Figure 3) in 2017.

Mr. Mariluch appreciated that BLM was documenting activities or observations caused by wildlife species (i.e., rabbits). Mr. Burdick indicated that documenting such activities are important so that observers in the future have a better understanding of what occurred and how sites may have changed over time.

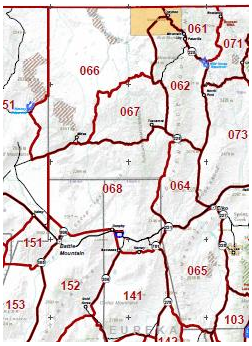

FIGURE 3- NEVADA HUNT UNITS

SITE SPECIFIC INFORMATION

A more detailed summary of upland woody species utilization is depicted in Table 6.

Use Area	Site	Key Species	Sample Size	Average Utilization	95% Confidence Interval
Mule Canyon	AG-01	Forage Kochia	20	8%	± 4%
	Mule Canyon (New)	Forage Kochia	20	7%	± 3%
	USE AREA AVERAGE		**40**	**8%**	**± 2%**
Sansinena	AR-18A	Forage Kochia	20	13%	**± 7%**
West Flat	West Flat	Shadscale Saltbush	20	4%	**± 1%**
Winter	Winter				

TABLE 6 - DETAILED UPLAND WOODY SPECIES UTILIZATION

Key points made in the presentation are summarized below.

Winter

Mr. Schweigert noted that there were not any cows placed in the Winter use area in 2017 as of the date of monitoring. Mr. Burdick noted there was a significant amount of rabbit use documented on this site.

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RIPARIAN MONITORING DATA

Mr. Sam Ault provided a summary of the 2017 riparian Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) data collected on 13 Designated Monitoring Areas (DMA) addressing 12 of the 19 use areas in the Argenta allotment.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The monitoring threshold for stubble height was 4 inches, while the threshold for woody browse species was 30 percent.

Information on streambank alteration was collected, but there was not a monitoring threshold for this indicator identified in the Settlement Agreement; therefore, it was not part of the "met/not met" determination.

To ensure a common understanding of language, Mr. Ault defined four categories of result – met, likely met, likely not met, and not met.

- **Met** – the monitoring threshold was not exceeded.
- **Likely Met** – the average value did not exceed the monitoring threshold, but the monitoring threshold falls with the confidence interval (95 percent).
- **Likely Not Met** – the average value did exceed the monitoring threshold, but the monitoring threshold falls within the confidence interval.
- **Not Met** – the monitoring threshold was exceeded.

An example of possible results for stubble height are shown in Figure 4.

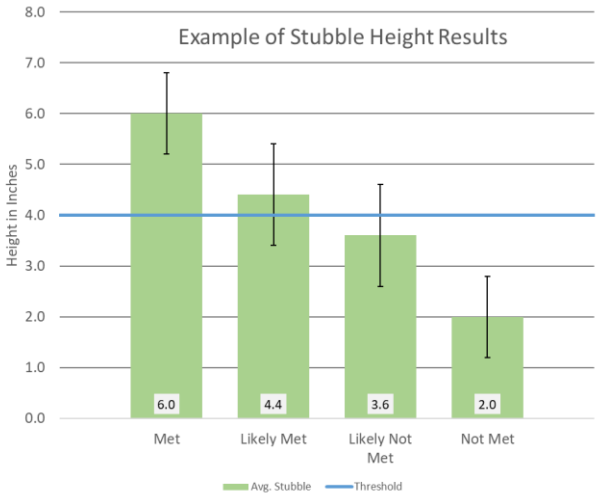

FIGURE 4 - STUBBLE HEIGHT EXAMPLE

Later in the meeting, Mr. Schweigert noted that monitoring sites that fall within the 95 percent confidence interval should be considered as having achieved (met) the threshold or objective. For example, when a 4-inch stubble height threshold is reached, with a ± 0.5 inches 95% confidence interval, the utilization threshold has been achieved. If the average utilization is 4.1 inches with a ± 0.5 inches 95% confidence interval, the utilization threshold has been achieved (shown as "likely met" in Figure 4).

For upland woody and/or riparian woody species utilization, monitoring data which fall below the 30 percent threshold (and the confidence interval) have also achieve the objective. Monitoring data that clearly exceeds the threshold (and the 95% confidence interval) should be considered as not meeting the objective. How these levels are interpreted has been an ongoing dispute and was discussed the during dispute resolution process.

Ms. Dafoe noted that Mr. Schweigert's point is speaking from a statistical standpoint, which has been extensively reviewed with Mark Gonzalez, that defines a diverse statistical population assessment/monitoring method, which includes the *Height Weigh* protocol. Ms. Van Riper noted that use of confidence intervals, statistical interpretation of "met/not met", etc., was part of the dispute resolution process. NRST made a recommendation to BLM, who, in turn, made the final decision, etc., which supported the NRST's recommendation in part. Ms. Van Riper noted that the final dispute resolutions are posted on the Argenta website.

Ms. Fite strongly objected to such decisions, which were made by the CMG behind closed doors, being used in any way in future processes for the Argenta allotment.

Ms. Dafoe noted that this is a statistical methodology for analyzing data that has been utilized and well defined by statisticians for years. Use of confidence intervals is not something developed by BLM or the CMG.

Mr. Lunn noted that the CMG does not make decisions, which is reserved to the BLM.

Ms. Van Riper noted that the required thresholds were defined within the settlement negotiation process, which was done with the parties as part of a legal settlement agreement. The dispute that came up later was raised by the Western Watersheds Project, from which NRST made a recommendation to BLM, who, in turn, made their decision. What will (or will not) continue forward once the Settlement Agreement expires is unknown. There are no pre-determined decisions addressing what (if any) part of the Settlement Agreement's interim management approach will be carried forward into the future.

Ms. Dafoe indicated that use of confidence intervals is addressed in BLM's monitoring protocols.

Ms. Dyer noted that all of the monitoring methods used, including use of confidence intervals, are outlined in BLM's manuals and handbooks. Nothing used in the Argenta process is outside BLM's protocols or approaches commonly used by BLM.

Ms. Fite indicated that she has not seen confidence intervals used by other BLM offices. Ms. Fite noted that BLM has been under significant political pressure to essentially allow the ranchers to get what they want in this group and process. Decisions made by BLM in response to disputes with the NRST have to be viewed with many questions in mind. Again, she doesn't believe it legitimate to carry the use of confidence intervals forward, because it is not being used in other BLM data analyses that she's reviewed.

Mr. Schweigert asked Ms. Fite if she has seen the data from Idaho. Ms. Kite asked what data Mr. Schweigert was referring to. Before Mr. Schweigert could respond, Mr. Lunn brought the discussion back to the topic at hand by indicating Ms. Fite has made her point, which has been recorded for the minutes.

Ms. Van Riper noted that some offices use confidence intervals, while other offices do not. The use of confidence intervals is within accepted BLM protocols. Mr. Lunn noted that it might be more appropriate to continue the discussion when the Grazing Permit Renewal team makes their presentation later in the meeting.

SITE SPECIFIC INFORMATION

In 2017, five of the eleven DMAs met, while two likely met, one likely did not meet, and three did not meet the 4-inch stubble height threshold for riparian herbaceous species, as displayed in Table 7.

DMA Name	Average Heights & 95% Confidence Interval	Met/Not Met
Crippen Creek	4.2 inches ± 0.8 inches	Likely Met
Ferris Creek	4.6 inches ± 0.8 inches	Likely Met
Indian Creek	3.7 inches ± 0.4 inches	Likely Not Met
Corral Canyon	5.0 inches ± 0.6 inches	Met
Fire Creek	5.0 inches ± 0.5 inches	Met
Mill Creek	7.1 inches ± 0.9 inches	Met
Ratfink	7.4 inches ± 2.1 inches	Met
Slaven	6.9 inches ± 0.7 inches	Met
North Fork Mill Creek	2.5 inches ± 0.2 inches	Not Met
The Park	2.3 inches ± 0.3 inches	Not Met
Trout Creek	2.5 inches ± 0.3 inches	Not Met

TABLE 7 - 2017 RIPARIAN STUBBLE HEIGHT SUMMARY

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Note: On Thursday, November 16, 2017, Mr. Ault sent the CMG the following e-mail message.

From: **Ault, Samuel** <sault@blm.gov>

Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 8:58 AM

Subject: Corrections to Confidence Intervals for Stubble Height and Woody Browse Results

Good Morning CMG,

I'd like to make a note on my presentation from Tuesday which was sent around yesterday. The MIM data analysis module estimates two separate precision values, or confidence intervals. One value is based on the variability of observations along the DMA. The other value is estimated off a standard factor for observer error assuming that observer has received proper training. The confidence interval presented on Tuesday is based only on variability of the sampled population.

Mark sent me a note last night after noticing that the confidence intervals reported on some sites were lower than expected. He reminded me that the larger of the two values should be used for reporting and detecting change. Attached is a table detailing the differences.

This error made no change to the Met/Not Met ratings. The final EOS monitoring report will have the adjusted values. If you have any questions, feel to reach out to me anytime.

--

Samuel Ault
Range Management Specialist
Mount Lewis Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
(775) 635-4058

The table referenced by Mr. Ault in the e-mail message above is provided in Attachment 2.

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Table 8 depicts the 2017 summary for the eight DMAs where woody vegetation was present.

DMA Name	Average Heights & 95% Confidence Interval	Met/Not Met
Corral Canyon	26.3% ± 5%	Likely Met
Ferris Creek	24.8% ± 10%	Likely Met
Indian Creek	29.6% ± 8%	Likely Met
Rock Creek	33.5% ± 6%	Likely Not Met
Harry Canyon	10% ± 0%	Met
Crippen Creek	21.5% ± 5%	Met
Fire Creek	19.8% ± 3%	Met
Ratfink	12.2% ± 3%	Met

TABLE 8 - 2017 RIPARIAN WOODY BROWSE SUMMARY

Key points made in the presentation for each DMA are summarized below.

Corral Canyon

The Corral Canyon Use Area, historically, has been used by Tomera Ranches, but has been leased[2] to C Ranches/Barrick.

Ferris Creek

The 2017 National Public Lands Day event was held in this use area in late September and early October during which the Round 2 exclosure fencing was constructed.

Livestock impacts were observed in 2017, but livestock grazing will be excluded in 2018.

Fire Creek

Streambank alteration was higher in 2017 (as compared to 2016), which is something that should be watched in the future. Ms. Dafoe asked if confidence intervals were identified for the streambank alteration data. Mr. Ault indicated that the confidence level for streambank alteration was approximately ± 2 percent, which was considered relatively small.

The Fire Creek site is proposed to be excluded from livestock grazing as part of a mine mitigation effort, but when the exclosure will be constructed is unknown. Mr. Mariluch indicated that they were waiting on BLM to which Mr. Sherve indicated that BLM is working on a second draft of the Environmental Assessment (EA), which he hopes will be released for public comment in December 2017. Mr. Ault noted that the Klondex mine was proposing to use a different type of fencing material (pipe rail) than the jack rail. Mr. Mariluch noted that pipe rail will be used on the back side of the exclosure and jack rail on the front.

Harry Canyon

The conditions on this site vary from year to year. Some years are lentic while in other years the stream flows very well. In 2015, there were high flows in the spring while, in 2016, the stream was dry. In 2017, there were strong flows.

Upstream from the DMA, Ellis Ranching Company has a water right under which water is diverted into several troughs, which may be a factor behind the de-watering of this site in some years. Ms. Dafoe noted that there are large amounts of juniper on the site, which could also be a factor in the de-watering issue.

[2] 430 Animal Unit Months.

Stubble height measurements were not collected in 2016 or 2017. Although there was not any woody browse utilization observed at this site in 2017, the average utilization was recorded at 10 percent, which is the lowest that can be recorded under the *Key Species* protocol.

Ms. Fite asked why stubble height measurements were not taken in 2017. Mr. Ault indicated that there was not a sufficient sample size of key herbaceous species. The lower section of the DMA dries out and is not wet for the majority of the year (i.e., dewatering issue addressed above).

Indian Creek

The Indian Creek Use Area is used by Barrick/Cortez Ranches.

The DMA was moved between 2015 and 2016 due to excessive amounts of cheatgrass growing in the streambed. The site was not used because the existing DMA appeared to be in an ephemeral reach. Ms. Dafoe noted that, in 2016, all DMAs were stratified to determine if the sites met the MIM stratification protocol. This site was determined not to fall within the protocol and was subsequently moved.

Mr. Ault noted that during the stratification review, the Harry Canyon DMA was also found to be the best site available. While not an ideal site, it does provide woody browse data for that use area.

Ms. Fite asked if the Harry Canyon site was moved between 2015 and 2016. Mr. Ault indicated that it was not moved, but a more appropriate site could not be identified. Possible sites on federal land were too dry, while other appropriate sites were on private land.

Ms. Dafoe indicated that the term "moved" was a misnomer. It would be more appropriate to indicate that the site did not meet protocol. Where possible, appropriate sites were identified, and the DMA moved to that location.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the 2015 data was collected on the old DMA site, while the 2016 and 2017 data was collected on the new (more appropriate) DMA.

Mill Creek

There is a road immediately adjacent to the DMA, which is graded frequently resulting in road fill material being pushed into the DMA. Approximately 70 percent of the DMA falls within the exclosure leaving approximately 30 percent accessible to grazing.

Ms. Fite noted that using data from inside and outside the exclosure is a bogus way of assessing livestock impacts. Mr. Ault noted that BLM recognizes the issue and tried to re-stratify the DMA in the summer 2015, but found the existing DMA to be the most appropriate site within the use area.

Ms. Van Riper noted that under the MIM protocol, fenced DMAs should ultimately transition into reference DMAs and new representative DMAs would need to be established.

Ms. Fite indicated that any report should identify the percentage of the DMA that lies within the exclosure so that the data cannot be used to demonstrate improvement under grazing. Mr. Ault indicated that the exclosure was noted in the 2016 monitoring report. Ms. Van Riper noted that the 2016 report references the exclosure, but does not identify the percentage of the DMA that falls within or outside of the exclosure. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Ault indicated that he will ensure the 2017 End-of-Year Report identifies the percent of the DMA that falls within and outside of the exclosure.**

Ms. Ault also noted that the exclosure was constructed in the spring of 2016, but livestock were able to gain access into the exclosure; therefore, in 2016, there was significant utilization within the exclosure.

There are no woody species in the DMA to monitor.

North Fork of Mill Creek

Mr. Ault noted that the DMA falls within the Round 2 exclosure.

There are no woody species in the DMA to monitor.

Ms. Fite asked if there was any part of the DMA outside of the exclosure. Mr. Ault indicated there is a water gap built into the exclosure. Mr. Cochran noted that the water gap is located where the historic road crosses the stream where there was pre-existing disturbance.

Ms. Fite asked if there was a reason to continue gathering stubble height measurements in the future, now that there is an exclosure. Mr. Ault indicated that there are two uses for the MIM protocol – a reference DMA or a representative DMA. Representative DMAs are designed to address management on sensitive segments of the use area, whereas, reference DMAs address the potential of the system.

Ms. Fite asked where riparian condition, which is a measure of ongoing livestock use, is measured in this large use area. Mr. Ault indicated that there is not riparian (lotic) habitat outside the exclosure in this use area. Ms. Fite asked about lentic habitat to which Mr. Ault indicated lentic habitat is not addressed under the MIM protocol or the Settlement Agreement, but will be addressed when completing the proper functioning condition assessment. Mr. Cochran noted that BLM is developing a lentic protocol, which is in the early stages of being field-tested. Once finalized, the District will implement the protocol.

Mr. Lunn asked if the head waters of the North Fork of Mill Creek had already been fenced. Mr. Ault explained that the headwater area was fenced under the Round 1 fencing effort. The Round 2 fencing tied directly into Round 1 fencing, which contains the water gap. Both lentic and lotic habitats are protected within the exclosure. Mr. Ault noted that there is lentic habitat outside of the exclosure.

Ratfink

In 2015, there was a large washout in the DMA, which resulted in significant damage. Recovery of the drainage is being monitored by the MIM data. The exclosure was constructed in 2016.

Ms. Schweigert asked if utilization observed in the exclosure was from wildlife. Mr. Ault noted that a reference was made on the 2017 field sheet that there had been significant deer use in the area.

Rock Creek

In 2017, no herbaceous utilization data was collected due to the lack of key herbaceous species.

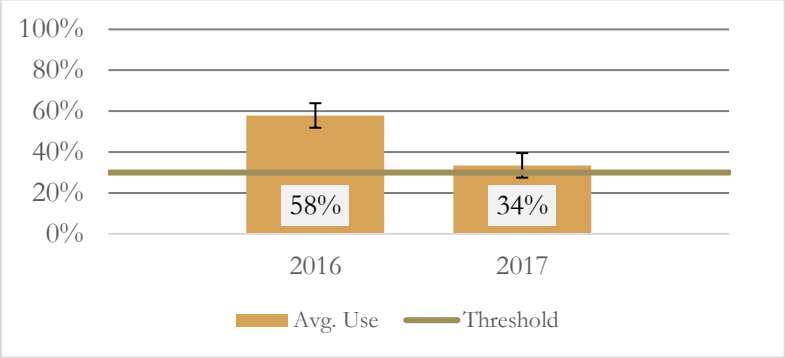

FIGURE 5 - AVERAGE WOODY BROWSE BY YEAR ON ROCK CREEK

There is a drift fence, constructed after an old fire, that is used as a management tool to keep livestock from moving into the flats. It was noted during the 2016 EOS meeting, that when the livestock are headed home, the gates should to be opened earlier to avoid livestock concentration areas. Therefore, the gates were opened on August 1, 2017, which was approximately one month earlier than in 2016. As a result of opening the gates earlier, there was significantly lower utilization of browse species (as compared to 2016), but the average was above the 30 percent threshold; therefore, this site was likely not met (Figure 5).

Ms. Dafoe noted that, similar to the Mill Creek DMA, there has been an issue with road material being pushed into the DMA during road grading operations. Ms. Ault noted when road grade material is encountered, it is noted on field forms. Mr. Dafoe indicated that while completing the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments in 2016, the impact of road debris being pushed into the stream channel was documented. Ms. Dafoe also indicated that there have been discussions with the County Road crew to address the issue.

Ms. Fite asked if the fire drift fence was a permanent or temporary fence. Mr. Cochran indicated the decision authorizing the fence, which was issued 10 or 15 years ago, was silent as to the nature of its permanence.

Ms. Ault noted that the Rock Creek and The Park DMAs lie within the Maysville North Use Area, which is the only use area with two DMAs.

Ms. Fite asked if the two DMAs would be fenced to exclude livestock grazing. Mr. Ault indicated that fencing the two DMAs was part of the Round 3 fencing proposal. Ms. Fite asked a follow-up question if there will be a DMA representing livestock use of riparian areas in the Maysville North Use Area. Mr. Ault indicated that the 2015 stratification process identified other potential DMA sites, but they require site verification.

Slaven

This DMA was fenced in the spring 2016. At the top (upstream end) of the DMA, the riparian area has expanded to a point where there is not much of a channel. The lower end of the DMA tends to dry out later in the season, which results in a loss of hydric species. There are no woody species within this DMA.

Mr. Schweigert noted that, in 2015, the DMA served as the only source of water in the Slaven area. Since that time, a water trough system has been developed. Mr. Mariluch also noted that there was an active mine in the area, which pumps water for dust control, which reduces the amount of water in the riparian area. Mr. Pete Tomera indicated that a solar pump was placed in the well, which pumps water to a series of troughs.

The head waters lie on private land above the DMA and is open to livestock grazing. Mr. Schweigert noted that at the time the DMA exclosure fence was designed, the design included an exclosure for the private land, in the event Tomera Ranches could purchase the land. The design also included development of the spring and an off-site trough system. Mr. Tomera noted that they are still working on purchase of the private land. Mr. Schweigert noted that the same is true on the Ferris DMA.

The Park

Despite not having livestock placed in The Park area for the past three years, the stubble height objective has not been met (Figure 6).

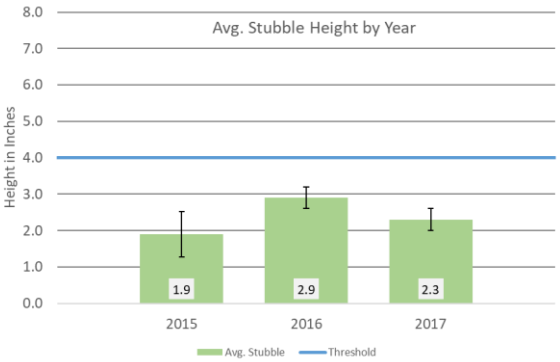

FIGURE 6 - AVERAGE STUBBLE HEIGHT ON THE PARK

The soft substrate in the riparian area has been heavily impacted by livestock hoof action; therefore, stream bank alteration measurements have been high (42%, 36%, and 46% in 2015, 2016, and 2017, respectively).

Ms. Fite asked if the owner(s) of the livestock using this area has been identified, as it appears trespass livestock spent a prolonged period of time in the exclosure. Mr. Ault noted that Tomera Ranches is the only permittee within this use area. Apparently, livestock were drifting into The Park from other use areas. Mr. Ault indicated that the permittees will address this issue during the 2017 grazing management review presentation.

Ms. Dafoe asked if Mr. Mark Gonzalez had reviewed the stubble height monitoring data. It was not known if Mr. Gonzalez had opportunity to review the data. Ms. Dafoe indicated that she questioned the accuracy of the information collected by the group in which she was a member. Mr. Gonzalez was going to review the data as well as the data collected by another group to determine if there was a significant difference. Ms. Van Riper noted that the discussion relating to Ms. Dafoe's concern occurred in the field; rather than afterwards – which led her to believe Mr. Gonzalez reviewed it on site. Mr. Ault noted that he had cursorily reviewed the data from both groups, which appeared to him to be similar.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the herbaceous vegetative growth in the area was heavily stunted and was an average of two inches without having been grazed. Mr. Mariluch asked how someone could be held to the four-inch stubble height threshold when the plants didn't grow that tall. Mr. Ault indicated that stunted plant growth is an indicator of heavy grazing. Mr. Mariluch indicated that stunted plant growth could also be the result of other factors such as weather, etc. Mr. Leonard indicated that it is important to document such findings in field notes and during discussion; however, regardless of the reason for the height of the plants (i.e., stunted plant growth or livestock utilization), this issue will be addressed in the 2018 Stockmanship Plan.

Ms. Dafoe noted that data was not collected in the exclosure to determine if that is what the exclosure was exhibiting. Mr. Ault noted that the exclosure looked like everywhere else. At some point, the fencing knocked down and livestock use was as heavy or heavier than past years. Ms. Dafoe noted that the exclosure had not been monitored in past years. Mr. Ault indicted that the exclosure is lentic and was too short. Ms. Dafoe agreed there are lentic areas and other areas that were too short, but, could, in theory, the exclosure could be used as a pseudo-reference site. Mr. Ault noted he had photographs within the exclosure.

Trout Creek

Meeting the stubble height threshold has been an issue in this DMA.

When asked, Ms. Dow (who was participating via VTC) explained that she and Ms. Skora had been discussing the requirements for stream bank alteration. Ms. Dow explained that there were no specific requirements for stream bank alteration, but the information was recorded for possible use in the future. The stream bank alternation information does not apply in determining attainment (or non-attainment) of herbaceous or woody utilization thresholds.

Ms. Fite indicated that fact is of significant concern to her because trampling by a thousand-pound cow causes significant (perhaps the most significant) impacts to small springs and streams. Not using stream bank alternation data to make informed decisions is a major concern to her.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Ault was asked to send an e-mail to the CMG which contains .pdf versions of the meeting's power point presentations, the handout, and all maps (completed).

WATER QUALITY OF CREEKS IN THE ARGENTA ALLOTMENT

Mr. Justin Ferris provided an overview of water quality monitoring completed during the MIM fieldwork on October 16 – 19, 2017, during which ten creeks[3] in the Argenta allotment were sampled (Figure 7). Three of the ten creeks (Trout Creek, Mill Creek, Ratfink Creek) were sampled in the spring as well as the fall of 2017 allowing for a seasonal comparison. Mr. Ault noted that the spring samples were collected during the PFC data collection effort, while the fall samples were taken at the MIM DMAs.

Water quality values that were sampled include:

- pH – a numeric scale used to specify the acidity or basicity (alkalinity);[4]
- temperature;
- conductivity – a measure of the water's ability to conduct electricity;
- total dissolved solids (TDS) – a measurement of the combined total of organic and inorganic substances contained in the water; and,
- salinity – a measure of salts dissolved in the water.

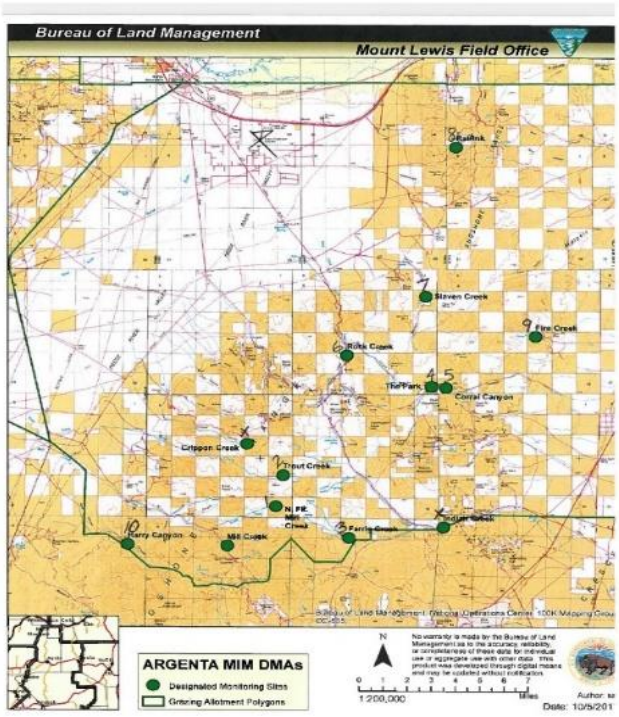

FIGURE 7 - WATER QUALITY MEASUREMENT SITES

[3] Crippen and Indian Creeks were not sampled.
[4] Pure water is neutral, with a pH of 7. Values between 0 and 7 are acidic and values between 7 and 14 are alkaline.

PH VAULES

The normal range for pH in surface water is between 6.5 to 8.5. Groundwater pH normally ranges from 6 to 8.5. Differences in pH can normally be explained by variations in local geology.

pH readings measured between October 16 and 19, 2017, are displayed in Table 9. All creeks were found to be in the normal range for surface water, which is slightly alkaline. The lowest pH reading (blue) was taken on the North Fork of Mill Creek while the highest (red) was on The Park (Corral Canyon Creek).

Creek	pH Reading
North Fork of Mill Creek	7.74
Trout Creek	8.77
Ferris Creek	8.11
The Park (Corral Canyon Creek)	8.76
Corral Canyon Creek	8.02
Rock Creek	8.41
Slaven Creek	8.56
Ratfink Creek	8.59
Fire Creek	8.12
Harry Canyon Creek	8.42

TABLE 9 - PH VALUES FOR CREEKS IN THE ARGENTA ALLOTMENT

TEMPERATURE, CONDUCTIVITY, TOTAL DISSOLVED SOLIDS & SALINITY VALUES

Conductivity, TDS, and salinity have a tendency to follow each other – if one reading is high, the other two normally will also be high.

Table 10 provides a summary of the values obtained in October 2017. The lowest and highest value for each parameter are depicted in blue and red, respectively.

Creek	Temperature (°F)	Conductivity (µS/cm)[5]	Total Dissolved Solids (ppm or mg/L)[6]	Salinity (ppm or mg/L)
North Fork of Mill Creek	48.6	178	127	87.9
Trout Creek	60.1	392	278	202
Ferris Creek	55.9	416	295	212
The Park (Corral Canyon Creek)	32.5	722	512	340
Corral Canyon Creek	52.3	688	488	354
Rock Creek	55.0	691	358	491
Slaven Creek	52.7	1,009	716	526
Ratfink Creek	41.5	1,028	723	516
Fire Creek	59.7	397	282	204
Harry Canyon Creek	48.7	568	270	191

TABLE 10 - CONDUCTIVITY, TDS, & SALANITY VALUES FOR CREEKS IN THE ARGENTA ALLOTMENT

Temperature readings normally reflect the ambient weather condition and are not reflective of water quality.

[5] Micro-siemens per centimeter.
[6] Parts per million or milligrams per liter.

SEASONAL COMPARISIONS

Table 11 provides a comparison of the seasonal water values for Mill, Trout, and Ratfink Creeks, which were taken the spring and fall of 2017.

Stream	Ph		Temperature (°F)		Conductivity (µS/cm)		TDS (ppm or mg/L)		Salinity (ppm or mg/L)	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
North Fork of Mill Creek	8.34	7.74	54.6	48.6	221	178	156	127	111	87.9
Trout Creek	8.20	8.77	57.0	60.1	214	392	151	278	109	202
Ratfink Creek	8.16	8.59	71.2	41.5	858	1,082	607	723	445	516

TABLE 11 - WATER QUALITY SEASONAL VALUE COMPARISONS

In summary, Trout Creek and Ratfink Creek showed what was expected between the spring and fall; however, Trout Creek was an anomality where the pH decreased while the conductivity, TDS, and salinity increased.

The solution to pollution is dilution.

Mr. Ferris noted an old saying (inset). In the spring, there is a higher concentration of meteoric water, which consists of snowpack, rain, and snowpack/ groundwater that has only briefly interacted with the surrounding geology. Meteoric water generally has a pH of 7, which is very close to pure water, and low values for conductivity, TDS, and salinity. Thus, in the spring, the influx of meteoric water to the creeks drives the values (pH, conductivity, TDS, and salinity) down. In the fall, there is less meteoric water and water interacts with local geology for a longer period of time; therefore, the values increase.

Mr. Ferris indicated that the North Fork of Mill Creek did not follow the normal spring/fall pattern due to sampling error. Mr. Ferris obtained only one sample in the fall versus seven samples in the spring. The one fall sample did not capture the character of the stream.

Mr. Schweigert asked if the one sample collected in the fall was taken at one of the seven sites sampled in the spring. Mr. Ferris indicated that it was not one of the seven sites sampled in the spring.

Mr. Paul Tomera asked what the information meant from a laymen's standpoint in terms of water quality. Mr. Ferris indicated that the water quality in the Argenta allotment is average and that it is slightly alkaline, which is commonly seen in streams across northern Nevada, which is a reflection of the geology. None of the values identify a problem and fell within the range for healthy streams.

PERMIT RENEWAL UPDATE

Mr. Sherve noted that the Grazing Permit Renewal team (Team) provided a draft Rangeland Health Assessment to the Battle Mountain District office for review in late July 2017. The document was reviewed by the Mount Lewis Field Office staff, who provided their comments from which a limited number required significant discussion between the field office staff and the Team.

A revised version of the assessment document is scheduled to be provided to the Mount Lewis Field Office later this week, which will receive a second review. The second version should be close to a concurrence between the field office and the Team. The field office anticipates providing its feedback on the second version to the Team in mid-December after which the draft assessment is projected to be released for public review in mid- to late-January.

Mr. Ault noted that, during the public comment period, a public meeting will be held with interested parties. Ms. Dafoe asked if the intent was to conduct the public meeting in the same manner as discussed earlier (i.e., the Team would be available to meet with individuals whenever convenient for the interested parties). Mr. Ken Vicencio indicated that there was significant opposition to that approach; therefore, a more formal meeting format (i.e., established meeting times) will be used.

Mr. Sherve indicated that completion of the Grazing Permit Renewal process is scheduled for March 1, 2019.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that he was at a loss as to why the grazing permittees have not been more involved in the process up to this point in time. He hasn't heard of a ten-year permit renewal process being completed without more active involvement of the permittees, considering it is a ten-year renewal for the permittees. Mr. Sherve indicated the permittees will be more involved in the process as it (the process) unfolds, which is also new to the Mount Lewis Field Office.[7] Efforts to date have focused on getting the BLM (Mount Lewis Field Office and the State Office Team in Reno) onboard and coordinated internally. As the process moves forward, it will be open to the permittees.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the Settlement Agreement indicated livestock permittees would be notified within one to two weeks of any monitoring occurring in regard to the permit renewal, which has not occurred. Currently, the permittees don't know what the monitoring data or the draft assessment indicates. There was some monitoring information provided to the permittees last fall, but nothing has been received and/or analyzed since that time.

Mr. Sherve indicated that he wasn't familiar with any monitoring that occurred without their involvement. Ms. Dafoe indicated that the permittees were not notified when the Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data was collected. Ms. Dafoe indicated that she has e-mails that requested the consultants and/or, at a minimum, the permittees be notified. Mr. Ault noted that the Team stratified some points when addressing sage-grouse seasonal habitats, priority habitat management areas, etc., which were reviewed, and field verified by the Mount Lewis Field Office staff under very tight time frames. This effort has been discussed in the past, and there was no intent to keep the permittees or their consultants out of the loop. Ms. Dafoe noted that the Settlement Agreement was very clear on the notification. Mr. Ault indicated that BLM understands that the Settlement Agreement clearly outlines the notification requirement, and has been working to improve consultation efforts with the permittees and their consultants.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that his organization received the 2016 monitoring information on a thumb drive in December 2016, but has not received anything addressing data collected in 2017. Mr. Ault indicated that he responded to Mr. Schweigert e-mails requesting that he (Mr. Schweigert) call him (Mr. Ault) to have a discussion on exactly what data they (consultants) would like to receive. Mr. Ault indicated that he had not yet heard back from Mr. Schweigert on that request for a more detailed discussion. Mr. Schweigert noted that his request was for all 2017 data,and any data that had been located since December 2016 and not shared with his organization. Mr. Schroeder noted that he has the 2017 PFC data (i.e., forms, photographs, photograph log, plant lists, etc.) on a thumb drive that was provided to Mr. Schweigert during the meeting.

Ms. Fite indicated that all data should be shared with the world, including the interested public or anyone who wants the data. Mr. Schroeder indicated that he thought Ms. Fite was going to be at the meeting in person at which time she would have received the data. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Schroeder agreed to provide the 2017 PFC monitoring data available to Ms. Fite.**

Ms. Fite noted that that was part of the problem with this whole process. The only reason she is privy to any of this is because an Administrative Law Judge allowed her and WildLand Defense to have access. There are other people who might be interested and are not part of this elite group. Ms. Fite strongly objected to an "insider" group getting

[7] This is the first permit/renewal process for the field office that involves the State Permit Renewal Team.

information, while the rest of the world is kept in the dark. She does not think it is in the public's best interest. Mr. Ault indicated that everything except for the 2017 PFC monitoring data was provided to Ms. Fite last fall on a "ftp" link. If Ms. Fite was unable to retrieve that information off of the link, she should notify the Mount Lewis Field Office who would be happy to provide the information again. Now that the 2017 PFC information has been disseminated, BLM would be happy to make it available to Ms. Fite and anyone else who makes a request for the information. Ms. Van Riper noted that all monitoring information or anything related to the Settlement Agreement (i.e., monitoring reports and data, dispute resolution information, meeting minutes, etc.) are available online.

Ms. Fite noted that there wasn't complete actual use information for 2016. Ms. Fite indicated that she e-mailed BLM asking about that, but hasn't received a response. Ms. Van Riper noted that the actual use information received is documented in the 2016 EOS Report between pages 70 and 80.

Mr. Lunn asked if consideration was given to having some type of public meeting so that interested parties could find out more about the CMG and available information. Mr. Vicencio noted that there will be a public meeting once the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report is made available for public review. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the assessment's contents, key highlights, etc. Mr. Ault indicated that the assessment will be distributed through the "interested parties" mailing list, which includes people who have approached the Mount Lewis Field Office indicating their interest in all things in the Argenta, Copper Canyon, or North Buffalo allotments.

Ms. Van Riper noted that the CMG process is not tied to the grazing permit renewal process. The CMG is part of the Settlement Agreement, not the permit renewal effort. Public involvement, sharing of information, etc., for the permit renewal process follows the standard process for all permit renewals. Mr. Vicencio indicated that the Code of Federal Regulations requires consultation, coordination, and cooperation with entities on the public mailing list. A person or entity needs to be on the mailing list to receive the data, notifications, etc.

Mr. Mariluch restressed his point that the permittees in the allotment should be involved step-by-step throughout the process working with BLM. Mr. Ault indicated that as the process unfolds in the future, the permittee interaction will increase. The original schedule called for the process to be at a point of soliciting for applications and talking about grazing rotations, but the rangeland health assessment schedule has been delayed, which delays the entire grazing permit renewal process.

Ms. Dafoe asked if BLM anticipated completing the remainder of the process in three months (March 1st). Ms. Dafoe mistakenly thought the deadline for completion of the permit renewal process was March 1, 2018, but it is March 1, 2019.

Mr. Vicencio committed to reaching out to the permittees once the rangeland health assessment and evaluation document is finalized.

Mr. Vicencio noted that there had been discussion about having a day in the field to discuss State and Transition models, monitoring data, and how the rangeland health assessment was being approached. Such a meeting and discussion prior to release of the assessment document would assist the permittees in understanding the contents of the assessment. If the permittees are interested in that approach, something can be scheduled. Ms. Dafoe asked if the State and Transition models were available to the public. Mr. Vicencio indicated that some models have been finalized, but he hasn't tried to find them through external sources. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Vicencio will determine if State and Transition models are available externally to the public. If not, provisional copies of the models can be made available to the CMG.** Ms. Dafoe thought some models were still under review. Based on discussions with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mr. Vicencio believes most models are final, except for final editorial/grammatical review.

Mr. Sherve asked Ms. Dafoe if there were issues with the 2016 data received, other than not coordinating on the AIM data. Ms. Dafoe indicated that there weren't specific issues, but it was unclear if more data was collected, or if all data had been received. The Settlement Agreement outlined that data would be provided as the data is collected. There was only one download (Fall 2016) so they (permittees and their consultants) were not sure if there was more data collected that hadn't been provided. Mr. Vicencio noted that the comments provided by the Mount Lewis Field Office to the Team on the initial draft of the rangeland health assessment noted that there might have been some 2009 use pattern mapping that the Team was not aware of. The actual data was part of the download received in the fall 2016, but the maps may not

have been included, which have been included in the rangeland health assessment for reference purposes. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Vicencio will ensure the 2009 use pattern mapping information and maps were part of the monitoring information provided to Intermountain Range Consultants in the fall 2016. If not, those maps should be provided to Intermountain Range Consultants.** Ms. Dafoe asked if the data was used in the analysis. Mr. Vicencio indicated that the assessment discusses historic management as well as the current management under the Settlement Agreement. The 2009 use pattern mapping information is part of the historic management discussion.

Ms. Lynn Tomera noted that Mr. Vicencio referenced having a meeting where questions concerning the rangeland health assessment could be asked. Ms. Tomera asked if there was a projected time frame for that meeting. Mr. Vicencio was not sure of the exact date the rangeland health assessment will be made available, which is dependent on the District's workload. Mr. Vicencio indicated that the assessment document is massive – 300 pages, which will require some time to review. Mr. Ault noted that the current schedule calls for the District's review of the draft revised assessment document to be completed on November 17, 2017. An internal Team review will be conducted, which will require one to two weeks. Following the internal team review, BLM Nevada program leaders in the State Office will complete a review, which will require an additional one to two weeks. The Team will need some time to address comments from the Program Leader review. After that review process, which is projected to be late December 2017 or early January 2018, BLM will have a better idea of when the draft assessment will be released to the public.

Ms. Tomera asked if their consultants will have opportunity to review the draft assessment prior to its release to the general public. Mr. Vicencio noted that additional discussion between the Mount Lewis Field Office and Jake Vialpando, State Permit Renewal Team Leader, will be needed before that question can be answered. The original plan was to provide a summary of the assessment, which Mrs. Tomera thought would be appropriate for the permittees, but the consultants should be provided the entire document. Mr. Vicencio indicated that there will be time provided (one month) for the public to review the document and provide comments, which will be considered by BLM when developing the final assessment. Following completion of the final rangeland health assessment and evaluation report, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will be initiated. We are in the beginning stages of the entire process.

Mr. Schweigert noted that it has taken BLM three years to develop the draft assessment, and the public will be given only 30 days to review the 300-page document. Mr. Vicencio noted that was one of the reasons a summary document was being considered. Mr. Vicencio noted that the draft assessment includes discussion of current objectives for the allotment, Resource Management Plan direction, Rangeland Program Summary, the Settlement Agreement, etc. Much time has been required to ensure BLM has addressed its legal obligations for how the allotment has been managed since its adjudication in the 1960s, changes/decisions that have been made since that time, monitoring data, etc. There is a significant amount of background information that is followed by the 2013 – 2016 upland and 2017 PFC monitoring data, which was used to assess the rangeland health standards.

Mr. Sherve noted that review of this document must be completed prior to initiating the NEPA process, which will involve another public comment period. Mr. Ault noted that the livestock permittees will be consulted prior to beginning the public comment period. The livestock permittees will be required to submit a grazing application to the Mount Lewis Field Office with their (permittees) preferred alternative, which will be analyzed in the NEPA document along with other alternatives based on the results of the rangeland health assessment. At the end of the process (March 1, 2019), BLM will select an alternative, which will become the grazing permit.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that BLM must appreciate that the permittees cannot develop their preferred alternative(s) until they have received and verified the rangeland health assessment and its underlying monitoring data. Mr. Ault indicated that the Mount Lewis Field Office has not yet discussed possible alternatives, but, similar to the permittees, is waiting for the rangeland health assessment process to be completed. Mr. Cochran added that is the reason for the gap between the issuance of the final rangeland health assessment and beginning the NEPA process is to develop appropriate alternatives.

Ms. Fite asked if alternatives submitted by the public would be considered in the NEPA document. Mr. Cochran indicated that inclusion of alternatives submitted by the public is a standard practice. Mr. Cochran stressed the alternatives must be well defined in order to be analyzed. Alternatives that are not well defined will, most likely, will be documented in the "alternatives considered but not analyzed" section of the NEPA document.

Ms. Fite indicated that is why she is interested in receiving the 2016 livestock actual use by unit in the mountain use pasture (mentioned previously). Ms. Fite noted that she referenced the 2016 End-of-Year Report as suggested by Ms. Van Riper, but the actual use data depicted in that document lumps all mountain use pastures together. There is no discrete actual use information by unit, which makes it difficult to understand what is going on and if the problems were caused by high stocking levels and/or periods of use.

Mr. Schweigert responded that there is quite a bit of livestock drift between certain use areas that prevents submission of an accurate actual use report. Any such report would merely be a guess, which is of no value. Ms. Fite indicated that was what stockmanship and herding was all about.

Mr. Sherve reiterated that BLM's target for completion of the term permit renewal process is March 1, 2019. The most immediate need is the review and comment on the rangeland health assessment, which, hopefully, will be completed in January 2018.

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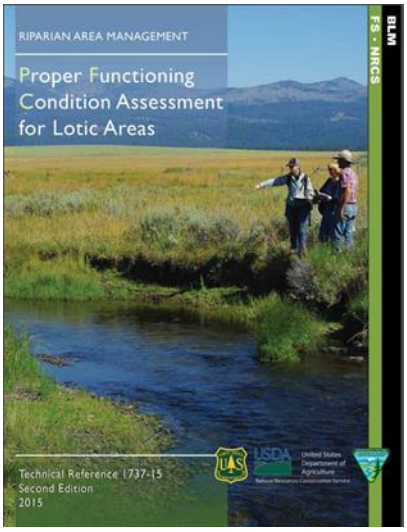

PROPER FUNCTIONING CONDITION UPDATE

BLM uses Technical Reference 1737-15 (inset) entitled *Riparian Area Management: Proper Functioning Condition Assessment for Lotic Areas* (Dickard et al. 2015) to guide assessment of riparian (lotic) areas. There is a similar technical reference for lentic areas.

The technical reference addresses integrated riparian management, which is how Mr. Schroeder thinks about riparian areas and what is happening within those areas. While the riparian area assessment is an important part of the process, it is not the only step. Other parts include (1) examining resource values and identifying management issues, both of which come into play as management alternatives are developed during the NEPA process; (2) establishing objectives for riparian areas; (3) monitoring to determine if objectives are being met, and (4) applying adaptive management.

While the Argenta process involves assessing PFC and the term permit renewal process, PFC assessment can be completed as a stand-alone process. As discussed earlier, the term permit renewal process involves several steps – the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report, NEPA, and issuance of the final term permit.

Riparian PFC data was collected this spring (2017) to support development of the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report for the Argenta allotment.

In his presentation, Mr. Schroeder addressed the larger picture of the PFC assessment process and did not address site specific issues. Table 12 provides a summary of the riparian (lotic) condition ratings for the Argenta allotment in 2017.

Rating	Count	Percent of Count	Cumulative Miles	Percent of Total Miles
Proper Functioning Condition	18	60	13.4	59
Functional-At-Risk – Upward Trend	7	23	5.6	25
Functional-At-Risk – Trend Not Apparent	2	7	0.9	4
Functional-At-Risk – Downward Trend	0	0	0	0
Nonfunctional	3	10	2.7	12
TOTAL	**30**	**100**	**22.6**	**100**

TABLE 12 - SUMMARY OF RIPARIAN (LOTIC) CONDITION RATINGS

Under the PFC protocol, three broad categories of site characteristics are examined – hydrology, geomorphology, and vegetation – and rated against the potential for a specific stream reach. Proper functioning riparian areas is the rangeland health standard that we working to achieve.

Mr. Schroeder emphasized that 84 percent of the total miles within the Argenta allotment fall within the Proper Function Condition or Functional-at-Risk – Upward Trend categories, which means those miles either have the three broad characteristics (hydrology, geomorphology, and vegetation) or are moving toward having those characteristics.

Mr. Schroeder stressed that the information is preliminary, and no formal PFC determination has been made at this point. However, he is comfortable stating the data points that are not being met in relation to PFC standard (i.e., sites that are either nonfunctioning or have less than an upward trend).

Mr. Schroeder indicated that a similar but slight more negative scenario can be found on lentic sites (Table 13) because the sites are isolated, impacts to wetlands tend to be concentrated, and there is not flowing water to help alleviate those impacts.

Rating	Count	Percent of Count	Cumulative Acres	Percent of Total Acres
Proper Functioning Condition	1	10	0.1	2
Functional-At-Risk – Upward Trend	3	30	2.9	61
Functional-At-Risk – Trend Not Apparent	3	30	0.35	8
Functional-At-Risk – Downward Trend	3	30	1.4	29
Nonfunctional	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**10**	**100**	**4.75**	**100**

TABLE 13 - SUMMARY OF WETLAND (LENTIC) CONDITION RATINGS

When addressing the baseline MIM information (Table 14), Mr. Schroeder highlighted the third column (yellow) from the right, which shows all use areas in an early- or very early-seral stage, except for the Indian Creek, which is in a mid-seral stage. This initially appeared to be a discrepancy with the positive PFC assessment results (Table 13). Riparian areas, by their nature (water available, favorable site conditions for vegetation growth, etc.), are dynamic and can respond quickly to management changes, climate changes, etc.

The Argenta allotment experienced several years of drought, which were followed into a few "normal" wet years, at which time the PFC assessments were completed. In addition, the Settlement Agreement came into effect and management changes were made, which influenced conditions on some sites. Those factors came together to give favorable conditions on the sites when the assessments were completed. The sites were rated properly, but must be taken in context.

Site	Species Composition			Streambank			Vegetation		
	% Early Seral	% Mid Seral	% Late Seral	% Alternation	% Stability	% Cover	Ecological Status	Wetland Status	Winward Stability Rating
Fire Creek	64	7	28	26	73	94	Early	Fair	Mid
Corral Canyon	69	7	22	0	87	99	Early	Fair	Low
The Park	69	2	29	15	91	99	Early	Fair	Mid
North Fork of Mill Creek	82	12	3	40	84	93	Very Early	Good	Low
Trout Creek	59	28	9	0	100	100	Early	Good	Low
Crippen Creek	54	4	28	6	60	69	Early	Fair	Mid
Ferris Creek	72	4	21	5	72	80	Early	Fair	Low
Indian Creek	30	58	10	11	73	94	Mid	Fair	Mid
Slaven Creek	66	34	0	0	79	96	Early	Fair	Low

TABLE 14 - MIM DATA (JUNE 2016)

Despite having received good precipitation, the sites have not progressed beyond the early seral stage. If conditions required for achieving PFC are there, the sites should have improved. The only conclusion Mr. Schroeder could reach is that the lack of improvement in the seral stage is due to the impacts to the site. The only thing consistently occurring across the allotment is livestock grazing, which occurs every year and is season-long keeping the sites in an early ecological state.

The next step in the process will be to examine the resource values and identifying management changes that should be implemented on the ground to affect change toward meeting PFC.

Mr. Schroeder re-emphasized that this is preliminary data. Mr. Schroeder has discussed the data and his conclusions with Mr. Mark Gonzalez, who noted that sites that rated well (at PFC or in an upward trend) but are in an early ecological status (based on MIM data), warrant more analysis and examination. Mr. Schroeder has yet to make that deeper examination of this discrepancy. Ms. Van Riper noted that this issue needs to be rectified when addressing Question 11.[8]

Mr. Schweigert noted that he does not see the difference between the lotic PFC and MIM data as a discrepancy because the MIM stratification protocol, by design, selects the most sensitive areas, which are typically the most accessible areas. Mr. Schweigert noted that Mr. Steve Smith gives an excellent presentation of how sensitive spots will repeat themselves over the landscape as one travels down the creek, which is generally true in real life. In the Argenta allotment, the upper watershed meadows are the most sensitive areas, which have been the most impacted areas for the past 150 years because they are easily accessible to livestock. Mr. Schweigert acknowledged that there has been season-long grazing without any significant management action; therefore, these sites will show the worst impact by design of the MIM protocol. One concern Mr. Schweigert has with the MIM protocol is that it concentrates on smaller spots and loses sight of the big picture. It would be easier to address issues on smaller areas; rather than taking a large landscape approach by saying we need to change management on 86 percent of the stream because 14 percent isn't so good. We should be concentrating on the 14 percent.

[12/06/2017 CLARIFICATION SCHWEIGERT CLARIFICATION: The repeating sensitive areas that are discussed by Mr. Smith, and are part of the MIM stratification protocols, do not repeat themselves on Trout Creek, North Fork of Mill Creek (in particular). The sensitive areas at the headwaters have been impacted, but the remainder of the streams lengths, which are "less sensitive" areas controlled by woody species dominance and rock/boulder substrates, are largely at PFC. Any "cures" need to fit the impacted areas, not adversely impact livestock grazing as a whole in the drainages.]

Ms. Dafoe used Trout Creek - Reach #2 as an example where the PFC assessment was completed on reaches that were not within the MIM DMA. Ms. Dafoe stressed that "apples should be compared to apples". It is difficult to compare MIM data collected on one tributary with data collected on another tributary where PFC data was collected. It is important to compare "apples to apples" when looking a MIM data, which is a monitoring protocol and PFC, which is an assessment protocol. Mr. Schroeder indicated that he would not do that. Ms. Dafoe provided another example, where, in Rock Creek, an altered state that was heavily impacted by a road was not mentioned. There were areas in Hilltop where a road drastically impacts the site, which was analyzed in a way that falls under the PFC assessment, but there were other extenuating circumstances.

Mr. Schroeder agreed with both comments (one from Mr. Schweigert and the second by Ms. Dafoe). When Mr. Schroeder completes the more in-depth review, it will be what Ms. Dafoe suggested because the DMAs are very site-specific and does not examine the whole system like the PFC assessment. Mr. Schroeder has thought about Mr. Schweigert's comment and believes it is not as simple as the DMA being designed to show the impacts. On the Argenta allotment, there are a limited number of sites that fit the MIM protocol. If conditions across the allotment are showing an early seral stage, it would be too encompassing a statement to say it is solely due to the bias in the protocol. That may be part of the explanation, but it is hard to believe it is the entire explanation.

Mr. Schroeder noted that when alternatives are developed to manage for resource values and address management changes, it will be necessary to address the more localized, smaller areas, which cannot be done with a broad-brush approach.

Ms. Fite noted that PFC, by its nature, is arbitrary. The biases of individuals involved influence the outcome of the PFC assessment. Whether the site has been grazed already in the year (or not) heavily influences the perception of those

[8] Adequate riparian-wetland vegetative cover is present to protect banks and dissipate energy during high flows (page 42 of TR 1737-15).

conducting the PFC assessment. So, it is, at least, a biased look at conditions on the ground at one point in time. In the context of a DMA, one can see from the roads how hammered every wetland or riparian area is in the allotment. Ms. Fite stated that the DMAs have been rigged by the selection of new monitoring sites as well as building exclosures over all or a part of them to make conditions look more favorable on the ground. This is a big part of putting up these "band-aid" fences prior to having a complete assessment of the conditions, which screws up the baseline and long-term data that might be collected at the site.

Mr. Schweigert asked Ms. Fite if there was any BLM protocol with which she agrees, as it appears she doesn't agree with anything BLM has done to date. Ms. Fite indicated that she liked the MIM trampling (streambank alteration or stability) protocol, but, unfortunately, it wasn't a standard in this allotment under the settlement agreement. Mr. Schweigert asked if collecting one out of 17 indicators would be biased in itself. Ms. Fite indicated that she didn't understand what Mr. Schweigert was asking as there have been many papers written on how arbitrary PFC actually is.

Mr. Lunn interrupted the discussion by indicating that we were not going to debate the merits of PFC, which is an accepted BLM protocol.

Mr. Paul Tomera noted that 84 percent of the total miles of stream were either at PFC or had an upward trend toward PFC, and asked what the State of Nevada average would be. Mr. Schroeder indicated that he did not know what the state average would be. Mr. Tomera asked if Mr. Schroeder believed 84 percent was a good average for the State of Nevada. Mr. Schroeder indicated that 84 percent was probably on the higher end. With that statement, Mr. Tomera cautioned the Permit Renewal team not to reinvent the wheel when it came time to consider alternative management. If 84 percent of the streams in the allotment are at PFC or Functioning-At-Risk with an upward trend, there may not be need for drastic changes. Making huge changes may not result in what we're trying to achieve. Mr. Tomera views 84 percent as saying the Argenta allotment doesn't need a complete overhaul.

Ms. Dafoe reiterated a point she made earlier that, during the PFC assessment, Ms. Fite had, by her own admission, had not read the revised PFC manual nor, to Ms. Dafoe's knowledge, had any professional or otherwise MIM training. Therefore, comments that have been made need to be taken into account, but aren't from someone who has had this training versus others in the room who have had the training.

Mr. Schweigert noted that Table 1 of Mr. Schroeder's handout referenced Trout Creek Reaches 1 and 2, but made no mention of Reach 3 and 4. Mr. Schroeder indicated that the sites shown on Table 1 were those that were assessed. Sites may have been delineated, but not assessed. Referencing the map (Figure 8), Mr. Schroeder noted that Reach 3 and 4 were highlighted in grey, which means they were delineated, but not assessed because, based on aerial imagery, they are confined, are a woody dominated system, receive little livestock impact, and are believed to either be at PFC, or possibly their potential. Assessing these reaches was not the best use of time or resources.

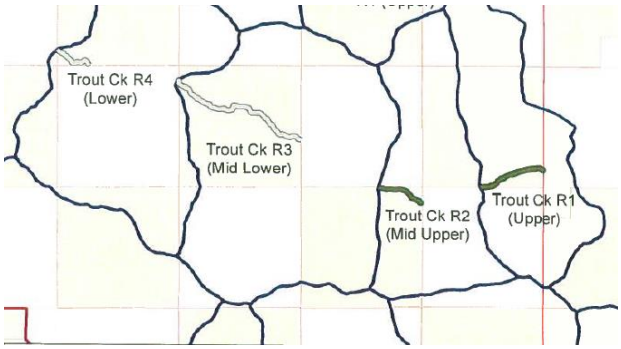

FIGURE 8 - TROUT CREEK PFC SITES

[12.7.17 Note from Mr. Gonzalez - The process for assessing stream reach by aerial imagery is already outlined in the new TR 1737-15. It is referred to as "Remote imagery with selective ground inspection." Under this protocol, PFC rating can't be assumed. The process outlined in the TR needs to be following, using an interdisciplinary team and documenting results on the PFC assessment form. This is the way to truly determine what percentage of streams in a project area (e.g. permit renewal area/allotment) are in PFC, FAR, and NF.]

Mr. Schroeder noted that had these reaches been assessed, they would have placed a more positive outlook on the figures displayed in Table 11. The approach that was taken should be considered to be conservative in terms of managing resources on the ground. Mr. Schweigert requested that an additional column be added to Table 11 displaying those figures (i.e., Reaches 3 and 4) as described by Mr. Schroeder, which would provide a more proper perspective. Ms. Dafoe noted that any area assessed from a geospatial standpoint that were assumed to be at PFC should be included (or counted).

Ms. Dafoe participated in assessment of Trout Creek Reach 2, where it was agreed Reaches 3 and 4 would have mimicked the landscape and features of Reach 2, and were, subsequently, geospatially assessed and determined to be at PFC. Reach 2 would have been representative of Reaches 3 and 4. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Schroeder will discuss the request made by Mr. Schweigert to incorporate stream reaches that were geospatially assessed into the summary of riparian condition ratings for the Argenta allotment.**

Mr. Lunn asked if the total miles of riparian (lotic) habitat in the Argenta allotment were available. Mr. Schroeder does have the total miles of riparian habitat at his office, but thought the assessed sites were approximately 75 percent of the total. Mr. Dan Tomera asked if a high percentage of the remaining 25 percent (not assessed) would be at PFC based on geospatial assessments. Mr. Schroeder stated that he would not assume the remaining 25 percent would be at PFC. When determining which sites to assess, decisions were made, in part, based on some sites were not likely to have impacts and, after examining aerial imagery, looked to be in good shape.

Ms. Fite asked if there was a map available of all the sites considered (those assessed and not assessed) and a rationale as to why some sites were not assessed. Mr. Schroeder noted that the maps sent to Ms. Fite in a .pdf format by Mr. Ault will show the rating for each assessed site. Stream reaches not assessed will be highlighted in grey, similar to Figure 8. The rationale as to why a site was identified for assessment (or not to be assessed) is not provided in the .pdf document sent to Ms. Fite, but will be included in the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report.

Ms. Fite asked if there will be more lentic PFC monitoring collected before the assessment proceeds much further. Ms. Fite expressed a concern, after attending the PFC monitoring in May 2017, that a site was rejected. Ms. Fite noted that she was not involved in the rejection decision and was not aware of the rationale for its rejection. Ms. Fite revisited the site later in the fall and found that it had been "beat to death" – absolutely trampled to death and grazed to its lowest level, which is the same condition seen at many springs, seeps, and other areas in the allotment. Ms. Fite fears that many sites were rejected in the process for reasons such as there wasn't enough flow, or it wasn't defined enough. Those are the areas that are going to be permanently lost to sage-grouse and other wildlife if past livestock use practices are continued in those areas. Ms. Fite is very concerned that the assessment will focus only on sites where data has been collected, which would undercut any outcome that would protect springs, seeps, and other stream segments across the allotment.

Mr. Lunn asked Ms. Fite to restate her question, to which Mr. Sherve noted that the original question was if there was going to be additional PFC (lentic) monitoring prior to completing the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report. Mr. Sherve indicated the response was no. The window for collecting additional data has closed or is quickly closing. Mr. Ault indicated that the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report must be finalized, which cannot be done without delaying the entire process by at least a year.

Ms. Fite asked if BLM typically issues draft rangeland health assessment and evaluation reports that are provided to the public for comment. If so, there should be time for collection of additional data prior to development of the final rangeland health assessment and evaluation report. Mr. Ault indicated that if additional data collected after release of the draft assessment creates a substantial change in the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report, BLM would need reissue a draft assessment for a second public comment period.

Mr. Lunn suggested there may be an issue with the current protocol for monitoring and assessing lentic areas. Ms. Van Riper indicated there is PFC protocol for lentic areas, but the MIM monitoring protocol for lentic areas is being developed. Ms. Dafoe noted that the PFC protocol for lentic areas is being updated.

Mr. Schroeder noted that as he was preparing for the riparian wetland assessment in the spring 2016, he consulted with Margie Gooseman (BLM Wildlife Biologist on the Permit Renewal team) extensively about her data needs for completing an assessment of sage-grouse habitat. The sites selected for PFC assessment were largely driven by Ms. Gooseman's data needs. In terms of sage-grouse habitat, Mr. Schroeder is comfortable that the PFC assessment provides the appropriate data. Choices were made as to the sites to be assessed to obtain adequate data (coverage) to draw conclusions about conditions on the ground.

In reference to Ms. Fite's earlier statement, Ms. Van Riper noted that streambank alternation was believed by most involved in the PFC assessment to be an important indicator that should be monitored. It was included in the Settlement

Agreement, but, as part of the negotiations, it was decided that it would not be used (1) as a livestock "move" trigger or threshold or (2) to base the success (or failure) in meeting EOS parameters, but was collected to inform long-term management changes. The streambank alternation data should be considered by the Permit Renewal team as it completes the rangeland health assessment.

Mr. Schroeder explained that items such as stubble height, streambank alteration, and woody browse, are more annual indicators, which don't lend themselves to determining long-term trend, and are not particularly useful for the rangeland health assessment and evaluation. Annual indicators will be examined when it's time to examine the resource values and management issues at each site as management alternatives are being developed.

2017 GRAZING MANAGEMENT & STOCKMANSHIP PLAN REVIEW

Mr. Steve Leonard provided an overview of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan by describing the actual livestock rotation patterns and issues observed during the year.

TOMERA RANCHES 2017 STOCKMANSHIP PLAN

Tomera Ranches submitted monthly actual use reports, but a 2017 summary of actual use data has not been compiled as of yet.

In early March 2017, the plan was to turn livestock out on the East Flat, West Flat, Winter, and South pastures. As conditions permitted, the livestock were moved up the mountain through the canyons. Water was a limited resource; therefore, livestock were dispersed through stockmanship efforts. In accordance with 2016 discussions relating to early sage-grouse nesting and early brood-rearing, livestock were again dispersed through stockmanship efforts to avoid concentration of animals.

Approximately July 1st, the plan was to remove livestock from Mule Canyon, Crippen, Trout Creek, and North Fork, and distribute them to the remaining areas. No livestock were turned out into The Park in 2017. Stockmanship efforts were focused on removing animals from riparian areas. As observed from the monitoring data, stockmanship efforts were ineffective in keeping animals out of the upper ends of the canyons as well as The Park. Changes will be proposed in the 2018 Stockmanship Plan to address these issues.

As use levels were reached or in early September (whichever came first), livestock would be moved into the East and West Flat Use Areas.

Overall, upland efforts worked well, and significant progress was made, despite not having several sensitive areas fenced as planned. There are opportunities for improvement during the hot season, which will be proposed in the 2018 Stockmanship Plan. There has been significant progress made since 2015 when part of the upland sites and only one of nine riparian sites met or achieved monitoring thresholds. As noted earlier in the meeting, 100 percent of the upland sites and 62 percent of the riparian sites either met or likely met thresholds.

Mr. Paul Tomera noted that livestock were placed in North Fork and Trout Creek use areas early, and later placed into Chicken Creek and Ferris Creek. Monitoring data doesn't appear to demonstrate the success of the stockmanship efforts to keep livestock out of the riparian areas. On two occasions later in the season (August), riders were sent to Trout Creek where no livestock were found. Moving into the 2018 Stockmanship Plan, North Fork will serve as a buffer area, which was found to work when livestock were pushed into Chicken Creek and/or Ferris Creek in 2017.

Mr. Tomera indicated that, in 2016, livestock were removed from The Park into the Maysville North use area using a slope with gentle incline and with water available in the canyon. Those livestock had a tendency to repeatedly drift back into the canyon to water. Conversely, in 2017, livestock were removed from The Park by driving them up a steep hill into the Slaven use area. Under this scenario, a very small number of livestock drifted back into The Park. The number of livestock removed as well as the number of animals drifting back into The Park were lower in 2017, as compared to 2016. Although not shown in the monitoring data, the 2017 approach was a success.

CHIARA RANCH

The 2017 Stockmanship plan was to use the two use areas in accordance with the Grazing Permit/Lease and use low-stress stockmanship to keep livestock dispersed. As growing conditions permit, livestock were moved up the canyons to minimize concentrated disturbance. Use levels were monitored, and livestock removed as use levels were approached or met; or at the end of the grazing season, whichever occurred first.

Upland monitoring thresholds in the Harry Canyon use area were met. Riparian monitoring results for the Mill Creek DMA were also met, as been previously discussed.

FILLIPINNI RANCHES

Grazing begin in the Fire Creek Use Area to utilize the upland areas early, which minimized use of riparian areas. Approximately June 1 the livestock were moved into the Horse Haven and Whirlwind Valley Use Areas. Later in the season, after seed ripe, the livestock were moved into the Sansinena Use Area, where they remained until either the use levels or the end of the season was reached.

There were bank alternation issues identified on Fire Creek, which should be addressed with plans proposed by the Klondex mine. Mr. Mariluch indicated that instead of placing all livestock in the Fire Creek use area, in 2018, plans are to place approximately half the livestock into this area. The remaining livestock will be placed in the Whirlwind Valley use area.

2018 STOCKMANSHIP PLAN

FILIPPINI RANCHES

The 2018 Stockmanship Plan for Filippini Ranches was addressed during the 2017 Stockmanship Plan review.

Mr. Mariluch asked if taking one-third to one-half less livestock into the Fire Creek use area would help address bank alteration issues. Mr. Ault indicated that the Fire Creek use area has the same issue as in The Park (Maysville North Use Area) and the Trout Creek Use Area under the Tomera Ranches permit. Livestock are removed from the area, but it requires a constant effort to keep livestock out of the area. Despite being unsure if placing less animals in the use area will significantly affect or improve the bank alteration issue, Mr. Ault thought it was a good way to move forward. It was noted that the upland and riparian monitoring thresholds were met in 2017.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that there shouldn't be an issue once BLM completes the NEPA process for the Fire Creek Mine Mitigation project. Mr. Ault suggested moving forward with the 2018 grazing plan as if the mine fence was not constructed. Mr. Cochran noted that the first draft of the EA for the Fire Creek Mine Mitigation project has been received from the contractor, which required significant changes. The contractor is scheduled to provide a second draft of the EA to BLM by mid-December, which, once finalized, will be released to the public for review.

Ms. Dryer asked if the Fire Creek Mitigation Project might be implement by September 2018. Mr. Cochran indicated that that was a possibility; however, there are several actions that must be completed before anything can occur on the ground. Under the best-case scenario, the EA would be ready for public review by mid to late-January 2018.

Ms. Fite asked if the Fire Creek Mitigation Project was for sage-grouse mitigation, which is an area that no longer has any sage-grouse. Mr. Cochran indicated that it is mitigation for the mine, and that there is some sage-grouse habitat in the area.

Ms. Fite asked if other permittees trail through the use areas. Mr. Ault indicated that, historically, Tomera Ranches and Newmont both had sheep permits on the Argenta and Carrico Lake allotments. Through a grazing preference transfer, Tomera Ranches obtained all sheep AUMs on the Argenta allotment and Newmont obtained all sheep AUMs on the

Carrico Lake allotment. In addition, Newmont has some winter cattle use on the Argenta allotment in the Sansinena Use Area, which is billed out of the Elko BLM District Office.

Barrick has grazing use in the Indian Creek, Corral Canyon, and County Line Use Areas. When the initial closure decision was made, C Ranches (now Barrick) did not appeal, so they did not have standing, and were not a signatory party to the Settlement Agreement.

Mr. Cochran noted that there may be minimal livestock drift occurring in the Granite Mountain area.

CHIARA RANCH

The 2018 Stockmanship Plan for Tierra Ranch was addressed during the 2017 Stockmanship Plan review.

TOMERA RANCHES

When addressing the Tomera Ranches 2018 Stockmanship Plan, Mr. Schweigert noted that there is not much of a problem with upland utilization in the Mule Canyon and East Flat use areas. The riparian data for the Maysville North Use Area continues to be troublesome to the permittees. In addition, the Trout Creek Use Area continues to be a problem.

To address the issues identified in 2017, three options have been developed.

Management of the Trout Creek Use Area will be the same for every option (details under option 1). There will be no cows in Maysville North during the hot season under every option. Under option 1, the cows will stay in Mule Canyon, which is fenced off. Under option 2, the cows will go into Maysville North early and then into Mule Canyon. Under option 3, the cows will go into Maysville North early and then to Maysville South, placing the cattle deep down Indian Creek drainage, and control with topography and riding.

OPTION 1

TROUT CREEK USE AREA

To address issues in the Trout Creek Use Area, under Plan 1, no livestock will be placed in the use area in 2018. After July 1st, riders will spend approximately 4-5 days per week in the Trout Creek Use Area. Helicopter surveillance will also be conducted once per week to ensure livestock do not use the area. The intent is to push any livestock out of Trout Creek and North Fork use areas into Chicken Creek and Ferris Creek areas (Maysville South), as it is unlikely the livestock will drift back due to topographical boundaries. There is water on private land in the North Fork, Trout, and Crippen Creeks, which will serve as the late season use area for livestock.

MAYSVILLE NORTH USE AREA

To address issues in the Maysville North Use Area, under Plan 1, livestock will not be placed in the use area in 2018. Mr. Schweigert noted that if The Park exclosure (Round 3 project) can be constructed as soon as the legal challenges have been addressed, some livestock may be removed from the Mule Canyon Use Area and placed in the Maysville North Use Area, which, if it happens, would not occur until after September 15th. [12/6/2017 UPDATE: The ALJ placed a stay on this construction, pending review on the merits, which the ALJ noted will likely be addressed before September 15, 2018.]

MULE CANYON USE AREA

In 2017, approximately 600 head of livestock grazed the Mule Canyon Use Area early utilizing approximately 2,400 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) resulting in five or six percent utilization. In 2018, the proposal is to use the Mule Canyon Use Area season-long with approximately 600 head. Livestock will be initially placed in upper elevation areas when natural water sources can provide sufficient water.

As the natural water sources begin to dry up or a decision is made to begin water hauling, water will be hauled to either lower elevation sites on BLM and/or private land. Tomera Ranches is working to obtain the necessary authority to haul water to private land, and would like to have the same authority for BLM lands using the water haul sites authorized under the September 2, 2015, drought decision. No new sites are being proposed on public land. Mr. Schweigert noted that the sites authorized under the 2015 decision were not used in either 2015, 2016, or 2017.

Later in the discussion, Mr. Mariluch asked for BLM's position on using the water haul sites approved under the September 2015 drought decision. Mr. Sherve indicated that BLM would support hauling of water to private land sites,

but the sites on public land would have to be addressed through the NEPA process. Mr. Schweigert reiterated that the proposed sites have been culturally cleared and approved previously under the September 2, 2015 drought decision.

Mr. Ault indicated that the Mount Lewis Field Office completed a *Document of NEPA Adequacy* (DNA) to authorize those water haul sites. To authorize those sites again, BLM would have to either (1) use the drought EA, which does not apply to today's conditions, or (2) issue a Categorical Exclusion (CX), which involves a new decision and the administrative remedies (appeal) process.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that additional clarity is needed as to where BLM stands because there was an e-mail from Mr. Furtado (Battle Mountain District Manager) stating BLM would not process any range improvements. Mr. Schweigert stated the language in that e-mail indicated "any additional infrastructure", but these water haul sites have already been approved.

Mr. Mariluch stressed that the permittees are developing a stockmanship plan that addresses identified issues, which will probably take both sides (permittees and BLM) working together to solve the issues.

Ms. Dafoe asked for additional clarification as to the e-mail and its intent. Ms. Van Riper indicated that the intent was no "additional range improvement projects including water hauls" in 2018.

Mr. Schweigert noted that he has not received a copy of the string of e-mails. Ms. Van Riper felt like Mr. Furtado should send the e-mail, but since he (Mr. Furtado) hadn't replied to either Ms. Van Riper or Mr. Schweigert, perhaps the e-mail should be forwarded by one of them. Mr. Schweigert expressed his frustration by stating "we're dealing in a freaking black box". We don't know what the rationale was, to which Ms. Van Riper indicated that she had summarized and conveyed what was stated by Mr. Furtado, without forwarding all of the messages.

Mr. Sherve indicated that the rationale is (1) BLM has been a lot of time on the Argenta allotment and (2) there are 87 other allotments that require attention. There are multiple, non-discretionary mining workloads consuming a significant amount of the renewable resources staff time. BLM has developed a balance going into 2017 between the Argenta allotment and the needs of the rest of the District's workloads. The District has a list of workloads that is over 300-line items, which require a significant amount of time to prioritize. In summary, it is a combination of things, but BLM has spent a lot of time and there is a lot of other stuff that has been building up for the past several years.

Mr. Schweigert noted that Tomera Ranches has also spent a lot of money and time on this allotment, addressing issues not raised by them, but by BLM. This approach is an easy fix for an issue. Mr. Schweigert is confident that BLM will receive an application from the permittees that they (BLM) will need to act on. Mr. Sherve indicated that nothing BLM does is easy. Even completing the CX process, which is the easiest NEPA process, isn't easy and will probably trigger another round of litigation. What seems easy on the front, requires a ton of work on the back side. BLM has a heavy workload and attention on other projects.

Ms. Dafoe noted that, in the past three years, Tomera Ranches has experienced a reduction in their calf crop, has spent a significant amount of money, and are sitting in a meeting when they should be out weaning calves. Everyone in this room, including the NRST, has a large workload. She came off a mountain in Idaho yesterday to come to this meeting. Everyone has that type of workload. With that said, Ms. Dafoe referenced Section 9 (page 11 of the Settlement Agreement), which she read.

> Upon its receipt of permittees' applications, BLM will issue a decision in accordance with 43 C.F.R. subpart 4160 on proposed water hauls sites within 30 days, provided no resources are identified that require consultation (such as under Section 106 of the NHPA), for the following sites identified by Permittees as high priority for water hauling: East Flat, Mule Canyon, North Maysville, South Maysville, Harry Canyon, and Indian Creek Use Areas. If a proposed decision is protested, BLM will issue a Final Decision within 15 days of its receipt of the protest(s). BLM commits to review other proposals as appropriate and to expedite consideration of such proposals where appropriate during the Interim Management Period.

Ms. Dafoe indicated that, based on Section 9, it is her opinion, that BLM should have included that into its workload analysis. Mr. Ault noted that the reference provided does not require a decision to authorize the request, but solely requires a decision to be issued. BLM could issue a decision denying the application within the identified timeframes, which serve as their "workload" planning.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that BLM signed the Settlement Agreement. Mr. Ault indicated that he understood that BLM signed the Settlement Agreement, which is why the Argenta allotment has had several CXs and DNAs completed. There has been a lot of effort put in by the Mount Lewis Field Office staff while many other range users haven't had anything.

Mr. Lunn summarized that Mr. Furtado send an e-mail, which was paraphrased by Ms. Van Riper and sent to others (livestock permittees, Mr. Furtado, Mr. Sherve, Mr. Ault, and Mr. Massey) basically stating that additional range improvement projects (including water hauls) would not be processed. Ms. Van Riper indicated that there was a conversation with the permittees and Mr. Ault where the Mule Canyon topic was broached, including the potential use of CXs for water hauls, the need for applications, etc. In advance of Mr. Schweigert, Mr. Leonard, and the permittees working together to develop alternatives for the 2018 grazing season, Ms. Van Riper felt they should be aware of any decision where BLM would not process water hauls. Ms. Van Riper found and read directly from the e-mail, as stated below:

> "BLM will not be processing any new range improvement proposals for the Argenta allotment in FY2018".

After receiving the e-mail, Ms. Van Riper asked if water hauls count as a range improvement project. The answer was yes because they constitute a draft and final decision subject to appeal.

Ms. Dafoe indicated that they've heard the conversation that other range users are not getting this or that, but the other range users were not told that they were not going to be able to turn out.

Mr. Lunn asked if Mr. Furtado's e-mail was the definitive answer that BLM will not process the water haul application. Mr. Sherve indicated that Mr. Furtado's e-mail was the definitive answer. BLM will accept the applications, but will essentially deny them.

Ms. Dow asked if there was opportunity to haul water to sites on private land as part of the approach to grazing in the Mule Canyon use area, if hauling water to BLM sites is not possible. Mr. Cochran indicated that BLM has always encouraged permittees to explore private land options first. Ms. Van Riper indicated that the 2018 approach as presented by Mr. Schweigert would require a combination of sites, both on BLM and private land. To achieve the correct distribution, hauling water on BLM sites is necessary.

Ms. Fite noted that herders could also be used to help distribute the livestock. Mr. Schweigert indicated that livestock cannot be distributed to areas that do not have water.

Mrs. Lynn Tomera asked why it was necessary to complete the entire NEPA/decision process again, if the water haul sites had been previously approved, culturally cleared, etc. Mr. Sherve indicated that previously it was addressed through a different analysis. Mrs. Tomera indicated that they are the exact same sites, the same positive and negative impacts, etc. Ms. Fite noted that the previous analysis and approval was completed through the drought EA. Mr. Schweigert also indicated that the analysis was done under the drought EA, which analyzed the impacts (good and bad) of hauling water.

Ms. Kite asked if we were still discussing the Mule Canyon use area, which she thought was going to be grazed early. Mr. Leonard and Mr. Schweigert clarified that the upper elevation areas of the Mule Canyon use area would be grazed early in the season, afterwards, the livestock would be moved to lower elevation areas (within the Mule Canyon use area) where water hauling and one well will be used to avoid livestock concentration. The lower elevation areas are well represented by the upland monitoring sites, which showed very light (or no) utilization in 2017. In many areas Forage Kochia has not been grazed. In other areas, cheatgrass needs to be grazed to reduce fuel loading and the fire hazard.

Ms. Fite asked if the livestock would be in the Mule Canyon use area for the entire grazing season. Mr. Schweigert indicated that livestock would be in the Mule Canyon use area throughout the season, but would utilize (graze) different

locations within the use area by controlling available water. As utilization in an area approaches the upland grazing threshold, water would be hauled to a new, ungrazed area, and livestock would be placed on that water site. Ms. Van Riper noted that the intent of maintaining the 600 head of livestock in the Mule Canyon use area season-long was to reduce the number of livestock using other use areas, which will make it easier to achieve the commitment to not graze the Maysville North Use Area.

Getting back to Plan 1, Mr. Schweigert noted that the pivot well near the "Mule Canyon New" monitoring site will not be turned on early in the season, in order to address a bloat problem with Forage Kochia.

Mr. Leonard added that the upper elevations of the Mule Canyon use area, including Water Canyon, which contain natural waters in the early season, are separated from the lower elevation areas of the Mule Canyon Use Area by a fence. [12-06-2017 CLARIFICATION SCHWEIGERT CLARIFICATION: Water Canyon is separated by a fence at lower elevation and topopgraphy (though such topographic semaration is not perfect) from the remainder of the Mule Canyon Use Area.]

Ms. Fite asked if Water Canyon was part of the Mule Canyon Use Area, which it is. Ms. Fite noted that during the Spring 2017 PFC assessment, the upland areas of Water Canyon area were very heavily used and trampled during a harmful period of time for the forbs and native grasses. Early use is hammering those areas that are in a relatively better condition. Mr. Leonard indicated that he could not respond to Ms. Fite's comments specifically as he did not attend the Spring 2017 PFC assessment, and noted that that area has been historically used in that manner.

Ms. Dafoe inquired as to the vegetative species that Ms. Kite was referring that were "hammered". Ms. Kite indicated the species would have included the forbs present during the field tour, which she thought were flox, buckwheat, and several composites. Ms. Fite also noted that the inter-spaces were heavily trampled as they were moist – too moist for cows to be using the area. Ms. Fite noted that in the past, Forage Kochia had been aerial seeded in that area and has been increasing, at the disadvantage of the native species. The more grazing that occurs in the spring, the more Forage Kochia will be seen, and the native species are being weakened.

Mr. Schweigert noted that Forage Kochia is considered a beneficial species for not only livestock, but wildlife including mule deer and pronghorn. Ms. Fite indicated that may be true, but it is a very aggressive species outcompeting native plants. Mr. Schweigert asked if Ms. Fite had any data to support her statements, or if we are dealing with opinion. Ms. Fite indicated that we're dealing with scientific research done in the Snake River Birds of Prey area. Mr. Schweigert indicated that he isn't talking about that article, but her observation where she is making a trend statement. Mr. Schweigert would like to understand Ms. Fite's baseline data and what she is seeing now. Ms. Fite indicated that her baseline would be the 2001 or 2002 fire after which Forage Kochia was aerially seeded over a significant amount of county. There are young as well as old Forage Kochia plants, which demonstrates Forage Kochia's reproduction and increase. In addition, there are extensive amounts of bare ground for Forage Kochia to move into. Trampling of bare ground favors Forage Kochia and other weeds moving in. We went from no Forage Kochia to Forage Kochia with all age classes being prevalent, which means Forage Kochia is increasing.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the native forbs referenced by Ms. Fite were also aerial seeded, some of which are varieties. Ms. Fite's term of "natives" may not be a disclaimer as most of the area was aerial seeded after the fires. Ms. Fite asked if we knew what natives were aerial seeded, in particular, if buckwheat or yarrow was part of the seed mix. Ms. Fite noted that there is not much yarrow in the area. Ms. Fite did not know if BLM was aerially seeding yarrow at that time. Ms. Van Riper asked if BLM knew what the aerial seed mix was. Mr. Cochran indicated the seed mix could be looked up, but he did not know off the top of his head what forbs were included. Mr. Cochran noted that crested wheatgrass and Forage Kochia were a part of the seed mix.

Ms. Dafoe noted that she documented species in 2016 while completing monitoring studies. She isn't sure if the seed mix was reviewed at that time, but there have been extensive discussions concerning the areas that were aerially seeded. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Cochran will provide the CMG with a list of species that were aerially seeded in the Mule Canyon Use Area.**

Mr. Leonard summarized that the 2018 approach under Plan 1 is to use the lower portions of the Mule Canyon Use Area during the hot season. In the hot season, water would be hauled to lower elevation areas of the use area, and livestock

placed on those water sources. Once an area has been appropriately grazed, the water site would be moved to another ungrazed area, thus creating a pseudo-rotation system. Mr. Schweigert added that livestock would be removed from Water Canyon on or about July 1.

In summary, Plan 1 is designed to (1) not place 600 head of livestock in other use areas where there have been issues in higher elevation country, (2) not graze the Trout Creek or Maysville North use areas, (3) focus stockmanship efforts on the Trout Creek and Maysville North use areas four to five days a week combined with aerial surveillance, and (4) after July 1, move livestock to Indian Creek and Maysville South use areas.

OPTION 2

MAYSVILLE NORTH

Livestock use would begin in the Maysville North Use Area by March 15 or as early as ground and forage conditions permit. Beginning July 1, livestock would be moved to the Mule Canyon Use Area.

Ms. Fite thought going into the Maysville North Use Area as early as March 15 was a terrible plan, especially for sage-grouse, and that early season grazing in the upper Water Canyon area was one of her concerns.

Ms. Dafoe tried to recall what parts of the Maysville North use area were considered sage-grouse habitat. She didn't think The Park was considered sage-grouse habitat. Ms. Fite indicated that it was sage-grouse habitat.

MULE CANYON USE AREA

Livestock would be moved from the Maysville North Use Area into the Mule Canyon Use Area beginning July 1. The existing BLM water infrastructure will be used.

Using the Mule Canyon Use Area during the hot season will require water to be hauled to private sites, and public land sites, if approved.

Ms. Fite noted that this would be a terrible plan for sage-grouse. Ms. Fite asked if range readiness was still a criterion for turning out livestock. Mr. Schweigert indicated that he stated, "as conditions permit".

Ms. Fite asked what happens if livestock get turned out early, then, as it always does, it rains in the spring when the soils are already moist, resulting in everything getting grossly trampled, which is what cheatgrass and other invasive weeds thrive on (extensive disturbance of the soil). Trampling in the spring when soils are moist also tears apart native bunch grasses and forbs. It also means livestock will be eating forbs and grasses during their active and critical growing period, which is of concern. March 15 is too early for grazing native plants in sagebrush country, if you want the native plants to persist over time.

Mr. Paul Tomera asked Ms. Fite if there was anything the permittees could do that would make her happy. Ms. Fite indicated that what she thought should have been done since the beginning of the process was to complete the assessment to determine what needs to be done to minimize harm to the habitat and the watershed. Instead, there is a constant reshuffling and putting up little fences around areas, which shifts impacts elsewhere, and intensifies the use. It's merely playing a game of trying to avoid impacting monitoring sites while, at the same time, sacrificing other areas that aren't being monitored.

Mr. Tomera noted that the 2018 Stockmanship Plan focuses on addressing the two problem areas – The Park and Trout Creek – by using other areas that haven't experienced the negative impacts seen in those two, but Ms. Fite keeps identifying issues with this approach. Ms. Fite noted that Water Canyon had not received any riparian monitoring this fall (2017); therefore, the plan proposes to intensity grazing use in areas where there is no monitoring to determine what's going on.

Mr. Lunn asked Mr. Schweigert to address Ms. Fite's question relating to range readiness and the soil condition. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that the permittees have sat in meetings with Mr. Furtado who is talking about using these areas early in the season, essentially following the snow line up the canyons.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that he is at a loss as to how to respond to Ms. Fite as he isn't sure what issue she would like to address. Livestock are authorized to graze anywhere and everywhere on the Argenta allotment beginning March 1 through February 28. The permittees are trying to address issues on Rock Creek and The Park, both of which have a monitoring site and have not been fenced. The intent of the proposed Option 1 plan is to eliminate livestock from the use area in 2018, that could potentially utilize Rock Creek and/or The Park.

Ms. Van Riper asked for more clarification on the statement "as conditions allow". Mr. Schweigert wasn't sure if the Mount Lewis Field Office has range readiness criteria, but, from a permittee standpoint, they (permittees) look to see if the soils are dry enough and if cheatgrass is growing. The intent is to utilize cheatgrass as it begins to grow.

Ms. Van Riper noted that range readiness has been discussed by the CMG in the past because there was concern that a range readiness analysis was not conducted in 2016. As a result of that concern, Mr. Leonard and Mr. Steve Cote performed a range readiness analysis at the beginning of the 2017 grazing season. BLM does not technically complete range readiness studies on all allotments prior to turnout; rather, it is left to the permittees to make that decision. Mr. Cochran noted that BLM typically conducts range readiness studies in allotments where needed, as determined through an evaluation process. The Argenta allotment has not had such an evaluation, which might be something to consider through the permit renewal process. Mr. Cochran hasn't seen a range readiness requirement on a Nevada grazing permit, but has seen it in other states where he has worked.

Ms. Van Riper noted that range readiness is not being ignored when determining when livestock should be put on the range. Readiness criteria do not technically existing for the Argenta allotment, and NRST and the permittees have gone into the field prior to livestock turnout to discuss and understand the rationale for why conditions were acceptable for livestock turnout. It is being done, even though it is not required.

Mr. Lunn noted that the Argenta allotment is the state's highest priority for completing the term permit renewal process. The allotment has never had a management plan and, through direction of the Settlement Agreement, as much as possible was to be learned about the allotment's management strategies, which could, in turn, be used to make the grazing permit renewal process more successful.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that the assessment was part of that process. The Settlement Agreement required the allotment to be assessed and then using that assessment to develop the long-term grazing management strategy. Originally, the rangeland health assessment and evaluation was scheduled to be completed in early 2017, with the term permit being issued by February 28, 2018.

It is understood the Settlement Agreement is a "band-aid" interim management approach to allow grazing to occur while protecting the resources to the extent possible while the rangeland health assessment and evaluation and the permit renewal process are being completed. All parties want to have the rangeland health assessment and evaluation report as well as the permit renewal process completed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Leonard noted that he could find individual spots on any use area with early grazing use where there are concerns, but, overall, utilization has been very low, and there is a biological soil crust prevalent across the range, which, if grazing were occurring too early, would not be found. Based on his spring field observations, he hasn't seen evidence of forbs being utilized any more than grass species, both of which have been utilized at a very low level. From a professional standpoint, he does not have an issue with early season grazing at the current stocking levels.

Ms. Dafoe noted that the 1987 – 1988 Resource Management Plan and its associated Rangeland Program Summary are management documents that currently exist. Those documents outlined the infrastructure needed for the Argenta allotment that have never been constructed.

TROUT CREEK USE AREA

Same as option 1

OPTION 3

EAST FLAT, WEST FLAT USE, AND MAYSVILLE SOUTH USE AREAS

The 600-head of livestock that would be placed in the Mule Canyon Use Area under Plan 1, would be placed in the East and West Flat use areas until April 15, at which time, they would be trailed in bunches through the Maysville North Use Area and placed in the Maysville South Use Area. Once placed in Maysville South, livestock would be kept out of Ferris Creek, which will be used later in the season by livestock drifting into the Trout Creek and North Fork use areas. Livestock will remain in the Maysville South Use Area until September 15.

MAYSVILLE NORTH USE AREA

After September 15, if The Park and Rock Creek exclosures (Round 3 projects) are constructed, Maysville North will be grazed. If the exclosures are not constructed, the livestock will be trailed through the Maysville North Use Area to the Mule Canyon Use Area. [12-06-2017 SCHWEIGERT CLARIFICATION: as tentatively developed in draft, optionwould use North Maysville early, move to South Maysville about July 1, and trail through North Maysville in the fall to other lower elevation Use Areas.]

MULE CANYON AND SLAVEN USE AREAS

These areas would be used by livestock in the fall 2018. Using the Mule Canyon Use Area during the hot season will require water to be hauled to private sites, and public land sites, if approved. The existing BLM infrastructure would also be used.

TROUT CREEK USE AREA

Same as option 1.

PERMITTEES' PREFERRED PLAN

When asked, Mr. Schweigert indicated that the permittees' preferred plan is Plan 1, as it (1) avoids issues with keeping the Maysville North Use Area void of livestock, (2) eliminates the issue of losing range riders, (3) allows use of grasses and Forage Kochia in the Mule Canyon Use Area that would, otherwise, burn if not used, and (4) keeps livestock out of the Maysville North Use Area until the exclosure fencing is constructed, which would not occur until mid-September.

Success of Plan 1 requires assistance from BLM in terms of approval to haul water to sites on public land. Plan 1 can perhaps be implemented without use of the public land water haul sites; however, it is much better if they can be used.

PROCESS & TIMEFRAMES FOR MOVING FORWARD

Table 15 outlines key timeframes and actions needing to be completed prior to March 1, 2018.

Action	Deadline
Initial actual use data and the draft 2018 Stockmanship Plan (including the three Tomera Ranch options) to Mr. Ault	Mid-December 2017
Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 EOS Report (including the proposed FY 2018 Stockmanship Plan) will be completed, distributed to interested parties, and posted on the Internet.	January 12, 2018
A virtual CMG meeting (by phone) will be held to discuss and resolve public feedback on the draft FY 2017 EOS and finalize its contents.	February 5, 2018
Final FY 2017 EOS Report will be completed, distributed to interested parties, and posted on the Internet.	February 28, 2018
Conduct pre-season monitoring	Before livestock turnout

TABLE 15 - CRITICAL PROCESS TIMEFRAMES

Mr. Lunn reminded the permittees that they will have to make application for the water haul sites on public land.

Mr. Schweigert asked Mr. Ault to send him (Mr. Schweigert) a .pdf of the use areas, boundaries, etc.

Ms. Dafoe asked if she could receive the appropriate shape files for the boundary fences. Mr. Ault indicated that he has been working on the shape files with Mr. Vicencio, but they are still an internal working document, which is not available to the public. Mr. Ault would also like to verify the data with Tomera Ranches before finalizing the product.

FENCING UPDATES

SOUTH BOUNDARY FENCE

Mr. Sherve noted that the South Boundary fence has been a proposal for a long time as has been discussed in the past. BLM recognizes the need to have the fence constructed, and will add it to their workload priorities, if Barrick remains interested in pursuing and possibly funding the project.

Based on discussions with Mr. Sam Castor (Barrick), Mr. Ault reported that Barrick has expressed interest in funding the project. BLM will be hosting a quarterly meeting with Barrick on December 5th during which project will be broached with Barrick management.

ROUND 3 FENCING

Mr. Ault indicated the final decision for Round 3 fencing has been issued. Appeals have been received from Western Watersheds and WildLands Defense, which also requested a stay of action. BLM has responded to the appeals and the request for stay, and is waiting for a decision from the Administrative Law Judge on the stay request, which is expected to occur in mid-December. (Update: stay was granted)

Everyone should be aware that the Mill Creek campground burned this year. Last week, BLM released a "cooperation, consultation, and coordination" letter outlining BLM's approach. Mr. Mariluch indicated that he would like to have his AUMs figured using the same method used to figure the 21 AUMs on 188 acres. Mr. Cochran noted that the 21 AUMs was calculated based on the average stocking rate (ratio of the total permitted AUMs and the total allotment acreage) for the allotment. Mr. Ault noted that the majority of the burned area was private land (and was not included in the AUM calculation).

Mr. Schweigert inquired as to the utilization received on the Mill Creek upland monitoring site. Mr. Ault indicated that it was slight to light. Mr. Schweigert asked why any AUMs are being taken away when there is excess of forage outside the burned, excluded area. Mr. Sherve noted that the potential expansion of the campground would not affect anyone's AUMs. There is a temporary fire closure, which reduced the AUMs, but over the long-term, there is no plan to cut or reduce anyone's AUMs.

Mr. Schweigert asked why such a small number of AUMs (21) had to be reduced when there is only slight to light utilization.

In the interest of time, the conversation was stopped at this point.

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TRANSITION FROM NRST TO THE MOUNT LEWIS FIELD OFFICE

Ms. Van Riper summarized that there have been several questions asked about what will happen when the Settlement Agreement expires on August 1, 2018, and the permit renewal process is not completed until March 1, 2019.

Since the CMG's meeting last November, NRST has been slowly minimizing its role in the Settlement Agreement process. Ms. Van Riper summarized that Mr. Furtado shared a document with the Argenta permittees (involved in the Settlement Agreement) stressing the importance of communication and coordination (i.e., who will be the permittees primary BLM contact, the hierarchy to be followed, etc.) There has been a general agreement by all parties on the process for communication and coordination.

There are several substantive questions remaining to be answered:

- What will happen on August 2, 2018, after the Settlement Agreement expires?
- Are there requirements for "within season" monitoring?
- Will the EOS monitoring be completed in October 2018 as it was under the Settlement Agreement?
- Will allotment management revert back to the terms and conditions outlined in the existing Permit/Lease?
- Will the Settlement Agreement monitoring threshold levels be eliminated?
- What happens to the CMG after August 1, 2018?

Ms. Van Riper noted that NRST will be working to develop a draft Settlement Agreement process assessment document as required by Section 6.6 of the Settlement Agreement (below), which will be shared with BLM and the CMG.

> **6.6 End of Interim Management Period Assessment.** At the end of the Interim Management Period, the BLM, after consulting with the CMG and NRST, will assess and report on the overall success of the Stockmanship Plan during the Interim Management Period.

Mr. Sherve indicated that other than the coordination and consultation process developed by Mr. Furtado, there has not discussion internally within BLM concerning the transition process and/or the questions raised above.

Mr. Ault indicated that while there is not a requirement to complete indices and monitoring, he, personally, has interest in following through to the end. Without following through to the end, Mr. Ault feels that there will be a lack of closure. If the permittees are opposed to completing the EOS monitoring, etc., BLM probably would not push hard that it should be done. Hopefully, there will be a final decision for the term permit renewal in place by March 1, 2019[9]. If not, hopefully, BLM and the permittees can continue forward with the cooperation and communication that has occurred under the Settlement Agreement.

Mrs. Tomera asked if the extensive monitoring completed under the Settlement Agreement is done for other allotments within the Battle Mountain District. Mr. Ault indicated that, in a perfect world, extensive monitoring would be done on all allotments. The monitoring required under the Settlement Agreement has significantly affected the timeline for completion of permit renewal efforts on other allotments. There are allotments scheduled to have their permit renewals completed in 2017, and their baseline data hasn't been collected and a draft rangeland health assessment and evaluation report hasn't been started.

Mr. Cochran added that not having the appropriate staffing is one reason for BLM emphasizing the importance of developing cooperative monitoring agreements, so permittees can acquire and provide the appropriate monitoring

[9] Beginning of the 2019 grazing season.

information, which will be accepted by BLM. BLM's monitoring efforts are typically directed to allotments where permit renewals are upcoming.

Later in the meeting, Ms. Dafoe noted that the state had been trying to develop a cooperative monitoring template and inquired as to the status of that effort. Ms. Dyer noted that the effort has grown somewhat since it was last discussed with the CMG in November 2016. Mr. Ault had drawn up a draft monitoring agreement based on the state's template, which hasn't been acted on for a variety of reasons.

Cooperative monitoring in general has increased in its presence and push. There has recently been a Memorandum of Understanding between BLM's Washington Office and the Public Lands Council, which outlined the desire on both entity's part to conduct cooperative monitoring. Also, the Nevada *Rangeland Monitoring Handbook*, which is currently out for peer review, contains a template for cooperative monitoring agreements. There is national and regional interest in increasing cooperative monitoring, which is also part of the national outcome-based grazing pilot demonstration project.

No one has the desire to just do more monitoring, but everyone recognizes that monitoring has suffered through the years, and there is need to get more "eyes on the ground" looking at and collecting meaningful data. The goal of the cooperative monitoring agreement is to get the BLM and the permittee on the same page in terms of what is the most meaningful data and identifying which party can contribute to the collection of that data.

Ms. Dafoe indicated that she had head that there were one or two cooperative monitoring agreements out of the Elko BLM District Office. Mr. Ault indicated that there are one or two agreements in the Battle Mountain District Office. Ms. Dafoe indicated that she was referencing an agreement with Newmont Mining. She had heard that there had been forward movement, and that a cooperative monitoring agreement had been signed with other permittees. Ms. Dyer indicated that several BLM Districts (i.e., Winnemucca and Elko) have cooperative monitoring agreements in place. The template developed by the state office was not the only approach that can be used. Some offices have been developing cooperative monitoring agreements for several years, which haven't always had the same components; therefore, the state office template was developed with the goal of ensuring all appropriate components are included. Cooperative monitoring is not a new concept, but has been ongoing for many years.

Ms. Van Riper noted that discussions pertaining to development of a cooperative monitoring agreement for the Argenta allotment would appropriate as the term permit renewal moves forward.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that he can appreciate that the Argenta allotment has taken up more time over the past three years than other allotments, but the permit renewal process has been overdue for much longer than three years. He doesn't like that the Argenta allotment is being used as the excuse for not being where we need to be.

Mr. Ault agreed with Mr. Mariluch. Everyone would like to see permanent management stability brought to the Argenta allotment. Management that will provide an economic balance for the permittees and an ecological balance for the public lands; however, once that happens, BLM will not have the resources to perform indices and monitoring every year.

Ms. Fite asked if there was a total cost to the Department of the Interior for the Settlement Agreement process, which Ms. Fite believes should be an important part of the final assessment report. The final assessment report should also address any decisions about how to move forward with any of this. Ms. Fite estimated that well over a $1 million has been spent in the process. Ms. Fite noted that most of the improved conditions have occurred within the fenced exclosures, while conditions outside the exclosures have not improved.

Mr. Cochran indicated that there is not a single point of tally as to the costs associated with the settlement process. BLM has provided the available accounting information in response to Ms. Fite's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, but BLM does not have the accounting mechanism in place to identify all costs. Ms. Fite noted that responses to FOIA requests trickle in a "scatter shot" form and still haven't provided the basic information on how much in public funds have been poured into the Argenta process. WildLands Defense has not received the information. Mr. Cochran indicated that he and she should coordinate after the meeting, and he will get in touch with State FOIA Officer. **ACTION ITEM: Mr. Cochran will coordinate with the State FOIA Officer in relation to the WildLand Defense FOIA request, after**

which he will contact Ms. Fite. Ms. Van Riper noted that NRST has submitted all of their costs as has the Battle Mountain District Office to the Nevada State Office.

Mr. Schweigert requested the same information for BLM having to deal with litigation brought by Western Watersheds Project and WildLand Defense. Mr. Cochran gave Mr. Schweigert the same response as he gave Ms. Fite, that some of the costs can be identified, but a total cost is not available.

Ms. Van Riper noted that it is difficult to complete a benefit/cost analysis for a final report because there are numerous "opportunity" costs that cannot be captured (i.e., what alternative scenarios may (or may not) have been in the absence of the Settlement Agreement). Ms. Fite noted that there are also alternative uses foregone that would need to be considered (i.e., opening up the mountain pastures, the lack of healing rest that probably will be required for them, etc.)

Ms. Fite indicated that there should be full and open public involvement and regular BLM processes applied to this allotment. There needs to stop being an "insider" group that (1) is privy to special information and (2) exerts influence on BLM. Mr. Schweigert noted, that according to her own definition, Ms. Fite is one of the "insider" group.

Ms. Van Riper noted that once the Settlement Agreement expires, the CMG goes away, unless someone decides to form another collaborative effort. Things will return to "business as usual" – typical public involvement requirements, no required monitoring, etc.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Mr. Lunn noted that this will be the last time the CMG meets in this format, unless something changes drastically. He asked each member to address how they feel about the Settlement Agreement, the work they accomplished, the outcomes achieved, etc.

Mrs. Lynn Tomera

When all of this started coming down, it didn't look like there was any way that we could ever worked together to try to make a positive outcome and to overcome the problems. I am forever grateful to the NRST and BLM for all the work and help they've given us. We've come to a point where we're all pulling in the same direction, which is a good thing.

Thanks to Mr. Schweigert and Ms. Dafoe, we've learned a lot about monitoring and now see things that we didn't see before. Mrs. Tomera thinks we will be able to go forward and have a good outcome. Thanks, again to the NRST. Maybe we'll just have the CMG go on forever – helping us out.

Mr. Pete Tomera

Mrs. Tomera pretty much said everything. We appreciate everyone that has cooperated, and we will continue to try and cooperate with the BLM to shut down the expenses to us and BLM. If a problem develops, we'll sit down and get it done. We don't need thousands of dollars being spent on little problems. We'll work together. We've learned a lot about riparian and stockmenship, thanks to Mr. Leonard and Mr. Cote. We appreciate the goodness of Ms. Van Riper and all the rest of the crew.

Mr. Bob Schweigert

Mr. Schweigert doubled everything that was stated by Mr. and Mrs. Tomera. We have come a long way in talking to and cooperating with each other, and we have some stabilized monitoring methods that we should follow through on. I always like a "round table" CMG type meeting, with everyone hearing from the person who has a concern without the biased filtering we all have. I hope the monitoring and the CMG type concept continues.

Mr. Shawn Mariluch

Its pretty much been all said. We were thrown into the limelight by necessity to save our livelihoods, which has worked out pretty well. We're headed in a good direction. I still have concerns with going forward if we're not doing the monitoring on a regular basis (annually, bi-annually, etc.) Mr. Mariluch is concerned that monitoring will be done only when there is a drought, or something happens. Without the CMG, NRST, etc., we wouldn't be ranching.

Mr. Max Filippini

We have to thank the riparian team. Without them, we probably would have been out of business. Our allotments are open, and we have livestock out. We've figured out what is working and what isn't.

Ms. Jamie Dafoe

I think the NRST team has done a phenomenal job as well as the CMG in taking a very contentious situation and figuring out a way to alleviate it. When Ms. Dafoe entered the process, it appeared to her that there was a definite lack of communication. We're also seeing the permittees being tasked with the onerous and expense of doing the monitoring. They're having to do that, for lack of a better word, in defense of their livelihood, and may (or may not) be right.

To maintain that level of defensibility, she and Mr. Schweigert get hired to complete the monitoring, during which BLM normally does not participate. Collaboration needs to occur, and should not be the onus of the permittee. She would prefer to see the situation where permittees could bring in consultants as part of a collaborative process working with the BLM. Ms. Dafoe asked if going back to "we just can't monitor, so we don't" is a viable solution.

Ms. Dafoe noted that she was a Forest Service Range Conservationist on 2.5 million acres, which is not easy, but a person should be able to get to at least one monitoring point on each allotment. It isn't an easy task, but if you can get to at least one site annually, at least you went out there. At least, you have some type of interaction with the permittee(s). Or, you can meet them at a location where they have a concern.

She believes that, in the Argenta scenario, conversations between the permittees and BLM did not occur. Whenever conversation stops, people get defensive or resort to defense mechanisms, which leads to the need for a CMG-type approach. It would be a more viable solution to figure out some way to monitor. Maybe it will not be as comprehensive as what we've been doing, but to have something is better than having nothing at all.

She would prefer to see BLM within the state (and other states) take a vested interest in monitoring, and, at least, come out sometimes, even if it is someone else doing the monitoring. Take a vested interest in what's happening on the land that you're managing, and in the people, that are on that land day-in and day-out. It would solve a lot of Nevada's issues.

The CMG as a whole has worked in a very good way and put out a political fire that could have very easily gone a different way.

Mr. Dan Tomera

Mr. Tomera was thinking that is seems like a lifetime ago when this all started - when they attended that first meeting in February and were told they couldn't turn out. There was the first meeting with the NRST and the "crazy" woman. It was a highly volatile situation, with so many people involved, it's mind-boggling the way things turned out - digging through the mud and muck to get the Settlement Agreement.

When he talks to friends and family in the livestock industry, Mr. Tomera tries to explain the NRST, CMG, or EOS process, and they think he is full of shit and is telling fairy tale stories about some of the things they've been going through the past couple of years.

Everyone has been through a lot. Other than the permittees, Ms. Van Riper and Mr. Lunn were the only two here when the process started. A lot of people have gotten involved and Mr. Tomera has met a lot of people he would consider friends. It has been quite a trip.

Mr. Justin Ferris

Mr. Ferris has been involved in the CMG process for a year (one season of MIM and PFC). He was impressed with the divergent interests involved in the CMG, and when it came down to collecting the monitoring work, everyone acted in good faith, trying to get accurate data.

Mr. Ferris has worked for many different government agencies, and has never seen anything quite like this. I think everyone involved should be proud of what has been accomplished.

Mr. Paul Tomera

Mr. Tomera's biggest regret is not sitting down in a room like this to work out the issues five years earlier, which would have saved quite a bit of expense and heart ache. He is hopeful such discussions will be able to occur moving forward.

With that being said, the Argenta allotment and the permittees have benefited from the expertise brought by the NRST. There have been many helpful suggestions from knowledgeable people.

Mr. Tomera has learned a lot through the process, including how to look at issues from BLM's perspective, which has been helpful. Before this process, their biggest concern was if livestock were going to gain weight. When looking at riparian areas from BLM's perspective, it brings a different light on the issues.

NRST was very helpful in getting the process pointed in the right direction.

Like Dan, Mr. Tomera would like to consider everyone as friends as a result of this process. He appreciated what has been done for the allotment as well as the permittees. Mr. Tomera is hopeful that there can be a good relationship between the permittees and BLM moving forward as everyone has the same interest. It is important that everyone can sit down to discuss and work through issues.

Mr. Tomera isn't necessarily glad he had the experience, but, nonetheless, it has been a fulfilling experience.

Mr. Mike Holbert

Mr. Holbert expressed his appreciation for being able to prepare the meeting minutes and to help Ms. Van Riper.

Ms. Laura Van Riper

Ms. Van Riper reflected on Mr. Mariluch's comment about being thrust into the lime light. The Argenta allotment is complicated in its own right, a "C" allotment, which wasn't prioritized by BLM as a top priority for grazing management or range improvements in the past 100+ years, etc. Since the settlement agreement, there has been a lot of hard work; trying/experimenting new approaches; becoming frustrated; learning; understanding what riparian area are, why they're important; and being able to clearly say that Argenta is now are the highest priority allotment in the state for permit renewal. Another thing we can clearly say is it isn't a drought or upland issue, the riparian issues on the Argenta allotment are a byproduct of 100 years (or more) of season-long, yearlong grazing. Recognizing that and now being able to focus on identifying the tools in the tool box to try and move past that approach is important if we're going to affect riparian/rangeland health positively in the future.

Ms. Van Riper understands the frustration of others (BLM, WildLands Defense, etc.) about things being piecemealed, being a "band-aid" approach, etc. It is what it is. There was no other choice at the time, but to create an interim management strategy that was a "band-aid" that piecemealed things. Everyone agreed at the time that all the tools in the tool box would be on the table, and that we would do the best that we could to have positive conditions on the range, knowing that the Settlement Agreement itself was not a long-term management plan. It was not going to fix all the problems on the allotment. There are still riparian problems on the allotment - we know that. We know outside of fenced areas and DMAs, there are still issues that need to be addressed. However, the entire settlement process wasn't just about being a "band-aid" or an interim strategy. It was to be an interim strategy until a point at which the long-term management plan was developed, which as everyone has said, is sorely needed.

Ms. Van Riper would venture to say that in the absence of the Settlement Agreement, the Argenta allotment would not have been state's highest priority for permit renewal. If people are concerned about a long-term management strategy for the allotment, the Settlement Agreement did that. It made the Argenta allotment the state's highest priority for permit renewal. That was the end goal, which has now been set in motion.

Ms. Van Riper is hopeful the emphasis of being on the ground to collect monitoring data, being legitimate about the data, and maintaining open and honest communication and coordination will remain important. Ms. Van Riper feels the model has been set and the groundwork has been laid for going forward if everyone chooses to interact in that fashion. You will have to do it either on the front or back end of the process. Everyone has learned the hard way that doing it on the back end is more painful as compared to doing it up front.

Ms. Van Riper hopes that things continue to move forward both in terms of the communication as well as the substantive process on the ground.

Mr. Adam Cochran

Mr. Cochran used an analogy from *The Hobbit* to express his statement. Approximately half way on their journey, the group is at the edge of Muir wood when Gandalf leaves. Although Gandalf has left, there is a path for the rest of the group to follow, which they do working through various challenges and obstacles. From the beginning, the group knew that Gandalf would leave, they just didn't know when it would happen.

Mr. Cochran indicated the CMG knew this day was coming. Now, it that time. There is a plan for moving forward. BLM has sat down with the permittees to outline a process for moving forward. The Settlement Agreement is coming to an end, and there is still a lot ahead of the group. Completion of the permit renewal process, issuance of a new 10-Year permit with a management plan, implementation of the management plan, etc. We have a communication framework established, which, if we to stick with that framework, we'll be able to meet the challenges ahead and finish where we need to be.

There are things such as monitoring where BLM and the permittees need to sit down and discuss what needs to be done. Until we have the completed rangeland health assessment and evaluation is completed and the permit is issued, it might be premature to initiate such discussions, but, after we understand what is in the permit, we can make those things happen to ensure this situation doesn't happen again in the future.

Mr. John Sherve

Mr. Sherve indicated that this forum is a new approach for him - airing grievances and concerns without the threat or reality of protests, appeals, and lawsuits. He has appreciated the approach, which has led to accomplishing more and making progress toward a successful resolution. Mr. Sherve is hopeful the CMG-concept will be carried forward, which has been a positive learning experience for everyone.

Ms. Kathryn Dyer

This has been a learning experience for everyone – a process that no one will walk away from feeling like things should be approached like before. Mr. Paul Tomera's statement about having gotten together five years earlier resonated with Mr. Dyer, which will probably be embraced by everyone when such opportunities present themselves in the future. If nothing else, everyone is able to walk away with an understanding of how strong the potential is when there is mutual interest in coming together to address issues. It is important that we do not shy away from being proactive in addressing issues cooperatively.

There has been a world of positive outcomes from this effort in terms of permittees being able to see a resource through new eyes or understand a concept with a new knowledge base. Helping others to understand one's view or position on an issue as well as being able to see or understand someone else's view or position is very important. What a difference it makes in communicating with someone once you've built a common language and understanding. Although there have been some painful "bumps in the road", over the past several years, we have built that common language that will allow

us to effectively communicate with each other. We may not always agree with each other, but we can effectively communicate what we are seeing and why.

Ms. Dyer appreciated everyone who was in the room and who has been a part of the process. It has been a long, stressful process for everyone, longer for some than others. She appreciates that everyone has remained a part of the process over the entire three years.

Ms. Genevieve Skora

Ms. Skora echoed the comments made by everyone. It is great, so many positive things have come from the group, including the improvements made on the ground and in the communication between parties. The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service appreciates being part of the process and participating in the monitoring effort.

Mr. Sam Ault

Mr. Ault noted that he assumed responsibility for the Argenta allotment's grazing program as a GS-5 with nine months on the job, which has been a very large learning experience for him personally. Mr. Ault is grateful for the opportunity he has had to learn from greater minds about ecology, the environment in which BLM operations, working with people, etc.

In moving forward, he would be interested in continuing the CMG approach; unfortunately, without the NRST. It is valuable to sit down with others to discuss things such as what we did last year, what worked, what didn't work, what can we change next year, etc. If others are interested in using that approach, he will be the first to sign on. Mr. Ault recognizes the value of assisting with monitoring on the ground and would like to do so, but there are other responsibilities and obligations that must be met.

If there is interest in continuing with indices and EOS monitoring, we'll find a way. It is beneficial to look at what happened, where we're sitting, and where we're still having issues. If the permittees are interested in reopening the discussion on cooperative monitoring agreements, he is interested in such a discussion.

Mr. Ault understands that the permittees are frustrated with BLM's communication, which is not occurring quickly enough. A perspective that the permittees may not see or understand is that BLM is equally as frustrated with how slow the process takes. If the permittees believe the process is occurring quicker than what BLM lets on, they should reach out to BLM. One-on-one conversations between BLM and the permittees makes Mr. Ault's life easier as he is not spending time putting out "fires". Mr. Cochran suggested following the communication protocol, but, if Mr. Ault is not available, permittees can contact Mr. Cochran, Mr. Massey, or Mr. Sherve.

Mr. Mike Lunn

Mr. Lunn remembered when he and Ms. Van Riper walked into the Battle Mountain Civic Center in January 2015, where all of the permittees were there. Normally, Mr. Lunn likes to have people sit in a circle, which was his intention at that meeting, but quickly figured out that the permittees were going to sit behind the tables, and he and Ms. Van Riper were not.

Mr. Lunn also noted that it was at that meeting that he made a mistake of explaining to Mr. Hank Filippini about the condition of the riparian areas on his allotment, and how they hadn't always been that way, or didn't have to stay that way. Mr. Lunn remembered Mr. Filippini being pretty quick with him.

The NRST wasn't quite sure how to approach the meeting and/or the process, but, because of everyone's willingness to get involved, it has been a hell of a ride.

Mr. Gant Massey

Mr. Massey indicated that there have been many words of wisdom spoken today. Mr. Massey noted a quote he had sent to Mr. Ault and Mr. Cochran earlier in the morning, "The mark of a thoughtful mind is for a person to entertain a new idea", which is good practical advice even though it is 2,300 years old.

We are not yet done, but if we lose this sense of open consideration, then none of this effort was worth it.

Mr. Steve Leonard

Mr. Leonard thanked the CMG for allowing him the opportunity to work with them. As stated by Mr. Lunn, it has been a heck of a ride.

When Ms. Van Riper asked him if he was interested in working with the CMG, Mr. Leonard said "Not only no, but hell no! You don't need me, you need God." Now, Mr. Leonard is glad he was part of the process. He is glad to be drawing to a close, and, hope that things keep going. Mr. Leonard would like to see some form of EOS monitoring this year to the extent we can stay "By God, we did it!" He would like to see everyone, collectively, being able to say that.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.

DECISION AND ACTION SUMMARY

No formal decisions were made during the meeting. Attachment 3 provides an overview of the action assignments made.

ACRONYMS

The following acronyms were used during the meeting and listed in alphabetical order.

Acronym	Meaning
AIM	Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring
AUM	Animal Unit Month
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CI	Confidence Interval
CMG	Cooperative Monitoring Group
CX	Categorical Exclusion
DMA	Designated Monitoring Area
DNA	Determination of NEPA Adequacy
EA	Environmental Assessment
EOS	End-of-Season
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FY	Fiscal Year
MIM	Multiple Indicator Monitoring
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NRST	National Riparian Service Team
PFC	Proper Function Condition
TDS	Total Dissolved Solids

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ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1 – ATTENDANCE

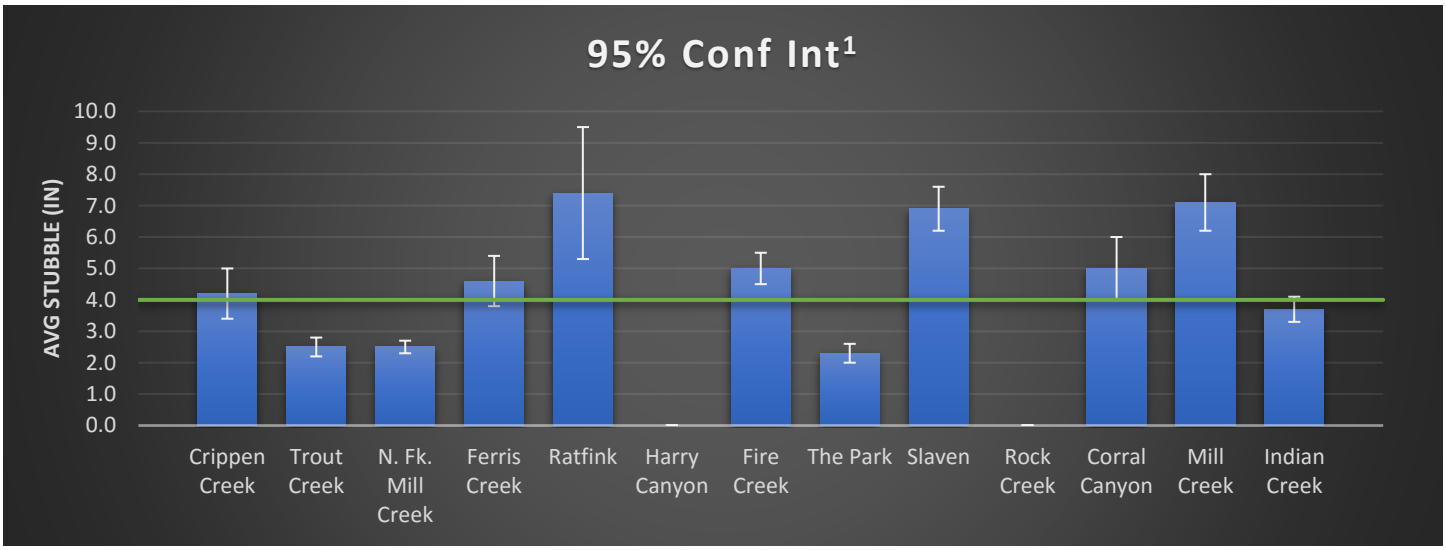
Persons in Attendance	
Member	**Representing**
Sam Ault	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Adam Cochran	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
John Sherve	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Amanda Holmes	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Laura Van Riper	National Riparian Service Team
Robert Burdick	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Jim Schroeder	BLM – Nevada State Office
Paul Tomera	Tomera Ranches
Dan Tomera	Tomera Ranches
Jamie Dafoe	Intermountain Range Consultants
Bob Schweigert	Intermountain Range Consultants
Pete Tomera	Tomera Ranches
Lynn Tomera	Tomera Ranches
Gant Massey	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Steve Leonard	Cowdance Range & Riparian Consulting – NRST Contractor
Mike Lunn	Solutions for Sustainability – NRST Contractor
Ken Vicencio	BLM – Nevada State Office
Kim Dow	BLM – Nevada State Office
Kathryn Dyer	BLM – Nevada State Office
Genevieve Skora	U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Reno
Angie Mariluch	Filippini Ranching Company
Shawn Mariluch	Filippini Ranching Company
Katie Fite	WildLands Defense
Dave Davies	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office
Max Filippini	Chiara Ranching Company
Justin Ferris	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office

ATTACHMENT 2 – 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL COMPARISON FOR MIM DATA[10]

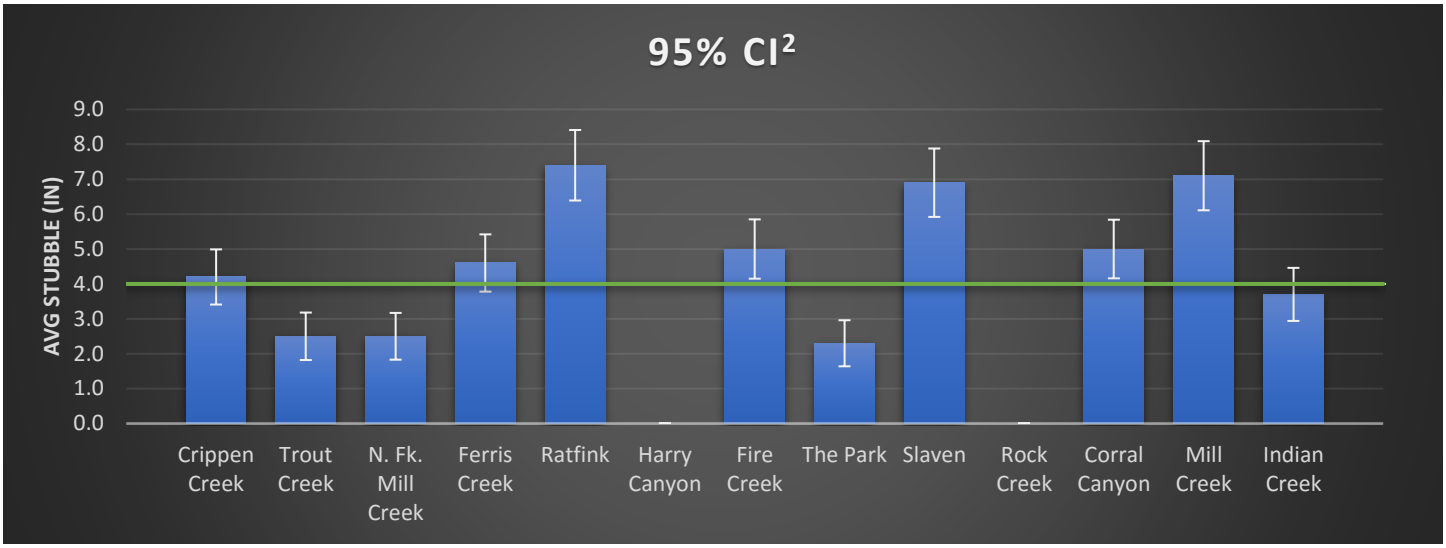
DMA	Threshold	Average	95% Conf Int[1]	95% CI[2]
	4			
Crippen Creek	4	4.2	0.8	0.79
Trout Creek	4	2.5	0.3	0.68
N. Fk. Mill Creek	4	2.5	0.2	0.67
Ferris Creek	4	4.6	0.8	0.82
Ratfink	4	7.4	2.1	1.01
Harry Canyon	4	-	-	-
Fire Creek	4	5.0	0.5	0.85
The Park	4	2.3	0.3	0.66
Slaven	4	6.9	0.7	0.98
Rock Creek	4	-	-	-
Corral Canyon	4	5.0	1.0	0.84
Mill Creek	4	7.1	0.9	0.99
Indian Creek	4	3.7	0.4	0.76
	4			

[1] 95% conf Int: 95% confidence interval based upon standard deviation from sample data

[2] 95% CI: the 95% confidence interval on observer variation see table F7 in the Appendix. (The bar graph is on the next page). Use of these confidence intervals assumes the observer(s) have adequate training.



[10] The intent of this attachment was to illustrate to the CMG the error made in presentation. The Final EOS Report will have only one table with the highest confidence interval represented.


95% CI²
AVG STUBBLE (IN)
9.0
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
Crippen Creek
Trout Creek
N. Fk. Mill Creek
Ferris Creek
Ratfink
Harry Canyon
Fire Creek
The Park
Slaven
Rock Creek
Corral Canyon
Mill Creek
Indian Creek

ATTACHMENT 3 - SUMMARY OF ACTION ASSIGNMENTS

The following is a summary of the action items made during the meeting.

Action Number	Action	Party Assigned Action	Page of Meeting Minutes
1	Ms. Dafoe will send the 2016 Russian wildrye curve to Mr. Ault.	Jamie Dafoe	8
2	Re-evaluate the 2016 herbaceous utilization data for Russian wildrye using the 2016 curve developed by Intermountain Range Consultants.	Sam Ault	8
3	Ensure the 2017 End-of-Year Report identifies the percent of the Mill Creek DMA that falls within and outside of the exclosure.	Sam Ault	13
4	Send an e-mail to the CMG which contains .pdf versions of the meeting's power point presentations, the handout, and all maps.	Sam Ault	16
5	Provide the 2017 PFC monitoring data to Ms. Fite.	Jim Schroeder	19
6	Determine if State and Transition models are available externally to the public. If not, provisional copies of the models can be made available to the CMG.	Ken Vicencio	20
7	Ensure the 2009 use pattern mapping information and maps were part of the monitoring information provided to Intermountain Range Consultants in the fall 2016. If not, those maps should be provided the Intermountain Range Consultants.	Ken Vicencio	20
8	Discuss the request made by Mr. Schweigert to incorporate stream reaches that were geospatially assessed into the summary of riparian condition ratings for the Argenta allotment.	Jim Schroeder	25
9	Provide the CMG with a list of species that were aerially seeded in the Mule Canyon Use Area.	Adam Cochran	32
10	Coordinate with the State FOIA Officer in relation to the WildLand Defense FOIA request, after which he will contact Ms. Fite.	Adam Cochran	38