

**APPENDIX A
WYOMING RANGELAND STANDARDS
CONFORMANCE REVIEW SUMMARY**

ALLOTMENT: Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area (Dickie #00604, Badger Gulch #00652, Allen Basin #00669, Pitchfork #00676, Hunt Oil 15-Mile #00682)

FIELD OFFICE: Worland FO

PERMITTEES/LESSEES: LU Sheep Co., YU Land & Cattle, ZE Ranch, Webster Ranch, Hunt Oil Co.

ACTIVITY PLAN: Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan

PART 1 - CONFORMANCE REVIEW

STANDARD #1: *Within the potential of the ecological site (soil type, landform, climate, and geology), soils are stable and allow for water infiltration to provide for optimal plant growth and minimal surface runoff.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? Yes

Rationale: Rangeland health evaluations were conducted at the 5 primary upland key areas in the HMA. Soil/site stability, integrity of the biotic community, and hydrologic function was determined to be stable, intact, and functioning, relative to the site potential, at each key area.

STANDARD #2: *Riparian and wetland vegetation has structural, age, and species diversity characteristic of the stage of channel succession and is resilient and capable of recovering from natural and human disturbance in order to provide forage and cover, capture sediment, dissipate energy, and provide for ground water recharge.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? N/A

Rationale: The only designated stream segments in the HMA are Fifteenmile Creek, and several major tributaries. These are desert ephemeral drainages which run water in direct response to storm events. Extensive riparian function studies have been conducted on Fifteenmile Creek and its major tributaries. It has been determined that the entire system is incapable of dissipating the energy from the intense flow events that it receives. A detailed analysis of the Fifteenmile Creek Watershed can be found in the North Gooseberry #00508 Allotment Management Plan-Environmental Assessment, EA No. WY-018-EA6-184, located in the North Gooseberry Allotment #00508 AMP file. Current management of the HMA does not appear to be contributing to a decline in riparian function.

STANDARD #3: *Upland vegetation on each ecological site consists of plant communities appropriate to the site which are resilient, diverse, and able to recover from natural and human disturbance.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? Yes

Rationale: Vegetative trend data has been collected at the 5 primary upland key areas in the HMA using the Wyoming Permanent 10-Plot Trend Transect method since 1983. The data indicates that range condition

currently varies from 46% to 73% of potential, with a static to upward trend at each key area. Total ground cover ranges from 53% to 90%.

STANDARD #4: *Rangelands are capable of sustaining viable populations and a diversity of native plant and animal species appropriate to the habitat. Habitats that support or could support threatened species, endangered species, species of special concern, or sensitive species will be maintained or enhanced.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? Yes

Rationale: The HMA provides crucial winter and winter/year-long habitat for mule deer and antelope. The area also provides winter, breeding and brood rearing habitat for sagegrouse. Numerous other raptors, small mammals, passerines, and predators inhabit the area as well. Due to recent light to moderate use levels by wild horses only, in general, the condition of the vegetative communities within the HMA are as good as can be expected given the potential of the area. Plant communities offer both vegetative and structural diversity as well as adequate vigor, residue and litter important to soil stability and water retention.

STANDARD #5: *Water quality meets State standards.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? Unknown

Rationale: There are no available data at this time to indicate that this standard is not being met. The HMA drains to Fifteenmile Creek via ephemeral channels. Fifteenmile Creek is a WYDEQ Class 3B water. Class 3 waters are waters, other than those designated as Class 1, that are intermittent, ephemeral or isolated waters and because of natural habitat conditions, do not support nor have the potential to support fish populations or spawning. Uses designated on Class 3 waters include aquatic life other than fish, recreation, wildlife, industry, agriculture and scenic value. Class 3B waters are tributary waters including adjacent wetlands that are not known to support fish populations or drinking water supplies and where those uses are not attainable. Class 3B waters are intermittent and ephemeral streams with sufficient hydrology to normally support and sustain communities of aquatic life including invertebrates, amphibians, or other flora and fauna which inhabit waters of the state at some stage of their life cycles. In general, 3B waters are characterized by infrequent linear wetland occurrences or impoundments within or adjacent to the stream channel over its entire length. Fifteenmile Creek is not listed on DEQ's 2000 303(d) list of water quality impaired water bodies. It does not appear that current management in the HMA is contributing to a decline in water quality beyond what is naturally occurring.

STANDARD #6: *Air quality meets State standards.*

Resource conditions in the allotment meet the standard? Yes

Rationale: According to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, there are no non-attainment areas in the Big Horn Basin.

PART 2 - FACTORS RELATED TO NON-CONFORMANCE WITH STANDARDS:

The entire Fifteenmile Creek riparian system is in a non-functional state. This is largely due to historic management of the area, and the natural features of the area. It is believed that improving the upland vegetation is the best management tool available to facilitate improvement in the overall

watershed. The current management of the Fifteenmile HMA is helping to achieve this goal.

PART 3 - SELECTED GUIDELINES TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE IN GRAZING MANAGEMENT:

No change in grazing management is needed.

PART 4 - IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS INCLUDING PERMIT/LEASE TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Continue existing management under the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan.