

Chapter 2 - Comparison of Alternatives

A. Alternatives to be Studied in Detail

1. Proposed Action:

1. Incorporate those portions of Kozy Kove, Sea Vista and Sur Sur Ranches outside of wilderness designation into adjacent management area 42 and those portions designated as wilderness by congress into management area 64 through a non-significant Forest Plan amendment. (P&N #1)
2. Identify rangelands within the Kozy Kove, Sea Vista and Sur Sur ranches suitable for grazing through a non-significant Forest Plan amendment. (P&N #2)
3. Gorda Allotment: Issue Term Grazing Permit. Livestock may include cow/calf pairs, other mature cattle including bulls, and yearling cattle. (P&N General)
 - a. Mill Creek Unit: The earliest on-date will be February 1 and the latest off-date will be June 30 to coincide season-of-use with maximum available water sources; the utilization standard will be an average of 1,200 pounds per acre at key areas and Animal Unit Months¹ (AUMs) will not exceed 230 to maintain sufficient soil cover and plant vigor to impede the spread of French broom. (P&N #5,6)
 - b. Prewitt Unit: The earliest on-date will be February 1 and the latest off-date will be August 15 and AUMs will not exceed 450. To obtain uniform distribution and plant use, and maintain plant vigor across the unit as natural features and facilities will allow, construct a ¼ mile (approximate) barbed wire drift fence above Wild Cattle Canyon to partition Alms Ridge from Prewitt Ridge (Appendix I-3, map) creating two separate pastures and implement a 2-pasture rotation grazing system between Alms Ridge pasture and Prewitt Ridge pasture. (P&N #4,7)
 - c. Plaskett Unit: The earliest on-date will be February 1 and the latest off-date will be August 1 to coincide season-of-use with maximum available water sources; AUMs will not exceed 316. (P&N #8)
 - d. Pacific Valley Unit: To maintain sufficient soil cover and plant vigor to impede the spread of Italian thistle; to encourage consumption by livestock of invasive weeds; to reduce the duration desirable forage is exposed to grazing, thus maintaining vigor: The earliest on-date will be March 1 and the latest off-date will be September 15; AUMs will not

¹ Animal Unit Month is the amount of feed required to support one Animal Unit for one month. Animal Unit values: cow with calf = 1.32; mature cow = 1; mature bull = 1.5; yearling < 9 mo. = 7; yearling >9 mo. = 1. AU x 1,000 = monthly forage requirement (lbs air dry forage).

exceed 343; implement a 3-pasture deferred rotation system; utilization standard will be an average of 1,200 pounds per acre at key areas. (P&N #9)

South Pasture: Construct a new 100-foot long (approximate) drift fence on the north side of Plaskett Creek to exclude cattle access to the creek and riparian zone (Appendix H-5, map). (P&N #10)

North Pasture: Relocate the stock corral approximately 300' to the north. Livestock crossing of Prewitt Creek will be limited to four times per year with monitoring of the creek prior to and during crossings to ensure protection of fisheries. (P&N #10, 11)

4. Alder Creek Allotment: Issue Term Grazing Permit providing for: Yearlong season of use; AUMs will not exceed 115. Permitted livestock may include mature or yearling horses or mules, cow/calf pairs, other mature cattle including bulls, and yearling cattle. (P&N General, #4)
5. Salmon Creek Allotment: Issue Term Grazing Permit providing for: Yearlong season of use; AUMs will not exceed 65. Permitted livestock may include mature or yearling horses or mules, cow/calf pairs, other mature cattle including bulls, and yearling cattle. (P&N General)
6. Kozy Kove Ranch: Issue Term Grazing Permit providing for: The earliest on-date would be December 15 and the latest off-date May 15; AUMs will not exceed 160. Permitted livestock may include cow/calf pairs, other mature cattle including bulls, and yearling cattle. Permitted grazing will be contained on the Kozy Kove ranch through management practices described in the LRMP (Range Resources Management D02). If monitoring indicates cattle are drifting in the vicinity of the old Forest boundary, construct drift fence (Appendix H-9, map) to preclude grazing in previously ungrazed portions of the Silver Peak Wilderness. (P&N #3,4)
7. San Carpofo Allotment: Incorporate the Sea Vista and Sur Sur Ranches onto the San Carpofo allotment. Issue Term Grazing Permit providing for: The earliest on-date will be November 1 and the latest off-date will be May 15; AUMs will not exceed 975; permitted livestock may include cow/calf pairs, other mature cattle including bulls, and yearling cattle. Dismantle the Dutra Camp enclosure fence and replace with a drift type fence that when combined with natural brush barriers will enlarge the campsite to enhance the recreational wilderness experience while continuing to prevent livestock entry. (P&N General, #4,12)
8. Buckeye Allotment: Remove this allotment from the Los Padres National Forest grazing program through a non-significant Forest Plan amendment. (P&N #14)
9. Twitchell Allotment: Remove this allotment, and associated structural improvements, from the Los Padres National Forest grazing program through a non-significant Forest Plan amendment. Implement effectiveness monitoring as described below after closing to assess habitat changes within the Research Natural Area. (P&N #13)

10. **Torre Canyon Allotment:** Remove this allotment from the Los Padres National Forest grazing program through a non-significant Forest Plan amendment. (P&N #15)

Standard Management Requirements

Apply Standard Management Requirements (Appendix B) to all allotments under implementation of the Proposed Action.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Adaptive Management involves identification of future management options that may be needed to adjust management actions to meet desired objectives as determined through monitoring. The following monitoring will be used to evaluate whether the prescribed management is working and provide resource information necessary to evaluate and revise grazing strategies if needed.

Implementation monitoring:

- Check compliance with annual operating instructions. This will include spot-checking on/off and pasture move dates, evaluating allowable use, verifying permittee maintenance of range improvements, and observations of concentrated cattle use.
- Utilization within Key Areas will be estimated approximately midway through the prescribed season-of-use period. If utilization is projected to exceed RDM utilization standards, monitoring will occur once every 10 days until the prescribed use period ends or maximum allowed utilization is reached.
- On the Kozy Kove Ranch, monitor for livestock drift into the Silver Peak Wilderness. If monitoring indicates a drift problem, construct drift fencing. For location of drift fence, see Kozy Kove map (Appendix H-9, map)

Effectiveness Monitoring

- Check for signs of livestock presence within sites of Traditional Cultural Practices or identified high-risk cultural resource sites. Conduct and analyze permanent condition and trend transects at approximately 5-year intervals.
- Evaluate non-native invasive plants monitoring reports both from Forest Service random sampling and from permittees (Standard Management Requirement).
- Complete range management BMP implementation and effectiveness evaluations (USDA Forest Service, 2002) at sites where monitoring has identified the need to evaluate the effectiveness of specific practices in meeting our objectives. (See Appendix D for San Carpoforo example)
- Utilize water quality data provided by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, or Monterey Bay Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network, or other available data.
- Check for signs of livestock presence within areas occupied by threatened, endangered or sensitive species (TES).

- Within two weeks before or after the end of prescribed use period for allotments and/or individual pastures, determine utilization at designated key areas. On yearlong use allotments, Alder Creek and Salmon Creek, utilization will be measured during the months of August through September.

Validation Monitoring

If Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species are discovered in areas prone to impact from livestock, this new information will be considered, consulted on with FWS/NOAA Fisheries, and a determination made as to what avoidance or minimization measures should be incorporated into the allotment management plan and annual operating instructions.

Adaptive Management

If monitoring indicates that range conditions are not at or trending toward desired conditions within a five year timeframe; or if validation monitoring indicates that a Forest Service listed sensitive plant(s) is likely to trend toward federal listing or loss of viability; or threatened or endangered species population appear to be in decline due to livestock, an interdisciplinary team with relevant expertise will determine what adjustments in management are needed. Adjustments will choose from one or a combination of the following rangeland management practices:

- Fencing and other structural improvements
- Adjustments in season of use
- Adjustments in allowable use levels
- Adjustments in numbers of livestock
- Types of livestock
- Period of rest

Changes will be reflected in the annual operating instructions and term grazing permit.

2. No Action:

Grazing permits would not be re-issued after the current permits expire [36 CFR 221.4 (a)(1)] and remain vacant pending further NEPA analysis. On the recently acquired properties no grazing permits would be issued.

3. Continuation of Current Permit:

Livestock grazing on the existing allotments will continue to be permitted under current management that includes all applicable standards and guidelines from the current Los Padres Land and Resource Management Plan, Standard Management Requirements listed in Appendix B, as well as any requirements from consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act or other legal requirements. For a description of current management see Appendix F. No grazing would occur on the recently acquired ranch parcels. The vacant allotments will remain in the LPNF grazing program. A subsequent NEPA decision would be necessary to stock the vacant allotments should the demand for forage change.

B. Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Responses to public scoping identified another eight alternatives that are included in the “Range of Alternatives” (Appendix I) considered in this analysis. Those alternatives and the reasons why each was eliminated from detailed study are presented below.

1) Combine the Salmon Creek and Buckeye Allotment into one Unit.

Fails to meet Purpose and Need, Non-feasible: Because of low forage production in key livestock use areas, and difficulty in distributing and controlling livestock, the Buckeye Allotment has been proposed for closing. There have been no significant issues on the Salmon Creek allotment or requests for additional forage that necessitate combining with the Buckeye Allotment.

2) No-grazing for a minimum of 10 years.

Fails to meet Purpose and Need, Unsubstantiated Need: No substantiated reason for this alternative has developed out of the review of public comments. There have been no significant issues identified that necessitate extended periods of rest. The analysis of the allotments conducted as part of the current environmental assessment has indicated that the proposed action would be consistent in meeting or moving toward desired conditions under the currently proposed grazing regime and therefore does not indicate the need for ceasing use for any extended period of time.

3) Fewer numbers than proposed.

Fails to meet Purpose and Need, Unsubstantiated Need: There have been no substantiated reasons identified that necessitate fewer numbers. Our experience has shown that season of use and timing are the key components when making adjustments to meet our objectives.

4) Combine mandatory rest-rotation. This would prevent overgrazing of other areas.

Unsupported Need: Overgrazing in general has not been identified as an issue through all the public comment opportunities provided on this project. The Forest Service ID team has promoted and developed rotational grazing systems wherever the landscape, non-wilderness status and facilities allow. The adjusted grazing seasons and rotational systems are incorporated into the Proposed Action and will correspond with the maximum available water and green forage periods allowing for proper distribution and utilization throughout the units. Where the need exists to impede the spread of noxious weeds, raising the standard for residual dry matter has been incorporated to further reduce grazing levels. In the one or two isolated places impacted by insufficient distribution, the current proposed action has provided actions to avoid or minimize such effects.

5) Should analyze an alternative with these features:

3-year rest period; 1/3 stocking rate reduction.

3-year rest-rotation cycle with maximum utilization of 30% in wet and normal years.

Specified post-grazing residual stubble height requirement during dry years.

Rigorous enforcement of restrictive stream bank disturbance

Fails to meet Purpose and Need: There have been no significant issues identified that necessitate these features. The adjusted grazing seasons and rotational systems in the Proposed Action will correspond with the maximum available water and green forage allowing for proper distribution and utilization throughout the units. In addition, the proposed action implements specific seasons of use to reduce the time period desirable plants are exposed to grazing, allowing them to recover vigor, produce seed and establish new reproduction. Existing riparian standards and guidelines and annual allotment administrative monitoring should provide adequate protection of stream banks. Should monitoring find any problem areas, those would be addressed on a site-specific basis.

6) On the Salmon Creek Allotment, to seek to improve the health of native bunchgrasses, a rotational system that provides for spring rest is preferable to year-round grazing with no attempt at any rest period.

Fails to meet Purpose and Need: The decline in health and vigor of native bunchgrasses on the Salmon Creek allotment has not been identified as a significant issue. Visual evidence suggests that the perennial grass populations are flowering, setting seed, and are able to store food reserves under current management. The Proposed Action allows the permittees to defer use between the two fenced pastures based on available forage and water.

7) At San Carpofero Camp there is no fence or barrier to keep cattle out. Please incorporate existing fences and/or new ones to exclude the camp and riparian area from access by cattle.

Fails to meet Purpose and Need- Unsupported: Our observations have revealed little use by livestock at San Carpofero Camp. There is nothing at San Carpofero Camp that would attract livestock use. Occupancy of the Camp by campers would deter use by livestock. The Camp is located within the flood plain of sand, gravel and rock. There is little forage of value there and plenty of water in the surrounding hillsides. Livestock use in the vicinity of San Carpofero camp is generally transitory in nature i.e., they move through the area as they travel to or from primary grazing areas.

8) For those allotments (Alder Creek, Salmon Creek) for which year-round grazing are proposed, an alternative for seasonal grazing should be analyzed.

Not Supported by Data: There have been no significant issues identified that necessitate seasonal grazing on the Alder Creek allotment. On the Salmon Creek Allotment, the permittees defer use between two fenced pastures based on available forage and water. The amount of water and forage available relative to the numbers and utilization levels prescribed should keep these areas within desired condition. Monitoring indicates that resource conditions meet LRMP Standards and Guidelines.

C. Comparison of Alternatives

Table 1: Purpose and Need addressed by alternatives.

Allotment/ Ranches	Purpose and Need	No Action / No Grazing	Proposed Action	Continue Current Permit
Kozy Kove, Sea Vista, Sur Sur	To incorporate into LRMP mgt. area	Ranches will not have LRMP direction and mgt. emphasis	Entire ranches will have specific LRMP direction and mgt. emphasis	Ranches will not have LRMP direction and mgt. emphasis
Kozy Kove, Sea Vista, Sur Sur	To determine suitability for grazing	No determination	Determine to be suitable	No determination
Kozy Kove	To provide preventive measures to keep livestock within ranch boundary	No need	Preventive measures provided	No need
All	To provide available forage to qualified livestock operators from coastal rangelands	No forage provided	Forage provided	Forage provided on active allotments. +No forage provided on newly acquired properties

Allotment/ Ranches	Purpose and Need	No Action / No Grazing	Proposed Action	Continue Current Permit
Gorda- Mill Unit	To obtain uniform distribution/ utilization and maintain plant vigor.	No season of use. +Key forage species will recover vigor then taper off.	Season corresponds with maximum available water and green forage promoting uniform distribution and utilization. +Key forage species will maintain vigor.	Season corresponds with limited available water and green forage resulting in improper distribution and utilization. +Key forage species will decline somewhat.
	To maintain sufficient soil cover and plant vigor to impede spread of French broom	Bareground would remain mostly static or decrease somewhat. +Foliage density maintained. +RDM > 1200 lbs/ac. +French broom cover 1-5%.	Bareground would remain mostly static or decrease somewhat. +Foliage density maintained. +RDM > 1200 lbs/ac. +French broom cover 1-5%.	Bareground is expected to increase somewhat. +Foliage density decrease. +RDM > 1000 lbs/ac. +French broom cover 5-25%.
Gorda- Prewitt Unit	To obtain uniform distribution/ utilization.	No season of use. +Key forage species will recover vigor then taper off.	Proper distribution. +Key forage species will maintain vigor.	Improper distribution. +Key forage species will decline somewhat.
Gorda – Plaskett Unit	To adjust season to obtain uniform distribution/ utilization	No season of use. +Key forage species will recover vigor then taper off.	Season corresponds with maximum available water and green forage. +Key forage species will maintain vigor.	Season corresponds with limited available water and green forage. +Key forage species will decline

Allotment/ Ranches	Purpose and Need	No Action / No Grazing	Proposed Action	somewhat. Continue Current Permit
Gorda- Pacific Valley Unit	To maintain sufficient soil cover to impede spread of Italian thistle; to encourage consumption of weeds; to reduce duration of grazing on desirable forage.	RDM > 1200 lbs/ac. +Bareground would remain mostly static or decrease somewhat. +Propagation of weeds and other invasive plants will increase.	RDM > 1200 lbs/ac. +Bareground would remain mostly static or decrease somewhat. +Propagation of weeds reduced.	RDM > 1000 lbs/ac. +Bareground would remain mostly static. +Propagation of weeds will remain constant.
	To maintain and protect resident and anadromous fisheries	Habitat managed for protection.	Habitat managed for protection.	Habitat managed for protection.
	To protect cultural properties	Cultural properties protected	Cultural properties protected	Cultural properties protected
San Carpoforo	To modify Dutra camp enclosure to preserve Wilderness recreation values	Confined nature of campsite removed.	Confined nature of campsite modified.	Confined nature of campsite remains the same.
Twitchell	To comply with Cone Peak RNA direction and achieve proper distribution	RNA direction met for no new range structures.	RNA direction met for no new range structures.	RNA direction met for no new range structures. +Improper distribution
Buckeye	To decide status of vacant allotment	Allotment remains in LP grazing program as vacant.	Allotment removed from LP grazing program.	Allotment remains in LP grazing program as vacant.
Torre	To decide status of vacant allotment	Allotment remains in LP grazing program as vacant.	Allotment removed from LP grazing program.	Allotment remains in LP grazing program as vacant.