From: Dave Kimble
To: Wes Sibert
Subject: RE: Habitat Lease Draft
Date: Monday, March 04, 2013 1:53:55 PM
Attachments: Habitat Lease Draft.doc

Hi Wes,

I tried to incorporate your ideas from below into another draft (attached). Thanks for clarifying, as I think this will make our meeting on Wednesday a lot easier.

If I added too much detail, such as the tentative grazing schedule, that could be taken out. That would be up to you and WLCI as to how much detail you want.

I also sent the wetland dike design specifications to Cheryl Grapes today.

Talk to you later,

Dave Kimble
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-----Original Message-----
From: Wes Sibert [mailto:wessibert@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, March 01, 2013 7:39 PM
To: Dave Kimble
Subject: Re: Habitat Lease Draft

Dave,

After review everything I think we need to keep 2 things in mind going into the habitat meeting.

1. Although we are using NRCS stocking rates as a guide line the Habitat Lease is being offered by the WLCI, it is not a NRCS program and we shouldn't be bound by their standards (expect on the easement of course). Justin Caudill wants the habitat lease to be "rancher friendly". So lets try keep it as simple as possible and remember that the NRCS stocking rates are already conservative and derived from the idea "take half leave half." In this case the ranchers historical data of what the land can do needs to be in the equation.

2. The past two years my steer weights in fall averaged 775lbs and heifer weights averaged 725lbs, for a total average of 750lbs. Calves are placed on the pasture at 500lbs, so their average grazing weight is 625lbs, the NRCS AUM factor for a 650 yearling is .7. So I feel this is where we need to work. In fact I want to keep that in mind for the CUA, we shouldn't have used a .8 factor, .7 in more accurate.

As I mentioned in an earlier email I have acquired 160 acres to the east of the Swanson pasture. I will use that with the Reservoir Pasture, Pivot field and upper 70 (north of Swanson pastures, I will fence it out) to off set the time between May 15-July 15. I think it will be easier to continue to use the CUA numbers for the Swanson and Three mile Pastures. Although in the future I feel a AUM factor of .7 should be used. (We will try to get that fixed if not this year hopefully by the next CUA)

Here is my plan for grazing for the 150 yearling (105 AUMS on all my land 120 AUMS on the easement land)

From May 15 -July 10: I will graze the new 160 acres , upper 70 acres, and Reservoir pastures. Breaking grazing time ups accordingly. 30 Days in 160, 10 Days in upper 70 (there would be 45 AUMS their about 13 days of grazing, 15 days in Reservoir (I know this doesn't come close to matching NRCS stocking rates but I have ran an average of 330 yearlings for 20 days in that pasture the past 2 years, this would be the 3/4 amount of time with half as many yearlings)

Starting July 10 I will use the pivot field. I will use 105 AUM (1 month) of the NRCS Rate of 172 (which I believe is really low).

After July 15 I will rotate Easement Pastures with the Pivot field for remaining AUMS existing on the easement. Taking me to late September or mid October depending on how I use the 29 days in the Three mile pasture. I would like to use split that usage. 15 days from in the beggining of may and 14 days from July 20 to August 4 (That way I can let my pivot sprinkle a bit and then let calves back on) I then would be off the Three mile pasture until the next spring. (the feed in their will be amazing it gets water all the time)

Thanks,

Wes

On Mar 1, 2013, at 4:12 PM, Dave Kimble wrote:

> Hi Wes,
>
> Here is an updated map and my comments on the Habitat Lease Draft. I
> have a lot more questions than answers right now as to how to make
> this all work together with the WRP easement. Things such as the
> stocking rate on non-WRP will be a judgment-call between you and WLCI,
> as it is their money and they can decide what they think is
> appropriate for their lease. But it will also be invaluable to have
Oakley's input on that.
>
> I am sure we will be able to work something out that will work for you
> and WLCI, while still falling in line with the WRP Compatible Use
Agreement.
> We just have to figure out the details. 2013 may be a tough year with
> the strictness of the CUA requirements. Hopefully some flexibility on
> the WRP can be introduced in 2014 and beyond on the WRP, but we will
> just have to see how the land and plants respond in 2013. It would
> sure help if we'd get some snow!
>
> Have a good weekend.

>
> Dave Kimble
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>
> -----Original Message-----
> From: Wes Sibert [mailto:wessibert@yahoo.com]
> Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 10:46 AM
> To: David Kimble
> Subject: Habitat Lease Draft
>
> Dave,
>
> Here is copy of the Habitat Lease Draft I have been working on. I
> just used the CUA as a template. The stocking rate I came to was a
> happy medium between 50% NRCS stocking rates AUMs(which are already
> conservative) and 50% of the historical stocking rates AUMs of the
> property.
>
> One thing that could be real helpful is if you could revise it and add
> a map of the property boundaries and pasture names along with
> potential monitoring sites. (under section c local description)
>
> Another thing I would like to mention somewhere is that the NRCS may
> executed a 406 easement in the Northeastern part of the property.
> That would not affect the habitat lease but would only bring an even
> more conservative practice to that portion of the property. The
> easement practice on the 406 acres would supersede the habitat lease
> for that portion of the property. The rest of the property would
> still function under the habitat lease. (Remember the habitat lease
> goal was always to surround the easement, fill in the gaps so to
> speak)
>
> One thing to keep in mind this is pilot project and Justin really
> wants it to be something that does not prevent the landowner from
> running an agricultural operation. Give the landowner a little bit
> more say than some of the more rigid programs the various government
agencies offer.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Wes
> <Habitat Lease Draft.doc><map.pdf>

Habitat Lease Uinta County, WY
WLCI, USFW, Siberts

County: Uinta Fort Bridger, WY	Lease Terms: $ per year for a 5 year period. Expiration: December 31, 2017 Renegotiable at that time

A. Person Responsible for Habitat Lease Activities (Name, Address, & Tel No.)
Wesley Sibert, 3102 County Road 217, Fort Bridger, WY 82933 (307-780-5299)

B. Purpose:

To improve the overall habitat area of private lands through a moderate livestock grazing plan that will increase plant diversity and vigor. Grazing will be applied in a manner so as to encourage the growth of desirable vegetation while suppressing undesirable vegetation and maintaining adequate forage and cover for wildlife species.

C. Location Description (Attach a copy of map showing approximate area of compatible use.):

This habitat lease includes portions of five pastures: the North Swanson pasture, South Swanson pasture, Three-Mile (southeast) pasture, Pivot (southwest) pasture , and Reservoir (northwest) pasture. An isolated 40 acres of BLM is largely contained within the Reservoir pasture. 1112 deeded acres plus additional BLM lands will be effected under this habitat lease.

Comment [DK1]: My GIS calcs come up with 1195 ac + BLM. Will need to rectify discrepancy

About 416 acres of the property in the South Swanson and Three-Mile Pastures is enrolled in the NRCS's Wetland Reserve Program, which will only allow livestock grazing through a Compatible Use Agreement. For 2013, the Compatible Use Agreement will allow grazing at stocking rates and in seasons that will mesh with this Habitat Lease. The stocking rates and seasons allowed in the Swanson Pasture and Three-Mile Pasture under the Compatible Use Agreement in 2013 are more conservative and allow less flexibility than will be allowed under this lease (see attached WRP Compatible Use Agreement).

D. Beginning Condition of Site:

The site is a combination of uplands and wetland areas within the same field boundary, creating some management difficulty. To a large degree, the uplands are currently in a degraded state whereas the lowland/wetland areas receive less grazing pressure which could eventually lead to undesirable accumulation of herbaceous thatch and less plant diversity within the site.

E. Statement of Effect and Compatibility:

Numerous studies have documented that livestock grazing, when managed appropriately, can maintain or improve habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. Because of the nature of the land, many wildlife species will benefit from the habitat lease, including both wetland species and upland species. Most notable species include migratory birds, sage grouse, mule deer and antelope. This piece of land is essential winter habitat for mule deer. Because most of the deeded ground is irrigated, an excess accumulation of thatch would accumulate quickly at the site in the absence of regular disturbance. Livestock grazing has been chosen as the tool to enhance the habitat through disturbance.

Sibert habitat Lease

A specific habitat enhancement that will be accomplished through this Habitat Lease on the approximately 818 non-WRP land will be an increase in herbaceous residual cover to improve greater sage-grouse nesting cover and mule deer forage in all seasons.

The proposed stocking rates are sufficiently conservative in the South Swanson and Three-Mile Pastures (50% of standard AUM stocking rates) that significant residual cover will remain throughout the grazing period, regardless of when they occur relative to the nesting season. We expect about 6 inches of residual cover post-grazing in most of the wetland areas, with more at some specific locations. This may not be the best habitat for species that prefer very short vegetation, but this type of habitat is already available on neighboring lands.

Currently, the WRP Compatible Use Agreement will not allow livestock grazing in South Swanson or Three-Mile pastures from May 15 to July 15. This will force most use of these pastures to be in the late-summer to fall. However, if the CUA changes in 2014 and beyond, the general strategy in Three-Mile Pasture, which contains the Three-Mile Creek riparian area, will be to graze early in the season (i.e. May-June) to discourage cattle concentration in the riparian area and discourage cattle utilization of shrubs.

We should insert more goals for the Pivot and Reservoir pastures, which I'm sure will focus on upland plant health and improved habitat for sage grouse and mule deer. Let's discuss this as a group, but probably the main strategies will be to maximize plant rest (non-grazing) time for the grasses to encourage recovery.

Specifics for 2013

One of the main components of the habitat lease is to reduce grazing by 50% in order to improve wildlife habitat. Fifty percent of NRCS stocking rate is 431.35 AUMs and 50% of the actual historic stocking rate is 759 AUMs. It is the landowner's objective that the stocking rate for this Habitat Lease fall somewhere between these 2 figures.

Pasture	Acres	NRCS Recommended Stocking Rate[1] (AUM)	75% NRCS Stocking Rate	50% NRCS Stocking Rate
North Swanson	70	90.6	68.0	45.3
South Swanson	252	328.0	n/a	164.0
Three-Mile	326	232.4	n/a	116.2
Pivot	328	172.1	129.1	86.05
Reservoir	229	39.6	29.7	19.8
TOTAL	1205	862.7	507.0[2]	431.35

Comment [DK2]: What will be the stocking rate for the pivot if it is irrigated and cropped? What about just irrigated and grazed? I have not kept up-to-date with what you are doing with the pivot. What months can you graze the pivot if it is being cropped?

[1]The producer feels the NRCS AUM stocking rates to be very conservative. Actual historical data shows the land has ran a lot more AUMs. The producer has historically ran an average of 330 yearling for 5.5 months for the last 2 years (1270 AUMs) and before that the property ran 220 pairs for 6 months (1518 AUMs) for the past 20 years. The producer also feels that the reservoir pasture and pivot pasture NRCS AUM rate could be reevaluated to show a rate closer to 90 and 200 AUMs, respectively. The pivot was not producing when the range was evaluated.

[2]The 50% stocking rates for the South Swanson and Three-Mile pastures were used in this calculation, since the WRP easement is only going to allow the 50% stocking rates in these pastures in 2013.

Sibert habitat Lease

The NRCS Compatible Use Agreement prohibits grazing from May 15 to July 15 on the WRP easement and will allow 280 AUMs to graze in the South Swanson and Three-Mile pastures in 2013, or 150 yearlings to graze for 2.33 months or 70 days.[3] The stocking rate and season of grazing could change in 2014 and beyond, as the Compatible Use Agreement is only authorized for 2013. For 2013, the producer is proposing an approximately 125 day (4.2 mo) grazing season on the Habitat Lease area[4]. Therefore, an additional 55 days of grazing, or 193 AUMs would be used from the North Swanson, Pivot, and Reservoir pastures. This would be about 64% of the NRCS recommended stocking rate in these pastures. The total AUMs used on the entire property would be about 438 AUMs, or about 50% of the NRCS recommendation and 29% of the historic stocking rate.

Tentative 2013 grazing schedule

Pasture	**Dates**	**AUMs used**
Three-Mile	May 1-15	52.5
Off the Habitat Lease	May 15-June 15	(105)
North Swanson	June 16-June 25	35
Reservoir	June 26-July 10	52.5
Pivot	July 11-20	35
Three-Mile	July 21-August 3	49
Swanson South	August 4-24	70
Pivot	August 25-September 15	70
Swanson South	September 16-October 5	70
TOTAL ON HABITAT LEASE		434 (not including off-lease land)

What will be the monitoring targets for the WLCI lease? For the WRP CUA, it is 6 inches of stubble in the wetland areas. This may not be appropriate for the WLCI lease, as the WLCI lease is focusing on the non-WRP, non-wetland areas. (See attached monitoring plan for details on proposed monitoring methods.)

[3] The CUA was written using a 0.8 animal unit conversion factor for the cattle yearlings. A more accurate factor based on the actual weights of the livestock is 0.7. Because the CUA is already written for 2013, 0.8 will be used to determine grazing days in Swanson and Three-Mile pastures. Hopefully the AU conversion factor can be corrected in 2014.

[4]The 150 yearlings will graze an additional 1 month on an adjacent 160 acres that is not part of the Lease area.

F. Special Conditions, Specifications and Other Details Including Input Received From FWS, CD and State Wildlife Agencies.

A small acreage of the pivot will not be cropped and left as residual cover and grazing for wildlife

The habitat lease will be visited annually for the length of the contract, which is 5 years, for necessary changes if needed. The Habitat Lease may then be renewed as it is meeting the purpose and intent.

The Uinta County Conservation District has recommended that grazing periods be kept short in duration to reduce repeated grazing events on preferred plants before plants have had adequate time to recover. Any other specific recommendations for the Pivot, Reservoir, and North Swanson pastures?

The FWS has recommended that some conservative grazing be allowed on recently constructed wetlands and to maintain vigorous vegetation. Due to the woody vegetation on Three-Mile Creek, early-season grazing is preferred in that field, as permitted in conjunction with the WRP CUA.

Sibert habitat Lease

The local WY G&F biologist supports allowing reduced amount of grazing on the tract and recommended against late fall and winter grazing when big-game, mainly deer, are heavily dependent on the area. This property is some of the best big-game winter range in the area. The game WY G&F department will also work with landowner to discourage an winter activities such as "shed hunting" that can cause stress on wintering mule deer.

Landowner or Representative (Signature, Date):_____

Approved (USFWS Coordinator Signature, Date):_____

Approved (WLCI Coordinator Signature, Date):_____

Approved (UCCD Range Manager Signature, Date):_____

Comment [DK3]: I'm guessing FWS will not sign it, but we'll work out those details

Sibert Habitat Lease

- The locations drawn on the above map are approximate. Exact monitoring sites will be established in the field.
- Although the boundary is not shown on the map, the monitoring sites are inside the deeded property boundary.
- We are proposing 5 monitoring sites, but these could eventually be pared down to 2 or 3 if monitoring over time shows that some sites can be eliminated

Comment [DK4]: WLCI will want to establish its own monitoring sites outside the WRP easement area with its own targets. Let's discuss in the meeting.

Short term monitoring

- The primary purpose of the short term monitoring is to track stubble heights and ensure that the grazing at the stocking rates prescribed is of benefit.
- In addition, collection of short term monitoring data over time will provide a long term trend of approximate livestock utilization and stubble heights at the end of the grazing season

1. Swanson (northeast pasture)
    - Repeatable photopoints with an established bearing at all sites
    - The Wyoming BLM-USFS Key Species utilization method will be used, modified to fit the site and our monitoring goals
        1. Establish permanent transect bearing and measure stubble height, grazed/ungrazed, for a plant every 3 steps
        2. Total = about 50 plants and 150 meter transect at each site
        3. Avg. stubble height and approximate % utilization can be calculated from this method
    - Avg. stubble height will be the quantitative measurement used to determine whether or not the cattle need to be(or should have been) moved off early

2. Three-mile (southeast pasture)
    - 2 upland monitoring sites and 1 riparian monitoring site on Three-mile Creek
    - Repeatable photopoints with an established bearing at all sites
    - The same key species utilization method as being used in the Swanson pasture will be used at all 3 sites in Three-mile pasture
    - % of willow leaders browsed will be measured at the riparian monitoring site if we determine there are enough willows to measure at the time of establishing the monitoring site

Sibert habitat Lease

- Avg. stubble height on the upland monitoring sites will not be used as a “move cattle trigger point” because of the unpredictability of how the vegetation is going to recover over time and variable precipitation
    - However, stubble height and utilization will be measured in the uplands to document that the uplands are not being over-utilized by livestock

Long term monitoring

- Compilation of multiple years of stubble heights, utilization, and photopoints will be sufficient long-term monitoring for the wetland (Swanson pasture) and riparian (Three-mile pasture) sites
- Line-point-intercept transects will be established at the upland monitoring sites in Three-mile pasture to track changes in % bare ground and % plant species composition over the long term