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First name: Douglas

Last name: Harris

Organization: Harris & Son's Stirrup Bar Ranch LLC

Title: Owner/ Manager

Comments: The Stirrup Bar Ranch leases and runs cattle on the USFS Dyer Creek Allotment area.

In response to the key issues for Rangeland Management on the GMUG:

Current Grazing and trends in numbers; We work very closely with the USFS range managers overseeing these properties to determine the correct numbers of cattle and as an experiment goats on our allotment.

in 2017 we ran 400 head of cattle and 650 head of goats.

The goats were utilized to manage Larkspur, noxious weeds, and brush mitigation without spray and or controlled burn. The experiment was viewed as a success by us and the USFS for a organic method to help improve the quality of the range and eliminate undesirable vegetation. Where the goats were staged they cleaned up the area and we moved them on a daily basis. The native grasses that had been previously choked out were the first to respond in these areas providing forage for cattle and big game animals. It is the goal that we can eliminate the undesirable vegetation and improve the range for many years to come.

PLEASE PROVIDE FLEXIBILTY IN THE RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO UTILIZE SPECIES DIVERSITY TO MANAGE AND IMPROVE THE ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE RANGE!

We rotate our cattle on the allotment based on input from the USFS range managers which continually observe quality of the range and advise accordingly. The range improvement has been substantial due to the rotation grazing technique and leaving some of the pastures idol for a full season depending on observations made by USFS and ourselves. Each year we review the previous years activity and make changes accordingly with our range managers to take into account the effects of climate change and drought.

We take pictures and maintain a file to show how all of these techniques of controlled livestock grazing improves the rangeland year in and year out

PLEASE INCORPORATE ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO ALLOW MANAGEMENT FLEXIBILITY SO THAT CHANGES CAN BE MADE WHEN NECESSARY WITH CHANGING WEATHER AND RANGE CONDITIONS.

Stubble height and utilization are not good tools to measure this. Use of a Grazing Response Index is a much more effective tool to measure rangeland health.

We develop water sources on each of our pastures to help spread out the grazing animals and provide water sources for the wildlife in the area.

As an example of this in early 2017 we developed a spring in our Oak hill pasture at our expense for machinery, labor and equipment. A permanent rubber tank was installed to collect the spring and an overflow was installed to allow it to flow back on the ground for smaller wildlife to benefit as well. Within one week we observed elk and deer utilizing the tank to water where before the spring was just a mud-hole.

WE DO THESE THINGS IN ADDITION TO OUR LEASE COST TO IMPROVE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE RANGELAND FOR ALL SPECIES. THIS ALSO SPREADS OUT THE ANIMALS FROM RIPARIAN AREAS

The socio-economic impact of our operation and others that utilize public lands for grazing is very important to the counties that we operate in. We currently operate in Delta, Montrose, and Gunnison counties. The ranch contributes production from 550 cows and approximately 3000 tons of hay to the overall market value for these counties as well as significant impact to the total economic impact to all of these counties.

It is my opinion that we need to continue to work in concert with the USFS and BLM to utilize public lands for grazing livestock in order to continue to feed the massive population growth in this country. It is predicted that in Colorado alone we will see 25-30% population growth in the next 25 years. With agricultural land continually being lost to development for housing ect. it is imperative that we manage our public lands for multiple use as well as protecting our ability to produce livestock for consumption.