

WHITE SANDS RESOURCE AREA

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RANGELAND PROGRAM SUMMARY



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WHITE SANDS RESOURCE AREA

Rangeland Program Summary

III 1987

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is a copy of the White Sands Resource Area (WSRA) Rangeland Program Summary (RPS). This document summarizes the rangeland management portion of the WSRA Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Those wishing to express their views on this RPS should respond within 30 days after receiving the document.

Sincerely,

P. Robert Alexander
Area Manager
White Sands Resource Area

Enclosure

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Rangeland Program Summary

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The White Sands Resource Area (WSRA) Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) serves three purposes: (1) to provide the public with results of the rangeland management portion of the WSRA Resource Management Plan (RMP); (2) inform the public of the BLM's rangeland resource management objectives for the WSRA; and (3) to document management actions which will achieve those objectives (BLM 1984a, BLM 1986a).

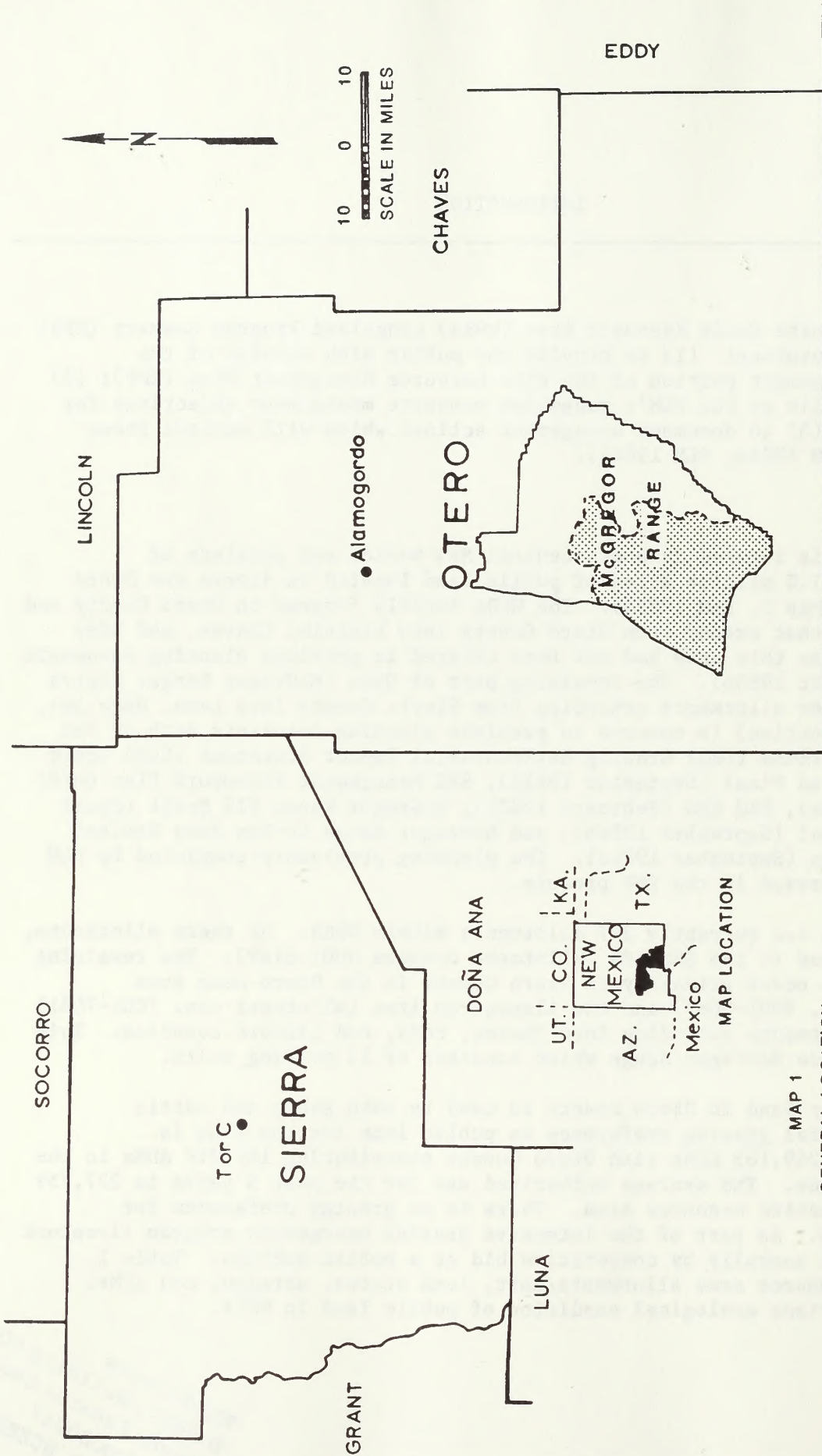
SETTING

WSRA is located in south-central New Mexico and consists of approximately 1.8 million acres of public land located in Sierra and Otero counties (See Map 1, BLM 1985a). The WSRA RMP/EIS focused on Otero County and 11 allotments that extend from Otero County into Lincoln, Chaves, and Eddy counties because this area had not been covered in previous planning documents (BLM, WSRA Draft 1985b). The remaining part of WSRA (McGregor Range, Sierra County, and some allotments extending from Sierra County into Luna, Dona Ana, and Socorro counties) is covered in previous planning documents such as the Southern Rio Grande (SRG) Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Draft (May 1981a), and Final (September 1981b), SRG Management Framework Plan (MFP) (February 1982a), SRG RPS (February 1982b), McGregor Range EIS Draft (April 1980a) and Final (September 1980b), and McGregor Range Co-Use Area Habitat Management Plan (September 1981c). The planning previously completed by BLM was brought forward in the RMP process.

There are currently 227 allotments within WSRA. Of these allotments, 122 were covered in the SRG RPS (allotment numbers 6001-6149). The remaining 105 allotments occur primarily in Otero County in the Otero Mesa area (allotment nos. 9001-9067) and the Alamogordo Area (allotment nos. 7001-7081) with some allotments extending into Chaves, Eddy, and Lincoln counties. This does not include McGregor Range which consists of 14 grazing units.

Public land in Otero county is used by both sheep and cattle producers. Total grazing preference on public land for the WSRA is approximately 249,163 AUMs with Otero County contributing 147,916 AUMs to the total preference. The average authorized use for the past 5 years is 227,759 AUMs for the entire Resource Area. There is no grazing preference for McGregor Range. As part of the intensive grazing management program livestock forage is sold annually by competitive bid at a public auction. Table 1 summarizes resource area allotments/unit, land status, acreage, and AUMs. Table 2 summarizes ecological condition of public land in WSRA.

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MAP 1

GENERAL LOCATION

WHITE SANDS RESOURCE AREA


 Portion of McGregor Range not grazed by livestock.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF EXISTING ALLOTMENT/UNIT NUMBERS, LAND STATUS, ACREAGE, AND AUMS

County	Number of Allotments/ Units	Allotment Acreage			Present AUMs		
		Public	Other	Total	Total AUMs (Federal and Other)	Livestock Federal (Preference)	5-Year Average
Otero	105	950,936	439,960	1,390,976	290,653	147,916	135,261
Sierra	122	834,333	367,551	1,201,884	193,745	101,247	92,498
McGregor	14			251,700			
Total WSRA	241	1,785,269	807,511	2,844,560	484,398	249,163	227,759

Sources: BLM, WSRA-RMP, 1986b.
BLM, McGregor Range EIS Draft (April 1980a).

TABLE 2
ECOLOGICAL CONDITION BY ACREAGE FOR WSRA

COUNTY	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
Otero		138,216	385,504	409,760
Sierra		13,944	282,591	632,043
McGregor Range	8,030	119,710	105,350	18,610
WSRA TOTAL	<u>8,030</u>	<u>271,870</u>	<u>773,445</u>	<u>1,060,413</u>

Sources: BLM, McGregor Range EIS Draft (April 1980a).
BLM, Las Cruces District Files.

WSRA provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. Table 3 lists present and projected (by the year 2006) deer and pronghorn populations for the Resource Area.

TABLE 3
DEER AND PRONGHORN POPULATIONS FOR WSRA

	DEER		PRONGHORN	
	PRESENT	PROJECTED	PRESENT	PROJECTED
Sierra	354	615	195	670
Otero	5,955	12,588	731	1,666
McGregor Range	3,700	5,000	750	850
TOTAL	10,009	18,203	1,676	3,186

Source: BLM, WSRA, RMP, 1986b.

There are no wild and free roaming horses in the WSRA; however, a small herd of 12 burros were located on the Three Rivers Ranch north of Alamogordo, New Mexico. As a result of a decision in the WSRA RMP, these animals were captured in December 1986 and made available to the public through adoption.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

CATEGORIZATION

During the RMP planning process, BLM established certain management strategies for each allotment category. These are:

1. Category C. The BLM will manage these allotments in a custodial manner while protecting existing resources.
2. Category M. The BLM will manage these allotments so that their current satisfactory condition is maintained.
3. Category I. The BLM will manage these allotments to improve their current unsatisfactory condition.

All grazing allotments in WSRA were assigned to one of the three management categories listed above. Eighty-four allotments were placed in the I category, 119 in the M category, and 24 in the C category (see Table 4). The 14 units making up McGregor Range were not included in the categorization process.

TABLE 4
WSRA ALLOTMENT CATEGORIES BY COUNTY

	I	M	C
	Allotments/Acreage	Allotments/Acreage	Allotments/Acreage
Otero	41/521,325	55/410,823	9/17,519
Sierra	43/681,808	64/136,316	15/18,849
TOTAL WSRA	84/1,203,133	119/547,139	24/36,368

Sources: BLM, WSRA Draft RMP/EIS, 1985b; BLM, WSRA RMP, 1986b.

The rangeland management program concentrates on all 84 category I and 25 selected M allotments because of their potential for improvement, resolution of conflicts, and wildlife concerns (BLM 1986b). The category I allotments will have priority for monitoring, preparation of activity plans, and installation of rangeland improvements. Selected M allotments will have priority for intensive wildlife habitat monitoring until potential conflicts have been resolved. At this time, these allotments will be categorized as M or I allotments. The remaining 94 category M and 24 C allotments will be monitored less intensively.

The rangeland program for the co-use portion of McGregor Range is described in the McGregor Range Rangeland Management Program document (January 1981c). The program includes implementation of intensive grazing management, a rangeland improvement program, and expanded monitoring.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In addition to management guidelines for each category, each allotment will have certain goals and specific objectives. One of the goals of the rangeland management program is to determine an appropriate grazing capacity for each allotment and unit. All goals and objectives will be established in consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the allottee and other affected interests.

All program goals and objectives will be consistent with BLM's goal or overall mission of:

"The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the balanced management of the Public Land and resources and their various values so that they are considered in the combination that will best serve the needs of the American people. BLM management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; a combination of uses that takes into account the long term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources. These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness and natural, scenic, scientific and historical values."

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Administrative procedures in the rangeland management program excluding McGregor Range include issuing a first-year notice through letters, agreements or decisions informing affected allottees that the RMP has been implemented and the category (M, I, C) of their allotment. This notice will also state the grazing preference and authorized use for the allotment and any upcoming monitoring studies. First-year notices for allotments in Sierra County were issued in 1982. First-year notices for Otero County will be issued after this document has been distributed to the public (BLM 1984a).

When BLM determines that sufficient monitoring data exist, an evaluation of that data will be made to determine if there is a need for livestock adjustments. Decisions or agreements pertaining to livestock use adjustments may be necessary due to problems associated with stocking rate, season of use, kind and class of livestock, grazing patterns, or other reasons. All decisions and agreements will be in compliance with 43 CFR 4110.3-1, 43 CFR 4110.3-2, and 43 CFR 4110.3-3. Necessary adjustments due to drought, fire, or other emergencies will also be made in compliance with the CFR subpart 4100.

ACTIVITY PLANS

Activity plans will be developed on category I allotments. The plans will be prepared within guidelines established by the agreements or decisions to resolve resource conflicts. These plans would:

1. Identify resource management problems;
2. Establish management goals and objectives;
3. Prescribe the livestock grazing practices that will be used to achieve the stated goals and objectives;
4. Identify planned rangeland improvements; and
5. Define the method of monitoring.

Significant resource values (riparian areas, threatened or endangered species, crucial wildlife habitat) in conflict with existing grazing management will be favored for development or enhancement in activity plans. Sixteen existing activity plans comprising 364,901 acres will continue. All activity plans will be evaluated, revised, or terminated as necessary.

McGregor Range currently operates within two activity plans. This includes the McGregor Range Co-Use Area Habitat Management Plan (September 1981c) and the McGregor Range Activity Management Plan (July 1982c).

GRAZING PRACTICES

Grazing practices needed to meet resource management objectives will be prescribed in activity plans. These practices will be developed in cooperation with the allottee and other affected interests. Grazing practices will also allow for the physiological needs of plants and a beneficial return of dollars expended in achieving the overall management objectives.

RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS

Rangeland improvements will be constructed to facilitate resource management objectives prescribed in activity plans. All rangeland improvements constructed on public land will be in accordance with pertinent procedures, design specifications, executive orders, manual requirements, regulations, and policies. Site-specific Environmental Assessments will be completed as appropriate for management actions. Details for improvements (specifications, maintenance, etc.) are contained in the WSRA RMP and in a number of other BLM improvement specification manuals.

Location, extent, and timing of rangeland improvements will be determined by the following factors:

1. Management objectives for an allotment may or may not warrant development of rangeland improvements.
2. Interdisciplinary contributions from various BLM resource specialists for rangeland improvement development and implementation may be necessary.
3. Proposed range projects will undergo review by BLM resource specialists to ensure that no significant impacts will occur to wildlife, archaeological, and other resource values. This will also allow for incorporation of mitigating measures on those affected resources.
4. Operator contributions for rangeland improvements will be considered in the prioritization process.
5. BLM funding through 4322 and 8100 programs.
6. Category I allotments will receive priority for rangeland improvements over M and C allotments.
7. Consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the Grazing Advisory Board will occur so that recommendations can be made as appropriate.

In the short-term, an estimated 199 miles of pipeline, 124 miles of fence, 53 wells with pump or windmill, 75 storage tanks (20,000 gallons), 225 drinking troughs, 74 erosion control dikes, and 1 catchment will aid in meeting resource management objectives (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
PROPOSED RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS

Allotment Number	Pipeline (Miles)	Storage Tanks	Drinking Troughs	Fences (Miles)	Dikes	Dirt Well Tanks or Windmill	Pump	Water Catchment	Chemical Treatment (Acres)	Mechanical Treatment (Acres)	Prescribed Burn (Acres)
6001	1.5		2		4					146	
6002	2.5	2	5				1		3,205		
6017	3.5	2	4	16.5			1		11,711	773	
6019	10.5	2	13	5.25	2				18,599		
6020		1	7	8	8		1		23,221	3,734	
6022	6	3	1				1		19,731	1,439	
6026			2				1				
6027	1.75	1	2						2,440		
6033				3							
6037				3							
6039				3.5	7						
6041	3.5	1	7	2.5	2		1		3,959		
6042	.75				1				2,321		
6043						1					
6046		1	7				1				
6048	3.5	2	2				1				
6049			2				2				
6050	1		2				1				
6053	10	1	6			2	1				
6054	1	1	1						3,561		
6055									30,392	2,429	
6056	2.5		1						3,243	771	
6059	6.5	1	15	1.75	6				2,318		
6067	2		3		8				8,898		
6068	1.5		2						2,187		
6070		1	1			1	1		1,629		
6072	2.3		3						922		
6075	5.5		2						2,592		
6080	8.75	1	9						16,013		
6081	2.3		4						2,556		
6082	3		2	9	1	1	1				
6083	.25	1	1	3.5	10		1		1,814	243	
6085	1	1	1	1			1		688		
6091	3	1	4				1		2,889		
6093	.3		1	4.5							
6094						1					
6102						1			1,639	600	
6109				1.1							
6113	.25	1	3	1.25			1				
6140				1.9					3,032		
7005				1							
7012	1	1	2			1	1				
7014	1.5										
7031			1								
7033	.25	1	1								
7037				2.25							

TABLE 5 (concluded)
PROPOSED RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS

Allotment Number	Pipeline (Miles)	Storage Tanks	Drinking Troughs	Fences (Miles)	Dikes	Dirt Well Tanks or Windmill	Water Catchment	Chemical		Prescribed Burn (Acres)
								Treatment (Acres)	Mechanical Treatment (Acres)	
7050	4		4							
7051	6	3	4	4				1,780		
7055					1			304		
7056								1,688		
7067								1,399		
9001	1		1	2.75	1			604		105
9003										
9008	.25				1					
9009	1	1			1					
9010	1.50			4.25						
9012				1						
9013	1.25	1	1					7,985		
9026								1,282		
9031	5.75	3	4	4	1			2,629		
9035	2.5		1					2,500		
9036	1.5		1	1.75				9,525		1,719
9037	1.25		1					1,456		
9038	1.75		2							
9039	2.25		2							
9040	1.25		2		1			3,865		
9042				7.25						
9044	1			4	1					
9046	2.25			1.5						
9047	.75			2.5				2,510		
9049	1.75		1	.75				4,039		400
9050										
9051	4.25		4	.75						80
9052	.75		1							
9053	8.5		3	5				8,312		
9055	1		1		1			538		
9056		1		2.75				1,137		
9059				2.50						
9062				4.50						
9063	4	1		5		1		7,153		
SUBTOTAL	142.9	36	148	124.25	74	16	1	229,060	10,135	2,381
McGregor Range	56 ^{a/}	39	77		5	34				

Sources: BLM 1980a, and BLM 1986b.

Note: ^{a/} Includes 17.5 miles of replacement line.

Vegetation treatments will include burning, application of chemicals, and mechanical treatments. These treatments on 241,576 acres will increase forage production by approximately 20,006 AUMs in the long-term. Seeding will occur on 1,597 acres.

A benefit-cost analysis will be performed on each activity plan which will aid in prioritization of allotments to commit 8100 funds needed to implement activity plans. Those activity plans with the highest ratio will generally receive consideration for earliest implementation.

MONITORING

All 227 allotments in the WSRA will be monitored. The level of monitoring will be based on management category and allotment objectives. All 14 units on McGregor Range are currently being monitored and will continue to be monitored to determine if objectives are met and to set stocking rates annually or biannually.

An intensive monitoring program will be initiated on 66 allotments in Otero County and will continue on 43 allotments in Sierra County to determine if management objectives for the allotment and land-use plan are being met (BLM 1986a). Allottees and other affected interests will be notified about the studies and will be invited to participate in the studies.

Monitoring studies on category I and selected M allotments may include collection of climatic, actual livestock use, key forage species utilization, wildlife use, and ecological condition and trend data. On selected M allotments, BLM will conduct studies to determine if livestock grazing is adversely affecting wildlife habitat. The study will include pronghorn viability indices and other techniques.

District guidelines for monitoring techniques are contained in Grazing Allotment Monitoring Studies Guidelines and Procedures for Las Cruces District Bureau of Land Management. A variety of other technical references such as BLM TR 4400-1 Rangeland Monitoring: Planning for Monitoring (1984b); TR 4400-2, Rangeland Monitoring: Actual Use Studies (1984c); TR 4400-3, Rangeland Monitoring: Utilization Studies (1984d); and TR 4400-4, Rangeland Monitoring: Trend Studies (1985c) will be used as appropriate.

Some methods for data collection by critical element are shown below:

1. Actual Use

- a. Livestock counts
- b. Wildlife counts or pellet transects by habitat areas
- c. Records supplied by operators

2. Utilization of Key Forage Species

- a. Portable cages
- b. Permanent transects
- c. Temporary transects

3. Climatic Conditions
 - a. Rain gauges
 - b. U.S. Weather Bureau Stations
4. Rangeland Condition and Trend
 - a. Exclosures
 - b. Permanent photo points
 - c. Browse transects
 - d. Production plots
 - e. Pace-point transects

As other efficient methods of data collection are developed, they will be considered in the rangeland management program.

Other M and all category C allotments will also be monitored to determine if resource values are being adversely affected. The level of monitoring will be determined for each allotment on a case by case basis.

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND EVALUATION

Periodically, all monitoring data will undergo analysis and interpretation so that an evaluation can be made to determine if resources have changed. BLM TR 4400-7, Rangeland Monitoring: Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluation (1985d) and pertinent District and State guidelines will be used in the process of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of monitoring data. When evaluations show that present management practices will achieve management objectives, no changes will be made. If monitoring studies suggest that resource objectives have been met, categorization will be changed from I to M. Further coordination and consultation and appropriate management action will be taken where evaluations suggest that resource values are being adversely affected or resource objectives are not being met.

RPS UPDATES

The status of the rangeland management program will be reported in an annual RPS update (BLM 1986c). This update will include changes in allotment categorization, number of agreements reached, decisions issued, status of monitoring studies, number and type of rangeland improvements constructed, number of acres of vegetation treatment, number of activity plans implemented, evaluated, revised or terminated, and any other actions initiated (BLM 1984a).

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