

IV - WHITE MT. UNIT

A. LOCATION

The White Mt. Unit consists of the range of mountains known as White Mountains, located on the east side of Owens Valley and running north and south and paralleling the Sierras. They are geologically much older than the Sierras and have no physical connection. The White Mountains, Inyo Mountains and Panamints are really one range, but different sections have different names.

The unit boundary is delineated by the Forest boundary on the north, east and west sides, and by the Westgard Pass highway on the south. The northern portion of the unit lies in the State of Nevada.

B. DESCRIPTION (Resources and Uses)

The unit constitutes a high uplift of mountains, culminating in White Mountain Peak, 14,242 feet in elevation. The west slope is a precipitous, barren escarpment. Near the top, where slopes are more gradual, there is a light cover of sagebrush, mountain mahogany and bristlecone pine. The west side is interspersed with extremely deep, highly colored canyons that produce a surprising amount of water. The water originates from springs that are evidently tied to deep sources of supply. Flash floods are commonplace during the summer. The slopes on the east side are more gradual and are interspersed with meadows, aspen thickets and slopes well covered with sagebrush and perennial grass. The unit has a long history of pioneer mining activity and heavy grazing. Ranches on both sides are highly dependent upon water that originates within the unit.

C. ZONES

No.	Zone Name	Management Rank	Planning Period
1	East Zone	Water-Grazing-Wildlife-Timber-Mining	10 Years
2	West Zone	Water-Mining	10 Years

NO. 1 - EASTSIDE ZONE

a. Boundaries

This zone is bounded on the west by the crest of the mountain range, on the south by Westgard Pass road, and on the north and east by the Forest boundary.

b. Description (Resources and Uses)

All of the ranches in Fish Lake Valley are highly dependent upon water flowing from this zone for irrigation and domestic purposes. Likewise, they are closely dependent upon the forage resources to balance their ranch operations. All the feed that is raised on the home ranches is needed to sustain livestock during the rigorous winter months.

At one time the zone must have produced a luxuriant crop of forage. The results of excessive use by livestock prior to and shortly after the establishment of the Forest are readily evident. Sheet erosion and excessive gully erosion are particularly noticeable on top and in Crooked Creek.

Sparse stands of bristlecone pine are found on top and extend down a short distance on the east side. The wood, particularly from the dead and down timber, is very attractive and has many desirable qualities for specialty purposes.

Wildlife populations have always been light, there being no records in early history of any appreciable concentration. Lack of suitable sparse feed undoubtedly has limited deer. Excessive grazing around springs has limited sagehen. Mountain sheep are just holding their own and why they have not increased with protection is a question. They occurred in large numbers in the past. Chukar partridge have been introduced and have adapted themselves exceptionally well. They are expanding rapidly and flocks of from 20 to 400 are frequently seen.

Only two streams contain fishable populations of trout; Wyman and Cottonwood Creeks. They will never withstand the impact of heavy fishing.

The southern end of the zone is accessible by three routes extending to the top. Wyman and Silver canyons are steep dirt roads and are only accessible by pickup or jeep. In 1949, the Navy constructed a good dirt road from Westgard Pass to the top to provide for their Naval research special use improvements at the head of Crooked Creek. A jeep road extends from this point almost to the top of White Mountain Peak.

Inactive mines and claims are numerous, many predating the establishment of the Forest.

c. Resources - Rank and Management Objectives

Water is the highest ranking resource, followed by grazing, wildlife, timber and mining.

d. Planning Period

Planning period established at ten years and based upon ten year term for grazing permits.

e. Existing or Potential Problems and Recommendations

1. Erosion & Water Production

Range in deteriorated condition; accelerated erosion. Capacity of watershed to hold water low in many areas.

Recommendations

- (a) That stocking of ranges be such as to permit a residual stand of grass to remain on the ground at the end of each season.
- (b) That in suitable drainages, beaver be planted to assist in stabilizing runoff.
- (c) That a plan be developed and blueprinted for erosion control developments (water level dams) at the headwaters of Crooked Creek and Tres Plumas.
- (d) "Show-me" trips for water users in Fish Lake to develop appreciation of water values.

2. Grazing

Past and present overuse of grazing lands.

Recommendations

- (a) No increases in numbers permitted even in good years for the duration of the ten year period.
- (b) Stocking of Crooked Creek now correct as to numbers and season. Either by riding or fencing, defer use of Crooked Creek proper until fall gathering.
- (c) Season for Cottonwood Allotment correct. Remove temporary stock in 1951 and reduce preference stock to 200 head, which is correct.
- (d) Indian Creek good condition. No change in stocking or season.
- (e) Davis and Perry Aiken allotments season correct. Start on a 30% reduction program.

(f) Trail Canyons season and stocking satisfactory.

(g) Reduce Tres Plumas sheep range from 1250 to 1000 and close Tres Plumas meadow proper from further use. Never permit cattle to run on this range, and should opportunity present itself, eventually close range to grazing because of water value.

3. Timber Sales

Timber, both dead and down and live scarce. Lumber has unusual qualities, including resistance to rot, beauty, etc. Periodic pressure to make sales for inside finish.

Recommendation

Discourage large sales and hold for specialty and cabinet work. Reserve sufficient timber to meet Forest needs for post and sign material. Confine all sales to dead and down. Study and develop fair appraisal price.

4. Recreation Special Uses

From time to time, pressure will be exerted for commercial uses for resort, organized camp, etc. Area will not stand heavy impact of use (fishing and hunting). Uses will conflict with grazing and water.

Recommendation

Discourage any permanent developments. Possibly may wish to grant temporary hunting camp or pack station, but maintain on temporary basis and keep seasonal.

5. Wildlife

Low numbers of wildlife population.

Recommendations

(a) Encourage Division of Fish and Game on reduction of mountain lion to favor deer numbers.

(b) Continue to protect sagehen, but in addition protect green grass areas around springs and seeps by fencing. This is undoubtedly a limiting factor, particularly during dry years.

(c) Adequate roosting type is a likely limiting factor for quail. Encourage Fish and Game to develop some on trial basis.

(d) Encourage Fish and Game to study both chuckar partridge and mountain sheep. Too little is known about them at present.

6. Wild Horses

Small residual population of wild horses running in several bands periodically create trouble.

Recommendation

Problem not sufficiently critical to warrant aggressive action. Encourage individual permittees to solve in their own way to keep population down.

NO. 2 - WESTSIDE ZONE

a. Boundaries

This zone bounded on the east by top of crest adjacent to Zone No. 1, on the north and west by the Forest boundary and on the south by the Westgard Pass highway.

b. Description (Resources and Uses)

This zone has no renewable resource values of any extent. Some riparian forage exists along a few streams and fringe areas at the base of the slopes. It is used in a casual way by local ranchers. A small deer population exists, but is not huntable because of the rugged terrain. Mountain sheep use the most rugged area near the crest, and are protected. Mining, particularly non-metallic products such as asbestos, talc and pumice, is important. Water flow from the numerous streams is very important and sustains many ranches along the base of the mountain in Chalfant Valley toward Benton.

c. Resources - Rank and Management Objectives

Water is the highest ranking resource, followed by mining, wildlife and grazing.

d. Planning Period

Arbitrarily established at ten years.

e. Existing or Potential Problems

1. Possible conflict may eventually occur between use of riparian vegetation by chukar partridge and cattle.

Recommendation

When this appears to be the case, eliminate grazing which is held on a temporary basis.

2. Grazing Trespass

Some grazing trespass may occur at the north end of the zone adjacent to Bureau of Land Management.

Recommendation

Watch and when it occurs, take appropriate action as the situation warrants.