



Livestock Grazing Management Systems for Riparian-Wetland Areas

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Livestock grazing management in riparian areas is one of the most pervasive issues facing land managers. Most public and private rangeland is grazed, and even though riparian areas constitute only about 8 percent of the total public land acreage, and less than 1 percent of the public land in many of the more arid Western states, most grazing allotments, including some desert allotments, contain some riparian acreage (Leonard et al. 1997). Livestock grazing can be a compatible use in riparian areas when managed in harmony with land management objectives, and when the function, capability, and potential of the site and the needs of the riparian vegetation guide the development of the grazing management prescription. Regardless of other differences in management objectives, grazing must be compatible with achieving or maintaining “proper functioning condition” to be considered sustainable (Leonard et al. 1997). The grazing management system for an area should be tailored to the conditions, problems, potential, economics, and livestock management considerations on a site-specific basis. From the standpoint of achieving livestock management objectives and minimizing soil, vegetation, and water quality impacts, grazing management plans will vary. There is no set formula for identifying the type of grazing system or management plan that will be best for any livestock operation or allotment. Water quality impacts are closely related to concentration of livestock. The grazing system must be designed on the basis of soil and vegetation capabilities, water quality considerations, and livestock and wildlife requirements (Moore et al. 1979).

2009. 62nd Society for Range Management Annual Meeting. Paper No. 14-9.