



Social, Political, and Practical Challenges of Managing Annual Grass-Dominated Landscapes

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There are three main challenges facing federal agencies managing annual-grass dominated landscapes; annual variability of forage, patchiness of annual-grass dominated areas within a landscape, and the management of these lands after fire. The majority of the allotments that are dominated by annual grasses are authorized for grazing in the winter, therefore the forage amount is known before grazing begins. Winter grazing is at a premium; as a result options are few on low forage years and can be constrained by regulations. Similarly, few allotments are comprised completely of annual grass-dominated lands. Possibly the best ways to deal with these two challenges is through flexibility, which has to be taken care of through the planning process. Allotment management plans can allow for flexibility within the terms and conditions of the permits that can be best fit to the conditions that are encountered. Fire has the largest impact to annual grass-dominated lands with the difficulty for management coming after the fires are extinguished. The two main issues after fire suppression are often Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) and Grazing Management. ESR is very sensitive to time and timing of the planning and implementation for a given project. Short time frames are given for the completion of the plans and the timing of the implementation greatly affect the success of the project. Grazing management is often more complicated immediately following a fire; due to the "success" or "failure" of an ESR project, mixed land ownership, and the general vagaries of weather and politics.

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