

ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST

HIGH UINTAS WILDERNESS

DESIRED CONDITION & RANGE STANDARDS

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In the High Uintas Wilderness Management Plan (Plan Amendment 12, 1997), desired condition classes were delineated within the wilderness as a means of acknowledging diversity in use patterns, user behavior and preferences, and the nature of the wilderness experience while protecting wilderness values. Differing condition classes in the wilderness requires management to apply specific strategies to specific sections of the wilderness to achieve desired conditions. The type and intensity of management varies with the desired condition class.

Livestock grazing often conflicts with recreational use in the High Uintas Wilderness. It can displace visitors, make popular camping areas undesirable, compete with recreational stock for limited forage, and interfere with the wilderness experience. However, these social impacts are highly subjective and are very difficult to quantify. Livestock grazing also has biophysical impacts, which will be left to Forest resource specialists to evaluate. Thus, only visual quality will be addressed in the following standards. The wilderness management mandate requires the protection of *natural conditions* and *wilderness character*. Visual quality is an important indicator of these attributes and affects the wilderness experience.

Livestock grazing is recognized as an appropriate use of wilderness. However, the effects of livestock grazing should be consistent with the desired conditions described below by desired condition class.

DESIRED CONDITION

There are no changes proposed to desired conditions in the High Uintas Wilderness, as described in Plan Amendment 12.

Class I Areas

The area is characterized by an unmodified natural environment. Human induced change is temporary, minor, and less than in Class II and III. Soil compaction and minor vegetation loss associated with human related activities are temporary, discontinuous, and limited in extent to the area of activity. Human induced changes to soils, water and air quality, wildlife habitats, natural fire regimes, and vegetation do not disrupt natural processes within the watershed.

By managing the area to maintain very low use levels, outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined recreation are available. There are few, if any, system trails. Appropriate and properly designed system trails that pass through Class I are considered corridors and are maintained. Encounters with other groups and

rangers are rare. Both the outfitted and general public disperse use and practice Leave No Trace ethics and skills. Regulations are communicated to visitors primarily outside the wilderness. Few direct contacts by wilderness rangers are made, unless needed to monitor conditions or address problems. Generally, Class I areas are defined outside permitted livestock allotments, except areas within allotment boundaries that are unsuitable, vacant, or unused (due to physical barriers or quality of forage). Lakes are generally not stocked with fish.

Class I areas appear 100% unaltered by livestock grazing activities (non-recreational). Visual quality is described as *pristine*.

Class II Areas

The area is characterized by a predominantly unmodified natural environment. Some human induced change is evident but generally not persistent and less than in Class III. Soil loss, compaction, and minor vegetation loss associated with human activities are discontinuous and limited in extent to the area of activity. Human induced changes to soils, water and air quality, wildlife habitats, natural fire regimes, and vegetation do not disrupt natural processes within the watershed.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation exist. Compared to Class III, fewer areas of concentrated visitor use occur. In areas of concentrated human use, dead and down firewood is available but may be scarce. Developed, maintained, and signed system trails exist. Encounters with other groups, rangers, and wilderness ranger camps are less than Class III but more than Class I. Both the outfitted and general public practice Leave No Trace ethics and skills. Where regulation is needed to prevent deterioration of the wilderness resource and visitor experience, it is communicated to visitors primarily outside the wilderness and on-site. Livestock grazing and fish stocking may occur.

Class II areas appear 80% unaltered by livestock grazing activities (non-recreational). Visual quality is described as *natural*.

Class III Areas

This area is characterized by a predominantly unmodified natural environment. Human induced change is greater than in Class I and II and could persist from year to year. Soil loss, compaction, and minor vegetation loss associated with human activities are discontinuous and limited in extent to the area of activity. Human induced changes to soils, water and air quality, wildlife habitats, natural fire regimes, and vegetation do not disrupt natural processes within the watershed.

Concentrated use is more common than in Class II, but it is managed to augment opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. During peak season and at popular sites, outstanding opportunities for solitude are more limited than in Class I and II. In popular campsites, dead and down firewood may be unavailable.

Well-maintained and signed system trails aid visitors. Encounters with other groups, rangers, and wilderness ranger camps are more common than in Class I and II. Both the outfitted and general public practice Leave No Trace ethics and skills. Where regulation is needed to prevent deterioration of the wilderness resource and visitor experience, it is communicated to visitors both outside of the wilderness and on-site. Livestock grazing and fish stocking may occur.

Visitors may come in contact with water impoundments or snow measurement devices. Repair, reconstruction, or stabilization of water impoundments and associated activities (borrow sources, access roads) are performed so the ability of soils to support naturally occurring vegetation is not diminished.

Class III areas appear 60% unaltered by livestock grazing activities (non-recreational). Visual quality is described as *semi-natural*.

STANDARDS

Currently, there is a 40% range utilization standard for all allotments in the wilderness. A change is proposed in Class II areas only.

Class I Areas

0% Utilization. Since Class I areas are generally defined outside permitted livestock allotments, except areas within allotment boundaries that are unsuitable, vacant, or unused (due to physical barriers or quality of forage), this is the current standard. No change is needed or proposed.

Class II Areas

20% Utilization. This is less than the current standard. The reduction is proposed to improve and protect visual quality in Class II areas and bring them into compliance with the desired conditions described above. Also, since more natural conditions are prescribed for Class II areas by Plan Amendment 12, the standard should logically be less than in Class III areas.

Class III Areas

40% Utilization. This is the current standard. Under appropriate permit administration, no change is needed or proposed.

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