

Tushar Allotments Collaboration Field Trip Report

Wildcat/North Wildcat Creeks Pine Creek/Sulphurbeds Allotment August 1-2, 2007

Collaboration Participants

John Keeler (Utah Farm Bureau)
Sean Kelly (UDWR)
Terry Krasko (Beaver RD, USFS)
Mary O'Brien (Grand Canyon Trust) --- note taking
Doug Sorensen (Beaver RD, USFS)
Joe Yardley (Pine Creek/Sulphurbeds permittee)

Others:

Christine Duffy (intern, Grand Canyon Trust)
 (Noxious weed control, Beaver RD)

- Map of the portions of N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creeks walked:
http://tushar.ecr.gov/pdf/website_tushar_collab_pinecrksulph_wildcat2.pdf
- Photos from the ridge between N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creeks (upland); and riparian areas of N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creeks
<http://tushar.ecr.gov/?link=107>

General

An August Collaboration trip to North Wildcat/Wildcat Creeks (Pine Creek/Sulphurbeds Allotment) was planned during a June 22, 2007 Collaboration field trip on Pine Creek. A 2003 Level II Riparian Inventory of N. Wildcat Creek (see Background Information) had indicated riparian conditions of concern, and Terry Krasko indicated that the Forest had been aware for some time of such problems.

As the ORV route up the ridge between N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creeks is not passable without riding a horse or ATV, or walking, Mary O'Brien (Grand Canyon Trust) hiked up on August 1 (with an intern, Christine Duffy). Other Collaboration members arrived by ATV on the morning of August 2, where the ATV route ends at Wildcat Creek.

The Wildcat Pasture was to be grazed in 2007 (Darrell Yardley, Clark Bradshaw) from June 16 until July 11 (or earlier, to allotment utilization standards). Three cows

were observed in Wildcat Creek, near our meeting place, on August 2. These belong to Clark Bradshaw, and were scheduled to be in Pine Creek pasture at this time. This area used to be a sheep camp, but was not in use by the 1960s. Until _____, the allotment was a cow/sheep common allotment.

A large area south of N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creek is a major part of the allotment capacity.

Doug S. mentioned the desire for a grazing scheme that gives protection to the riparian area. He suggested moving salt blocks to keep the herd away from the Wildcat Creeks. Doug indicated “timing and duration” is a key to making it work.

Mary asked how much earlier cows could come in, and if the plants would be ready by then. The answer: one week.

Mary questioned the capacity within this region of N. Wildcat and Wildcat Creek, as the ridge between them and the area visible from that ridge appears to be dominated by peppergrass (*Lepidium* sp.) and cheatgrass understory, and not much else.

Joe stated that the cows could utilize Gambel oak.¹ With livestock grazing, Gambel oak is the major remaining cover in this area of N. Wildcat Creek.

Doug indicated Wildcat Ck Pasture is the pasture with the lowest capacity of the five Pine Creek/Sulphurdale pastures.

Cheatgrass is common here. Aspen is in the higher elevations of the southern portion of the pasture, along with snowberry and mountain mahogany.

Around 1999 portions on the Wildcat Creek pasture were burned, because there is a loss of shrub steppe to pinyon-juniper, and conifer is encroaching on aspen. But PJ below 8,000 feet yields more cheatgrass, so any PJ removal would have to be mechanical.

Joe Y. Suggested flip-flopping between BLM land and the Wildcat Pasture, grazing Wildcat earlier, and the BLM land later.

Joe's largest pasture burned in the Millard Fire this year. There will be 1-2 years of re-seeding on that allotment. Fire burned there 10-11 years ago with “excellent” re-seeding that included native and exotic plants, including the exotics annual ryegrass and orchard grass, and native ricegrass, intermediate wheatgrass, and sand dropseed. Forage kochia (exotic; *Kochia prostrata*) is being used currently as forage and to prevent return

¹ Gambel oak is “fair” forage for cattle; and its nutritional content lowers starting in June; up to 50% of cattle diet can be Gambel oak without ill effects. See <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/quegam/all.html>

of cheatgrass (unlike cheatgrass, forage kochia remains green throughout the season. It was described as non-invasive.²

N. Wildcat Creek (see photos, map)

Doug mentioned that the eroding banks with much bare ground are not meeting Forest standards.

The group discussed possible ways to keep cows out of the riparian area, including one-way gates into corrals with sweet mix to attract cows. This is a low moisture molasses supplement called Crystal Licks that is about \$100/250-pound tubs.

Joe Y wondered whether the cheatgrass may be good pasture if eaten when it is young and green, but that taking cows off early means coming home early and that is difficult for ranchers.

The possibility of grazing on BLM land (from N. Indian Creek to I-15) while giving the Wildcat Pasture a Spring rest was discussed.

This area is about 7,600 feet in elevation, and there was a burn in 2000 (Wildfire? Prescribed burn?)

A seep was trampled (see photo 1318), as cattle are using this ephemeral creek's bed as a grazing route. There was a discussion of the importance of ephemeral streams as a sponge; and the importance of sedges to slow runoff.

Wildcat Creek (see photos, map)

Again, trampled/eroding banks; bare ground; and incised channel were observed. Some narrowleaf cottonwood recruitment was noted (e.g., photo 1327) while most cottonwood shorter than 6 feet have been browsed (e.g., photo 1326). The question of whether these young cottonwood over 6 feet may have been released during the two years (2001/2002?) the pasture was rested following the 2000 fire. [This could be determined].

Most willows were browsed; where they were inaccessible to cattle/elk because of the channel being narrow (e.g., photo 1344).

² But, as the USDA notes, "Studies indicate that plants will spread under favorable conditions into bare or disturbed sites where competition is limited."

http://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_kopr80.pdf