

## **B.5.0 AGRICULTURE AND RANGE**

Beef cattle production is the most common form of agriculture in the plan area. There is some potential for other forms of agriculture. There are Crown grazing tenures throughout the plan area, with the majority of use concentrated in the Elk River, Bull River and Sand Creek watersheds. Agriculture Land Reserve designations in the plan area are shown on Map B.5.1.

### **Issues:**

- High quality, available forage in the plan area is limited and decreasing, largely due to forest ingrowth
- There is no incentive to debuild roads, other than within approved cutblocks, on range lands
- The supply of available forage is influenced by forest disturbance
- Appropriately designed grazing regimes may enhance the availability and use of forage for livestock
- A sustainable and profitable beef cattle industry in the plan area is dependent on the availability of rangeland for grazing
- Class III Agriculture (*Canada Land Inventory*) is the highest classification level in the plan area because of limitations to the growing season. This classification, however, accommodates optimum perennial forage production.
- Riparian areas are important watering sites for livestock, contribute to forage productivity, and maintain a stable water supply for irrigation. Concentrated livestock use of riparian areas may impact proper functioning condition<sup>1</sup>.
- In the Wigwam and Flathead River watersheds (LU C14 -C18) high quality, available forage is limited and of critical importance to maintaining internationally significant wildlife populations of ungulates and carnivores, as well as maintaining livestock grazing permits associated with guide-outfitting operations
- In the Elk River, Bull River and Sand Creek watersheds high-quality, available forage is limited and decreasing, and this continues to precipitate conflicts between wildlife populations and domestic livestock
- With only small areas of NDT4 in the plan area, there is limited capability to enhance range lands to address forest ingrowth
- There are conflicts between the forest industry and domestic livestock on Crown land
- Predator impacts on domestic livestock, particularly in LU C14-C18, may jeopardize maintenance of natural predator-prey relationships
- Domestic livestock grazing impacts alpine and subalpine environments

### **Intent:**

- Maintain a healthy and profitable agricultural sector that respects sensitive environmental values, subject to terms and conditions of approved tenures and plans, and consistent with SRMMP objectives

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<sup>1</sup> Effects of Cattle Grazing near Streams, Lakes and Wetlands, FPB Special Report, FPB/SR/11, June 2002

- Maintain or enhance livestock grazing activity, subject to terms and conditions of approved grazing tenures and range use and range stewardship plans, to maintain agriculture opportunities while managing for viable populations of wildlife
- Eliminate potential for parasite and disease transfer from domestic livestock to wildlife
- Manage the Wigwam and Flathead River watersheds (LU C14 – C18) to ensure sustainable forage for wildlife
- In areas within the plan area designated as Agriculture Land Reserve under the *Agriculture Land Reserve Act* (Map B.5.1) and consistent with approved ecosystem restoration plans, consider sites with high forage production as a priority for forage production enhancement while maintaining grassland integrity
- Manage range land to be healthy and diverse
- Maintain and manage range land according to ecosystem management principles within the limits of its sustainable carrying capacity.
- Reduce current and historic forest ingrowth in areas with high quality range capability
- Manage recreation access in range lands to minimize alienation/loss of the resource base
- Control noxious weeds to maintain range land values including forage, shrub and tree production and biodiversity
- Manage vehicle use on range land to minimize negative effects on range land values
- Tenuring opportunities for agricultural operations will be considered to improve their viability, subject to SRMMP Resource objectives
- Maintain opportunities for water allocation for agricultural uses
- Minimize conflicts between livestock and forestry values
- Integrate grazing objectives with operational timber management activities
- Minimize conflicts between livestock and wildlife (both ungulates and predators)
- Minimize the impact of livestock grazing on alpine and subalpine environments
- Livestock use of riparian areas will comply with current and relevant legislation and regulation
- Manage riparian areas to maintain proper functioning condition as provided in Section B.9.1
- Agricultural use will be sensitive to identified wildlife habitats as provided in Section B.9.7.

**Resource objectives:**

**Objective 5.0.1**

**Manage livestock grazing in the Wigwam and Flathead River watersheds (Landscape Units C14 – C18) to ensure forage quality, productivity and availability for wildlife.**

**Objective 5.0.2**

**Maintain livestock grazing at 500 Animal Unit Months or less for low-intensity horse, mule and donkey use associated with Guide Outfitter and/or backcountry tourism operations in the Wigwam and Flathead River watersheds (Landscape Units C14 – C18). Livestock grazing is subject to terms and conditions of approved grazing tenures, licences and permits issued under existing legislation, regulations and guidebooks as amended periodically by regulatory agencies. “Livestock” and “Animal Unit Months” have the same meaning as in the *Range Act*.**

**Objective 5.0.3**

**Increases in Animal Unit Months for livestock grazing under the *Range Act* in alpine and subalpine grassland ecosystems (AT, ESSFwmp and ESSFdkp) will only be considered where there is a recommendation of a qualified registered professional, indicating that conservation objectives, as defined in Chapter B.9.0, of this plan can be met. Grazing by domestic sheep, goat and llama are not permitted in identified Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep or mountain goat range.**

**Objective 5.0.4**

**Encourage livestock to use areas other than OGMAs and MMAs as per Section B.9.2 and Map B.9.2.1.**

**Best management practices:**

- *Range Use Plan Guidebook (MOF, October 2000)*
- Relevant sections within the *Riparian Management Area Guidebook (MOF, 1995)*
- *Range Land Handbook for BC (BC Cattlemen’s Association, 1998)*

**Economic benefits and opportunities:**

- Diversified agriculture industry
- Guest ranches and guide outfitters
- Livestock grazing
- Agroforestry
- Noxious weed control
- Riparian management

**Measures of success:**

- Viable agriculture industry
- Increased productivity of Crown lands used for agriculture
- New sources of water for agriculture identified
- Livestock losses due to predators minimized
- Reduced livestock-forestry conflicts
- Forest ingrowth on higher capability range reduced
- High quality forage available
- Healthy and contiguous range lands
- Riparian areas in proper functioning condition within range agreement areas

- Timber management practices that enhance forage production on areas identified for open forest and open range
- Water quality in community watersheds with livestock grazing maintained
- Noxious weeds eliminated or reduced
- Minimized range land alienation resulting from access development
- Sustainable populations of wildlife

**Maps:**

B.5.1 Agriculture Land Reserve