California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)

State Grazing Licenses and Land Management Sub-Committee

**Comprehensive Land/Grazing Management Plan Template**

Prepared by Land Management Plan Action Team:

Lance Criley, CRM, US Forest Service

Lawrence Ford, CRM, private consultant

Jeanette Griffin, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Updated: 12/8/23

California’s grasslands have been grazed extensively by livestock of Mediterranean origin since their introduction in the Eighteenth Century. Grasslands in the Mediterranean climate zone are dominated 90-100% by annual grasses and forbs introduced from the Mediterranean Basin. In high-altitude meadows, the Transverse Ranges, Mojave Desert, and east of the Mediterranean climate zone, many of the introduced Mediterranean species occur in the grasslands but occur with the original native grassland and shrubland species. Paradoxically, California’s Mediterranean grasslands are recognized as a global “hotspot” of biodiversity, with high numbers of endangered and threatened native species. Many of these species benefit from grazing by livestock that reduces the mass and height of the introduced species. Unmanaged, these grasslands can build up high volumes of herbaceous and woody fuels that increase wildfire intensity and spread. These fuels can also be effectively reduced by livestock grazing.

Livestock grazing can be a practical and economical management tool for habitat conservation and fire fuel reduction objectives in California grasslands. The challenge to managers is to integrate these habitat and fuel reduction objectives with the conventional range management objectives of maintaining grassland productivity, minimizing soil erosion, preventing invasive pest plant infestations and spread, and improving conventional grazing operations to accomplish the combined objectives in specific locations and circumstances. Considering the complexity of grassland ecosystems, variable and unpredictable weather that drives many grassland conditions, multiple uses and habitats in each range landscape, and demands for economically sustainable grazing operations, we need to use the best available science to maximize benefits and minimize impacts.

The Land Management Plan Action Team of Board of Forestry’s Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) recommends the outline below as a template for Land/Grazing Management Plans on state lands. We’ve identified with asterisks (\*) in the outline which sections are critical to address in any condensed plan. Examples of Land/Grazing Management Plans that follow the structure and content suggested here and representing the range of more and less complexity should be posted by RMAC in a linked webpage and updated periodically for reference by relevant planners.

We recognize that some public agencies and private rangeland owners might not be able to afford to develop a plan as described here. We recommend that such public agencies find a way to develop these plans either as a regional master plan for tiering/adapting to specific properties, or as worthy of dedicating staff to this work. Private rangeland owners might find planning assistance from the local Natural Resource Conservation Service or University of California Cooperative Extension.

The grazing management plan should include an explanation of how management of the subject land is governed by any overarching plans (such as easements, Habitat Conservation Plans, resource management plans, or timber/forest management plans). The grazing management plan is meant to be complementary. And although each property has usually had some degree of resource surveying, pre-acquisition evaluation, and/or broader resource management planning, the evaluation of grazing effects on special resources are often left out. Furthermore, the plan need not reiterate all the previous planning work, but should build on previous work to evaluate grazing effects on each special resource and describe desired effects.

Existing resource management plans for the subject property may have relevant information already developed that assesses relevant resource vulnerabilities to and benefits from grazing. In such cases, the current grazing management plan need only reference those plans, not duplicate that info. However, often these broad plans do not adequately assess grazing effects or specifics of grazing management. Thus, the current planning effort presented here should cover all items in the template.

Livestock grazing has many interacting effects on resources of rangeland and associated pastureland that should be included in a plan that is intended to conserve ecosystems, not just targeted species or agricultural opportunities. The plan should include both real and effective conservation, but also be feasible and sustainable for grazing operators and their broader community that supports each grazing lessee. Grazing plans need to include measurable goals, objectives and performance standards in grazing guidance, and include monitoring of compliance and effects. Grazing management plans should adequately provide monitoring and adaptation plans, with methods and adaptation triggers defined.

Management objectives should be clearly stated in the Management Plan, and these objectives should drive the grazing management. Grazing management strategies should be chosen to best achieve the management and natural resource objectives. Grazing plan preparation should involve someone with expertise in both rangeland management and livestock management. When developing and implementing grazing management plans in California, it is highly recommended to consult with a specialist in rangeland management, such as a Certified Rangeland Manager.

**Outline of Comprehensive Land/Grazing Management Plan (updated 3/29/22)**

\***1.0 Introduction**

\*1.1 Relationship of this plan to existing applicable management plans, easements, law/codes/regulations; it will describe intended benefits and expectations of the effects of grazing and associated activities on the grazed lands; any grazing lease/license will refer to this Grazing Management Plan

\*1.2 Purposes and Uses of this Plan (including referencing in any grazing lease/license)

* Describe intended benefits and expectations of grazing and associated activities to the landowner and grazed land; refer to the linked Grazing Agreement

\*1.3 Preparers, including the supervising licensed California Certified Rangeland Manager, where required

* May be identified on title page; requires review of applicable state code, including but not limited to the following: California Deputy Attorney General Bagley’s 2008 analysis (<http://www.elkhornsloughctp.org/uploads/files/1223682249DAG%20Opinion%20on%20CRM.pdf>)

\***2.0 Description of Current Site Conditions** (referencing other relevant planning documents, not duplicating; particular impacts of grazing will be discussed in Section 4)

\*2.1 Summary of Existing Plans for the Property

* Cite all available documents; include applicable plans, federal or state code or legal agreements, environmental reviews, and concise presentation of relevant management goals and requirements in these documents

\*2.2 Vegetation

\*2.3 Invasive Pest Plants

\*2.4 Wildlife and Habitats

2.5 Aquatic and Hydrologic Resources

2.6 Soils and Topography—Productivity, Erosion, and Compaction

2.7 Fire Hazards and Risks

2.8 Woody Encroachment

\*2.9 Grazing Context

* Describe type of grasslands/forage, grazable areas, grazing hazards, built structures, neighbors, access, and current grazing program

\***3.0 Impacts of Grazing on Resources of Concern**

\*3.1 Summary of Special Considerations for Grazing Management

* Describe special species, natural communities, habitats, soils, fire fuels, and other sensitive resources affected by grazing

\*3.2 Summary of Expected Grazing Effects on Special Resources and Desired Management Outcomes

\*3.3 Potential Conflicts with Wildlife, Recreation, or Neighbors

3.4 Expected Effects of Climate Change

3.5 Priorities for Maintenance and Potential Improvement of Carbon Sequestration

\***4.0 Grazing Management Goals, Objectives, and Performance Standards**

\*4.1 Identify Goals, Objectives, and Performance Standards to Meet Conservation and Sustainability Policies of Landowner Agency

\***5.0 Grazing Program**

\*5.1 Glossary of Terms

\*5.2 Options, Potential Uses, and Recommended Livestock Kind and Class Appropriate to Achieve Management Objectives

\*5.3 Grazing Capacity and Recommended Initial Stocking Rates

* Based on available forage, management goals and objectives, and consistent with terms of the grazing license

\*5.4 Special Management Areas (clusters of special resources affected by grazing), Targeted and Deferred Grazing

\*5.5 Conflict Mitigation Strategies

* Describe potential conflict mitigations, including requirements to minimize the conflicts in specified situations (e.g. protected wildlife require feed, which contributes to feed losses for the grazing licensee) and offer of fee-credits or payments by the landowner for in-lieu work performed by the grazing licensee to fix or to compensate for damages or trade-offs

5.6 Fire Hazards and Risks Mitigation Strategies

\*5.7 Grazing Period

\*5.8 Supplemental Feeding, Feeding Areas

\*5.9 Animal Distribution Improvements

\*5.10 Restrictions

* Dogs, horses, building of structures, supplementary enterprises, use for non-grazing purposes, private recreation or hunting access

\*5.11 Communications

* Mutual expectations for communications between the landowner and licensee for general planning as well as emergency response
* Within how many hours does the landowner expect the grazing licensee or representative to arrive at the property to respond to emergency calls
* Annual planning meetings and reports

\*5.12 Livestock Lease/License Options and Recommendations

\*5.13 Grazing Fee Credit Options and Other Incentives for Stewardship Cooperation

\*5.14 Infrastructure

* Applicable state code regarding livestock fencing, and concise presentation of required compliance by licensee with California Department of Food and Agriculture Code, Division 9, Part 1, Chapter 6, Sections 17121-4 and Chapter 8 for electrified fences

\*5.14.a Existing Grazing-related Infrastructure

\*5.14.b “Wildlife-friendly” fencing should be used or required only at segments where specified wildlife may be directly harmed by regular fence; fence segments where no such conflict is expected should use regular fence; however, all fence should meet or exceed the CDFA “good and substantial fence” code

\*5.14.c Required Improvements

\*5.14.d Maintenance and Unexpected Repairs

\*5.14.e Estimated Costs and Responsibilities

* Costs of permanently installed infrastructure (with useful life expected to exceed the term of the grazing license) related to the desired grazing operation are typically covered by the landowner; costs of maintenance of that infrastructure are typically covered by the grazing licensee

5.15 Extreme Weather (drought, flood, debris flows, infrastructure damage) Preparations, Special Monitoring, and Response Plan

\***6.0 Monitoring, Reporting, and Plan Adaptation**

\*6.1 Monitoring and Reporting

* Describe required methods and variables

\*6.2 Plan and Practice Adaptation

* Describe required changes to existing grazing plans at time of license that must be negotiated (including responsibilities for any costs) with all parties before requiring those changes; clarify timing and expectations for modifications to grazing strategy that may be required during extreme weather and other emergencies
* Clarify how periodic monitoring will be conducted (by landowner and licensee), and how licensee will be expected to respond to updates to the linked GMP; who will any resulting added costs to licensee be covered
* Clarify timing and expectations for modifications to grazing strategy will be required during extreme weather and emergencies

\*6.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Grazing Program Managers and Grazing Lessees/Licensees

\***7.0 Summary of Requirements and Recommendations**

\*7.1 Concise summary of key management requirements described in the plan

\*7.2 Supplementary assessments and planning (such as the plan elements above without asterisks)

\***8.0 References**