



Center for Biological Diversity

Protecting endangered species and wild places through science, policy, education, and environmental law.

NEWS ADVISORY
 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. TUESDAY JULY 2ND.
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 MORE INFORMATION: [Appeal](#), [Appendix 1](#), [Appendix 2](#)

CHILTONS' GRAZING PERMIT CHALLENGED Forest Service rejects compromise

The Center for Biological Diversity has challenged the decision of the Coronado National Forest to reauthorize cattle grazing on the MONTANA allotment south of Arivaca Lake in southern Arizona.

The Montana allotment is permitted to the CHILTON RANCH and CATTLE CO.

Governor Hull's appointment of rancher Susan Chilton to the Arizona Game and Fish Commission in early 2001 met with strong opposition from Arizona hunting, conservation and environmental groups who claimed that Mr and Mrs Chilton tried to suppress Arizona Dept. of Game and Fish recommendations concerning the Montana allotment, and that they have an agenda hostile to wildlife and endangered species.

On April 26, 2002 the Coronado National Forest produced a grazing plan that the Center criticized as doing little to address protection needs for endangered species. The plan would still allow grazing in habitat of the endangered Sonora Chub, as well as convert a spring into a cattle trough, despite a high chance that the spring is home to the threatened Chiricahua Leopard Frog.

"The Forest Service didn't even exclude cows from the tiny strip of occupied chub habitat. Stocking rates are unchanged or may even go up. Whenever we go out there, much of it is grazed to bare dirt, and cattle are breaking into the Sonora Chub preserve" said Dr Martin Taylor, conservation biologist with the Center.

The problems cannot be addressed just by fencing around streams and pools, according to Taylor: "The soil compaction and loss of vegetation in the watershed reduces water retention, causes erosion and this degrades fish and frog habitat," he said.

In late June, the Center filed an appeal with the Regional Forester, and attached photographic evidence showing excessive grazing and other problems on the allotment in both 2001 and 2002.

The Center later wrote to the Coronado National Forest asking for a meeting onsite to discuss how the concerns raised in the appeal could be resolved. Administrative Officer Larry Medlock replied on June 26, saying that the only resolution he would entertain was withdrawal of the Center's appeal.

"We are willing to search for solutions to the problems out there, but the Coronado National Forest isn't open to any significant changes on the ground" Taylor said.

The appeal identified the following problems with the proposed grazing plan for the allotment:

- continuing to allow grazing in California Gulch, the habitat of endangered native fish the Sonora chub;
- turning Schumaker spring into a cattle trough, a spring that could be home for a threatened native frog;
- spending more taxpayers' money on the destruction of Schumaker spring and on fencing that will not even exclude cows from Sonora Chub habitat, than would be collected in 10 years of grazing fee receipts;
- lack of legally required site-specific studies of population trends of "management indicator species" such as Montezuma (Mearns's) Quail;
- no attempt to define areas of high density Montezuma Quail habitat, as required by a Forest Service directive;
- a possibly increased stocking rate that will significantly reduce Quail habitat;
- self-contradictory reports about ecological conditions on the allotment;
- the impacts of grazing on the northern portion of the allotment around Arivaca Lake are ignored by cutting those lands out of the allotment;
- continuing to rely on a Forest Plan that has not been revised after 15 years as the law requires;
- allowing levels of forage consumption that go against best science and the Forest Plan;
- routinely allowing grazing to exceed even these limits.

Resources: A copy of the Appeal, including photographic documentation of grazing damage on the allotment is available [online](#).

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