

LARRY ALLEN CONSULTING

June 14, 2001

Jim and Sue Chilton  
Box 423  
Arivaca, AZ 85601

Dear Jim and Sue:

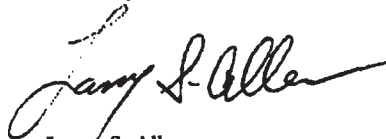
At your request I visited the Montana Grazing Allotment June 9. The purpose of the trip was to evaluate conditions in California Gulch and to investigate allegations by the Center for Biodiversity that a riparian protection fence had been cut and cattle intentionally placed within the Border Exclosure.

California Gulch does not normally flow at this time of year, and this year is no exception even though the watershed had one of the best autumn and spring rainfall seasons in a century. The reach between the "tinaja" and the Border Exclosure was completely dry. One half mile upstream from the tinaja were scattered small pools of water, which can be expected to dry up in about two more weeks, if it doesn't rain. A large "pool" in a mesquite bosque along the California Gulch Road, which has been identified as a refugia for the Sonoran Chub, was completely dry. Within the exclosure are several intermittent, isolated pools of water. These pools are in real danger of drying out, and no connection exists to any other water. This will result in the death of any fish, which are present in the pools.

I walked the length of the Border Exclosure and found absolutely no sign of cattle intrusion. The fence was intact, vegetation showed no sign of use, and there were no cattle tracks or manure. Two fresh "cow pies" were observed outside the exclosure in the Warsaw Pasture. It is common for cattle from Mexico to stray into the US in this area, since drug runners and people entering the United States along the border often cut the international fence. I rode much of the Warsaw Pasture with Forest Service personnel June 5, and it was obvious that Chilton cattle have not been in the area during the scheduled 18-month rest period. The situation described in the Center for Biological Diversity letter to Ranger Keith Graves simply does not exist on the landscape.

Ecological conditions within the exclosure are very good. There is a good variety of woody and herbaceous, riparian obligate species. Ground cover and shade are excellent, and the channel exhibits a good sinuosity. Bank stability is good and improving. I was involved in the original decision to fence this area. The idea was to create a special purpose pasture, with carefully controlled light grazing. Over the years it was grazed conservatively each year and rested most of the time, resulting in current conditions. At the time the Forest Service decided to eliminate this area from the Montana Allotment, conditions were the same as currently exist. In my opinion, all that has been accomplished with this change in management is a shift of responsibility for fence maintenance and trespass prevention from you to the agency.

Sincerely,



Larry S. Allen  
Natural Resource Consultant

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