

When a Bad Score Isn't Really Bad

An Explanation

Sometimes, when data are assembled to show overall trends, some of the details can be misleading. An example is the Cedar Knolls allotment in the Sanpete Ranger District.

It got the worst overlap score of the district: Cedar Knolls -29

That means that each pasture was grazed on the same 29 days as the previous year it was grazed. However, each pasture was *rested* every other year. This is good land management practice and brings some balance instead of grazing every pasture every year.

Like Cedar Knolls, high altitude pastures – with short growing seasons – are generally grazed in late summer. If grazed every year at the same time, some or many of the plants and wildlife of these pastures are not able to reproduce. Eventually, palatable plant species, their pollinators, and depended wildlife silently decline or disappear from the site.

These are the reasons overlap of annual operating times were calculated for all Manti-La Sal National Forest allotments.

- 1- There are years with missing Annual Operating Instructions, or corrupt files. We made do with the data we had by skipping those years. So, the next year it was grazed the dates were compared to the previous year it was known to be grazed.
- 2- Some years pastures are purposely rested (most frequently on the Sanpete Ranger District) but sometimes pastures were rested because of fires, mudslides, or poor grazing conditions. When grazing resumed, it was compared to the previous year it was grazed.
- 3- Even with a rest year, pastures should be grazed, if possible, on different dates from the previously grazed year to maximize the benefits gained from the rest year.
- 4- To avoid making a judgment call on how each pasture and allotment should be calculated, all were calculated the same way. So, even though Cedar Knolls was rested every other year – a good practice - it was scored for overlap just like all the other pastures.



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