

Notes

# Rangeland Monitoring Log



For more information or questions:  
[www.idrange.org](http://www.idrange.org)  
[ghyde@idrange.org](mailto:ghyde@idrange.org)  
1-208-398-7002

## Rangeland monitoring log:

- should be tailored to your allotments' needs.
- protects your assets by recording observations/ occurrences on your land.
- documents years of observation— which is more substantial with agencies and in the courtroom.
- gives you a better understanding of your land and what is occurring.
- gives you firsthand proof of your management techniques and allows for continuation or adjustments.

Years of monitoring and documentation cannot be fabricated— it can make or break an agency/ court decision.

For questions on monitoring talk with your local agency or any range specialist— Visit our **rancher resources** for more information and contact lists.

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All information is adapted from Montana's: Range Technical Note: Rangeland Monitoring Fact sheet; and Professor Ken Sanders "A Rancher's Guide to Monitoring Rangelands"

## Choosing a Monitoring Site

### Things to consider when choosing monitoring spot:

1. A key area that represents a geographical area in terms of soil, vegetation, slope, aspect, distance to water, etc.
2. An area that has exceptional value or is susceptible to damage (riparian areas, areas under public scrutiny, critical wildlife habitat etc.)
3. Areas where you would expect to see improvement fairly soon.
4. An area in good condition to show your improvement & how your management practices are working.

**Special considerations:** these areas can be monitored but should not be the only area monitored on your allotment— they do not represent the whole area.

- livestock loading areas
- livestock entrance/exit areas
- water & salt locations
- fence lines & ridges
- stock trails
- unused areas
- livestock traditional bed ground ( i.e. if they always bed down under the junipers in the summer— you won't change their habit)

\*\*Remember every piece of documentation tells a story! Know your land's story and tell it with pictures and with your monitoring log.\*\*

## Monitoring/Log Inventory Items:

**Whenever you are out on your land, take note of what you see.**

### Land observations:

- 1. Plant Species:** Desirable vegetation versus unpalatable vegetation
- 2. Forage production:** How much forage is available to animals?
- 3. Ground/Canopy Cover:** List type and amount of ground cover that protects the soil surface from evaporation and erosion (i.e. gravel, rock, moss, plant litter, growing plants, etc.) This will measure if the basal area of growing plants is increasing, which indicates higher productivity.
- 4. Livestock Use:** *Utilization is the proportion of current-year forage production that is consumed or trampled by grazing animals.* List 2-3 key forage species each year, that are consumed by livestock. (How these species are grazed will tell you how the area is being grazed and what you need to do.)
- 5. Wildlife Use:** How are wildlife using/impacting your land? Note the season, animal population, and utilization patterns.
- 6. Climate/ Natural disaster:** Note rainfall, freezes, fires, drastic weather changes (late springs, early summers, intense heat, flash floods, etc.).

## Monitoring/Log Inventory Items: Concerns:

1. Livestock trespassing from adjoining allotment
2. Damage to resources from other users (i.e. recreationists)
3. Gates left open, fences knocked down (resulting in cattle movement)
4. Poisonous plant problems– that limit pasture use
5. Insects, rodents, or invasive species that affect allotment condition

**Improvement Projects:** Completion– where, when & why?

1. Was the improvement successful and still functional?
2. Are there maintenance problems beyond your control?
3. What agreements were made on maintenance responsibility?

**\*\* List Allotment and Date-  
You can never log too much– It's all important!!!**

## Monitoring/Log Inventory Items:

### **Federal/State Agency Visits/ Discussions:**

Note date, land/allotment being discussed, discussion details- (concerns, outcome, future expectations from both parties.)

### **Use by others:**

1. Off-road vehicle use/and or damage (note date and area)
2. Undeveloped campsites- especially on riparian areas
3. Hunting/ Fishing activity
4. Vandalism- fences cut, gates left open, etc.
5. Trespassing livestock- include date, owner, number, and entry point.
6. Any visitors to allotment and vehicles' license plate number

### **General Range Data:**

1. Dates when water is available in springs, reservoirs, etc.
2. Potential sources of new water
3. Wildlife use of improvements
4. Salt location each year
5. Expenses, such as water hauling, maintenance, construction and labor

**Monitoring Goals:** Data for management decisions and continuous improvement/sustainment of range-land.

\*\*Goals should be determined in coordination with allotment's state and federal agencies.

**Long-Term Goal:** What do you want your land to be 10 years from now (desired landscape description, level of production, etc.)?

**Short-Term Goals:** Yearly Goals– Description on how you will fulfill your long-term goal and what you want your land to be each year.

### **General Operation Inventory:**

1. Number of livestock
2. Age of livestock
3. Area of grazing- (acreage, name of area, etc.)
4. Livestock Distribution (areas used or areas not used by livestock)
5. Description of land vegetation- (shrubs, forbs, grasses, majority of plants available– palatable/unpalatable, etc)
6. Allotment entrance and exit dates
7. Wildlife presence (when, how often, how many, etc.)

**History:** (Are there previous grazing management plans for your ranch/allotment?)

1. When & by whom?
2. Still in use? If so, is it still effective?
3. What changes have been made? If any, why & where?
4. Have stock water facilities and fences been changed? When & why?
5. Is there old monitoring data available?