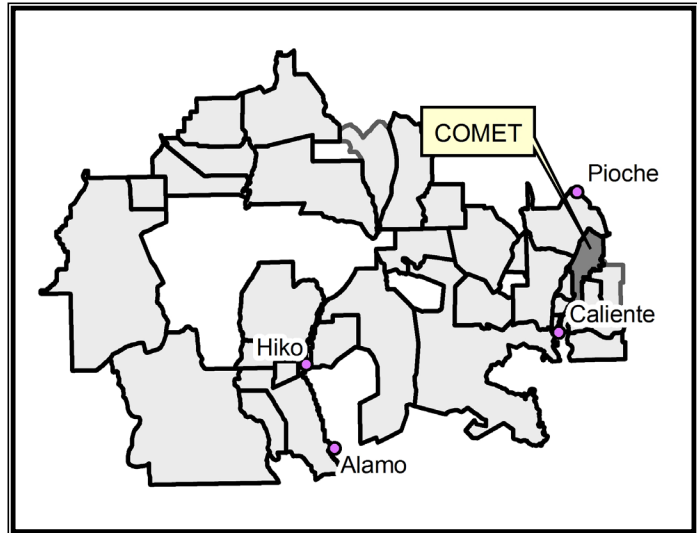


4.0 COMET ALLOTMENT

Permittee: Lom Thompson
City/State: Las Vegas, NV

Contact: Raymond Thompson
City/State: Caliente, NV

Base Property: Land



4.1 ALLOTMENT DESCRIPTION

The Comet Allotment is approximately eight miles long north and south, and varies in width from .5 to three miles wide east and west. The south side of the allotment is approximately eight miles north of Caliente. The allotment is located west of US Highway 93. The east side of the allotment follows private property lines along Meadow Valley. The allotment surrounds the Cathedral Gorge State Park on the north end. The Park and US Highway 93 separate a portion of the north end of the allotment into a separate pasture. See Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 for details of the allotment and the railroad route.

Table 4.1: Comet Allotment Details

ALLOTMENT ACRES		GRAZING PERMIT					
Public	Private	Number/Type of Livestock		Season of Use	AUMs		
					Total	Active	Suspended
10,553	10,622*	Lom Thompson	18 cattle	3/1 – 2/28	254	214	40

*A considerable amount of the private acreage is fenced land belonging to several ranches in the area.

4.1.1 Grazing System

The allotment is set up for a pasture rotation system.

4.1.2 Stockwaters and Water Rights

When cattle are on the allotment they water primarily on private land. There is a well on Airport Road that may be on BLM land at Map Reference 2. The map shows a pond on BLM land at Map Reference 3. If cattle were to use the allotment, they would water on the bottomlands in the lower elevations, and work their way up to higher elevations as they graze.

4.1.3 Existing Fencing

The allotment is divided into one large and three small pastures. See Pasture Designations 1 - 4 on the map.

4.2 PROPOSED RAILROAD ALIGNMENT – DOE PROPOSED ROUTE – COMMON SEGMENT

There are segments of three proposed railroad routes through the private land within the allotment; Caliente, Crestline, and Eccles, all of which combine into the Common Segment on public land within the allotment. Miles and acreages through the allotment are detailed in Table 4.1. All segments are proposed to enter the allotment from private land to the east, and then extend west across the allotment, exiting into the Bennett Springs Allotment.

Rail Length Within Allotment: 2.4 miles
1,000' Construction Right-of-Way Area: 291 acres

4.2.1 Fencing Preference for Proposed Rail Alignment

The current Permittee does not want fencing at this time; however the ranch is listed for sale and a new owner may have a different preference.

4.2.2 Impacts and Mitigation

4.2.2.1 Base Property

The Meadow Valley Option will impact base property, and stockwaters on base property that service the allotment. See Community At Large Report for impacts and mitigation.

4.2.2.2 Grazing System

The Common Segment Route will divide Pasture 1 into two pastures, one large pasture north of the right-of-way (ROW), and a very small pasture south of the ROW. The small pasture will be difficult to manage. Impacts cannot be specifically determined until the centerline of the track is staked. Because the track extends from the low areas of the allotment to the higher areas, it may not impede movement of cattle from the lowlands to grazing upslope. However, it may impede movement of cattle to and from the south end of Pasture 1. Even without fencing the track, this will present somewhat of a barrier to cattle, especially where there is cut and fill for the railroad pad. Cattle will tend to concentrate on the alfalfa field at Map Reference 1 because they will not be free to graze to the south of the track. Grazing use resumed on the allotment in 2005 after being in non-use since 1982. There is an unfenced alfalfa field that belongs to another party (Map Reference 1), and the Permittee did not want his cattle bloating from eating the alfalfa. There was also a missing cattleguard on the Airport Road near Cathedral Gorge State Park where cattle could drift out of the allotment. The cattleguard was replaced in 2003.

The Permittee has indicated that he plans to reconfigure fencing to better balance the pastures after construction of the track and service road.

Construct three cattle crossings, either underpasses or earthen ramps with approaches not to exceed 25 percent grade. The Permittee prefers underpasses so that cattle will be able to pass under the track instead of walking over it, as with construction of cattle crossings with gates. Moving cattle through gates is difficult for one person to handle.

Fencing the alfalfa field (Map Reference 1) is also mitigation for impacts to livestock movement. Fencing the field will require 6.25 miles of fence.

4.2.2.3 Existing Fence and Capital Improvements

The proposed track and service road will pass through a fence upon entering and exiting the allotment (Map References 4 & 5).

Construct a railroad cattleguard and a road cattleguard on the service road at the fences where the railroad will enter and exit the allotment. The best place for these railroad cattleguards at Map Reference 4 would be on private land so that the water source would not be cut off from use by cattle.

4.2.2.4 Stockwaters and Associated Infrastructure

The proposed track and service road pass near a pond on private land (Map Reference 7). The pond at Map Reference 3 will be cut off as a water source for livestock use at the south end of Pasture 1.

Construct an unspecified stockwater development north of the track, and one south of the track. The type of water development and the exact locations will be determined after the ROW is staked. One option is equipped wells with troughs.

4.2.2.5 Road and Trails

The proposed track crosses one trail in the allotment (Map Reference 6).

Construct a trail crossing with approaches not to exceed a twelve percent grade.

4.2.2.6 Vegetation and Forage

Inside the 60 acres of ROW, there will be a permanent loss of forage from the railroad pad, service road, road crossings, and cattle crossings. There will also be a loss of forage caused by construction activities, which may be temporary if the area can be, and is, rehabilitated and reseeded. Outside the ROW, there will be forage depletion from road construction, staging areas, material borrow areas, worker camps, and other construction related activities that will be partially permanent, and partially temporary to the extent the areas can be, and are, rehabilitated and reseeded. The loss of forage could result in a BLM Grazing Permit reduction.

The exact amount of forage loss cannot be determined until construction is completed. Minimum mitigation entails keeping disturbance to the least amount possible during construction. See Volume I Impact Analyses, Section 4.1.9.1 Disturbed Area Rehabilitation.

4.2.2.7 Loss of Livestock

There is some risk of livestock death on the track and service road if the ROW is not fenced.

Fence the ROW to reduce the chance of cattle being hit by a train. At present the Permittee does not consider this a sufficient risk to warrant fencing along the track and service road. However, if underpasses are constructed along with the track construction, the ROW fencing can be added later.

4.2.2.8 Other Impacts and Mitigations

None known.

Table 4.2: Comet Allotment Impacted Features

Impacted Features	Common Segment
Base Property (land)	0
Base Property (water within 4 miles)	0
Base Property (water within 1 mile)	0
Base Property (pipeline crossings)	0
Existing Fencing (ea)	2
Capital Improvements	0
Stockwaters within 4 miles	2
Stockwaters within 1 mile	2
Creeks (ea)	0
Pipelines (ea)	0
Roads (ea)	0
Trails (ea)	0
ROW Acreage	291

Table 4.3: Comet Allotment Mitigation Summary

Proposed Mitigation Units	Common Segment
Fence Construction (miles)	6.25
Fence Removal	0
Gates (ea)	0
Railroad Cattleguards (ea)	2
Road Cattleguards (ea)	2
Grazing Management Plan	1
Corral Relocation	0
Chute Relocation	0
Wells (ea)	1
Troughs (ea)	1
Springs (ea)	0
Creek Crossings (ea)	0
Unspecified Stockwaters (ea)	2
Pipeline Crossings (ea)	0
Pipeline Construction (miles)	0
Road Crossings (ea)	0
Trail Crossings (ea)	1
Sheep Crossings (ea)	0
Cattle Crossings (ea)	3
Underpasses (ea)	0

Note: These construction units are estimates. Actual construction units cannot be determined until the centerline of the track is staked and design plans are available.

Figure 4.1: Comet Allotment

INSERT 11X17 FIGURE
4.1 Comet.pdf