

## EBRPD Grazing Policy Violations Report

### Overgrazing & Erosion at Sycamore Valley Open Space - North

Friends of Sycamore Valley

January 20, 2003

## 6 EBRPD Grazing Program Policies

Chapter 11 of the 2/25/02 FSV report investigated in considerable detail the violations of EBRPD grazing policies by park district management. This report will only address those policy guidelines that relate to Overgrazing & Erosion. Those related policy items have been restated here for reference in this report.

### 6.1 Related Wildlands Management Policies & Guidelines

The EBRPD *Wildlands Management Policies & Guidelines* (WMP&G) document states:

*This document provides general guidance to persons responsible for the administration and stewardship of park district wildlands to insure the proper use and enhancement of wildland resources.*

*The goal of the District wildland management program is to conserve and enhance important resource values such as soil, vegetation, wildlife and water to ensure that natural parkland ecosystems are maintained in a healthy and productive condition.*

The WMP&G indicates that the health of wildlands is dependent upon good management of the forage:

*One measure of good management of non-native grasslands is determined by the amount of residual dry matter, or mulch, that remains on the ground at the end of the grazing season (Jasmer and Holechek 1984). Mulch provides watershed protection, promotes nutrient recycling, prevents high soil surface temperatures, improves the soil as a habitat for organisms, retards evaporation, increases water infiltration and creates favorable conditions for new plant growth (Hopkins 1954). Many resource management objectives can be met solely by managing for residual mulch. On the other hand, excessive mulch buildup may encourage the growth of certain undesirable plant species.*

*Research indicates that the amount of mulch remaining in any one year can influence plant productivity and plant composition the following growing season. Low amounts of mulch tend to favor the growth of undesirable plants (Heady 1956, Hooper and Heady 1970). An optimum mixture of desirable plant species results on non-native grassland where 600 to 800 pounds per acre are left (Pitt and Heady 1978, Bartolome et al. 1980).*

The suggested optimum *residual dry matter* (RDM) underlined in red above is a specification that the EBRPD policy strives to adhere to. The WMP&G document specifically states:

**Guideline:** *Forage utilization by grazing animals will be regulated to assure that appropriate amounts of residual dry matter, or mulch, remain on the ground to achieve desired resource management objectives. Various residual mulch guidelines exist for different sites in the California annual grassland type (Clawson and McDougald 1982, U.S. Forest Service 1983). EBRPD guidelines will meet or exceed other established standards.*

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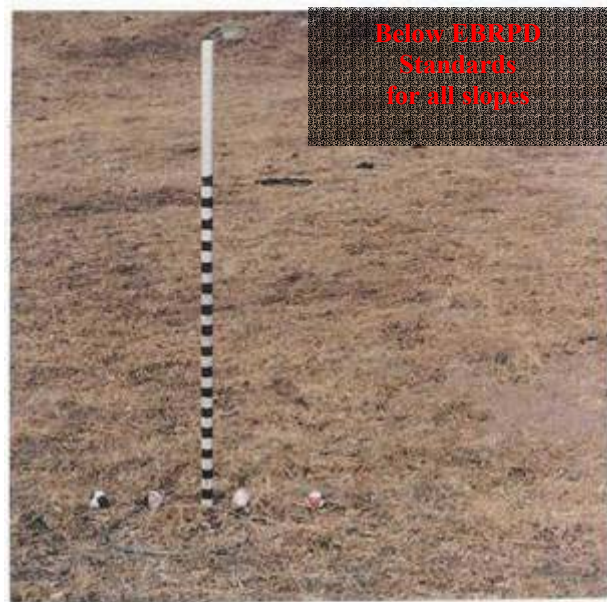
*These standards generally translate into 4 to 6 inches of standing vegetation at the end of the grazing season. Individual areas may have special circumstances that will require that additional mulch remain. Residue requirements will vary according to the need to promote soil stability, maintain plant productivity, enhance visual and recreational values, or protect wildlife habitat.*

The following photographs were obtained from the photographic index that is used by EBRPD staff to assess RDM:



#### **750-1000 lbs/acre**

Seedstalks may be heavily utilized or trampled, considerable ground cover present, some bare soil apparent, Robel pole irregularly obscured to height of 1-2+", many golf ball sized objects partially visible at 10 feet, and some barely visible at 20 feet.



#### **125-250 lbs/acre**

Standing seedstalks rare, however seedstalks and seed heads do occur as litter, residual vegetation scarce, most areas uniformly grazed to 1", scattered areas grazed to 3-5", bare soil obvious, Robel pole fully visible, golf ball sized objects clearly visible at 10 & 20 feet.

The suggested policy guideline is represented in the photographs on the left representing the category of 750-1000 lbs per acre.

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The following photographs represent conditions found at the end of the 2002 grazing season at SVOS-N:



It is clear from these photographs that the RDM remaining at SVOS-N is well below the required standards. The areas shown are even less than the 125-250 lbs per acre. In 2001 FSV performed a series of RDM measurements throughout SVOS-N using the EBRPD photo index standards. The conditions shown above are consistent with those found in the park at the end of the 2001.