

# Federal management of natural landscapes

April 24, 2006

Re "Middle of Nowhere is a Center of Conflict ," April 19

One critical issue was neglected in the article: Ongoing livestock grazing degrades the very objects the monuments were designated to protect. Livestock grazing damages the habitat of the desert tortoise and other wildlife, tramples cultural artifacts, harms native plant communities and spreads invasive vegetation. On the Arizona Strip and on Arizona's national monuments, livestock grazing leaves permanent scars on landscapes that are supposed to receive special protection. Springs, seeps and wetlands are left vulnerable to the effects of cattle. The Bureau of Land Management's plan didn't even consider eliminating livestock grazing. The BLM states that the new plan strikes a balance between protection and multiple uses, but the scales are tipping in favor of special interests.

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