Appendix B – Response to Scoping Comments

This is a brief summary of relevant comments received during 2011 scoping. The response indicates how the comment was addressed within the EA (such as in alternative development or discussion of environmental effects), or whether it was beyond the scope of the project analysis. WWP is Western Watershed Project, and Miller Land Company, Inc., Joyce Livestock Company, and Kershner are permittees.

Commenter	Comment	Response
WWP	There are resource impacts associated with water haul sites	The existing and proposed water haul sites will be analyzed as part of the range of alternatives for this action.
WWP	Alternatives that propose reduced grazing with area closures, no-grazing, and seasonal adjustment should be included.	A reduced grazing and no-grazing alternative will be analyzed as part of the range of alternatives and per BLM regulations.
WWP	Closure to livestock grazing and full restoration of lands acquired by the BLM should be included in this project analysis.	The closure of acquired lands can be considered as an alternative or part of another. However, restoration of lands is not within the scope of this project and analysis.
WWP	Adverse impacts to small prey species and their habitat as it relates to birds of prey.	Effects to various wildlife species, including small mammals and raptors, are addressed in the wildlife sections of this EA.
WWP	Active and passive restoration should be included in the range of alternatives.	Active restoration is not within the scope of this analysis and project. However, passive restoration would be the result of both reduced grazing and no-grazing alternatives.
WWP	Trampling promotes and spreads weeds and damages microbiotic crusts. Such also may damage nesting sites and burrows.	Trampling effects on weeds and microbiotic crusts are addressed in the vegetation section of the EA. Trampling effects to nesting and burrowing wildlife are addressed in the wildlife section of the EA.
WWP	Lack of effectiveness of exclosures	Is being addressed as part of this action.
WWP	Failure to prepare an EIS	Based on the results of NEPA analysis, the authorized officer will issue a determination of the significance of the environmental effects and whether an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be required.
WWP	Fall grazing may impact native plants	Effects from fall grazing (as well as other seasons) are addressed in the EA.
WWP	BLM must designate ACECs	The designation of ACECs is not within the scope of this project or analysis.

WWP	Need to analyze the cumulative effect of OHV trails and off-road motorized recreation to special status species (plant and animal) habitat.	Cumulative effects of OHV use to vegetation and wildlife are considered and analyzed in the respective cumulative effects section of this EA.
WWP	Review the areas within the Snake River Birds of Prey NCA for wilderness values.	Such review is not within the scope of this project and analysis.
WWP	Sage steppe and salt desert shrub habitat fragmentation	Effects resulting in sage steppe and salt desert shrub habitat fragmentation are addressed in this EA.
WWP	Fences provide predator perches that may affect nesting and brood rearing habitats.	Effects resulting from existing fencing to wildlife will be addressed in the wildlife section of this EA.
WWP	Removal of fencing and no further fencing should be considered in the range of alternatives	No new fence construction is proposed in any of the alternatives addressed in this EA. Removal of all existing fencing is outside of the scope of this analysis and does not serve the purpose and need of this action.
WWP	Removal of shrub cover from livestock grazing affects nesting and brood rearing habitat and reduces important forage for antelope and wintering mule deer.	Grazing effects to various wildlife species, including bird and big game species, are addressed in the wildlife sections of this EA.
WWP	Spread of disease to migratory birds and sage-grouse, such as West Nile Virus, as cattle create muddy areas suitable for mosquito larvae growth	Effects of West Nile Virus to bird species are addressed in the wildlife cumulative effects section of this EA.
WWP	Effects to climate change	Effects to climate change will be discussed in the issues section of the EA.
WWP	Effects to watershed health, riparian areas, and soils as a result of livestock grazing	Effects to watershed health, riparian areas, and soils as a result of livestock grazing are addressed in the watershed, riparian, and soil sections of this EA.
WWP	Effects of grazing as they relate to increased desertification across the landscape.	Effects of grazing to watersheds and vegetation is addressed in this EA. However, best available data does not indicate increased desertification across the landscape, therefore it is not specifically addressed in this EA.
WWP	Potential effects to public safety along HWY 78.	Public safety along HWY 78 is administered by the Idaho Department of Transportation and is outside of the scope of this document.

Miller Land Company, Inc.	BLM should actively manage invasive weeds	This is outside the scope of this project and analysis. However, such management actions do take place for noxious weeds. Invasive weed management is undertaken on a case-by-case basis as funding and other needs allow.
Joyce Livestock Company	It would appear to be prudent to develop a new alternative, possibly a combination of Alternatives A & B that incorporate many of the water haul sites but with the addition of a pre-season on-site meeting of BLM and permittees/interested public on any year that key growing season precipitation is 30% below normal or 20% below normal on successive years for the purpose of determining proper usage for that season.	Complete precipitation data is often lacking for the area, which would make it difficult to generate a qualified decision on adjusting AUMs. In addition, the time involved in coordinating and facilitating a pre-season meeting may be more than BLM can commit to on a long-term basis.
Kershner	Water haul sites help to better distribute livestock and therefore need to be included as part of the proposals.	The existing and proposed water haul sites will be analyzed as part of the range of alternatives for this action.
BLM Interdisciplinary Team	Fencing of FFR lands	Fencing BLM lands in the FFR Allotments into the surrounding adjacent BLM Allotment was considered. This was not brought forward for further analysis because of the expense of the project and because mitigation for known and predicted cultural and paleontological sites from vehicle and human traffic while building the fences would be too time consuming for our small staff.

Appendix C –
Plant Species Mentioned in Fossil Butte Group EA
Names based on USDA PLANTS Database (http://plants.usda.gov/java/) as of 2013

Common Name	Scientific Name	Code[1]	Growth Form and Status
arrowleaf balsamroot	*Balsamorhiza sagittata*		Native perennial forb
basin big sagebrush	*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*		Native shrub
basin wildrye	*Leymus cinereus*	LECI4	Native perennial grass
bindweed	*Convolvulus arvensis*		Noxious perennial forb
bluebunch wheatgrass	*Pseudoroegneria spicata* ssp. *spicata*	PSSPS	Native perennial grass
budsage	*Artemisia spinescens/ Picrothamnus desertorum*	ARSP5	Native shrub
bulbous bluegrass	*Poa bulbosa*	POBU	Invasive bunchgrass
bur buttercup	*Ceratocephala testiculata*		Invasive annual forb
Canada thistle	*Cirsium arvense*		Noxious perennial forb
cheatgrass	*Bromus tectorum*	BRTE	Invasive annual grass
clasping pepperweed	*Lepidium perfoliatum*		Invasive annual forb
cowpie buckwheat	*Eriogonum shockleyi* var. *packardaei*		Special status perennial forb
crested wheatgrass	*Agropyron cristatum*	AGCR	Non-native perennial grass
desertparsley	*Lomatium* spp.		Native perennial forb
desert pincushion	*Chaenactis stevioides*		Special status annual forb
fleabane	*Erigeron* spp.		Native perennial forb
flixweed	*Descurainia sophia*		Invasive annual forb
fourwing saltbush	*Atriplex canescens*		Native shrub
Gardner saltbush	*Atriplex gairdneri*		Native shrub
greasewood	*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*	SAVE4	Native shrub
halogeton	*Halogeton glomeratus*		Invasive annual forb
horsebrush	*Tetradymia* spp.		Native shrub
Idaho fescue	*Festuca idahoensis*		Native perennial grass
Indian ricegrass	*Achnatherum hymenoides*	ACHY	Native perennial grass
kochia	*Bassia scoparia*		Invasive annual forb
longleaf phlox	*Phlox longifolia*		Native perennial forb
low sagebrush	*Artemisia arbuscula*		Native shrub
Malheur prince's plume	*Stanleya confertifolia*		Special status biennial forb
mountain big sagebrush	*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*		Native shrub
Mulford's milkvetch	*Astragalus mulfordiae*		Special status perennial forb
musk mustard	*Chorispora tenella*		Invasive annual forb

Common Name	Scientific Name	Code[1]	Growth Form and Status
needle-and-thread grass	*Hesperostipa comata*		Native perennial grass
perennial pepperweed	*Lepidium latifolium*		Noxious perennial forb
prickly lettuce	*Lactuca serriola*		Invasive annual forb
puncturevine	*Tribulus terrestris*		Noxious annual forb
purple loosestrife	*Lythrum salicaria*		Noxious perennial forb
rabbitbrushes	*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus* or *Ericameria nauseosa*		Native shrub
rigid threadbush	*Nemacladus rigidus*		Special status annual forb
rush skeletonweed	*Chondrilla juncea*		Noxious perennial forb
Russian knapweed	*Acroptilon repens*		Noxious perennial forb
Russian olive	*Elaeagnus angustifolia*		Invasive shrub/tree
Russian thistle	*Salsola tragus*		Invasive annual forb
Russian wildrye	*Psathyrostachys juncea*		Non-native perennial grass
salt cedar	*Tamarix spp.*		Noxious shrub/tree
Saltgrass	*Distichlis spicata*		Native perennial grass
Sandberg bluegrass	*Poa secunda*	POSE	Native perennial grass
sand dropseed	*Sporobolus cryptandrus*		Native bunchgrass
Scotch thistle	*Onopordum acanthium*		Noxious biennial forb
shadscale	*Atriplex confertifolia*	ATCO	Native shrub
shining flatsedge	*Cyperus bipartitus*		Special status annual graminoid
slickspot peppergrass	*Lepidium papilliferum*		Special status biennial/perennial forb
Snake River milkvetch	*Astragalus purshii* var. *ophiogenes*		Special status perennial forb
spiny hopsage	*Grayia spinosa*		Native shrub
squirreltail	*Elymus elymoides* ssp. *elymoides*	ELELE	Native perennial grass
stiff milkvetch	*Astragalus conjunctus*		Special status perennial forb
stork's bill	*Erodium cicutarium*		Invasive annual forb
tamarisk	*Tamarix* spp.		Noxious shrub
tapertip hawksbeard	*Crepis acuminata*		Native perennial forb
teasel	*Dipsacus fullonum*		Invasive biennial forb
Thurber's needlegrass	*Achnatherum thurberianum*	ACTH7	Native perennial grass
tumble-mustard	*Sisymbrium altissimum*		Invasive annual forb
turtleback	*Psathyrotes annual*		Special status annual forb
white eatonella	*Eatonella nivea*		Special status annual forb
white-margined wax plant	*Glyptopleura marginata*		Special status annual forb
whitetop	*Cardaria draba*		Noxious perennial forb
winterfat	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*	KRLA2	Native shrub

Common Name	Scientific Name	Code[1]	Growth Form and Status
Wyoming sagebrush	*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*	ARTRW8	Native shrub
yellow salsify	*Tragopogon dubius*		Invasive annual forb

1 Codes are included only for species that use a code within the document, for example in Ecological Site names or the utilization table (Appendix F).

Appendix D

Special Status Wildlife Species in the Owyhee Field Office and Occurrence Potential within the Fossil Butte Group Allotments

Common Name	Species	Status (conservation plans)[1]	General Habitat[2]	Habitat Present[3]	Species Present[4]
Snake River Physa	*Physa natricina*	ESA E	Believed to inhabit deep water on the margins of moderately swift rapids or riffles. Individuals have been found in relatively undisturbed areas with gravel, boulder, or cobble substrates and low percentage of epiphytic algae or macrophytes.	No	Not Present
Columbia Spotted Frog	*Rana luteiventris*	ESA C (SGCN)	Cool, permanent, quiet water in streams, rivers, lakes, pools, springs, and marshes usually in hilly areas from sea level to about 3000 m. Highly aquatic, but may disperse into forests, grasslands, and shrublands	No	Improbable
Greater Sage-grouse	*Centrocercus urophasianus*	ESA C (SGCN/HPBB/ BCC)	Broad sagebrush covered valleys and foothills interspersed with wet meadows.	Yes; Fossil Butte and Joyce FFR allotments	Present
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Coccyzus americanus*	ESA C (SGCN/BCC)	Extensive, mature riparian woodlands, especially of cottonwoods or willows, and other open woodlands with dense understories at lower elevations. Mature riparian areas with willow and alder thickets.	No	Improbable
American White Pelican	*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*	BLM 2 (SGCN/HPBB)	Typically occur on isolated islands in freshwater lakes, marshes or rivers, on lakes, reservoirs and rivers supporting large fish populations and on mud, sand or gravel shores.	No	Improbable
Bald Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	BGEPA – BLM 2 (SGCN/BCC)	Restricted to large rivers and water bodies near mixed conifer forest, occasionally sagebrush foothills. Nest in oldest trees in the stand. Always associated with aquatic forage area.	No	Improbable
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*	BGEPA (HPBB/BCC)	Open habitats in mountains and hill country, prairies and other grasslands. Open sagebrush areas adjacent to nesting cliffs. Found on prairies, tundra, open wooded country, and barren areas, especially in hilly or mountainous areas. In Idaho, prefers open and semi-open areas in deserts and mountains.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Northern Leopard Frog	*Rana pipiens*	BLM 2 (SGCN)	Permanent water sources on plains, foothill, and in montane zones.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Pygmy Rabbit	*Brachylagus idahoensis*	BLM 2 (SGCN)	Throughout much of the Great Basin; relatively large areas of tall/dense sagebrush and deep soils. In Idaho, closely associated with large stands of sagebrush; prefers areas of tall, dense sagebrush cover with high percent woody cover.	Yes	Improbable
Columbia River Redband Trout	*Oncorhynchus mykiss gibbsi*	BLM 2 (SGCN)	Redband trout are found in a range of stream habitats from desert areas in southwestern Idaho to forested mountain streams in central and northern Idaho.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Present
White Sturgeon	*Acipenser transmontanus*	BLM 2 (SGCN)	Rely on streams, rivers, and estuarine habitat as well as marine waters during their lifecycle. Prefer to spawn in rivers with swift currents and large cobble; no nest is built.	No	Not Present
Black Tern	*Chlidonias niger*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Rivers and ponds. Nests in or on emergent vegetation in alkaline lakes and freshwater marshes, or in marshy areas along rivers,	No	Improbable

Common Name	Species	Status (conservation plans)[1]	General Habitat[2]	Habitat Present[3]	Species Present[4]
			lakes, or ponds. Forages within a few hundred meters of nest.		
Brewer's Sparrow	*Spizella breweri*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB/ BCC)	Sagebrush steppe. Idaho study found Brewer's Sparrows prefer large, living sagebrush for nesting. A recent study in southwestern Idaho concluded that their distribution was influenced by both local vegetation cover and landscape-level features such as patch size.	Yes; all allotments	Present
California Bighorn Sheep	*Ovis canadensis californiana*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Extremely rugged mountain areas with jutting crags, deep canyons and precipitous cliffs. Grassy slopes near cliffs and rocky ridges in mountains. Forages on mesic to xeric grass. Avoids dense vegetation cover.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Present
California Floater	*Anodonta californiensis*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Occurs in lakes and large streams at low elevations. This species is typically found on soft substrates and in areas with relatively slow current.	No	Not Present
Calliope Hummingbird	*Stellula calliope*	BLM 3 (HPBB/BCC)	In Idaho, found in mountains along meadows, canyons and streams, in open montane forests and willow and alder thickets	No	Improbable
Columbia Sharp-tailed Grouse	*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB)	Found in grasslands (especially with scattered woodlands), arid sagebrush, brushy hills, oak savannas, and edges of riparian woodlands.	No	Not Present
Common Garter Snake	*Thamnophis sirtalis*	BLM 3	Usually found in habitats associated with water, such as streams, rivers, lakes, ponds and marshes. They can also be found in open meadows and coniferous forests.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Ferruginous Hawk	*Buteo regalis*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB/ BCC)	Found in shrub steppe at periphery of juniper or other woodlands.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Flammulated Owl	*Otus flammeolus*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB/ BCC)	Prefers old growth. In Idaho, occupies older ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and mixed coniferous forests.	No	Improbable
Fringed Myotis	*Myotis thysanodes*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Found primarily in desert shrublands, sagebrush-grassland, and woodland habitats. Roosts in caves, mines, rock crevices, buildings, and other protected sites. Prefer to forage in riparian areas characterized by intermittent streams with wide channels.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Hammond's Flycatcher	*Empidonax hammondii*	BLM 3 (HPBB)	Found in coniferous forests and woodlands. In Idaho, associated with old-growth Douglas-fir/ponderosa pine forests.	No	Improbable
Lewis' Woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB/ BCC)	Found in open forests and woodlands (often logged or burned), including oak, coniferous forests (primarily ponderosa pine), and riparian woodlands and orchards.	No	Improbable
Loggerhead Shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus*	BLM 3 (HPBB/BCC)	Found in open country with scattered trees and shrubs, in savannas, desert scrub and, occasionally, in open juniper woodlands. Often found on poles, wires or fenceposts.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Longnose Snake	*Rhinocheilus lecontei*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Found in desert lowland areas that have sandy or loose soil and numerous burrows.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Mojave Black-collared Lizard	*Crotaphytus bicinctores*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Associated with arid habitats with sparse vegetation and the presence of rocks and boulders.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Mountain Quail	*Oreortyx pictus*	BLM 3 (SGCN/HPBB)	Mountain quail breed and winter in shrub–dominated riparian communities of hawthorn, willow, and chokecherry in the intermountain West.	No	Not Present
Northern Goshawk	*Accipiter gentilis*	BLM 3 (HPBB)	Found in deciduous and coniferous forests, along forest edges and in open woodlands. In Idaho, summers and nests in coniferous and aspen forests; winters in riparian and agricultural areas.	No	Improbable

Common Name	Species	Status (conservation plans)[1]	General Habitat[2]	Habitat Present[3]	Species Present[4]
Olive-sided Flycatcher	*Contopus borealis*	BLM 3 (HPBB)	Found in forests and woodlands (especially in burned-over areas with standing dead trees)	No	Not Present
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*	BLM 3 (SGCN/BCC)	Cliffs near forest, lakes, ponds, and rivers. Most are thought to migrate south of Idaho during winter but individuals remain near urban nest sites in Nampa and Boise year around.	Yes, all allotments	Possible
Piute Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus mollis*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Sagebrush and grasslands.	Yes, all allotments	Present
Prairie Falcon	*Falco mexicanus*	BLM 3 (HPBB)	Cliffs and rock outcrops in sagebrush steppe, grassland, montane meadows, marshes, and riparian areas.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Sage Sparrow	*Samphispiza belli*	BLM 3 (HPBB/BCC)	Shrub steppe, mixed desert shrub/grassland communities.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Spotted Bat	*Euderma maculatum*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Various habitats from desert to montane coniferous forests. Observed in canyons of Owyhee County. Normally roost in deep rock crevices of canyon and cliff walls but specific roost characteristics are not well documented.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	*Plecotus townsendii*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Juniper, desert shrub, and dry coniferous forest throughout Idaho; day roosts and hibernates in caves and abandoned mines, forages over water	Yes; all allotments	Possible
Western Groundsnake	*Sonora semiannulata*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Xeric habitat characterized by sandy or loose soil textures, talus slopes, and boulder fields. Vegetation is typically sparse, comprising of shrubs, such as shadscale, sagebrush, greasewood, and bunchgrasses and annual grasses.	Yes; all allotments	Present
Western Toad	*Bufo boreas*	BLM 3	Wide variety of habitats such as desert springs and streams, meadows and woodlands, and in and around ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and slow-moving rivers and streams.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Williamson's Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*	BLM 3 (HPBB/BCC)	Dry open woods, orchards, farmlands, and foothills	No	Not Present
Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax trailii*	BLM 3 (HPBB/BCC)	Found in thickets, scrubby and brushy areas, open second growth, swamps, and open woodlands. In Idaho, associated with mesic and xeric willow (riparian) habitats.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Woodhouse Toad	*Bufo woodhousii*	BLM 3 (SGCN)	Found in grasslands, shrub steppe, woods, river valleys, floodplains, and agricultural lands, usually in areas with deep, friable soils.	Yes, all allotments except Murphy FFR	Possible
Black-throated Sparrow	*Amphispiza bilineata*	BLM 4	Open shrub areas with Sagebrush, Atripex, Rabbitbrush, saltsage, horsebrush. Not found in dense sagebrush stands. Found in desert scrub, thorn bush. In Idaho prefers open shrub areas dominated by big sage, spiny hopsage, or horsebrush exceeding 50cm in height.	Yes	Present
California Myotis	*Myotis californicus*	BLM 4	Occurs in dry conifer forest, sagebrush steppe, riparian, and juniper habitats. Roost types in Idaho are poorly known. Mines and caves are reportedly used. Elsewhere, buildings and bridges are major roost types, and individuals are also found under loose tree bark.	No	Improbable
Dark Kangaroo Mouse	*Microdipodops megacephalus*	BLM 4	Soft, sandy soils in hot dry sagebrush areas. In Idaho found in loose sands and gravel in shadscale scrub, sagebrush scrub, and alkali sink plant communities. May occur in sand dunes near margins of range	No	Not Present
Kit Fox	*Vulpes velox*	BLM 4	Inhabits arid and semi-arid regions encompassing desert scrub, chaparral, halophytic, and grassland communities. Loose	Yes	Possible

Common Name	Species	Status (conservation plans)[1]	General Habitat[2]	Habitat Present[3]	Species Present[4]
			textured soils may be preferred for denning.		
Little Pocket Mouse	*Perognathus longimembris*	BLM 4	Shadscale and low sage areas on lower slopes of alluvial fans with pea-sized gravel. Found in sagebrush, creosote bush, and cactus communities. On slopes with widely spaces shrubs, found in firm, sandy soil overlain with pebbles. In Idaho, found in shadscale/low sage on lower slopes of alluvial fans.	No	Not Present
Merriam's Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus canus vigilis*	BLM 4	Prefers sandy soils in dry, open sagebrush and grassland habitats. Occurs in the lower Snake River Valley south and west of the Snake River in Owyhee County, Idaho and Malheur County, Oregon from Reynolds Creek to Huntington and west to Westfall.	Yes	Possible
White-faced Ibis	*Plegadis chihi*	BLM 4 (SGCN/HPBB)	Found mostly in freshwater areas, on marshes, swamps, ponds and rivers. In Idaho, prefers shallow-water areas.	No	Not Present
Wyoming Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus elegans nevadensis*	BLM 4	Mountainous areas and higher plateaus in open and semi-forested habitats. Grasslands. In Idaho found in grasslands and sagebrush, especially on upland slopes with loose, sandy soils. Occupies a variety of sage plain and grassland habitats such as valley bottoms and foothills, montane meadows, subalpine talus slopes, and reclaimed surface-mine areas.	No	Not Present

[1] Status includes Endangered (ESA E) and Candidate (ESA C) species listed under the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531-1544), eagles (BGEPA) protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. § 668-668d), and BLM Type 2 (BLM 2), Type 3, (BLM 3), and Type 4 (BLM 4) special status species (USDI-BLM 2003). Additional designations under state and national conservation plans include Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN; IDFG 2006), Idaho Partners in Flight High Priority Breeding Bird (HPBB; IPIF 2000), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC; USDI-FWS 2008).

[2] Habitat descriptions modified from IDVMD 2011.

[3] Presence of habitat within project area was determined from IDVMD 2011; OWE 2011; Yensen and Sherman 2003; Idaho, Oregon and Nevada BLM unpublished data; and specialist expertise.

[4] Categories include species presence documented (**Present**), species likely to occur based on preferred habitat and local species abundance and nearby (<5 miles) occurrences within 5 miles (**Probable**), species may occur based on preferred habitat and/or occurrences within 25 miles (**Possible**), species not likely to occur based on limited or lack of preferred habitat and/or occurrence over 50 miles (**Improbable**), and species not present due to lack of habitat (**Not Present**).

Appendix E

Migratory Bird Species with Potential to Occur within the Fossil Butte Group Allotments

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
American Avocet	*Recurvirostra americana*		S3	Y		Y	Y
American Coot	*Fulica americana*						
American Crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*						
American Dipper	*Cinclus mexicanus*			Y			Y
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*						
American Kestrel	*Falco sparvarius*						
American Pipit	*Anthus rubescens*						
American Robin	*Turdus migratorius*						
American Widgeon	*Anas americana*					Y	Y
Ash-throated Flycatcher	*Myiarchus cinerascens*						
Bank Swallow	*Riparia riparia*						
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba*						
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*						
Barrow's Goldeneye	*Bucephala islandica*		GAME	Y			Y
Belted Kingfisher	*Ceryle alcyon*						
Black Rosy-finch	*Leucosticte atrata*		S3	Y	Y		Y
Black-billed Magpie	*Pica pica*			Y			
Black-capped Chickadee	*Poecile atricapilla*						
Black-chinned Hummingbird	*Archilochus alexandri*			Y			
Black-crowned Night-Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*		S2B				Y
Black-headed Grosbeak	*Pheucticus melanocephalus*						
Black-necked Stilt	*Himantopus mexicanus*		S3	Y		Y	Y
Black-throated Gray Warbler	*Dendroica nigrescens*			Y	Y		
Blue-winged Teal	*Anas discors*						Y
Bobolink	*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*						Y
Bohemian Waxwing	*Bombycilla garrulus*						
Bonaparte's Gull	*Larus phildelphia*						

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
Brewer's Blackbird	*Euphagus cyanocephalus*	BLM 5					
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	*Selasphorus platycercus*						
Brown Creeper	*Certhia americana*						
Brown-headed Cowbird	*Molothrus ater*						
Bufflehead	*Bucephala albeola*						Y
Bullock's Oriole	*Icterus bullocki*						
Bushtit	*Psaltriparus minimus*						
California Gull	*Larus californicus*		S2B				Y
California Quail	*Callipepla californica*		GAME				
Canada Goose	*Branta canadensis*						Y
Canvasback	*Aythya valisineria*		S2N			Y	Y
Canyon Wren	*Catherpes mexicanus*						
Caspian Tern	*Sterna caspia*		S2B				Y
Cassin's Finch	*Carpodacus cassinnii*	BLM 5				Y	Y
Cassin's Vireo	*Vireo cassinii*						
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*		S2B				Y
Cedar Waxwing	*Bombycilla cedrorum*						
Chipping Sparrow	*Spizella passerina*						
Chukar	*Alectoris chukar*		GAME				
Cinnamon Teal	*Anas cyanoptera*		GAME	Y		Y	Y
Clark's Grebe	*Aechmophorus clarkii*		S2B			Y	Y
Clark's Nutcracker	*Nucifraga columbiana*					Y	Y
Cliff Swallow	*Hirundo pyrrhonota*						
Common Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*						Y
Common Loon	*Gavia immer*		S1B			Y	y
Common Merganser	*Mergus merganser*						
Common Nighthawk	*Chordeiles minor*						
Common Poorwill	*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*						
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*						

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
Common Yellowthroat	*Geothlypsis trichas*						
Cooper's Hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*						
Cordilleran Flycatcher	*Empidonax occidentalis*	BLM 5					Y
Dark-eyed Junco	*Junco hyemalis*						
Double-crested Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax auritus*						
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*						
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*						Y
Dusky Flycatcher	*Empidonax oberholseri*			Y		Y	Y
Eared Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*				Y	Y	Y
Eastern Kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*						
Forster's Tern	*Sterna forsteri*		S1				Y
Franklin's Gull	*Larus pipixcan*		S2B	Y		Y	Y
Gadwall	*Anas strepera*					Y	Y
Grasshopper Sparrow	*Ammodramus savannarum*	BLM 5	S2B	Y			Y
Gray Flycatcher	*Empidonax wrightii*		N	Y		Y*	
Gray Jay	*Perisoreus canadensis*						
Gray Partridge	*Perdix perdix*		GAME				
Great Blue Heron	*Ardea herodias*						
Great Egret	*Ardea alba*		S1B				
Great Horned Owl	*Bubo virginianus*						
Greater Yellowlegs	*Tringa melanoleuca*						Y
Green-tailed Towhee	*Pipilo chlorurus*	BLM 5			Y	Y	Y
Green-winged Teal	*Anas crecca*						Y
Hairy Woodpecker	*Picoides villosus*						
Hermit Thrush	*Catharus guttatus*						
Hooded Merganser	*Lophodytes cucllatus*		S2B	Y			
Horned Grebe	*Podiceps auritus*		S1				Y
Horned Lark	*Eremophila alpestris*						
House Finch	*Carpodacus mexicanus*						

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
House Wren	*Troglodytes aedon*						
Killdeer	*Charadrius vociferus*			Y			Y
Lark Sparrow	*Chondestes grammacus*			Y			
Lazuli Bunting	*Passerina amoena*						Y
Least Sandpiper	*Calidris minutilla*					Y	Y
Lesser Goldfinch	*Carduelis psaltria*		S2				Y
Lesser Scaup	*Aythya affinis*		S3			Y	Y
Lesser Yellowlegs	*Tringa flavipes*						Y
Lincoln's Sparrow	*Melospiza linconlnii*						
Long-billed Curlew	*Numenius americanus*	BLM 5	S2B	Y	Y	Y	Y
Long-billed Dowitcher	*Limnodromus scolopaceus*					Y	Y
Long-eared Owl	*Asio otus*						
MacGillivray's Warbler	*Oporornis tolmiei*			Y			Y
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*					Y	Y
Marbled Godwit	*Limosa fedoa*		S2		Y		Y
Marsh Wren	*Cistothorus palustris*						
Merlin	*Falco comlumbarius*		S2B				
Mountain Bluebird	*Sialia currucoides*					Y	Y
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*						
Nashville Warbler	*Vermivora ruficapilla*						
Northern Flicker	*Colaptes auratus*						
Northern Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*						
Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*		S2N			Y	Y
Northern Pygmy-owl	*Glaucidium gnoma*	BLM 5					Y
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*						
Northern Saw-whet Owl	*Aegolius acadicus*						
Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*		S2N			Y	Y
Northern Shrike	*Lanius excubitor*						
Orange-crowned Warbler	*Vermivora celata*						
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*						Y
Pied-billed Grebe	*Podilymbus podiceps*						

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
Pine Siskin	*Carduelis pinus*						
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta canadensis*						Y
Red-eyed Vireo	*Vireo olivaceus*						
Redhead	*Aythya americana*		GAME	Y		Y	Y
Red-naped Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*	BLM 5				Y	
Red-necked Phalarope	*Phalaropus lobatus*					Y	Y
Red-tailed Hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis*						
Red-winged Blackbird	*Aeglaius phoeniceus*						
Ring-billed Gull	*Larus delawarensis*						
Ring-necked Duck	*Aythya collaris*						Y
Rock Wren	*Salpinctes obsoletus*			Y			
Rough-legged Hawk	*Buteo lagopus*						
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus calendula*						
Ruddy Duck	*Oxyura jamaicensis*		S2N			Y	Y
Rufous Hummingbird	*Selasphorus rufus*			Y		Y	Y
Sage Thrasher	*Oreoscoptes montanus*	BLM 5		Y	Y	Y	Y
Sandhill Crane	*Grus canadensis*		GAME	Y		Y	Y
Savannah Sparrow	*Passerculus sandwichensis*						
Say's Phoebe	*Sayornis saya*						
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*Accipiter striatus*			Y			
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*	BLM 5	S4	Y			Y
Snow Bunting	*Plectrophenax nivalis*						
Snow Goose	*Chen caerulescens*						Y
Snowy Egret	*Egretta thula*		S2B			Y	Y
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*						
Sora	*Porzana carolina*						
Spotted Sandpiper	*Actitis macularia*					Y	Y
Spotted Towhee	*Pipilo maculatus*						
Stellar's Jay	*Cyanocitta stelleri*						
Swainson's Hawk	*Buteo swainsoni*	BLM 5	S3B	Y		Y	Y
Townsend's Solitaire	*Myadestes townsendi*						Y

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
Townsend's Warbler	*Dendroica townsendi*			Y			Y
Tree Swallow	*Tachcineta bicolor*						
Tundra Swan	*Cygnus columbianus*						Y
Turkey Vulture	*Cathartes aura*						
Vaux's Swift	*Chaetura vauxi*						Y
Veery	*Catharus fuscescens*						
Vesper Sparrow	*Pooecetes gramineus*						
Violet-green Swallow	*Tachycineta thalassina*						
Virginia Rail	*Rallus limicola*						
Warbling Vireo	*Vireo gilvus*						
Western Burrowing Owl	*Athene cunicularia*	BLM 5	S2				Y
Western Grebe	*Aechmophorus occidentalis*		S2B	Y		Y	Y
Western Kingbird	*Tyrannus verticalis*						
Western Meadowlark	*Sturnella neglecta*						
Western Sandpiper	*Calidris mauri*					Y	Y
Western Screech-Owl	*Otus kennicotti*						
Western Tanager	*Piranga ludoviciana*			Y			Y
Western Wood-Pewee	*Contopus sordidulus*						
White-crowned Sparrow	*Zonotrichia leucophrys*						
White-headed Woodpecker	*Picoides albolarvatus*		S2	Y	Y	Y	Y
White-throated Swift	*Aeronautes saxatalis*					Y	
Willet	*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*					Y	Y
Wilson's Phalarope	*Phalaropus tricolor*	BLM 5	S3B			Y	Y
Wilson's Snipe	*Gallinago delicata*						Y
Wilson's Warbler	*Wilsonia pusilla*						
Wood Duck	*Aix sponsa*						Y
Yellow Warbler	*Dendroica petechia*			Y			

Common Name	Species Name	BLM STATUS[1]	ID SGCN[2]	HPBB[3]	BCC[4]	IWJV[5]	NABCI ID[6]
Yellow-breasted Chat	*Icteria virens*						
Yellow-headed Blackbird	*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*					Y*	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	*Dendroica coronata*						

[1]BLM Status includes species on the watch list (BLM 5; USDI BLM 2003c).
[2]ID SGCN includes Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need with the following designations: S-State Rank, 1-critically imperiled, 2-imperiled, 3-rare, B-breeding population, N-nonbreeding population, and GAME - game bird (IDFG 2006b).
[3]HPBB includes Idaho Partners in Flight High Priority Breeding Bird species (IPIF 2000).
[4]BCC includes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern (USDI USFWS 2008).
[5]IMJV includes Intermountain West Joint Venture Continentally Important Species. Asterisk denotes that the species is not CIS in Intermountain West Avifaunal Biome.
[6]NABCI includes Continental and Regional Priority Bird Species of Idaho listed by North American Bird Conservation Initiative partners (North American Waterfowl Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Partners in Flight, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas) under state and national conservation plans.

Appendix F
Fossil Butte Group Allotment Utilization (2003 – 2012)

Utilization was not taken on all allotments every year. Only years in which utilization was taken are reflected in this appendix. Utilization was not conducted on individual species in years indicated by dashes (--). See Appendix C for plant species codes.

Fossil Butte

Species	% Utilization by Year					
	2007	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
PSSPS	33 47 54 54	--[2]	38 43 47	20 39	--	--
	Avg: 47%		**Avg: 43%**	**Avg: 30%**		
BRTE	14 17 17 19 22	--	10 11 12	22	--	--
	Avg: 18%		**Avg: 11%**	**Avg: 22%**		
ACHY	--	42 43	--	--	--	23
		Avg: 43%				**Avg: 23%**
POBU	--	20	--	--	--	--
		Avg: 20%				
POSE	--	--	0 6	13 22 22 24	--	--
			Avg: 3%	**Avg: 20%**		
ELELE	--	20 36	--	--	7 7 11 17 20	9 10 15 17 18
		Avg: 28%			**Avg: 12%**	**Avg: 14%**

Con Shea

Species	% Utilization by Year			
	2006	**2009**	**2011**	**2012**
PSSPS	--	29	--	--
		Avg: 29%		
ACHY	--	--	--	9
				Avg: 9%
POSE	30	7 9	--	--
	Avg: 30%	**Avg: 8%**		

Species	% Utilization by Year			
	2006	2009	2011	2012
ELELE	--	--	6 15 26	12 18
			Avg: 16%	**Avg: 15%**

Sinker Butte

Species	% Utilization by Year				
	2006	2008	2009	2011	2012
AGCR	26 34 44 45	29	11 14 20 23 30	0 10 11	13 13 14 14 15 20
	Avg: 37%	**Avg: 29%**	**Avg: 20%**	**Avg: 7%**	**Avg: 15%**
ACHY	--	18	--	--	--
		Avg: 18%			
POSE	--	--	--	15 25	14 16 17 21
				Avg: 20%	**Avg: 17%**
ELELE	--	5 16	--	9 12	--
		Avg: 11%		**Avg: 11%**	

Joyce FFR

Species	% Utilization by Year	
	2011	2012
PSSPS	--	0
		Avg: 0%
ACHY	3	--
	Avg: 3%	

Montini FFR

Species	% Utilization by Year	
	2007	2010
BRTE	9	7
	Avg: 9%	**Avg: 7%**

Murphy FFR

Species	% Utilization by Year
	2012
BRTE	3
	Avg: 3%

Appendix G
Analysis of Public Comments on the Draft EA
Fossil Butte Group Grazing Permit Renewal – DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2011-0010-EA
November 15, 2013

The Draft Fossil Butte Group Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-ID-B030-0010-EA, was released for public review and comment on October 16, 2013. Comments were received from the following:

Idaho State Department of Agriculture (10/30/2013)
Joyce Livestock Co. (11/4/2013)
Miller Land Co. (11/2/2013)
Owyhee County Board of Commissioners (11/4/2013)
Sierra del Rio (11/12/2013)
Vernon Kershner (10/31/2013)
Western Watersheds Project – Katie Fite (e-mails: 10/30/2013 4:25, 7:17, 8:05, 8:14, and 8:16 PM)

The following guidelines were used by the Owyhee Field Manager and the Fossil Butte Group Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) in considering, reviewing, and responding to Draft EA comments. Relevant comments were either:

1) Considered pertinent suggestions, which could be incorporated into the alternatives;
2) Considered as Other Alternatives Considered, but not analyzed;
3) Considered as issues to be addressed in the effects analysis;
4) Considered as indicators of where BLM needed to provide better clarification in the environmental assessment; or,
5) Considered concerns in which BLM provided a specific response herein.

Various requests were made for additional data, mapping, or other information to be included in the EA. Requests within the scope of the EA and relevant were incorporated into the EA; comments outside of the scope or not relevant to the EA were not incorporated into the EA. Additional information contained in support documents is available in the project record (see EA Section 1.6), but is not included in the EA in an effort to comply with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that NEPA documents be "concise, clear, and to the point" (40 CFR 1500.2(b), 1502.4).

Comments received from each party were reviewed and summarized, and the BLM's response follows each comment.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)

1. Comment: The party expressed concerns that a 15 day period to review and comment on the Fossil Butte Group Draft EA was unreasonably short.

BLM Response: As there is no requirement or standard for sending EAs out for comment, the field manager has the discretion of whether or not to send a draft out and for how long. The BLM extended the 15-day comment period an additional 5 days (October 30 to November 4) for interested publics to review the Draft EA and submit comments.

2. Comment: Standard 6 should have been evaluated for the Fossil Butte Allotment because the EA states that cheatgrass is dominant, subdominant, and/or extensive across the allotment.

BLM Response: The entire Fossil Butte Allotment was evaluated for Standard 4 because cheatgrass and weed-dominated areas map out as 3-11% of the entire allotment. The entire allotment is one pasture, and the areas dominated by cheatgrass are scattered and not managed separately from native plant communities. See the EA Appendix A. Although cheatgrass occurs in many areas of the allotment, other components of the native plant community also occur; therefore, Standard 4 is appropriate.

3. Comment: Alternative D for Fossil Butte has two less water haul sites and lack of push pond maintenance, which would result in poorer livestock distribution. Poor grazing distribution results in low harvest efficiency, erosion in heavily used areas, and lower animal production. BLM should reconsider options of water hauling and allow push pond maintenance for better livestock distribution.

BLM Response: The effects from differing numbers of water haul sites, push pond maintenance, and levels of livestock distribution on the Fossil Butte Allotment are analyzed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.1.2 of the EA under Alternatives B, C, D, and E.

Alternative D provides for six water haul sites rather than the eight that you requested in the Fossil Butte Allotment. The authorization of six water haul sites will provide for adequate cattle distribution throughout the allotment. Analysis in the EA shows that the disturbance around these six sites has only localized impacts on soils and vegetation, an acceptable trade-off to the improved livestock distribution across the allotment. The two additional water haul sites are not authorized in order to reduce impacts to sage-grouse habitat in the southwest part of the allotment and to a stand of needle-and-thread grass (See EA Section 3.3.1.2.4.1). Maintenance of push ponds would not be authorized because the six water haul sites would be sufficient for livestock distribution and the elimination of push ponds would further reduce soil disturbance from pond maintenance and cattle use to push pond areas.

4. Comment: Alternative D reduces Fossil Butte by 294 AUMs, Con Shea by 37 AUMs, and Joyce FFR by 122 AUMs. The EA states that AUM reductions would be implemented by reducing permitted use, rather than putting AUMs into suspended use. Because the Fossil Butte Allotment showed improving trends, there is realistic expectation that the reduced AUMs could at some point in time be returned, so these AUMs should be suspended rather than eliminated.

BLM Response: See EA Appendix A for analysis regarding voluntary AUM reduction resulting in improving trends on the Fossil Butte Allotment. In accordance with regulation pertaining to reducing permitted use (43 CFR 4110.3-2), reductions in active use AUMs to meet Rangeland

Health Standards or make significant progress, as well as reductions in active use AUMs to meet ORMP management objectives, would be implemented by reducing permitted use. Active use AUMs no longer available would not be converted to suspension. Suspension AUMs held on permits prior to this planning process would continue to be held on permits as suspension. The same process is required to reactivate suspended AUMs as it is to increase AUMs. A NEPA document and a subsequent decision in accordance with 4110.3-1, 4130.3-3, and 4160 is required to implement any modification of the grazing permit, including an increase in active AUMs.

5. Comment: The no grazing alternative needs to analyze in detail the increase in fuel load buildup that will occur from 10 years of no grazing in regards to wildfire. This would increase the wildfire risk to private and state lands in the FFR allotments, and to sage-grouse habitat.

BLM Response: The wildfire risk from increased levels of cheatgrass production resulting from a lack of grazing under Alternative E is described in Section 3.2.5.1, potential effects to wildlife habitats are analyzed in Section 3.2.5.5, and effects to the cumulative effects analysis area (including private and state land) in Section 3.4.

6. Comment: On EA page 15, Table 2.1 Fossil Butte, Alternative D, has BLM converted horse AUMs to cattle?

BLM Response: Yes, under Alternative D for Fossil Butte, AUMs assigned to horse use on the current permit have been converted to cattle use, resulting in the same total number of AUMs as assigned under Alternative B for Fossil Butte.

7. Comment: The party commented: On EA page 176 "… see Table ??? related to BLM …", the table number should be displayed correctly.

BLM Response: The table number reference on page 176 of the draft EA has been removed in the final EA.

8. Comment: Why is BLM proposing grazing reductions or management changes in these allotments when current livestock grazing management is not a causal factor for any of the standards not being met?

BLM Response: This comment will be taken into consideration in developing the Proposed Decision for Grazing Management of the Fossil Butte Group allotments. Although current livestock management is not a causal factor for Standards not being met, BLM's preferred alternative (D) includes management changes (primarily date changes) to improve resources and further reduce grazing effects, consistent with the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) and Snake River Birds of Prey (SRBOP) RMP. The BLM is responsible for developing a reasonable range of alternatives in the analysis for permitting activities on the public lands. In addition, the BLM's stewardship responsibilities for the public lands extend beyond the minimal requirements found in the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (FRH) Standards, ORMP, and SRBOP RMP. Where there is opportunity to improve the health of the range, the BLM has the authority and discretion to take that opportunity. Although current grazing management is not

identified as a significant causal factor for the non-attainment of the Standards, the IDT has identified issues that could be addressed with some modification to Terms and Conditions of the existing permit and should at a minimum be analyzed for further consideration. The BLM will hold itself responsible for completing appropriate assessment of the standards identified, if chosen in the grazing decision process.

Joyce Livestock Co.

1. Comment: The party expressed concern that a 15 day period to review and comment on the Fossil Butte Group Draft EA was unreasonably short.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #1.

2. Comment: The party questions whether alternatives analyzing reductions in AUMs are warranted on the Fossil Butte Group allotments due to current livestock grazing management practices not being a significant causal factor for failure to meet Standards.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #8.

3. Comment: The party disputes the BLM's analysis that Standards on the Fossil Butte Allotment began making significant progress only after a 10% voluntary AUM reduction was made by the permittees after 2007. The party states that significant progress was being made prior to 2007 and questions the validity of assessments and utilization monitoring on the allotment. The party also disputes the BLM's analysis that Alternative A would not meet applicable Standards.

BLM Response: The 2007 Determination concluded that current livestock grazing management practices were a significant factor in the Fossil Butte Allotment not meeting Standards 1, 4, and 8 at that time. Voluntary reductions were made in response to the 2007 Determination findings. The 2013 Determination used information collected since the AUM reduction in 2007. Both determinations were based on all of the best monitoring and other information available for current conditions. See EA Appendix A. Alternative A (Current Permit) is the same management evaluated in the 2007 Determination.

4. Comment: The party disputes the shortened season of use on the Fossil Butte Allotment analyzed in Alternative D. The party specifically questions sections of the EA (p 55) and the validity of climate data sources used to substantiate the reduction in season.

BLM Response: The Swan Falls Dam weather station is located approximately 6 miles from the Fossil Butte Allotment and at similar elevation, therefore the climate data is representative of the area (EA Table 3.4, page 55). The weather data indicate that October generally has temperature and precipitation combinations suitable for fall green-up or regrowth, as shown in EA Table 3.3. The shortened season in Alternative D reduces grazing during the October fall green-up period, as discussed in EA Section 3.3.1.2.4.1.

5. Comment: The party states that there is a realistic expectation that the AUMs reduced under Alternative D in the Fossil Butte Allotment could be returned to active use and requests that these AUMs be placed in suspended use and not cancelled.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #4.

6. Comment: The party disputes the re-assignment of AUMs from the Con Shea Allotment to the Joyce FFR Allotment due to the administrative transfer of Con Shea Pasture 3 into Joyce FFR Pasture 1. The party references past grazing management practices (pasture usage) to substantiate this comment.

BLM Response: The transfer of 37 AUMs from the Con Shea to Joyce FFR allotments between Alternatives A and D provides for no net change in permitted AUMs between the total for the two allotments. In this EA, the IDT is attempting to accurately portray Con Shea pasture management in the various alternatives, based on all available records. Administratively, Con Shea Pasture 3 is a landmass in which the BLM recognizes 37 AUMs to be available for livestock use. Therefore, these AUMs will need to be transferred to the Joyce FFR Allotment in order to allow for the proper administration of both allotments.

7. Comment: The party questions whether alternatives analyzing reductions in AUMs or grazing management changes are warranted on the Con Shea Allotment due to current livestock grazing management practices not being a significant causal factor for failure to meet Standards. The party specifically references the accidental AUM increase analyzed under Alternative B to substantiate this comment.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #8. The accidental AUM increase in Con Shea Allotment billing was not based on a Final Decision or fully processed permit; however, the median actual use was 1,167 AUMs for the EA assessment period, which was the baseline used for the analysis of Alternative B.

Miller Land Co.

1. Comment: The party requests the ownership of the base properties associated with each grazing permit be included in an appropriate section of the EA. The party specifically references three tables in the EA (Tables 2.9, 2.21, and 2.28) where this information could be included.

BLM Response: The BLM included the suggested verbiage in the tables to identify the base property owner associated with the Kershner authorization on Fossil Butte.

2. Comment: The party questions the number of AUMs assigned to the Miller-Kershner grazing permit on the Fossil Butte Allotment discussed in the EA. The party references earlier permits and billing statements that assigned a slightly higher number of AUMs.

BLM Response: Upon review of the Kershner authorization, the AUMs in the EA have been changed to reflect the correct number.

3. Comment: The party requests that all alternatives analyzed for the Fossil Butte Allotment include a mandatory plan requiring the BLM to reduce invasive plants within the allotment, including cheatgrass, starting the second year after the Final Decision is signed. The party questions why cheatgrass is not listed as a noxious weed within the EA, and states that increased noxious weed control by the BLM is needed if the Fossil Butte Allotment is going to meet applicable Standards. The party disputes BLM's determination that control of invasive noxious weeds is not within the scope of the EA.

BLM Response: Listing of plants as noxious weeds is at the discretion of the Idaho Department of Agriculture. All alternatives include continued noxious weed treatment by the Boise District BLM and work with Cooperative Weed Management Area partners (EA Section 3.1.1). Chemical treatment of cheatgrass is not analyzed because cheatgrass is so widespread and well-established; treatment of widespread invasive species such as cheatgrass is beyond the scope of the current grazing analysis' purpose and need (EA Section 1.4). Also, treatment alone would not solve the problem; subsequent seeding or restoration would need to occur to stabilize treated areas. The proposed action is specific to livestock management rather than other types of vegetation treatment, including weed control. However, all alternatives consider effects of the various proposed grazing management practices on cheatgrass (EA Section 3.2). This consideration is one of the primary issues used to evaluate alternatives (EA Section 1.7.2).

4. Comment: The party disputes the BLM's analysis that Alternative A would not meet applicable Standards in the Fossil Butte Allotment. The party states that for Alternative B if the 10% voluntary reduction in AUMs was maintained for a few more years, applicable Standards could be met and the full AUMs assigned in Alternative A could be removed from suspension. AUMs should be suspended instead of eliminated.

BLM Response: See BLM's response to Joyce Livestock Co. Comment #3 and ISDA Comment #4.

5. Comment: The party requests that errors in Table 2.10 on page 24 of the EA be corrected. The party specifically references the Miller-Kershner column of the table: "For the year 2004 the permit should indicate, "Not Used**" with explanation as follows: "Voluntarily not used at BLM request for the protection of the Idaho Springsnail habitat". A letter from Miller Land Co., Inc. and signed by Vernon and Kenny Kershner, dated 28 Oct 2004, was sent to the Owyhee Field Manager, Ron Kay. Further, the 2009 non-use was due to the BLM Field Office Range Officer denying the grazing that year. This should also be explained below the table." The party also states: "Also my research into actual use report submissions indicates that in many of the years where reports do not exist were years that the Terms and Conditions in the Permit did not require such a report and/or no report forms were sent to the user of the permit for completion."

BLM Response: The BLM was able to produce the letter signed by Miller Land Co. and Vernon and Kenneth Kershner, dated November 7, 2003, stating their intent to take voluntary non-use in the Fossil Butte Allotment during the 2003-2004 winter season due to drought conditions. Table 2.10 has been updated to reflect this letter. No other documentation was found to indicate voluntary non-use in 2004 or suspension of grazing in 2009 on the Fossil Butte

Allotment. Any submitted documentation that substantiates these requested corrections will be entered into the project record and Table 2.10 will be subsequently modified.

Grazing permits signed by Vernon and/or Kenneth Kershner dated March 5, 1997 and November 16, 2011 for the Fossil Butte Allotment include the Term and Condition that clearly states that your certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.

6. Comment: The party states that under Alternative C, he would not be opposed to continuing a voluntary AUM reduction on the Fossil Butte Allotment until Standards are met. The party requests that this voluntary reduction include negotiated reductions on drought years or for special circumstances.

BLM Response: Comment noted and considered in the development of the Proposed Decisions for the Fossil Butte Allotment. Reductions for drought are typically determined on a site by site basis, depending on the time of year grazing takes place, amount of annual grasses, etc. The BLM actively encourages open and proactive communication with permittees and interested public regarding drought and other conditions that could affect management of public lands.

7. Comment: The party disputes the season of use assigned to the Fossil Butte Allotment under Alternative D. The party states that the November 1st turn out date could negatively impact livestock grazing operations associated with the allotment and cause higher concentrations of livestock use within the allotment. The party requests that an October 15th date be assigned to the allotment under Alternative D.

BLM Response: Comment noted and considered in the development of the Proposed Decisions for the Fossil Butte Allotment. An October 15 start date was analyzed in Alternative B. The effects of a November 1 start date (Alternative D) on grazing intensity and livestock concentration are discussed in EA Section 3.3.1.2.4.1.

8. Comment: The party disputes the reduction in water haul sites and requests that the use of at least two push ponds be retained in the Fossil Butte Allotment under Alternative D. The party states that the use of these push ponds is one of the reasons the allotment is making significant progress toward meeting Standards.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #3.

9. Comment: The party disputes the legality of Alternative E and questions whether the BLM has the statutory authority to give the current owners of attached base property a first right to reacquire grazing rights in the Fossil Butte Allotment if those grazing rights are lost.

BLM Response: Alternative E is an appropriate analysis as it would not remove livestock from all public lands within the Owyhee Field Office, but would consider the effects of livestock removal at a localized level. As stated in section 2.3.6 of the EA, "Upon expiration of the 10-year term, livestock grazing on the allotment(s) would be reevaluated, with retention of

preference (priority for grazing authorization) for the approval of application(s) for grazing permit(s) attached to current base property(s)".

10. Comment: The party questions the validity of the reference conditions used in the analysis of Standard 4 on the Fossil Butte Allotment because vegetation has changed since the Oregon Trail time. The party also questions the desired vegetation recovery, given that no seeding is included.

BLM Response: Ecological Site Descriptions are used as reference conditions (EA Section 3.1.1), and are the best available and accepted scientific information. Seeding is beyond the scope and purpose and need of this EA (EA Section 1.4). The grazing management alternatives are designed to balance and address impacts to all relevant resources consistent with BLM's multiple-use mandate.

11. Comment: The party requests that discussions of season of use (EA Table 3.3 on page 55 for use in April, Summer Grazing pages 102 & 107) be corrected to more accurately reflect the seasons of use on the Fossil Butte Group allotments as the Joyce FFR Allotment is the only allotment in which spring grazing occurs.

BLM Response: Most grazing in the Fossil Butte Group allotments occurs in the fall, winter, and early spring, but late spring and summer use is included in three of the six allotments in some alternatives. Therefore, a general discussion of use in all seasons is appropriate. Effects specific to each alternative for each allotment are found in EA Section 3.3.

12. Comment: The party questions whether sage-grouse breeding or nesting habitats are affected by livestock grazing on any of the Fossil Butte Group allotments, with the exception of the Joyce FFR Allotment, due to the predominance of winter grazing in the Fossil Butte Group.

BLM Response: Winter grazing can affect sage-grouse breeding and nesting habitats by reducing the residual stubble height of perennial grasses prior to the start of the subsequent breeding/nesting season. The effects of winter grazing to sage-grouse habitat within the Fossil Butte Group allotments are analyzed in Section 3.2.1.5 in the EA.

13. Comment: The party disputes that the majority of the Fossil Butte Allotment historically provided suitable sage-grouse habitat.

BLM Response: Historic sage-grouse range data was incorporated by reference in Section 3.3.1.1.5 of the EA.

Vernon Kershner

1. Comment: The party states that the Fossil Butte Allotment is either meeting or making significant progress towards meeting all applicable Standards.

BLM Response: Standard 8 (Plants) is not met on the Fossil Butte Allotment, but current livestock grazing management is not a causal factor. Significant progress is being made toward meeting Standards 1, 4, and 8 (Upland Animals).

2. Comment: The party states that late fall and winter grazing is the best way to help the Fossil Butte Allotment meet all applicable Standards.

BLM Response: Comment noted and considered in the Proposed Decisions for the Fossil Butte Allotment. The EA Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 describe environmental effects of fall and winter grazing.

3. Comment: The party states that implementation of Alternative C will allow the Fossil Butte Allotment to continue to make significant progress toward meeting applicable Standards and keep a reliable cattle operation in Owyhee County.

BLM Response: Comment noted. Effects of Alternative C on meeting Standards and Social and Economic Values are described in EA Sections 3.3.1 and 3.2.1.7.

Owyhee County Board of Commissioners

1. Comment: The party questions why BLM is proposing livestock management changes in the EA when all allotments are either meeting Standards, making significant progress, or are not meeting Standards due to reasons other than livestock grazing.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #8.

2. Comment: The party disputes the analysis of environmental consequences resulting from Alternative A (Current Permit) as being different from Alternative B (Current Situation) in the Fossil Butte Allotment.

BLM Response: A comparison between Alternative A and Alternative B in the Fossil Butte Allotment is described in EA Table 2.1. Differences between the two alternatives include the number of permitted livestock, season of use, days per pasture, total AUMs, acres per AUM, water haul sites, push pond maintenance, and allotment specific terms and conditions.

3. Comment: The party disputes the analysis of the Fossil Butte Allotment that asserts recent (post-2007) changes in livestock management caused the allotment to begin making significant progress toward meeting Standards. The party states that livestock grazing management over the past 15 years has caused the allotment to meet all applicable Standards.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to Joyce Livestock Co. Comment #3. The BLM has recognized that changes in management have resulted in some improvement. The 2013 Evaluation/Determination (EA Appendix A) concludes that the allotment is making significant progress towards meeting Standards 1, 4, and 8 (Upland Animals) as described in EA Section 3.3.1.

4. Comment: The party questions the validity of the rationale used for reducing permitted AUMs to 1,328 in the Fossil Butte Allotment under Alternatives B and D. The party specifically questions subjectivity in rationale and determination findings among the 2007 and 2013 Evaluation/Determinations.

BLM Response: The 1,328 AUMs in the Fossil Butte Allotment for Alternatives B and D is based on actual use (EA Section 2.3.3) rather than permitted use. The 2007 Determination was based on livestock management practices prior to a 2008 10% voluntary reduction in AUMs, while the 2013 Determination was based on livestock grazing management practices subsequent to the 10% voluntary reduction in AUMs.

Sierra del Rio

1. Comment: The party requests that BLM considers a revised version of Alternative C which comprised of a spring rest rotation system in Sinker Butte Pastures 4 and 5 in which each pasture is used every other year followed by a year of rest.

BLM Response: Although spring use for only Pastures 4 and 5 was not specifically analyzed in an alternative, Alternative C analyzed effects of spring use one year in six for each pasture (EA Section 2.3.4.3). The analysis showed that the addition of spring use would result in Standards 4, 5, and 8 (special status upland wildlife habitat) not being met or making significant progress, and livestock management would be a causal factor (EA Sections 3.3.3.1.10.1 and 3.3.3.1.10.5). Spring use every other year in these two pastures would have similar or greater impacts.

2. Comment: The party questions why Sinker Butte Alternative A does not analyze Pasture 5 as being available for livestock use.

BLM Response: Alternative A is the current permit, which does not address grazing in Pasture 5 (acquired as a result of a land exchange). Other alternatives do address and incorporate this pasture, providing a remedy to an administrative oversight.

3. Comment: The party questions why the addition of 20 AUMs in Sinker Butte Alternative C is not analyzed in any other alternative.

BLM Response: The 20 additional AUMs in Alternative C are based on the request per the grazing permit application. That addition would not be appropriate in Alternative A because it is not on the current permit, nor in Alternative B which is based on actual use. The increase was not included in Alternative D because the allotment is not currently meeting all applicable Standards. Although current livestock grazing management is not a significant causal factor for not meeting Standards, there is no justification for increasing the level of use under Alternative D.

4. Comment: The party requests that a season of use beginning October 20 be assigned to the Sinker Butte Allotment.

BLM Response: An October 20 start date for the Sinker Butte Allotment was analyzed in Alternative B (EA Section 2.3.3.3).

Western Watersheds Project (WWP)

1. Comment: WWP disagrees with FRH (fundamentals of rangeland health) and EA findings that land degradation (weeds, lack of microbiotic crusts, etc.) is caused by long ago grazing rather than current grazing. "Historic" grazing needs to be defined and site-specific impacts evaluated.

BLM Response: Determinations of whether Standards are being met and causal factors for not meeting Standards are based on all of the best, available information, as listed in the Background section of each Fossil Butte Group Allotment Determination (EA Appendix A). The description of historic grazing in EA Section 3.1.1 has been expanded. The EA describes site-specific grazing impacts to livestock congregation points and other high use areas within the allotments.

2. Comment: Water hauling and feed supplement show that there is no basis for sustainable continuing use. Analysis of capability, suitability carrying capacity, or stocking rate compatible with meeting ORMP and SRPOP RMP requirements has not been done. Analyze the adverse effects of supplement feeding; they should not be used, but if so, placed 1 mile from any existing native vegetation community.

BLM Response: Water hauling and salt/mineral supplement are acceptable livestock management practices to improve cattle distribution on public lands to utilize available forage. Specific effects of supplemental hay feeding are described in the Montini Allotment for Alternative C. Effects resulting from salt/mineral supplement feeding is discussed in Cumulative Effects (EA Section 3.4) and would be similar to those described for water haul sites which affect cattle distribution (EA Section 3.2.1.1). We will consider a provision for placing supplement away from native vegetation communities. Although a formal carrying capacity analysis has not been completed, the stocking rate is evaluated based on comparing actual use figures to utilization measurements monitored under current grazing management. Utilization not exceeding 50% during dormant season use (the case in the majority of Fossil Butte Group area) generally indicates an adequate stocking rate (EA Section 3.2.1.1).

3. Comment: The stocking rate is not science-based, creates ugly erosion dustbowls and weedlands, and conflicts with visual, recreational, and sensitive and important species protections. Cattle are so desperate for food in areas that they were devouring greasewood and other shrubs that provide essential habitat. How did BLM arrive at the minimal AUM changes, carrying capacity, and sustainable use? These areas have minimal productivity and resiliency, and need rigorous upland trampling standards as cattle rove far to find feed. Compare current production to site potential, looking at old Ecological Site inventory, and conduct a current ESI, given the historic degradation. NRCS Ecosites are highly flawed.

BLM Response: See BLM's response to WWP Comment #2 about the stocking rate. Effects of the alternatives' stocking rates on weeds, visuals, recreation, and sensitive species are discussed in EA Sections 3.2 and 3.3. We have no indication of heavy shrub utilization in any of the Fossil

Butte Group allotments. Differences in stocking rates between alternatives were derived from the theme of the alternative (permit, actual use, permittee's proposal, etc.). Because current livestock grazing was not a causal factor for any allotment to not meet Standards, based primarily on the season of use and utilization levels, the preferred alternative does not include stocking rate reductions below the lowest level of Alternatives A-C.

We have not used the Ecological Site Descriptions to calculate carrying capacity in the Fossil Butte Group allotments, but rather evaluate the stocking rate based on actual use and utilization, as discussed in Comment #2. Upland trampling is considered in the overall stocking rate and season of use; utilization is used as the indicator of use, and the level of trampling would be related to this but is not explicitly measured.

4. Comment: These allotments should be managed by Snake River Birds of Prey (SRBOP) rather than OFO. The EA fails to protect and enhance raptor prey (Piute ground squirrel), special status animals, big game, and other wildlife; it fails to provide site-specific inventories and effects to these species from incessant winter disturbance, and recovery actions.

BLM Response: The EA is based on best available information, including habitat and species inventories, targeted monitoring, and incidental observations. Although comprehensive, site-specific inventories have not been conducted within the entire allotment and surroundings, the information available is sufficient to provide an adequate baseline to evaluate effects of the alternatives analyzed. Effects to wildlife species and their habitat resulting from livestock grazing management under analyzed alternatives are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA.

5. Comment: Separating grazing management to OFO from the NCA is biologically and legally unacceptable. Grazing is by far the most ubiquitous, pervasive, damaging use to degrade/destroy remnant native vegetation communities the raptors, raptor prey, and TES species that NCA lands are supposed to be managed for.

BLM Response: The 2008 SRBOP NCA RMP identified livestock grazing management of several allotments to the respective field offices (RMP Appendix 10) and retained management of 15 of the 31 allotments within the NCA. Allotments managed by the respective field offices occur partially within the NCA, although some are wholly within the NCA. Coordination with the NCA Field Manager occurred during the development of the alternatives analyzed in the EA. Allotment management by the respective field offices occurred prior to designation of the NCA. Effects to wildlife species and their habitat resulting from livestock grazing under the analyzed alternatives are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA.

6. Comment: The EA fails to address (survey, map, assess habitat loss) how livestock grazing degrades habitat for sage thrasher, brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, loggerhead shrike, gray flycatcher, etc. by destroying blocks of undisturbed sagebrush and understories. Adverse impacts of livestock facilities, water hauling, salt/supplement, and grazing are causing increases in cheatgrass, and loss of sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, and migratory birds, requiring a hard look.

BLM Response: Effects to wildlife species and their habitats resulting from livestock grazing and livestock grazing management under the analyzed alternatives are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA.

7. Comment: Habitats for special status plants have not been systematically assessed for the magnitude and trajectory of threats and impacts. Trespass in the rare plant exclosure shows a lack of care for rare plants and native vegetation communities.

BLM Response: Special status plants and their habitats are discussed in EA Section 3.1.4. Direct and indirect effects from the different alternatives are found in EA Sections 3.2 and 3.3, while cumulative effects are found in Section 3.4.2. Unauthorized grazing within the Con Shea exclosure is addressed in EA Appendix A and appropriate action on an individual operator will occur if findings of trespass are warranted and substantiated with evidence.

8. Comment: BLM failed to analyze a suitable range of alternatives, including removing grazing where there are conflicts with other resources. Its all-or-nothing scheme minimally and unfairly analyzes alternative E. There is no coherent alternative that significantly reduces grazing to benefit raptors and other values. Include alternatives with passive restoration in existing remnant native communities and active restoration of areas degraded by livestock, fire, and OHVs. Alternative A should be analyzed in detail to provide a baseline and an understanding of how it differs from how grazing actually has been conducted. Alternatives show minimal differences, and every acre will remain grazed in 4 alternatives. How can BLM consider an increase in AUMs for Con Shea and Sinker Butte, and removal of measurable use protections, despite FRH findings?

BLM Response: The range of alternatives in the Fossil Butte Group EA includes a No Grazing alternative, increases over the current permit (in some cases), and alternatives developed by the BLM that would provide for passive restoration while also providing for multiple uses on public lands. This range (No Grazing to increased AUMs) is sufficient to provide a reasoned decision about whether and how to renew livestock grazing permits on these allotments. The alternatives analyzed are those that were reasonable and sufficient to address the Purpose and Need and meet applicable objectives.

The increase of AUMs, in some alternatives for some allotments, was analyzed according to Grazing Regulations that require the analysis of a permittee's application. These alternatives were also helpful to provide a comparison of how livestock grazing might occur on the landscape. Where the BLM did not analyze Alternative A in detail, Alternative B was used as a baseline as it reflected the terms and conditions that are on the current permit or under the current management. Thus, the BLM applied it as the No Action alternative.

Active restoration was not within the scope of the Purpose and Need. Such actions would be better suited in site-specific analyses and projects.

The preferred alternative does not have an increase in AUMs for Con Shea (EA Table 2.2). The increase in the Sinker Butte Allotment is based on incorporation of additional land as a result of a land exchange, with no change in the stocking rate.

9. Comment: The preferred alternative has no Terms and Conditions ("standards"), and allows "anything goes". Does BLM not want to monitor site-specific conditions because it knows lands are being damaged? Need mandatory measurable terms and conditions for upland utilization, woody browse, riparian vegetation, etc., per ORMP and SNBOP RMP. Striping protective riparian vegetation and water quality standards affects severely polluted, degraded water quality, Physa snails, yellow-billed cook habitat, etc,; cattle conflict with public use and human health.

BLM Response: Section 2.1 of the EA specifically addresses monitoring studies to be conducted during the term of the grazing permits and in accordance with guidance provided by an Idaho State Office Instruction Memorandum. Section 2.1 also identifies that these monitoring studies would include upland utilization, woody browse, and riparian vegetation.

Effects to riparian areas, water quality, and wildlife species and their habitats resulting from livestock grazing and livestock grazing management under the analyzed alternatives are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA. Recent observations of riparian areas on Sinker Creek in the Fossil Butte Group allotments indicated healthy riparian vegetation, stable banks, and little or no livestock impacts. Livestock grazing management resulting in light to moderate utilization during the dormant season is expected to continue under Alternative D, so no reductions in riparian area structure, function, and/or stream-bank stability is expected to occur.

10. Comment: Discretionary use treats FFRs like sacrifice areas. And BLM failed to consider merging FFR lands with surrounding larger allotments.

BLM Response: Effects to resources resulting from livestock grazing and livestock grazing management during all applicable seasons of use are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA. BLM considered merging FFR lands with surrounding larger allotments in Section 2.2 of the EA.

11. Comment: Cumulative effects of OHV use, other recreation, surrounding land development, livestock degradation, fires, and climate change along with grazing, fences, troughs, stockponds, and water hauling are not adequately assessed. The magnitude of cumulative threats to sage-grouse, raptor, special status species, and big game winter habitat needs to be addressed.

BLM Response: The EA is based on best available information, including habitat and species inventories, targeted monitoring, and incidental observations. Although comprehensive, site-specific inventories have not been conducted within the entire allotment and surroundings, the information available is sufficient to provide an adequate baseline to evaluate effects of the alternatives analyzed. Cumulative effects to resources resulting from livestock grazing management under analyzed alternatives are described in Section 3.4 in the EA

12. Comment: Current grazing's amplification of climate change effects has not been considered in stocking rates, cheatgrass, sage-grouse, or desertification.

BLM Response: Climate change is discussed in Section 1.7.2 of the EA.

13. Comment: Watershed and vegetation health, water quality, riparian areas, plant community structure, wildlife habitat, special status species, and cultural resources are not maintained or improved at the high grazing levels proposed, ignoring RMP provisions. BLM has not shown that soil productivity will be maintained/enhanced with winter-spring grazing that rips apart microbiotic crusts, churns soil, creates weed sites, and remnant shrubs are devoured.

BLM Response: Effects to resources resulting from livestock grazing and livestock grazing management during all applicable seasons of use are described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 in the EA.

14. Comment: Watersheds are not monitored for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability at representative sites, but at cherry-picked, relatively pure vegetation communities. Some trend sites are biased and highly unrepresentative of that part of the allotment. Need to assess watersheds near drainages or steeper slopes, and areas of more intensive use.

BLM Response: Trend sites were specifically established at areas with perennial grasses present (if possible) so that changes in either direction (increase or decrease) could be detected. These and other monitoring sites (such as utilization or Rangeland Indicator sites) are all in areas accessible to livestock and representative of use in the allotment/pasture. Although some areas within an allotment will always be more heavily used than others (See EA Section 3.2.1.1 on Distribution of Use), multiple monitoring sites within an allotment provide a reasonably accurate representation of overall use.

15. Comment: The EA does not take into account recent drought effects, or 2012 wildfire, including the lack of restoration of burned lands. Or account for exceptional moisture years (like 2010) in its actual use since 2008.

BLM Response: Recent drought or high moisture years are all part of the range of variation expected, and permitted grazing management is designed to provide adequate resource protection under all but the most extreme cases, when site-specific adjustments are made. Grazing management has been adjusted as a result of the 2012 Con Shea Wildfire, with temporary pasture fences constructed allowing at least two growing seasons rest for the burned area in the Con Shea and Sinker Butte Allotments.

16. Comment: The proliferation of NEPA-less water haul sites is not discussed in the No Action alternative. There is no assessment of impacts from water haul sites on native biota, recreational and aesthetic values, flammable weeds, etc.

BLM Response: The effects from differing numbers of water haul sites, push pond maintenance, and levels of livestock distribution on the Fossil Butte Allotment are analyzed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.1.2 of the EA under Alternative B and in Cumulative Effects (EA Section 3.4).

17. Comment: Range readiness and grazing period info is incorrect; a large amount of grass growth occurs in moist fall-winter periods, and an end utilization of 20% may reflect 80-90% additive utilization on native grass species.

BLM Response: Range readiness criteria are designed for grazing systems where grazing begins in the spring, not fall/winter grazing. Therefore, range readiness criteria are not included in Alternative D for any allotment (EA Section 2.3.5). Fall and winter are the dormant season for most perennial grasses (See EA Section 3.1.1, Tables 3.3 and 3.4), although some fall growth occurs. Effects to plants of grazing on fall green-up are discussed in EA Section 3.2.2.1. The start date for Alternative D of the Fossil Butte Allotment (November 1) is designed to minimize effects from grazing on October fall green-up, compared to other alternatives (See EA Section 3.3.1.2.4.1).

18. Comment: Sage-grouse mapping needs to be redone to reflect nearby leks, remaining sagebrush habitats, and recovery of habitat. Seasonal closure signs for sage-grouse show that BLM should show the lands as sage-grouse habitat.

BLM Response: A map (Figure 3.2) depicting sage-grouse leks, sagebrush habitat, and habitat with high restoration potential within the Fossil Butte Group allotments can be found in EA Section 3.1.5. Sage-grouse and upland vegetation analyses specific to each allotment can be found in EA Section 3.3. Seasonal road closures within the Fossil Butte Group allotments do occur within designated sage-grouse habitat.

19. Comment: Additional information requested by WWP:

a. BLM mis-typed the SRBOP RMP requirement "limiting further loss of shrub habitat to no more than 30,000 acres of restored shrub habitat".
b. Need to show actual use by pasture, and annual production of cheatgrass under a variety of moisture regimes.
c. Provide the series of permits issued (1997, Ridered 2007, etc.) showing changes made, for Alternative B.
d. Provide data collected under Interim Terms and Conditions years and any other times.
e. Why use median rather than average actual use? Has BLM ever verified the stocking that ranchers report?
f. BLM fails to reveal areas where streams are no longer perennial and provide adequate protections for water quality. Maps for riparian areas are in odd, lurid colors, and do not show previous riparian and other site studies.

BLM Response:

a. The SRPOP RMP objective has been clarified (EA Section 1.8.2)
b. No numbers for actual use by pasture are available. See EA Section 2.3.3 (Alternative B) for actual use for each allotment. Annual production figures for cheatgrass are also not available. Utilization is the indicator used to determine whether the actual use is appropriate for the annual production (See response to WWP Comment #2).
c. Previous permits are available in the project record. This EA is analyzing condition since the latest permit, so only the terms of the most recent permit are shown in Alternative A. Alternative B is current management, which may differ from the current permit. See Section 2.3.1 Comparison of Alternatives.

d. All monitoring information available (including of Interim Terms and Conditions) was considered in the Determinations and EA. See the Data Sources table in each Determination (EA Appendix A) for types, dates, and location of monitoring information.
e. Median rather than average actual use was used because it is considered more representative of typical use and less influenced by abnormal, outlier years' figures. BLM monitors actual use compliance by occasionally field-checking turn-out and off dates and visual estimates of animal numbers.
f. Refer to sections 3.1.3, 3.3.3.1.3, of the EA for a description of the perennial streams, riparian areas, and connectivity with downstream water bodies associated with Sinker Creek and Fossil Creek. Sinker Creek flows subsurface just above its confluence with the Snake River and does not have a surface connection. Fossil Creek is dewatered by irrigation facilities prior to its confluence with the Snake River.

20. Comment: WWP is dismayed at the less than 15 day comment period, and requests an extension.

BLM Response: See BLM Response to ISDA Comment #1.

21. Comment: Withdrawal this EA and prepare a supplemental EIS to protect these and surrounding lands, including Silver City and other allotments. This EA violates FLPMA's consistency requirements, and fails to give priority to sensitive species and NCA values.

BLM Response: The effects of various past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were analyzed to determine the context and intensity of the accumulation of effects on this landscape. The alternatives proposed in this document are in compliance with the applicable land use plan objectives as described in Section 1.8.

22. Comment: All previous WWP comments and e-mails should be carried forward (i.e. 2011 scoping).

BLM Response: Comments received in 2011 were incorporated in the development of this EA. A matrix of the responses to the comments and how they were used in the EA is provided as Appendix B of the EA.

23. Comment: BLM refused WWP requests for Fossil Butte area site visits; only got a single day to tag along on FRH monitoring at trend sites.

BLM Response: IDT work on the current EA began in 2012, and no formal site visits were initiated until then. As noted, you were invited and attended a FRH monitoring in 2012.