



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Owyhee Field Office

20 First Avenue West

Marsing, Idaho 83639



In Reply Refer To: 4160

December 15, 2011

Dear Interested Public

Enclosed is the Owyhee Field Office's Scoping Document for Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-ID-B130-2012-0011-EA, "Livestock Trailing".

This Scoping Document is being made available for comment and review to the affected grazing permittees, interested publics, and other State and local governments of record for the document listed above. Written comments should be received at the office of the Authorized Officer by December 30, 2011. Comments need to be addressed to:

**Bureau of Land Management  
Peter Torma- Rangeland Management Specialist  
20 First Avenue West  
Marsing, Idaho 83639**

Comments sent electronically should be sent to Peter Torma Rangeland Management Specialist (ptorma@blm.gov) with the title of this project in the subject line.

Once the comment period has expired, BLM will compile, review, and consider all comments received regarding the livestock grazing management actions outlined in the Scoping Document. After consideration of the comments received, the EA will be finalized and an alternative will be selected. A Proposed Grazing Decision will then be issued along with the prescribed grazing management.

If you have any questions regarding this Scoping Document or any other issue(s) associated with this mailing, please contact Peter Torma, Rangeland Management Specialist at (208) 896-5916. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Loretta V. Chandler*

Loretta V. Chandler  
Field Manager

Enclosures:

-Scoping Document for Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-ID-B130-2012-0011-EA, "Livestock Trailing".

-Mailing List

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Boise District  
Owyhee Field Office  
20 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. West  
Marsing, ID 83639

**Scoping Information Package  
Owyhee Field Office  
Livestock Trailing Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-ID-B130-2012-0011-EA**

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to authorize the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Owyhee Field Office (OFO) in accordance with the 1999 Owyhee Resource Management Plan and 43 CFR 4130.6-3. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this document is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion in February 2012. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to help identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to assist in formulating alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the action.

**Purpose and Need for Action**

BLM is required, under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Taylor Grazing Act to respond to requests for livestock trailing/crossing across BLM-administered lands. In many instances, livestock producers must move their livestock across BLM-administered lands to facilitate proper grazing management of BLM grazing allotments as well as to facilitate movements of livestock to and from private, State, or other federally administered lands.

The purpose of the action is to respond to applications for Crossing Permits by identifying areas and terms and conditions for authorizing trailing of livestock across BLM-administered public lands. Authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM-administered lands, while considering the needs of other resources, is in accordance with 43 CFR 4130 and 4160, and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

## **Existing Condition**

The Owyhee Field Office is divided into 154 grazing allotments on approximately 1,320,000 acres of BLM administered lands. Livestock grazing use occurs within the Owyhee Field Office year round. Generally, the lower elevation rangeland in the northern third of the field office is grazed in the fall, winter, and spring. The higher elevation in the middle third is grazed in the spring, summer, and fall, and the high elevations in the southern third are grazed primarily in the summer and fall. Trailing of cattle and sheep occurs at different times throughout the year to facilitate these general seasons of grazing use. Furthermore, timing of trailing events may vary annually based on factors such as forage production, drought, resource conditions, weather, wildfire, court decisions, and individual livestock operations. Trailing events across BLM administered lands within the Owyhee Field Office range in distance from less than 1 mile to approximately 25 miles, and in duration from less than 1 hour to 6 days.

Grazing permittees or other livestock producers needing to trail livestock across BLM administered lands submit their requests prior to the proposed trailing event.

## **Proposed Action**

The BLM proposes to issue Crossing Permits to qualified applicants authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Owyhee Field Office for 3 years. Livestock trailing would be authorized within 1/8 mile (approx. 660 ft) on either side (total width 1/4 mile) of the proposed trailing routes (Maps 1 and 2). The numbers, class of livestock, dates, and duration identified for each trailing route (available as of December 7, 2011) are summarized in the attached table. Grazing permittees or other livestock producers needing to trail livestock across BLM administered lands would be required to submit an application far enough in advance of their need to allow BLM time to respond to the trailing request. For the 2012 grazing season, the Owyhee Field Office has received 20 applications to date. The Field Manager would consider each application, and determine whether or not to authorize the trailing of livestock.

Each Crossing Permit would outline the allotment(s) to be trailed across, the period of use (dates), the number and kind of livestock, and the total amount of forage anticipated to be removed (Animal Unit Months or AUMs; the amount of forage utilized by a cow and calf within a month). Additionally, terms and conditions specific to each trailing event would be identified, including the trail route, minimum distance of travel per day, and over-night areas. Further, the authorization may also include avoidance areas (special status species habitat, recently burned areas, vegetation projects, perennial streams, etc.), when appropriate, based on resource concerns.

## **Preliminary Issues**

The Owyhee Field Office Interdisciplinary Team has identified the following issues through internal scoping:

- Native Plant Community Health – Potential effects of livestock trailing to native plant community conditions requires proper management of timing, duration, and intensity of livestock utilization.
- Special Status Plants – Potential impacts to special status plants and their habitat.
- Sage-grouse – Potential impacts to sage-grouse during breeding and nesting periods.
- Migratory Birds – Potential impacts to migratory birds during nesting periods.
- Bighorn Sheep – Potential impacts from domestic sheep trailing through or near bighorn sheep habitat.
- Big Game – Potential impacts during wintering periods.
- Soils – Potential impacts to soils in areas recently burned by wildfire and soil compaction when soils are saturated.
- Vegetation Treatments – Potential impacts to recent vegetation treatments.
- Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants – Potential spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants.
- Cultural Resources – Potential impacts to historic trails, archaeological sites and other culturally sensitive locations.

## **Preliminary Alternative Development**

The following alternatives will be analyzed.

### No Action

Crossing Permits would not be issued to authorize the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Owyhee Field Office.

### BLM Alternative

The BLM would issue 3 year Crossing Permits to qualified applicants authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM-administered lands in the OFO generally as described in the Proposed Action; however, trailing routes, use periods, and methods may be modified to adhere to the following design criteria to minimize adverse resource impacts. Livestock trailing would also be authorized on additional routes subject to staying on existing BLM or County roads north of the Mud Flat Scenic Byway.

Proposed measures to minimize impacts from the trailing of livestock (sheep or cattle) include, but are not limited to:

- General limitation
  - Livestock trailing routes would be limited to 1/8 mile on either side of existing BLM roads to protect resources within the field office. These resources would include pygmy rabbit habitat, key sage grouse habitat, amphibian breeding sites, occupied Redband Trout streams, crucial big game habitat, occupied special status plants, ACEC's sensitive or federally listed threatened or endangered invertebrates, native plant communities unless otherwise authorized in this EA.
  
- Wildlife Limitations
  - Areas known to be occupied by resident populations of bighorn sheep would be excluded from trailing of domestic sheep in order to minimize risk of disease transmission to bighorn sheep. In areas known to contain bighorn sheep source habitat, domestic sheep trailing will be conducted as quickly and tightly as possible in order to minimize possible contact between bighorn and domestic sheep. Separation response plans in effect further minimize potential effects of contact.
  - Areas used for staging vehicles, horse trailers, fence panels, etc. would be limited to previously disturbed sites such as areas around stock ponds, troughs, or existing vehicular routes.
  
- Wildlife Timing Limitations
  - From March 1 to May 15, livestock trailing would be routed at least 1.0 km or .62 miles from occupied sage-grouse leks on existing roads. If this is not feasible, trailing events would be timed to occur between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm.
  - From March 1 to May 15, bedding of sheep would not be authorized within one mile of occupied sage-grouse leks between 6:00 pm and 9:00 am.
  - From March 1 to May 15, livestock and sheep over-night areas would be located at least one mile from occupied sage-grouse leks.
  - From April 1 to June 15, temporary water troughs would be limited to existing stock ponds, permanent troughs, or existing vehicular routes.
  - From April 1 to June 15, sheep bedding areas, sheep camps, or cattle over-night areas would not be authorized in key sage-grouse habitat unless they are within 0.25 mile of existing stock ponds, troughs, or vehicular routes.
  - From February 1 to July 31, livestock trailing would be routed at least 1 mile from known raptor nesting locations on existing roads.
  
- Vegetation Limitations
  - Trailing routes would avoid areas recently burned by wildfire for 2 years following a fire.
  - Trailing routes would avoid recent vegetation treatments (Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation, fuels reduction, or restoration treatments) for 2 years following the treatment.
  - Avoid trailing through OFO high priority noxious weed (knapweeds, leafy spurge, perennial pepperweed, rush skeletonweed, and yellow starthistle) infestations.

- Riparian Limitations
  - Bedding or over-night areas would be at least 0.25 miles from riparian areas.
  - Temporary water facilities would be placed at least 0.25 miles from riparian areas.
- Cultural Limitations
  - Livestock trailing would be routed at least 0.25 miles from canyon rims and 100 meters from perennial streams to minimize impacts to cultural resources. Canyon and stream crossings would be restricted to pre-determined locations.
  - Livestock trailing would be routed to avoid playas.
  - Livestock trailing would be routed at least 0.25 miles from the Oregon National Historic Trail whenever practical. Crossing of the historic trail would be restricted to pre-determined locations.
- Soils Limitations
  - Trailing would not be authorized during times when soils are saturated to minimize impacts to soils.
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Limitations
  - Trailing within wild and scenic river corridors would be avoided.
- Travel Management and Off Highway Vehicles
  - Motorized vehicles will remain on existing vehicle routes. Cross country use of motorized vehicles will not be authorized.

## **Decision to be Made**

The BLM will decide whether to issue Crossing Permits authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Owyhee Field Office. If crossing permits are authorized, the Field Manager will also decide whether to include specific terms and conditions as part of the authorization.

## **Scoping Comments**

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, preliminary alternatives, trailing routes identified for the Proposed Action and trailing routes on existing BLM roads (see attached map). Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received on or before December 30, 2011 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA.

Written comments must be submitted to Loretta Chandler, Owyhee Field Manager, 20 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West, Marsing, ID 83639. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to ptorma@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project “Livestock Trailing EA” in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed in the Owyhee Field Office Livestock Trailing EA.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Peter Torma, Rangeland Management Specialist, 20 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West, Marsing, ID 83639, 208-896-5916.

Attachments:

Maps 1 Owyhee Field Office Proposed trailing

Maps 2 Owyhee Field Office Proposed trailing-  
Tabel explaining routes