00196 McPherson Individual Allotment

DETERMINATION DOCUMENT

SECTION 1

___ All applicable Standards are met or making significant progress towards meeting and there is conformance with the guidelines. (No Determination is required, review is complete)

_X_ One or more Standards are not being met or there is non-conformance with the guidelines. (An Authorized Officer's Determination is required, complete Section 2)

SECTION 2

1. Documentation of causal factors *(other than livestock grazing)*.

The 1997 Little Gulch Fire burned 182 acres (77%) of BLM-administered land and the 2010 Big Fire re-burned 83 of those acres (36% of BLM-administered land). As a result, a mosaic of Wyoming big sagebrush communities with understories comprised primarily of cheatgrass interspersed with cheatgrass communities (lacking shrubs) now occupy the allotment. Perennial grasses and forbs as well as bitterbrush and rabbitbrush are also scattered among Wyoming big sagebrush communities.

Standard 4 is not being met on 131 acres of remaining Wyoming big sagebrush communities due to shifts from native perennial grasses and forbs to exotic annual grass dominated understories. Understories have largely been converted to cheatgrass with varying densities of native perennial bunchgrasses (e.g., Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, and purple threeawn) remaining. In turn, Standard 8 is not being met due to the degraded state of slickspot peppergrass habitat – which includes occupied/proposed critical habitat – where exotic annual grass and forbs now dominate plant communities.

2a. Is it more likely than not that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use are significant factors in failing to achieve the Standards or conform to the guidelines? *(YES/NO) Provide rationale.*

No. The current permit authorizes 20 head of cattle to graze annually from April 11 to May 31 with a 34 animal unit month (AUM) preference. The stocking rate is 7 acres per AUM and the allotment is used in spring each year, but overall use of remnant perennial grasses appears light. Perennial grasses also appear relatively vigorous where they are persisting in shrub communities and beyond. Light utilization (≤40%) during the critical growing period for perennial grasses generally allows for adequate regrowth, carbohydrate storage, and reproduction of these grasses.

2b. Is there conformance with Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management? *(YES/NO) if not list the guidelines that are not in conformance and provide evidence)*

Yes.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION

Check Box 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6	**Standards**							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) Meeting the Standard	X					X		
2) Not Meeting the Standard, but **making significant progress** toward meeting								
3) Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices **are not** significant factors				X				X
4) Not meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices **are** a significant factor								
5) Not meeting the Standard, cause not determined								
6) Standard does not apply		X	X		X			

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing	
Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management	Yes
If no, list guidelines not in conformance:	

/s/ Terry A Humphrey 6/1/2012

Authorized Officer: Terry A. Humphrey **Date**

Four Rivers Field Manager