

Jump, Succor, & Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewals Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Report

Scoping Report

BLM-ID-NEPA Permit Renewal Team

10/1/2012



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Introduction

This report documents the public scoping process of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Owyhee Field Office's Jump, Succor, and Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Scoping Report includes a description of the scoping process, a description of the scoping meeting(s), a summary of the comments submitted by the public, and an overview of the issues identified through all scoping comments.

The purpose of scoping is to identify issues important to the management of public lands and resources. These issues will guide development of alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS and will also guide the analysis of environmental consequences displayed in the EIS. The scoping process also provides an opportunity to inform the general public about the management of public lands and for BLM to gauge the concerns of those who have a stake in the resources of the area.

The BLM Owyhee Field Office is located in southwestern Idaho (see Figure 1). The Owyhee Field Office includes approximately 1,320,000 acres of BLM-administered public lands in western Owyhee County, Idaho. The area includes the communities of Marsing, Homedale, Murphy, Givens Hot Springs, Reynolds, Silver City, and rural outskirts of Jordan Valley, Oregon. The Owyhee Field Office manages a broad spectrum of land uses and allocations, including livestock grazing management, wild horse management, off-highway motorized vehicle, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), and the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Area.

The Jump, Succor, & Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project area is within the Owyhee Field Office. Within the project area, the BLM administers approximately 120,000 acres of public land. These lands include 25 grazing allotments with 15 term grazing permits and approximately 12,113 AUMs¹ of active permitted use. The EIS will analyze renewal of these term grazing permits; these allotments are referred to as the Group 2 Allotments. The EIS is being prepared at this time to comply with the Federal District Court of Idaho's May 15, 2008, Stipulated Settlement Agreement (SSA) in which the BLM agreed to complete grazing permit renewals associated with 75 grazing allotments in the Owyhee Field Office by the end of 2013. In accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, BLM is assessing current livestock grazing management practices to ensure conformance with 43 CFR 4180.2 – Standards and guidelines for grazing administration, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), before renewing term grazing permits.

¹ USDI BLM. "Owyhee Resource Management Plan." Boise, ID, 1999a.

Figure 1: BLM Owyhee Field Office Planning Area – Group 2 Allotments



EIS Planning Schedule

The process for completing the Jump, Succor, and Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal EIS began with the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register on January 9, 2012. The process continues through scoping, development of alternatives, and the development of a Draft EIS and Final EIS, as identified below in Table 1.

Table 1: Jump, Succor, and Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal EIS Schedule

Projected Dates ¹	Tasks
January 9 – March 9, 2012	NOI was published on January 9, 2012. Scoping period ended on March 9.
February 23, 2012	EIS Scoping Meeting – Open House
May 10 – May 31, 2012	Cooperating Agencies submit additional technical studies (monitoring and/or surveys).
October 12, 2012	BLM publishes Group 2 Scoping Report.
November 9 – December 10, 2012	BLM/Cooperating Agency DEIS internal reviews (30-days)
February 8, 2013	Publish NOA.
February 8 – March 27, 2013	BLM publishes DEIS (45 day comment period)
May 10 – June 10, 2013	BLM review of FEIS (30-day review) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperating Agency review (needed only if significant changes are made in response to DEIS comments)
July 15, 2013	Publish NOA.
July 15 – August 13, 2013	BLM publish FEIS (30 day waiting period).

Projected Dates ¹	Tasks
	BLM issues Proposed Decisions (43 CFR 4160, 15 day protest period).
August 14 – September 6, 2013	BLM addresses protests and completes ROD rewrites.
October 4 – November 4, 2013	BLM issues ROD (30-day appeal).

¹These dates are subject to change due to unplanned internal and external circumstances.

Scoping Process

Scoping is the process required by NEPA in the early stages of developing an EIS to determine the scope and significance of issues related to a proposed action. Knowing the scope and the significance of issues allows for an accurate and timely environmental analysis. In addition, scoping helps identify issues important to the management of the area, as well as which issues warrant consideration throughout the EIS process. The scoping process is designed to encourage public participation and to solicit public input early in the EIS process to ensure that all issues are brought to the table.

The BLM Owyhee Field Office initiated the scoping process for this effort on January 9, 2012, when the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register. The NOI included a call for resource information and the identification of issues for this project planning effort. The scoping period closed on March 9, 2012. However, some relevant comments were submitted after the end of the scoping period. Comments submitted after March 9, 2012, are addressed in this report and will be considered during the development of the EIS. A copy of the NOI can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 2: EIS Planning Process



Cooperation, Collaboration, and Consultation

Throughout the development of the EIS, the BLM will be working with other public agencies and Native American Tribes to acquire relevant information for use in the descriptions of the affected environment and issues and in the impact analyses. These interactions will also serve to keep these stakeholders

apprised, through regular contact, of the progress made toward completion of the EIS and any issues that arise throughout the process.

Cooperating Agencies

The BLM invited the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to serve as cooperating agencies for the Group 2 livestock permit renewal process. This status provides opportunities for the BLM to coordinate with each agency to collect and share information that will inform the Group 2 EIS. Of the agencies mentioned above, only the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declined to participate as a cooperating agency. The BLM holds monthly conference calls with designated representatives from NRCS, IDL, and IDFG to discuss the EIS and related issues.

In addition, although the Owyhee County Commissioners and the Idaho and Owyhee Cattlemen's Associations do not participate in formal cooperator meetings, the BLM meets with these groups on a regular basis as well.

Collaboration and Consultation with Tribes

The BLM works closely with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes through the Wings & Roots Program, part of the Native American Campfire, to acquire information about Tribal sacred and other important sites, as well as to gain an understanding of how BLM management decisions might affect the Tribes. BLM representatives attend regular Wings and Roots meetings to engage Tribal leaders in the EIS development process.

Scoping Meetings

During the scoping period, BLM officials made presentations to the Owyhee County Commissioners, grazing permittees, and other interested parties. In addition, interested individuals and organizations, affected Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as affected Indian Tribes were invited to submit comments to the BLM. The official 30-day scoping period began on January 9, 2012, with the publication of the Notice of Intent. Although the official scoping period ended March 9, 2012, the BLM will consider issues brought forward any time during the EIS planning process.

One public scoping meeting was held from 5:30 PM until 8:30 PM on February 23, 2012, in Marsing, Idaho, with the public arriving and departing at their leisure. The Public Scoping Meeting Notice (Appendix A) announcing the scoping meeting was sent to the Argus Observer in Ontario, Oregon, the Malheur Enterprise in Vale, Oregon, and the Owyhee Avalanche in Homedale, Idaho. The scoping notice was also posted on the Idaho State BLM website at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/newsroom/2012/january/open_house_will_discuss.html. During the scoping meeting, six people registered their attendance on the sign-in sheet (Appendix B) and took the opportunity to interact and ask questions about the project and EIS process.

The public scoping meeting was structured in an open-house format, with various information tables/stations representing known multiple uses and resources such as rangeland management/livestock grazing, recreation, transmission lines, domestic sheep grazing, bighorn sheep, sage-grouse, and other resources. BLM specialists stood at the resource stations and were available to interact with the public and answer questions in a casual environment. An informational handout (Appendix D) was available at the meeting, and attendees had the opportunity to submit written comments on a provided form (Appendix E) and received instructions on how to submit comments by mail, email, web, or fax. The

Group 2 scoping website (http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal0.html) also provides information about the EIS process and how to submit comments. All attendees were informed that only written, not verbal, comments would be considered. No written comments were received during the scoping meeting.

Written Scoping Comments

Written scoping comments were accepted via mail, email, and fax. A total of 9 responses were received between January 9 and March 9, 2012. A response is defined as one letter, email, or fax and each person could submit more than one response. Because some responses had more than one comment, the total number of comments received is greater than the number of respondents who submitted comments. Table 2 below shows the breakdown of how comments were received at the Owyhee FO. It includes only each original response; WWP submitted some of the same comments via both mail and email, which are counted only once, as mail responses, in the table.

Written comments were received from Western Watersheds Project (WWP), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Region 10 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Baltzor Cattle Company, and Owyhee County Commissioners.

Method of Submittal

Table 2: Method of comment submittal

Method of submittal	Responses received
Mail/Fax	6
Email	3
Scoping Meeting	0
Total responses	9

Comment Summaries

All of the written responses were reviewed and considered. Half of the comments received regarded sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. These comments expressed a desire for additional protection of sagebrush habitats in order to increase sage-grouse populations, and some comments focused on minimizing and/or eliminating livestock grazing on public lands where sage-grouse habitats exist. Other comments were more general in nature and were primarily associated with overall multiple uses within the project area, the EIS process and cumulative impacts analysis, livestock trailing/crossing authorizations, domestic sheep grazing, future range improvements, vegetation treatments (juniper management), and water quality in the project area.

Alternative Development

Many comments focused on the development of alternatives and the need for a set of site-specific required actions within each alternative that “chart a rapid, decisive and clear path forward to ensure protection and restoration (where necessary) of critically important sagebrush wildland habitats.”

Tribal/Religious

One comment received regarding cultural resources recommended that the EIS should include a description of the process and outcome of government-to-government consultation between the BLM and the Tribal governments, any issues that were raised, and how those issues were resolved.

Fire Management

A comment regarding underburning, which was not mentioned in the NOI, noted that if the BLM decided to pursue underburning as a management tool in the action alternatives, the EIS should carefully analyze the potential synergistic effects of cattle grazing and repeat burning. The EIS should also analyze the potential impacts associated with livestock grazing following a prescribed burn and include an alternative that maximizes the opportunity for pastures to recover and reestablish following a prescribed burn. Comments also recommended coordination among the Fuels Specialist, Rangeland Specialist, and permittee to plan and schedule burning activities with consideration of understory vegetation and grazing.

Rangeland Management and Livestock Grazing

Many comments suggested that the BLM remove livestock grazing completely from sensitive areas, limit grazing in other areas to levels below current actual use, and avoid grazing in areas during sensitive periods of the year. These actions in both riparian and upland areas would improve recovery of grazed lands and prevent further degradation. Specifically, some comments offered more specific suggestions like:

- A stubble height of 9 inches in residual native grass cover in understory communities
- Only one grazing disturbance in a grazing season – no double-dipping or repeated use
- Average utilization levels of 10 to 15 percent in upland areas
- No use of native grasses and forbs during active growing periods
- A stubble height of at least 6 inches on all riparian/meadow herbaceous species at all times
- No more than 5 percent breakage or other impacts of sagebrush plants or shrubs, and the BLM should implement shrub protection standards
- Reduce fragmentation of habitats
- After a wildfire:
 - Remove livestock for 7 to 10 years
 - Reseed with native species using natural spacing patterns
 - Do not build fences
- All standards should be used as triggers to immediately remove livestock from the pasture or drastically reduce livestock numbers if they are exceeded during the grazing season. If the triggers are exceeded in multiple years, livestock grazing should be ended in that pasture.
- If, during an inventory of pasture lands and associated values, areas of high ecological value and low grazing value are identified, BLM should consider closing that part of the allotment or reallocating forage as a grassbank.
- Using reserve forage allotments as a management tool. These reserve allotments would not be allocated to one specific permittee, but rather would be used on a temporary, non-renewable basis to allow for rangeland restoration and recovery. This recommendation also suggests that overarching guidelines for use of reserve forage allotments (e.g., not being used in cases of drought or overuse of another allotment) and that ecological thresholds be specified in the EIS.

Domestic Sheep Grazing

Comments regarding domestic sheep grazing focused on a recommendation to completely end it due to the risk of transmitting diseases from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep. One of the Group 2 permittees has authorization to graze domestic sheep in an allotment located within known bighorn sheep habitat, which could potentially increase the risk of disease transmittal.

Riparian Management (including Water Quality)

Some comments suggested that the BLM should consider revising stocking rates, where necessary, in order to meet desired conditions for stream shade, bank stability, and width-to-depth ratio. The BLM should also include indicators that will be used to determine the success of these management measures and thresholds that would be used to trigger adaptive management.

Special Management Areas (ACECs and RNAs)

Some comments expressed concern with the levels of degradation perceived in the Group 2 allotments; these comments recommended the establishment of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in order to address low sage-grouse populations and the expansion of medusahead, an invasive plant. The ACEC recommendation includes justification for why the commenters believe the ACEC is necessary and a description of the anticipated impacts the ACEC designation would have on the resources within the Group 2 allotments.

Vegetation

Specific comments regarding vegetation include a request to include in the EIS maps of native and rare plant locations and how these sites will be managed to protect native and rare plants. BLM should also consider incorporating restoration of native plant communities and cryptogamic crusts into the proposed action.

Wilderness

Some comments expressed the need for BLM to conduct a new Wilderness Study Area inventory to protect lands from additional roading or road upgrade intrusion into unroaded or little-roaded lands.

Wildlife and Fisheries

Comments noted that the EIS should describe the current quality and potential capacity of habitat and its use by fish and wildlife on and near grazing areas, and should identify known fish and wildlife corridors, migration routes, and areas of seasonal fish and wildlife congregation. If fish and wildlife, aquatic, and terrestrial habitats will be significantly impacted as a result of the proposed action, the EIS should include mitigation measures to minimize the impacts.

Sage-grouse

There were many comments regarding the need to protect and restore sage-grouse habitat within the Group 2 allotments. Many of these comments centered on passive restoration, in which ecosystem components are allowed to recover through the removal of disturbances and degrading activities; other comments suggested active restoration through weed and invasive plant control, adjustment of fire cycles

to more historic return intervals, juniper removal, seeding of native plants, and removal of harmful developments like fences and water troughs.

Other comments addressed grazing within sage-grouse habitat. Specifically, some comments recommended that no grazing be allowed in sage-grouse habitat from March 1 through June 20, during greater sage-grouse lekking and nesting. Comments also suggested that grazing should not be allowed in sage-grouse habitat in the winter. Other comments regarding grazing in sage-grouse habitat included a recommendation to analyze: a) the potential impacts to sage-grouse food and cover and interactions between livestock and sage-grouse (at the community and landscape levels), b) spatial and temporal heterogeneity of the landscape and how it affects abundance and grazing distribution, and c) the influence of topography, size and shape of pastures, and distribution of salt and water on grazing distribution.

Some comments express concerns about the modeling of core and other sage-grouse habitat, a National Technical Team report regarding sage-grouse habitat management, other agency actions taken to address sage-grouse habitat mapping, and the BLM decision-making process regarding sage-grouse issues. Comments question the quality of data and the adequacy of the model used for habitat mapping, as well as the approach the agency has taken in land use planning throughout the region that affects sensitive wildlife species. They also express concerns that the BLM may be downplaying the impacts of livestock grazing on key sage-grouse habitat, that the BLM may be willing to sacrifice some sage-grouse populations in favor of other development, and that habitat fragmentation may occur on a regular basis.

General Comments and Other Resource Concerns

Comments categorized as *general* or *other resource concerns* include those that either did not address a specific resource or addressed the EIS process. One letter noted that the writer did not plan to submit any comments because as a permittee, he believes he is exempt from the NOI process. General comments included:

- A belief that the NOI announcement in local media outlets was not sufficient.
- Requests for the BLM to halt all livestock grazing on federal land and allow cattle ranchers to graze on private land only.
- Recommendations for the BLM to examine all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of livestock grazing, as well as to develop and analyze the environmental effects of a no-grazing alternative.
- A recommendation for the BLM to undertake an environmental inspection and mitigation monitoring program, which should be described in the EIS.
- A recommendation to expand the scope of the EIS beyond livestock grazing to include all activities the BLM might approve on federal lands in the allotments, such as fences, water developments, and vegetation management.
- A recommendation for the BLM to determine the existing condition of the pastures, including an inventory of facilities, issues, and opportunities, as a primary step in the development of the EIS. The commenter also noted that this inventory should include a description/classification of the areas proposed for grazing, in terms of their social and ecological value and their value for grazing use.
- A request for the BLM to apply the same protective standards for sage-grouse habitat to all EIS analyses and maintain consistency across projects within the agency.
- A concern that the way the BLM is handling crossing permits may invite litigation, which would impact the development of the Group 2 EIS, among other actions taken by the agency. Litigation and/or the slow pace of crossing permit completion would negatively impact the ranchers in Owyhee County, who would not be able to conduct regular livestock grazing activities without

crossing permits. These comments also offer draft language that would clarify crossing/trailing permit regulations to specify when a crossing permit would be required.

- A recommendation to fully analyze the cumulative effects of grazing and other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions within the defined area and identify the actions that could minimize these effects.

Conclusion

As noted above, although the formal scoping period concluded in March 2012, the BLM is still accepting comments from the public regarding Group 2 livestock grazing permit renewals; all substantive, relevant comments submitted in writing will be considered during the development of the EIS. Comments can be submitted via letter, which can be faxed to (208) 373-3805, mailed to 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise ID 83709, attn: Jake Vialpando, or emailed to (NPR_EIS@blm.gov). The BLM anticipates releasing the draft EIS in late January or February 2013, after which the public will have 45 days to review the document and submit comments. More information is available on the Group 2 scoping website http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal0.html.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scoping Meeting Press Release

[Website](#) / [Facebook](#) / [YouTube](#) / [Twitter](#) / [RSS](#)



BLM News Release

U.S. Department of the Interior ▼ Bureau of Land Management

Boise District Office / 3948 Development Avenue / Boise, ID 83705 / 208-384-3300

For Immediate Release:
January 26, 2012

Contacts: MJ Byrne, (208) 384-3393
cell (208) 871-1992
Jake Vialpando (208) 373-3814

Open House will Discuss Environmental Impact Statement on Grazing Permit Renewal and Seek Public Comment on Issues

BOISE, ID - The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Owyhee Field Office will host an informational public open house to help identify the issues to be addressed in an environmental impact statement (EIS) for renewal of 15 grazing permits on public lands in western Owyhee County, Idaho.

The open house will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2012, at the American Legion Hall, 126 N. Bruneau Highway, Marsing, Idaho 83639.

The BLM will analyze the potential effects of renewing livestock grazing permits in the Jump Creek, Succor Creek and Cow Creek watersheds.

Some of the issues to be addressed in the EIS will include the effects of grazing where sage-grouse habitat exists and where potential domestic and bighorn sheep interaction may occur. In addition to livestock grazing, a variety of other multiple uses exist in the project area, including recreation, travel planning, wild horse management and electrical transmission line development. The planning area, located in Owyhee County, encompasses about 120,000 acres of public land.

“We are extending the comment period on the scope of the EIS to March 9, 2012, which is 15 days after this public meeting,” said BLM Boise District Manager Aden Seidlitz. “The BLM values public input and involvement for making sound decisions on proposed actions during the development of an EIS.”

In addition to commenting at the open house, comments may also be submitted in writing by any of the following methods:

- online: http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group.html
- email: NPR_EIS@blm.gov
- fax: (208) 373-3805
- mail: 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709, Attention: Jake Vialpando, Project Manager

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware 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 your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For more information, please contact Project Manager Jake Vialpando at (208) 373-3814.

The BLM manages more land - over 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

--BLM--

updates to constituents, and a **Federal Register** notice (75 FR 39702; July 12, 2010). The Draft CCP/EA identified and evaluated three alternatives for managing the Refuge for the next 15 years.

Under Alternative A (No Action), management would continue unchanged. Under Alternative B, the Service would develop an inventory and monitoring program; expand tidal restoration and enhancement activities for the benefit of migratory birds, endangered species, and other native wildlife; improve and expand visitor services by developing new public access locations; develop shoreline fishing locations; and provide some additional environmental education programs. Alternative C, which was identified as the preferred alternative, would include all actions in Alternative B, and would also emphasize wildlife management by studying population health and developing population goals for wildlife; provide greater interpretive opportunities; and substantially expand the environmental education program.

We received seven letters on the Draft CCP and EA during the review and comment period. Comments focused upon cultural resources, habitat management and restoration, invasive plants, public access, and mosquito management. We incorporated comments we received into the CCP when appropriate, and we responded to the comments in an appendix to the CCP. In the FONSI, we selected Alternative C for implementation. The FONSI documents our decision and is based on the information and analysis contained in the EA.

Under the selected alternative, the Service will expand both natural resource management and visitor services opportunities on the Refuge. An inventory and monitoring program will be developed, as well as wildlife population goals. In addition to expanded tidal restoration and enhancement activities, additional habitat management activities include improving hydrological connectivity of tidal marsh habitats. Priorities will also be developed for the conservation and restoration of sub-tidal habitat. Visitor service opportunities will be expanded considerably with interpretation and environmental education opportunities. In addition, wildlife observation and fishing programs will be improved and/or expanded.

The selected alternative best meets the Refuges' purposes, vision and goals; contributes to the Refuge System mission; addresses the significant issues and relevant mandates; and is consistent with principles of sound fish and

wildlife management. Based on the associated environmental assessment, this alternative is not expected to result in significant environmental impacts and therefore does not require an environmental impact statement.

Alexandra Pitts,

Acting Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California.

[FR Doc. 2012-130 Filed 1-6-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[LLID9310000.L1020000.EE0000.
LXSSD0010000]

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement To Address Grazing Permit Renewals in the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, and Cow Creek Watersheds in the Owyhee Field Office of the Boise District, ID

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (NEPA), as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Owyhee Field Office in Marsing, Idaho intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS), and by this notice, is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

DATES: This notice initiates the public scoping process for the EIS. We request that comments should be submitted within 30 days of the date of publication of this notice. The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meeting(s) will be announced at least 15 days in advance through local media and the BLM Web site, <http://www.blm.gov/id>. In order to be considered in the draft EIS, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments and issues related to the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, and Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal EIS by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group.html.
- *Email:* NPR_EIS@blm.gov.
- *Fax:* (208) 373-3805.
- *Mail:* Bureau of Land Management, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise ID 83709,

Attention: Jake Vialpando, Project Manager.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Owyhee Field Office; the BLM Boise District Office, 3948 Development Ave., Boise ID 83705; and the BLM Idaho State Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise ID 83709.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact Jake Vialpando, Project Manager, telephone (208) 373-3814, [email jvialpando@blm.gov](mailto:jvialpando@blm.gov).

Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1 (800) 877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This document provides notice that the BLM Owyhee Field Office in Marsing, Idaho, intends to prepare an EIS to address grazing permit renewal requests in the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, and Cow Creek areas, and announces the beginning of the scoping process. The area covered by the permit renewal requests is located in Owyhee County, Idaho, and encompasses approximately 120,000 acres of public land. The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the EIS, including the alternatives. The agency seeks public input to identify issues related to grazing permit renewals that have been proposed for those areas. Preliminary issues have been identified by BLM personnel; Federal, State, and local agencies; and other stakeholders. Some key issues that have already been identified involve the effects of livestock grazing on Greater sage-grouse and its habitat, as well as the potential for disease transmission between domestic and bighorn sheep. In addition to livestock grazing, a variety of other multiple uses exist within this area, including: year-long recreation activities, particularly hiking, boating, fishing, hunting, and off-road vehicle use; wild horse management; potential wind energy development and electrical transmission line development.

The Owyhee Field Office will consult with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes and other parties, as applicable, on this action during regular consultation proceedings and briefings. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with other stakeholders that may be interested or affected by the BLM's decision on this project are invited to

participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate as a cooperating agency. The BLM will also brief county commissioners, Congressional delegations and grazing permittees during the EIS process.

You may submit comments on issues and planning criteria in writing to the BLM using one of the methods listed in the **ADDRESSES** section above. To be most helpful, please submit comments by the close of the 30-day scoping period or within 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The public is also encouraged to help identify any other management questions and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS.

The BLM will use an interdisciplinary approach to develop the EIS in order to consider the variety of resource issues and concerns identified. Specialists with expertise in the following disciplines will be involved in the NEPA process: Range management, wildlife biology, archaeology, riparian, soils, and outdoor recreation.

Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7, 43 CFR 1610.2.

Loretta Chandler,

Field Manager, BLM Owyhee Field Office.

[FR Doc. 2012-125 Filed 1-6-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-GG-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[LLNML00000

L51100000.GN0000.LVEMG11CG230]

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Copper Flat Mine Plan of Operations, Sierra County, NM

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Cruces

District Office, Las Cruces, New Mexico, intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and by this notice is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

DATES: This notice initiates the public scoping process for the EIS. Comments on issues may be submitted in writing until February 8, 2012. The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance through local media, newspapers and the BLM Web site at: http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Las_Cruces_District_Office.html. To be included in the Draft EIS, all comments must be received prior to the close of the scoping period or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. We will provide additional opportunities for public participation upon publication of the Draft EIS.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the Copper Flat EIS Project by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* dhaywood@blm.gov.
- *Fax:* (575) 525-4412.
- *Mail:* BLM Las Cruces District Office, 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, NM 88005.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Las Cruces District Office.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Michael Smith, Geologist; telephone (575) 525-4421; address 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, NM 88005 or by email michaelsmith@blm.gov and to have your name added to the mailing list. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-(800) 877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM Las Cruces District Office has received a Mine Plan of Operations (Mine Plan) from the New Mexico Copper Corp. to re-start the Copper Flat Mine located in Sierra County, New Mexico. The proposed mine is located approximately 4 miles north-northeast of the town of Hillsboro, New Mexico. Lands involved in the mine include parts of the following sections:

New Mexico Principal Meridian

T. 15 S., R. 6 W.,
Sec. 31.

T. 15 S., R. 7 W.,
Secs. 25, 26, 35 and 36.

Mining, ore processing, and related activities would occur on both private land and public domain administered by the BLM. The proponent currently holds active mining claims over public domain land included in the proposed operation. The estimated project duration is 27 years from site construction to mine reclamation and closure. Mining at the existing open pit would be completed using standard multiple-bench methods. The pit would eventually widen to approximately 2,500 by 2,500 feet and deepen to 900 feet. Ore from the pit would be drilled, blasted, loaded and hauled to a planned processing facility immediately east of the pit. At this facility, the ore would be crushed and ground and copper and molybdenum minerals would be separated and concentrated using standard flotation techniques. Mineral concentrates would be transported by truck and rail to be processed offsite; onsite smelting or refining is not included in this proposal. Waste rock created during operations would be banked primarily on public domain land, and tailings would be disposed of into an expanded, existing tailings impoundment. Water for the proposed operation would be obtained from a well field located on BLM-administered land approximately 8 miles east of the mine in:

New Mexico Principal Meridian

T. 15 S., R. 5 W.,
Secs. 30 and 31.

Water would be piped to the proposed operation through an existing pipeline which roughly parallels the existing highway (New Mexico State Route 152). The total estimated disturbance on public domain land would be 745 acres. Reclamation would consist of removing processing equipment from Federal land, and restoring and seeding waste rock dumps and other disturbed areas. The BLM and the New Mexico Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources would bond the proponent for site reclamation prior to granting authorization.

The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the process for developing the EIS. At present, the BLM has identified the following preliminary issues:

1. Water use and effects on surface and subsurface hydrology;
2. Water quality effects and water quality protection;
3. Traffic;
4. Cultural Resources and Native American Religious Concerns;

Appendix D – Scoping meeting handout



BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT | IDAHO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal, 2012-2013 Jump Creek, Succor Creek & Cow Creek Watersheds

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) gives the BLM responsibility for managing public lands in the public interest, according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Congress intended the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to help public officials make decisions that are based on the understanding of the environmental consequences of actions and activities.

In order to meet its responsibilities under these two laws and others, the BLM completes environmental analysis of activities proposed for the lands it manages. When the potential impacts of a proposed action are expected to be significant, this analysis takes the form of an environmental impact statement, or EIS.

Scoping is the first phase of an EIS and establishes the issues that need to be analyzed. Public involvement during scoping is crucial because it allows citizens to share valuable information about places and resources in the planning area that they consider important and about potential effects the proposed action might have on those places and resources. Public comments and questions during scoping help ensure that the EIS supports a responsible decision made in the public interest.

The EIS now underway for renewal of 15 livestock grazing permits in the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, and Cow Creek areas of western Owyhee County will consider a number of issues and analyze a range of potential effects. Scoping comments about issues and impacts are due by the close of business on March 9, 2012.

The BLM will review all scoping comments to identify issues and impacts that will be examined as the EIS proceeds. An interdisciplinary team will develop a reasonable range of alternative management options that address issues identified during scoping. The BLM will subsequently select one of these Alternatives for each permit, based on careful analysis of issues and impacts that have been identified throughout the EIS process.

Following publication of a Draft EIS containing a range of Alternatives and analysis of their potential physical, biological, social and economic effects, the BLM will accept another round of comments for 45 days. The agency will respond to substantive comments that reveal new or missing information or flawed analysis that could substantially change the conclusions.

The BLM will then publish a Final EIS that includes responses to substantive comments and a Proposed Action, followed by a 30-day protest period for anyone who has already participated in the process and is not satisfied with the outcome. Following resolution of any protests, the BLM will issue a Record of Decision, completing the process.

To comply with terms of a Federal District Court of Idaho Stipulated Settlement Agreement, the BLM has agreed to complete grazing permit renewals associated with 75 grazing allotments, including the 25 allotments subject to analysis in this EIS, by the end of 2013. Below is a preliminary timetable for the EIS and decisions on the proposed grazing permit renewals presented at this scoping meeting.

Milestone	Projected Completion Date
Notice of Intent published in Federal Register	January 9, 2012
Scoping comment period	January 9-March 9, 2012
Scoping Report published	July 23, 2012
Draft EIS published	November 20, 2012
Comments accepted on Draft EIS (90 days)	November 4, 2012 – January 4, 2013
Final EIS and Proposed Decisions published	June 17, 2013
Record of Decision and Final Decisions	August 26, 2013



The BLM Owyhee Field Office is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to address 15 grazing permit renewal requests in the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, and Cow Creek areas of Owyhee County, Idaho. The area encompasses approximately 120,000 acres of public land.

In addition to livestock grazing, a number of other multiple uses are ongoing in this area: year-round recreation activities – particularly hiking, boating, fishing, hunting and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use – wild horse management, potential wind energy development and electrical transmission line development.

Some key issues already identified involve the effects of livestock grazing on greater sage-grouse and its habitat, as well as the potential for disease transmission between domestic and bighorn sheep. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has determined that greater sage-grouse are “warranted but precluded” for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Several of the allotments in this group lie in important, intact sage-grouse habitat, and a number of allotments overlap with bighorn sheep habitat.

An EIS will allow the BLM to fully explore the relationship of grazing and the impacts on sage-grouse habitat from these other activities in the area, along with other factors such as wildland fire that are part of the landscape in this portion of Owyhee County.

The BLM believes that analyzing these 25 allotments through an EIS is the most efficient and effective way to process these permit renewal applications while meeting the agency’s legal and regulatory obligations. The BLM is committed to involving stakeholders throughout the process of determining appropriate uses of the public lands where these allotments are located and in developing the information necessary to reach the best decision about the impacts of their multiple uses in relationship to each other.

For More Information

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(541) 473-6218

Project website

http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal0.html

Appendix E – Comment form

<p>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT GRAZING PERMIT RENEWAL JUMP CREEK, SUCCOR CREEK, AND COW CREEK WATERSHEDS, OWYHEE CO., IDAHO</p>  <p>SCOPING COMMENT FORM Please check your affiliation below:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual (no affiliation)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private Organization</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Federal, State, or Local Government</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Citizen's Group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Elected Representative/Legislator or Staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Agency</p> </div> <p>Name: _____ Organization (if applicable): _____ Street Address (optional): _____ City/State/Zip (optional): _____</p> <p>Please write your comments below (use back if needed). Written comments may be submitted using this card, an e-mail, or any other written format transmitted to the BLM by the means noted below and within the scoping period. Only written comments will be considered. Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Please submit tonight or mail/fax by March 9, 2012 to: Jake Vialpando, Project Manager, BLM Idaho State Office 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709 Fax: 208-373-3805 E-mail: NPR_EIS@blm.gov</p>	<p>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT GRAZING PERMIT RENEWAL JUMP CREEK, SUCCOR CREEK, AND COW CREEK WATERSHEDS, OWYHEE CO., IDAHO</p>  <p>SCOPING COMMENT FORM Please check your affiliation below:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual (no affiliation)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private Organization</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Federal, State, or Local Government</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Citizen's Group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Elected Representative/Legislator or Staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Agency</p> </div> <p>Name: _____ Organization (if applicable): _____ Street Address (optional): _____ City/State/Zip (optional): _____</p> <p>Please write your comments below (use back if needed). Written comments may be submitted using this card, an e-mail, or any other written format transmitted to the BLM by the means noted below and within the scoping period. Only written comments will be considered. Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Please submit tonight or mail/fax by March 9, 2012 to: Jake Vialpando, Project Manager, BLM Idaho State Office 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, ID 83709 Fax: 208-373-3805 E-mail: NPR_EIS@blm.gov</p>
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