



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:  
4160 ID130

December 16, 2013

**CERTIFIED MAIL**

Elordi Cattle Company, LLC  
PO Box 55  
Jordan Valley, OR 97910

Elordi Sheep Camp Inc.  
14448 Bighorn Drive  
Nampa, ID 83651

**Notice of Field Manager's Final Decision for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin Allotments**

Dear Permittee:

The BLM remains dedicated to processing your application for permit renewals on the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin grazing allotments. I signed a proposed decision to renew your grazing permit on November 12, 2013. The proposed decision included terms and conditions that would enable your allotments to make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Idaho S&Gs), as well as the objectives of the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP). You received that proposed decision on November 13, and a 15-day protest period was provided prior to issuance of this final decision. Timely protests of the proposed decision were received from Elordi Cattle Company LLC, the State of Idaho and Western Watersheds Project.

Protest points and my responses are provided in the attached document titled "Protest Responses - Group 2 Allotments." This Final Decision has been revised from the Proposed Decision, based upon further consideration of available information, a new grazing management proposal by Elordi Cattle Company LLC, and certain protest points that have been raised.

**Introduction**

As you know, the BLM evaluated current grazing practices and current conditions in the Soda Creek allotment in 2013 and Baxter Basin allotment in 2006. We undertook these efforts to ensure that any renewed grazing permits on the allotments are consistent with the BLM's legal and land management obligations. As part of our evaluation process, BLM evaluated current resource

conditions in light of Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines<sup>1</sup> resulting in signed Determinations; the Proposed Decision incorporates by reference the information contained in those documents.

The BLM also engaged in public scoping and met with members of the public interested in grazing issues in the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments. The process for completing the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, & Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Impact Statement (hereinafter referred to as the Chipmunk Group EIS or EIS) began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on January 9, 2012. 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, but some relevant comments were submitted after the end of the scoping period. All comments, including those submitted after March 9, 2012, are addressed in the scoping report (which can be found at

[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee\\_grazing\\_group/grazing\\_permit\\_renewal0.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/owyhee/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal0.html))

and were considered during the development of the EIS. The package solicited comments to better identify issues associated with renewing livestock grazing permits on this allotment. One public scoping meeting was also held from 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM on February 23, 2012; in addition, an open house was held on June 13, 2013, in Marsing, Idaho, with the public arriving and departing at their leisure. The purposes of these meetings were to provide more information about the issues the BLM identified and give the public an opportunity to ask questions and submit input in person.

After evaluating conditions on the land and meeting with you and the public, we saw that a few resource concerns currently exist on the Chipmunk Group EIS allotments, including the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments.

To support our focus of addressing livestock grazing's impacts to public land resources, my office prepared and issued an environmental impact statement<sup>2</sup> (EIS) in which we considered a number of options and approaches to maintain and improve resource conditions. Specifically, the BLM considered and analyzed in detail five alternatives for the Soda Creek allotment and four alternatives for the Baxter Basin allotment. We also considered other alternatives that we did not analyze in detail, as described in the EIS. Our goal in developing alternatives was to consider options that were important to you as the permittee, and to consider options that, if selected, would ensure that the natural resources in the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments conform to the goals and objectives of the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) and the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Idaho S&Gs). This proposed decision incorporates by reference the analysis contained in the EIS. The Draft EIS detailing the alternatives below was made available for public review and comment for a 45-day period ending June 17, 2013. Grazing permittees, a number of government entities and agencies, interest groups, and members of the public also provided comments. Comments that

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<sup>1</sup> Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for each allotment are assessed and evaluated in DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS throughout Section 3.

<sup>2</sup> EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS analyzed three alternatives for the Baxter Basin allotment and four alternatives for the Soda Creek allotment to fully process permits for livestock grazing management practices.

were received are summarized and responses are provided as an appendix to the completed EIS available on the web at:

[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa\\_register/owyhee\\_grazing\\_group/grazing\\_permit\\_renewal0.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal0.html).

On November 12, 2013, I issued you a Proposed Decision, which you received on November 13, 2013. Protests of the proposed decision for grazing on the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin grazing allotments were received from Elordi Cattle Company LLC, the State of Idaho and Western Watersheds Project. During the protest period, I met with you to further discuss management options for the Soda Creek allotment, including the grazing schedule you proposed in a letter dated November 15, 2013, prior to finalizing my decision.

Following public availability of the BLM's November 12, 2013, Proposed Decision, review of protest points, consideration of your November 15 letter and proposal, and meeting with you to discuss management of your allotments, I am now prepared to issue a Final Decision to authorize livestock grazing within the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments.

This proposed decision will:

- Describe current conditions and issues on the allotments;
- Briefly discuss the alternative grazing management schemes that the BLM considered in the EIS;
- Respond to the applications for grazing permit renewals for use in the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments;
- Transmit the attached responses to protests received for the Group 2 allotment proposed grazing decisions;
- Outline my final decision to select Alternative 2, with modifications, in the Soda Creek allotment, and Alternative 2 in the Baxter Basin allotment; and
- Explain my reasons for these decisions.

## Background

### *Allotment Setting*

These allotments lie within the Owyhee Uplands, a sagebrush steppe semi-arid landscape of shrubs and widely spaced bunchgrasses. Limited precipitation with cold winters and dry summers constrain plant communities and wildlife habitat potential. The native vegetation is primarily Wyoming big sagebrush at lower elevations or mountain big sagebrush at higher elevations, with an understory of various native perennial bunchgrasses. Low sagebrush and bunchgrasses are found in the areas with shallower soils. Precipitation ranges from about 12 to 16 in. on the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments, and occurs primarily during the winter.<sup>3</sup>

The Soda Creek allotment is located approximately 7 miles northeast of Jordan Valley, Oregon, and 3 miles northwest of DeLamar Mountain. Elevations in this allotment range from 4,934 to 6,978 feet. The allotment is dominated by mountain big sagebrush ecological sites, with potential

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<sup>3</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to the affected environment sections of EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS.

for bluebunch wheatgrass/Idaho fescue in the understory. The allotment consists of six pastures, with approximately 2,980 acres of public lands interspersed with state and private lands in five of the six pastures (pasture 4 does not contain public lands) (Map 1). About 30 percent of pasture 2 and 90 percent of pasture 3 were burned by wildfire in 1996. About half of private lands in pasture 4 burned in 1996, and the remainder burned in 2006. The allotment supports perennial streams in pastures 1 (0.29 miles), 2 (2.07 miles) and 3 (0.38 miles) and intermittent or ephemeral streams in pastures 1 (0.49 miles), 3 (4.91 miles) and 5 (0.39 miles). In addition, 11 springs or seeps occur in pasture 3.

The Baxter Basin allotment is located approximately 4 miles northeast of Jordan Valley, Oregon, and 2 miles southwest of Swisher Mountain. Elevations on the allotment range from 4,640 to 5,460 feet. The allotment is divided into three pastures totaling approximately 1,530 acres of public lands (Map 1). Much of the allotment was burned in a 1960 wildfire, and pastures 1, 2, and part of pasture 3 were subsequently seeded with crested wheatgrass. Upland plant communities include native basin big sagebrush with bluebunch wheatgrass/Idaho fescue understory and crested wheatgrass seedings in pastures 1 and 2. Pasture 3 is dominated by annual grasses, including medusahead wildrye. Baxter Creek, a mostly intermittent stream, runs through all three pastures, and supports some riparian vegetation in pastures 1 and 2, including 0.82 perennial miles in pasture 2. There are also springs and seeps in each pasture.

***Current Grazing Authorization***

Elordi Cattle Company is currently authorized to graze livestock within the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments, and Elordi Sheep Camp is currently authorized to graze livestock within the Soda Creek allotment in accordance with permits issued by the BLM. The terms and conditions of those grazing permits are as follows\*:

**Table LVST-1: Elordi Sheep Camp**

| Allotment              | Livestock |        | Grazing Period |       | % PL | Type Use | AUMs |
|------------------------|-----------|--------|----------------|-------|------|----------|------|
|                        | Number    | Kind   | Begin          | End   |      |          |      |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek | 18        | Cattle | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 33   |

**Table LVST-2: Elordi Cattle Company, LLC**

| Allotment                | Livestock |        | Grazing Period |       | % PL | Type Use | AUMs |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------|----------------|-------|------|----------|------|
|                          | Number    | Kind   | Begin          | End   |      |          |      |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek   | 255       | Cattle | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 462  |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek   | 3         | Horses | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 5    |
| #0530<br>Baxter<br>Basin | 121       | Cattle | 04/01          | 06/14 | 100  | A        | 298  |

\*Standard Terms and Conditions applicable to all BLM grazing permits and leases are not reiterated here, but apply to the above permits.

The following terms and conditions apply to the above permits.

In accordance with Section 415, H.R. 2055 (Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2012), this permit is issued with the same terms and conditions as the expired or transferred permit or lease. This permit or lease may be canceled, suspended or modified, in whole or in part to meet the requirements of applicable laws and regulations.

A minimum of 4-inch stubble height will be left on herbaceous vegetation within the riparian area along 1 mile of Cow Creek in allotment #0652 at the end of the growing season, as identified in the fisheries objective of the Owyhee EIS.

1. Turnout is subject to Boise District Range Readiness Criteria.
2. Your certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
3. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one quarter (1/4)-mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas or water developments.
4. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
5. Trailing activities must be coordinated with the BLM prior to initiation. A trailing permit or similar authorization may be required prior to crossing public lands.
6. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotments are closed to all domestic grazing use.
7. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvement permits in which you are a signator or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within a wilderness study area requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
8. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for Exchange-of-Use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turnout. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
9. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of \$15.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed \$150.00. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR 4140.1 (B) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR 4150.1 and 4160.1.
10. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schematic(s). Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
11. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.

As part of a settlement agreement, the following additional terms and conditions have been applied to both of the above permits since March of 2000:

1. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation, where stream bank stability is dependent upon it, will have a minimum stubble height of 4 inches on the stream bank, along the greenline, after the growing season;

2. Key riparian browse vegetation will not be used more than 50 percent of the current annual twig growth that is within reach of the animals;
3. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian areas, other than the stream banks, will not be grazed more than 50 percent during the growing season, or 60 percent during the dormant season; and
4. Stream bank damage attributable to grazing livestock will be less than 10 percent on a stream segment.

### ***Livestock Management***

Since 2000, the Soda Creek grazing allotment has been used primarily from June to September. Typically, livestock are grazed from June to mid-July in two of the four pastures, and then moved to the other two pastures from mid-July to mid-September to early October, so that the pastures are not used at the same time each year. However, a formal rotation has not been implemented. Actual Use reports show that grazing has exceeded permitted levels of 501 AUMs in some years, ranging from 177 to 711 AUMs and averaging 431 AUMs.

Since 1997, pastures 1 and 2 of the Baxter Basin allotment have been grazed from mid-May to the first week of June or rested in alternating years, while pasture 3 has been grazed from early to mid-April to the second week of May, when the cattle are moved to either pasture 1 or 2. Actual use has ranged from 191 to 428 AUMs, and averaged 326 AUMs. Actual use reports show that grazing exceeded permitted levels in most years until 2005, but has been at or below permitted levels since 2005.

### ***Resource Conditions***

A rangeland health assessment was completed for the Soda Creek allotment in 2004, which was subsequently updated with an evaluation and determination completed for the allotment in 2013. The Soda Creek allotment was found to be meeting Standards 1 (Watersheds) and 4 (Native Plant Communities), and not meeting but making significant progress toward meeting Standards 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands), 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain), 7 (Water Quality) and 8 (Threatened and Plants and Animals). Although Standards 1 and 4 are being met, soils and native vegetation communities are still at risk of degradation due to the recent history of wildfires on the allotment. Although significant progress is being made toward meeting Standards 2 and 3, and subsequently toward meeting Standard 8, deficiencies in habitat conditions for redband trout and Columbia spotted frog are of concern on the Soda Creek allotment, specifically in pasture 2. Standards 5 and 6 do not apply to the Soda Creek allotment.

The BLM completed a rangeland health assessment, evaluation, and a determination for the Baxter Basin allotment in 2006. It was determined that the Baxter Basin allotment is meeting Standards 1 (Watersheds), 4 (Native Plant Communities) and 6 (Exotic Plant Communities, Other Than Seedings), and not meeting but making progress toward meeting Standards 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands), 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain) and 8 (Threatened and Plants and Animals). Standards 5 (Seedings) and 7 (Water Quality) do not apply to the Baxter Basin allotment.

## *Vegetation - Uplands<sup>4</sup>*

### Soda Creek

Upland vegetation in the Soda Creek allotment consists of native sagebrush communities in various seral stages as a result of wildfires in 1960, 1996, and 2006. Post-fire rehabilitation efforts following the 2006 Chubby Spain fire included aerial seeding, which was successful, and aided natural recovery of plant communities. Upland vegetation was found to be meeting Standard 4 but vulnerable to degradation as a result of the fire history in recent decades. Occurrences of three noxious weeds – Scotch thistle, spotted knapweed, and whitetop – have been documented on the allotment in pastures 1 and 3.

### Baxter Basin

Upland vegetation in the Baxter Basin allotment consists of a mixture of seeded and native sagebrush communities in pastures 1 and 2 that were found to be meeting Standard 4; pasture 3 is dominated by annual grasses and was evaluated under, and found to be meeting, Standard 6. One occurrence of the noxious weed Scotch thistle has been documented on the allotment.

## **Watersheds**

### Soda Creek

The Soda Creek allotment is meeting Standard 1 for watershed function. However, soils in the Soda Creek allotment were found to be at risk of degradation due to recent fire history on the allotment, and 39 percent of the soil stability and hydrologic function indicators show a slight-to-moderate or moderate departure from reference condition. Therefore, continued cautious management is needed to maintain or improve soils and watershed conditions.

### Baxter Basin

The Baxter Basin allotment is meeting Standard 1 (Watersheds). Soils in the Baxter Basin allotment were found to be stable and adequately vegetated, with most (73 percent) soil stability and hydrologic function indicators showing a minimal departure from reference condition. However, where exotic annual grasses dominate, such as in pasture 3, soil health, including nutrient and hydrologic cycling, is more limited than in the native vegetation areas that are dominated by a diversity of perennial plants.

## *Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas*

### Soda Creek

The Soda Creek allotment contains portions of Cow Creek, Little Cow Creek and Jacks Creek, all in pasture 2. A portion of Cow Creek and a portion of Little Cow Creek were found to be in proper functioning condition (PFC) in 2009, while other portions of these creeks were found to be functional at-risk (FAR) in 2002. Additionally, 18 of the 20 springs that occur on BLM lands in pasture 3 were found to be in PFC. The 2013 determination for the Soda Creek allotment found that significant progress was being made toward meeting Standards 2, 3, and 7.

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<sup>4</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.1.

## Baxter Basin

The 2006 Evaluation/Determination found that significant progress was being made toward meeting Standards 2 and 3 for the Baxter Basin allotment. The Baxter Basin allotment contains portions of Baxter Creek in each of the three pastures. Approximately 0.8 miles of Baxter Creek in pastures 1 and 2 were assessed as being FAR and have noxious weeds present. Nine springs or seeps have been identified in the allotment; four are in pasture 1, four in pasture 2, and one in pasture 3. Of these, six are FAR, two are in PFC, and one was not assessed.

### *Special Status Plants*

#### Soda Creek

Small phacelia (*Phacelia minutissima*) is a BLM sensitive plant known from one occurrence within pasture 6 of the Soda Creek allotment. Field observations indicate that grazing and trampling by livestock are not impacting this population due to low livestock use in the area. The Soda Creek allotment is meeting Standard 8 relative to special status plants.

#### Baxter Basin

No special status plants are known to occur on the Baxter Basin allotment, and therefore the Standard does not apply.

### *Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals*

#### Soda Creek

The Soda Creek allotment is entirely within the mapped areas of sage-grouse preliminary priority habitat (PPH) and priority general habitat (PGH). The allotment is meeting standards for sage-grouse habitat, though areas burned by recent fires may be currently lacking in sagebrush cover, which is expected to naturally regenerate. The allotment also has potential for occupied habitat for both Columbia River redband trout and Columbia spotted frog. Riparian habitats for these species on the allotment are improving in condition; as streams stabilize, they deepen and narrow, and hydric species increase, leading to improved water quality and increases in insects important as food for aquatic wildlife. Therefore, significant progress toward meeting Standard 8 is being made on the Soda Creek allotment.

#### Baxter Basin

The Baxter Basin allotment is entirely within the mapped area of PPH for greater sage-grouse, a candidate species under ESA that was found to be warranted but precluded from listing in 2010. Plant communities in the allotment are providing marginal habitat for this species due to fragmentation of sagebrush habitat and lack of preferred forbs, as well as the dominance of annual grasses in most of pasture 3. The allotment is within the range of Columbia spotted frog, but potential habitat may be deficient due to the FAR status of most lotic and lentic wetland habitat on the allotment. Current conditions on the allotment are not providing suitable habitat for these special status animal species, but significant progress is being made toward meeting Standard 8, based upon the 2006 Evaluation/Determination.

## *Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management*

Because the evaluations and determinations for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments found that all Standards were either met, or significant progress was being made toward meeting the Standards, it follows that livestock management practices on the both the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments are in conformance with the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

### *Issues*

Throughout the internal and external (public) scoping process and project development period, the BLM interdisciplinary team identified the issues concerning livestock grazing management in one or more of the Chipmunk Group allotments. The identified issues that may be applicable to the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments are listed below<sup>3</sup>:

1. **Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*;** from this point on referred to as sage-grouse): Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas of the Chipmunk Group allotments contain altered sagebrush community composition, structure, and function that are affecting sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitat-dependent species.
2. **Riparian vegetation conditions:** Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.
3. **Fish and amphibian habitat conditions:** Stream, floodplain, wetland, and mesic (moderately moist) habitat conditions are directly related to conditions within the riparian vegetation community. Altering of the riparian community may affect the health and sustainability of fish and amphibian populations.
4. **Upland vegetation and watershed conditions:** Livestock grazing is affecting upland vegetation by reducing or removing native vegetation communities that protect watershed soil and hydrologic function.
5. **Special status plant species:** Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.
6. **Noxious and invasive weeds:** Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.
7. **Livestock trailing:** Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds and riparian vegetation.
8. **Socioeconomic impacts:** Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.
9. **Wildfire fuels:** Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.
10. **Climate Change:** The issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits is twofold. Livestock grazing in Owyhee County contributes CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions to the earth's atmosphere. In addition, climate change, itself a stressor on the sagebrush-steppe semi-arid ecosystem found in the Owyhee

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<sup>3</sup> Issues raised through the scoping process that do not apply to the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments are not listed here. They include Wild Horse Herd Management Areas and bighorn sheep disease transmission.

Uplands can, when found in conjunction with cattle grazing, further stress the ecosystem's vegetation.

### **Analysis of Alternative Actions**

Based on the current condition of the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments and the issues identified above, the BLM considered a number of alternative livestock management schemes in the EIS to ensure that any renewed grazing permit would result in maintaining or improving satisfactory conditions and continuing to provide for significant progress toward meeting standards where unsatisfactory conditions have been identified on the allotments. Overall, six alternatives were considered and analyzed in the EIS; of these, Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6 were considered in detail and analyzed for the Baxter Basin allotment, and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 were considered and analyzed for the Soda Creek allotment. The range of alternatives developed include: Alternative 1 - No Action/Current Condition, Alternative 2 - Permittee's Application, and Alternative 6 - No Grazing, as well as Alternatives 3 and 4, which were developed based on resource constraints. The following sections describe the theme of each of the alternatives and the allotment-specific authorizations and actions under each alternative.

Alternative 1 would allow a continuation of current management on the allotments. Elordi Sheep Camp would be permitted to graze 18 cattle from 6/1 to 10/31 on the Soda Creek allotment with 33 AUMs, and Elordi Cattle Company, LLC would be permitted to graze 255 cattle and 3 horses from 6/1 to 10/31 on the Soda Creek allotment with 467 AUMs. A total of 501 AUMs would be permitted on the Soda Creek allotment. Also, the Elordi Cattle Company, LLC would be permitted to graze 121 cattle with 298 AUMs from 4/1 to 6/14 on the Baxter Basin allotment.

Alternative 2 would authorize livestock grazing as applied for by Elordi Cattle Company, LLC and Elordi Sheep Camp. Elordi Sheep Camp would be permitted to graze 27 cattle from 6/1 to 10/31 on the Soda Creek allotment with 33 AUMs, adjusting public land percentage to 24 percent, based upon the amount of public land in the pasture used by this permittee. The Elordi Cattle Company, LLC permit for the Soda Creek allotment would include an increase in AUMs from 467 to 698. The permitted use for the Baxter Basin allotment would be the same as for Alternative 1.

Alternative 3 would permit grazing at currently permitted levels and seasons of use and would implement a rest-rotation system for the Baxter Basin allotment and a deferred-rotation grazing system on the Soda Creek allotment. This alternative would also incorporate annual indicator criteria, including stubble height, browse, bank alteration, and perennial grass height limits as terms and conditions of the permits. The grazing system for the Baxter Basin allotment would incorporate rest in pasture 3, which is currently used every year, while decreasing the rest in pastures 1 and 2 from every other year to 1 in 3 years. The grazing system for the Soda Creek allotment would require deferred use of each pasture a minimum of 1 in 3 years.

Alternative 4 would implement a grazing system with additional deferral of grazing for the Soda Creek allotment. Permitted use levels would not change. The grazing system would incorporate fall grazing between 9/1 and 1/31 every 1 in 3 years; maximum use by pasture would be specified, and livestock numbers would not exceed 258 head.

Alternative 4 was not analyzed for the Baxter Basin allotment.

Alternative 6 would deny the applications for grazing permit renewal in whole and not authorize grazing for a period of 10 years for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments.

### Final Decision

After considering the current grazing practices, the current conditions of the natural resources, and the alternatives and analysis in the EIS, as well as other information, it is my final decision to authorize grazing for a period of 10 years as outlined below:

**Soda Creek allotment:** Alternative 2 as described in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS, modified as follows:

- Active AUMs for Elordi Cattle Co., LLC will be limited to 467.
- Public land percentage will be unchanged, remaining at 36 percent<sup>6</sup>.
- Pasture 1 will not be designated as a fenced federal range (FFR) pasture.
- The grazing rotation described in Table LVST-5, below, will be implemented
- Pasture 2 will be rested 1 year in every 3-year grazing rotation.
- Cattle use for Elordi Cattle Co., LLC will be 406 AUMs in years when pasture 2 is rested.

**Baxter Basin allotment:** Alternative 2 as described in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS.

Implementation of these alternatives over the next 10 years will allow the Baxter Basin and Soda Creek allotments to meet or make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&Gs while also moving toward achieving the resource objectives outlined in the ORMP.

The terms and conditions of the grazing permits will be as follows:

**Table LVST-3: Elordi Sheep Camp**

| Allotment              | Pasture | Livestock |        | Grazing Period |       | % PL | Type Use | AUMs |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|--------|----------------|-------|------|----------|------|
|                        |         | Number    | Kind   | Begin          | End   |      |          |      |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek | 6       | 18        | Cattle | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 33   |

**Table LVST-4: Elordi Cattle Company, LLC**

| Allotment              | Pasture(s) | Livestock |        | Grazing Period |       | % PL | Type Use | AUMs |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|----------------|-------|------|----------|------|
|                        |            | Number    | Kind   | Begin          | End   |      |          |      |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek | All        | 255       | Cattle | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 462  |

<sup>6</sup> The Soda Creek allotment contains 36 percent public land, with the remainder being private and state lands. However, the proportions of public land vary by pasture. The application, as analyzed under Alternative 2, proposed that percent public land be calculated by pasture. However, this modification would not affect the level of use that will be authorized on public land. Therefore, for administrative reasons,

| Allotment                | Pasture(s) | Livestock |        | Grazing Period |       | % PL | Type Use | AUMs |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|----------------|-------|------|----------|------|
|                          |            | Number    | Kind   | Begin          | End   |      |          |      |
| #0652<br>Soda<br>Creek   | 5          | 5         | Horses | 06/01          | 10/31 | 36   | A        | 5    |
| #0530<br>Baxter<br>Basin | All        | 121       | Cattle | 04/01          | 06/14 | 100  | A        | 299  |

1. Turnout is subject to Boise District Range Readiness Criteria.
2. Your certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
3. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one quarter (1/4)-mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas or water developments. Use of supplements other than the standard salt or mineral block on public land requires prior approval from the authorized officer.
4. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
5. Trailing activities must be coordinated with the BLM prior to initiation. A trailing permit or similar authorization may be required prior to crossing public lands.
6. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotments are closed to all domestic grazing use.
7. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvement permits in which you are a signator or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within a wilderness study area requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
8. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for Exchange-of-Use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turnout. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
9. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of \$15.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed \$150.00. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR 4140.1 (B) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR 4150.1 and 4160.1.
10. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schematic(s). Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
11. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.

In addition to standard Boise District terms and conditions, the following terms and conditions will apply to the Elordi Cattle Company, LLC permit(s):

**Other Terms and Conditions:**

1. A minimum 4-inch stubble height will be left on herbaceous vegetation within the riparian area along 1.0 miles of Cow Creek at the end of the growing season.

2. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with the allotment grazing schedules. Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
3. Cattle use in the Soda Creek Allotment is limited to 406 AUMs in years when pasture 2 is scheduled to be rested.

The following terms and conditions will apply to the Elordi Sheep Company permit:

**Other Terms and Conditions:**

1. Grazing use by Elordi Sheep Camp on the Soda Creek Allotment is authorized only in pasture 6.

As noted in term and condition #2, the grazing schedules for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments (identified below) must be followed:

**Table LVST-5: Soda Creek allotment grazing schedule \***

| Pasture(s) | Year 1    | Year 2     | Year 3    |
|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| 1          | 8/18-10/1 | 6/1-7/15   | 8/18-10/1 |
| 2          | 9/1-10/31 | 6/1-7/15   | REST      |
| 3, 5 & 6   | 6/1-8/17  | 7/16-10/31 | 6/1-8/17  |
| 7          | 8/18-9/15 | 6/1-7/15   | 8/18-9/15 |

\*This schedule applies to cattle use by Elordi Cattle Company

**Table LVST-6: Baxter Basin allotment grazing schedule**

| Pasture | Even Years | Odd Years |
|---------|------------|-----------|
| 1       | 5/11-6/15  | Rest      |
| 2       | Rest       | 5/11-6/15 |
| 3       | 4/1-5/10   | 4/1-5-10  |

***Notes on the Terms and Conditions***

Elordi Cattle Company, LLC will be offered grazing permits for a term of 10 years for the Soda Creek allotment with 467 active AUMs, and for the Baxter Basin allotment with 299 active AUMs. Elordi Sheep Company will be offered a grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Soda Creek allotment for 33 active AUMs.

***Other Notes on the Proposed Decision***

Finally, it is my final decision to not authorize additional projects applied for by Elordi Cattle Company, LLC. The existing coordinated process to identify, analyze, and authorize as appropriate the restoration, improvement, or development of livestock water sources and other projects remains in place for project-specific consideration outside the permit renewal process.

Project maintenance obligations identified in current range improvement permits and cooperative agreements for range improvements are unchanged by this decision. Implementation of this decision is contingent upon maintenance of projects in a functioning condition (i.e., boundary and internal fences are in such good and functioning condition as to assure their ability to accomplish the purposes for which they were constructed, barriers to livestock movement).

## Rationale

### *Record of Performance*

Pursuant to 43 CFR § 4110.1(b)(1), a grazing permit may not be renewed if the permittee seeking renewal has an unsatisfactory record of performance with respect to its last grazing permit. Accordingly, I have reviewed your records as grazing permit holders for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments and have determined that Elordi Cattle Company, LLC, and Elordi Sheep Camp have satisfactory records of performance and are qualified applicants for the purposes of permit renewals.

### *Justification for the Final Decision*

Based on my review of EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS, the rangeland health assessment/evaluation, determination, and other documents in the grazing files, it is my decision to select Alternative 2, as modified, for the Soda Creek allotment and Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment. I have made these selections for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because of my understanding that implementation of this decision will best fulfill the BLM's obligation to manage the public lands under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act's multiple use and sustained yield mandate, and will result in the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments meeting or making significant progress toward meeting the resource objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho S&Gs. My modifications to Alternative 2, as analyzed for the Soda Creek allotment, will not result in environmental consequences not disclosed in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS; the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of this action have been adequately analyzed.

### *Issues Addressed*

Earlier in this decision I outlined the major issues that drove the analysis and decision making process for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments. I want you to know that I considered the issues through the lens of each alternative before I made my decision. My selections of Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment and Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment were in large part because of my understanding that these selections best addressed those issues, given the BLM's legal and land management obligations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As you know, your allotments are part of a group of allotments that form the Chipmunk Group allotments and the larger Owyhee 68 allotments, and is the subject of a permit renewal process to be completed by December 31, 2013. The NEPA process for the Owyhee 68 consists of five EAs and an EIS. This multiple-allotment process has required me, as the Field Manager responsible for signing these grazing decisions, to look at these allotments and the other allotments analyzed in the EAs and the EIS, not just individually but as a members of a group of allotments located in a particular landscape, the BLM Owyhee Field Office. That is, while I am looking at your individual allotment, reviewing its RHA/Evaluation/Determination, and selecting an alternative that will best address the allotment's ecological conditions and BLM's legal responsibilities (for the purposes of this decision), I am also looking at the

*Issue 1: Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus; from this point on referred to as sage-grouse): Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas of the Chipmunk Group allotments contain altered sagebrush community composition, structure, and function that are affecting sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitat-dependent species.*

**AND**

*Issue 4: Upland vegetation and watershed conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting upland vegetation by reducing or removing native vegetation communities that protect watershed soil and hydrologic function.*

As an indicator species for the sagebrush ecosystem, the attributes of suitable sage-grouse habitat provide an effective barometer for health of the sagebrush ecosystems that dominate the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments. Sage-grouse habitat quality is inseparable from vegetation community conditions discussed in Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities). Therefore, the following is a combined rationale for my alternative selections as they relate to the issues of sage-grouse habitat and upland vegetation and watershed conditions.

### Soda Creek

Upland watershed, vegetative, and wildlife habitat conditions will continue to meet Standards 4 and 8 and thus the needs of sage-grouse and other wildlife. Implementation of Alternative 2, as modified, will maintain suitable sage-grouse habitat and native plant communities that will provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow. The addition of rest from grazing in Pasture 2 in one of three years, in accordance with the grazing schedule being adopted through this final decision will provide for additional improvements in upland conditions, and leave

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allotment from a landscape perspective. From this perspective, there are problems common to the Owyhee 68 allotments.

Of the approximately 60 allotments that have riparian areas, at least 47 are not meeting S&Gs for riparian/water issues due to current livestock management; of approximately 73 allotments, 43 are not meeting the Standard for upland vegetation. In many cases, performance under Standard 8 tracks these results. Despite the efforts of BLM and the ranch operators, resource conditions are not good. Some of these allotments have been used in the spring year after year; some have had summer-long riparian use every year, some are severely impaired from historical use. As Field Manager for the Owyhees, I have a steward's responsibility to further the health and resilience of this landscape. Adding to these considerations, we live in a time of uncertainty. Climate change presents an uncertainty whose impacts we cannot clearly discern. Nonetheless, as stewards of the land, we must factor into our decisions a consideration of how best to promote resiliency on the landscape. Add to this the uncertainty associated with the BLM's organizational capacity to manage this landscape: in a time of budget cutting, staff reductions, and reduced revenues, land management decisions must factor in considerations of the level of on-the-ground management we can reasonably expect to accomplish. These compelling factors create the need to develop grazing management on individual allotments that combines the greatest assurance of ecological resilience with the most likely anticipated organizational ability, and which does soon a landscape level. My challenge is this: looking out at the field office, what intensity of management can I reasonably expect to accomplish, knowing that when BLM selects an alternative that requires intensive management from BLM (i.e., continuous and intensive monitoring or other workloads that need to occur every year) it also accepts the risk and responsibility of that system's failure which could include a decreasing ecological health for the allotment at issue. My responsibility and challenge here is to make decisions that can be successfully implemented by BLM over the long term and that will lead to success, defined as healthy, sustainable resource conditions and predictability for ranch operators.

additional residual herbaceous material as hiding cover for sage-grouse and other wildlife species following the year of rest. Limiting Elordi Cattle Company's cattle AUMs to 406 in years when pasture 2 is rested will ensure that grazing pressure is not increased in other pastures of the Soda Creek Allotment due to shifting the areas that are used.

### Baxter Basin

Watershed, vegetative, and upland/riparian wildlife habitat conditions would continue to meet Standards on the Baxter Basin allotment under Alternative 2, which will continue to implement rest every other year in the native plant communities in pastures 1 and 2. Continued light utilization levels are expected to provide adequate functional nesting, brood-rearing, escape, and hiding cover values for sage-grouse and other wildlife in the short term and healthy plant communities in the long term. Additionally, proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow will continue to be maintained.

In pasture 3 of the Baxter Basin allotment, which is dominated by annual communities, improvement in native vegetation species composition and distribution is not expected to occur due to the distribution and competitive advantage of invasive species over native species under Alternative 2. Unfortunately, regardless of which alternative is selected, livestock management changes alone will not improve upland vegetative conditions and provide the composition and structure necessary for sage-grouse and other wildlife due to the prevalence of exotic annual grasses. Restoring areas dominated by exotic annuals to shrubs and deep-rooted perennial grasses would require targeted vegetation treatments such as seeding and herbicide applications, actions not considered at this time. Therefore, Alternative 2 will protect the vegetation we currently have, and overall, current and proposed livestock grazing will not contribute to any future nonattainment of Standard 8.

*Issue 2: Riparian vegetation conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.*

**AND**

*Issue 3: Fish and amphibian habitat conditions: Stream, floodplain, wetland, and mesic (moderately moist) habitat conditions are directly related to conditions within the riparian vegetation community. Altering of the riparian community may affect the health and sustainability of fish and amphibian populations.*

### Soda Creek

Riparian areas are expected to continue to make significant progress toward meeting Standards under Alternative 2, as modified. I have chosen Alternative 2, modified, because this management would allow the Soda Creek allotment to continue to make significant progress toward meeting Standards 2 and 3, while incorporation of a formalized grazing rotation and rest of pasture 2, as identified in Elordi Cattle Company's proffered grazing schedule, would further reduce livestock impacts and ensure continued progress toward the Idaho S&Gs and ORMP objectives. The FEIS states that progress would not be made toward meeting Standards 2, 3, 7 and 8 under this alternative due to the proposed increase in AUMs. However, the Soda Creek allotment has made significant progress toward meeting these standards under currently authorized AUM levels, as documented in the evaluation and determination. The modifications to Alternative 2, which

include authorization of grazing at current AUM levels and implementation of a formalized rest-rotation grazing schedule, will continue to make significant progress toward meeting Idaho S&Gs. The modifications to current management would increase the rate of progress, particularly in pasture 2, which contains high-value riparian resources. Limiting Elordi Cattle Company's cattle AUMs to 406 in years when pasture 2 is rested will ensure that impacts are not simply shifted to other pastures during these years.

I expect the quality and quantity of the riparian communities in the Soda Creek allotment to progress steadily toward meeting desired habitat management objectives and meeting Standards 2, 3, 7, and 8.

### Baxter Basin

Riparian and spring/seep areas are expected to continue to make incremental progress toward meeting Standards under Alternative 2. A majority of the riparian resources on the allotment occur in pastures 1 and 2, which would continue to receive rest from grazing in alternating years, allowing hydric vegetation ample time to recover from trampling and grazing. Livestock would be removed from these pastures on or before June 15 in years they are grazed, allowing additional time for regrowth and recovery of hydric vegetation throughout the summer and early fall in these years.

*Issue 5: Special Status Plant Species: Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.*

### Soda Creek

The one sensitive plant population of *Phacelia minutissima* known to occur on the Soda Creek allotment is not being impacted by livestock grazing, based on field observations. The population is located in an area of pasture 6 that does not receive substantial amounts of livestock use, and thus is not being negatively affected by trampling or grazing by domestic livestock. Under Alternative 2, as modified, risks to this population would be expected to stay the same; therefore, selection of this alternative will maintain this sensitive plant population.

### Baxter Basin

Because no special status plant species are known exist on public land, this issue does not apply to the Baxter Basin allotment.

*Issue 6: Noxious and invasive weeds: Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.*

### Soda Creek/Baxter Basin

Although Alternative 6 would further reduce the potential for livestock to introduce and spread invasive and non-native annual species as compared to all alternatives that would continue to authorize grazing within the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments, livestock remain only one of a number of vectors for seed dispersal and soil surface disturbance. BLM's coordinated and ongoing weed control program would still be required in the absence of livestock grazing in the allotment. Continued progress toward meeting upland and riparian standards will reduce the competitive ability of weeds on the Soda Creek allotment.

*Issue 7: Livestock trailing: Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds and riparian vegetation.*

#### Soda Creek

Livestock trailing on the Soda Creek allotment was not identified as an issue for analysis in the EIS, thus this issue will not be addressed.

#### Baxter Basin

Livestock trailing on the Baxter Basin allotment would be limited to 0.68 miles of the Boulder Flat Route. Effects from livestock trailing/crossing will include minor trampling and up to 10 percent utilization along the trailing route corridor. Due to the short duration of trailing, grazing effects from cattle trailing are expected to be minimal. Direct grazing from sheep trailing would occur where sheep are trailed off existing roadbeds. However, because both sheep and cattle trailing will occur on such a small proportion of the landscape and for a limited duration, effects from trailing are expected to be insignificant. A slight increase in the spread of weeds could occur, but the short distance and duration will limit the amount and possibility. Additionally, if noxious weeds are detected in the future, easy access would be available for treatment. Range readiness determinations are essential and will reduce mechanical damage to soils when soils are saturated early in the spring during the peak spring melt events. The duration of trailing activities to be authorized will require active trailing in most cases. Management actions as described above, will allow upland plant communities, soils, watersheds, weeds, and riparian areas to meet or make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&Gs and ORMP objectives.

*Issue 8: Socioeconomic impacts: Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.*

#### Soda Creek/Baxter Basin

During the NEPA and public comment process, some raised the concern that selection of certain alternatives considered in the EIS could impact regional socio-economic activity. I share this concern, and have taken these concerns into consideration in making my decision; however, my primary obligation is to ensure that the new grazing permit(s) protects resources in a manner consistent with the BLM's obligations under the Idaho S&Gs and the ORMP. As noted above, I have selected Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment and Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment; those selections accomplish those latter goals while maintaining your previously authorized grazing levels on the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments.

*Issue 9: Wildfire fuels: Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.*

#### Soda Creek/Baxter Basin

During the NEPA process, some asked the BLM to consider using grazing to limit wildfire. The BLM has considered the issue and determined that it would be theoretically possible to use targeted grazing to create fuel breaks on these allotments with the hope that those fuel breaks would help control the spread of large wildfires in the area. However, the resource costs associated with this strategy are such that I have decided against it. Ultimately, implementation of

Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment and Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment will not significantly alter the BLM's ability to fight wildfire in the area.

Although a number of sources identify the potential to use grazing to reduce fine fuels on a landscape scale, identified benefits are greatest with targeted grazing that strategically maintains fuel breaks to aid fire suppression actions. Landscape-scale fuels reduction with livestock grazing has its greatest application in grass-dominated vegetation types and specifically within seedings of grazing-tolerant introduced grasses and annual grasses. Such conditions do not exist on these allotments on a pasture-wide scale. In addition, the levels of livestock grazing and the season of yearly use necessary to reduce fine fuels prior to the fire season are not conducive to sustaining native perennial herbaceous species. This is one of the main reasons a targeted grazing system to control fire is not viable on these allotments at this time. The BLM's current permit renewal process is focused on improving native upland and riparian plant communities on these allotments, and targeted grazing to create fuel breaks would not support that goal.

The selected alternatives retain a level of grazing use that reduces the accumulation of fine fuels, and thus will lessen the spread of large wildfires when fire weather conditions are less extreme. More importantly, it is designed to benefit and promote the health and vigor of native perennial species on the allotment, thereby limiting the dominance of annual species and so limiting the accumulation of continuous fine fuels and extreme fire behavior, while enhancing post-fire recovery.<sup>8</sup>

*Issue 10: Climate Change: The issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits is twofold. Livestock grazing in Owyhee County contributes CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions to the earth's atmosphere. In addition, climate change, itself a stressor on the sagebrush-steppe semi-arid ecosystem found in the Owyhee Uplands can, when found in conjunction with cattle grazing, further stress the ecosystem's vegetation.*

Climate change is another factor I considered in selecting Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment and Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment. Climate change is a stressor that can reduce the long-term competitive advantage of native perennial plant species. Since livestock management practices can also stress sensitive perennial species in arid sagebrush steppe environments, I considered the issues together, albeit based on the limited information available on how they relate in actual range conditions. Although the factors that contribute to climate change are complex, long-term, and not fully understood, the opportunity to provide resistance and resilience within native perennial vegetation communities from livestock grazing induced impacts is within the scope of this decision. The Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments are currently making progress toward or meeting all applicable Idaho S&Gs, and therefore rangeland health conditions are improving, increasing the resiliency of native vegetation communities occurring on the allotment.

### ***Additional Rationale***

I did consider selecting Alternative 6 (No Grazing) for these allotments; however, based on all the information used in developing my decision, I believe that the BLM can meet resource objectives

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<sup>8</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 2.4.

and still allow grazing on the allotments. In selecting Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment and Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment, rather than Alternative 6, I especially considered (1) BLM's ability to meet resource objectives using the selected alternatives, (2) the impact of implementation of Alternative 6 on the your operations and on regional economic activity, and (3) your past performance under previous permits. The Soda Creek and Baxter Basin grazing allotments were found to be meeting or making progress toward meeting all applicable Standards for Rangeland Health under current livestock management. Therefore, continuation of grazing on these allotments with the changes identified above is expected to result in meeting resource objectives while providing for multiple uses of the public lands. By implementing these alternatives, the resource issues identified will be addressed. Declining to authorize grazing for a 10-year period is not the management decision most appropriate at this time in light of these factors.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my decision to select Alternative 2 for the Baxter Basin allotment and Alternative 2, modified, for the Soda Creek allotment over other alternatives because livestock management practices under this selection best meet the ORMP objectives allotment-wide and the Idaho S&Gs consistent with the projected ability of BLM to oversee grazing on these allotments over the next several years. Alternative 2, as analyzed, would implement an increase in permitted livestock use, which may result in declining conditions on the Soda Creek allotment, while Alternative 3 would only result in slow progress toward meeting objectives and standards in pasture 2, which contains high-value riparian resources. Implementation of Alternative 4 for the Soda Creek allotment would result in continued significant progress toward meeting Standards 2, 3, and 8 over the 10-year life of the grazing authorization, but would unnecessarily impact the viability of Elordi Cattle Company's current livestock operation. However, implementation of Alternative 2, with the above-described modifications will result in continued significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&Gs and provide periodic rest from grazing for high-value resources in pasture 2.

Selection of Alternative 3 for the Baxter Basin allotment would increase frequency of use in pastures containing riparian areas that are at risk of degradation, while Alternative 2 will result in maintenance of uplands that are meeting standards and objectives and allow frequent rest from grazing for these riparian areas of concern.

For both allotments, Alternative 6 removes the economic activity of livestock operations from Owyhee County and southwest Idaho, a region where livestock production and agriculture is a large portion of the economy. That, in conjunction with current resource conditions and the improvement anticipated by implementation of the alternatives, as supplemented, lead me to believe elimination of livestock grazing from the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments is unnecessary at this point. This grazing decision and subsequent permits are being issued under the authority of 43 CFR 4100 and in accordance with the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (43 CFR 4100.0-8), thus all activity thereunder must comply with the objectives and management actions of the Plan.

## Authority

The authorities under which this decision is being issued include the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as promulgated through Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subpart 4100 Grazing Administration - Exclusive of Alaska. My decision is issued under the following specific regulations:

- 4100.0-8 Land use plans; The ORMP designates the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments as available for livestock grazing;
- 4130.2 Grazing permits or leases. Grazing permits may be issued to qualified applicants on lands designated as available for livestock grazing. Grazing permits shall be issued for a term of 10 years unless the authorized officer determines that a lesser term is in the best interest of sound management;
- 4130.3 Terms and conditions. Grazing permits must specify the term and conditions that are needed to achieve desired resource conditions, including both mandatory and other terms and conditions; and
- 4180 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. This proposed decision will result in taking appropriate action to modifying existing grazing management in order to make significant progress toward achieving rangeland health.

## Right of Appeal

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in writing in for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge in accordance with 43 CFR § 4160.3(c), 4160.4, 4.21, and 4.470. The appeal must be filed within 30 days following receipt of the final decision or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for a stay of the decision in accordance with 43 CFR § 4.471 pending final determination on appeal. The appeal and petition for a stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted above. In accordance with 43 CFR § 4.401, the BLM does not accept fax or email filing of a notice of appeal and petition for stay. Any notice of appeal and/or petition for stay must be sent or delivered to the office of the authorized officer by mail or personal delivery.

Within 15 days of filing the appeal, or the appeal and petition for stay, with the BLM officer named above, the appellant must also serve copies on other person named in the copies sent to section of this decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4.421 and on the Office of the Field Solicitor located at the address below in accordance with 43 CFR § 4.470(a) and 4.471(b).

Boise Field Solicitors Office  
University Plaza  
960 Broadway Ave., Suite 400  
Boise Idaho, 83706

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error and otherwise complies with the provisions of 43 CFR § 4.470.

Should you wish to file a petition for a stay, see 43 CFR § 4.471 (a) and (b). In accordance with 43 CFR § 4.471(c), a petition for a stay must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

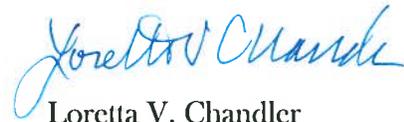
- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer and served in accordance with 43 CFR § 4.471.

Any person named in the decision that receives a copy of a petition for a stay and/or an appeal, see 43 CFR § 4.472(b) for procedures to follow if you wish to respond.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 208-896-5913.

Sincerely,



Loretta V. Chandler  
Owyhee Field Manager

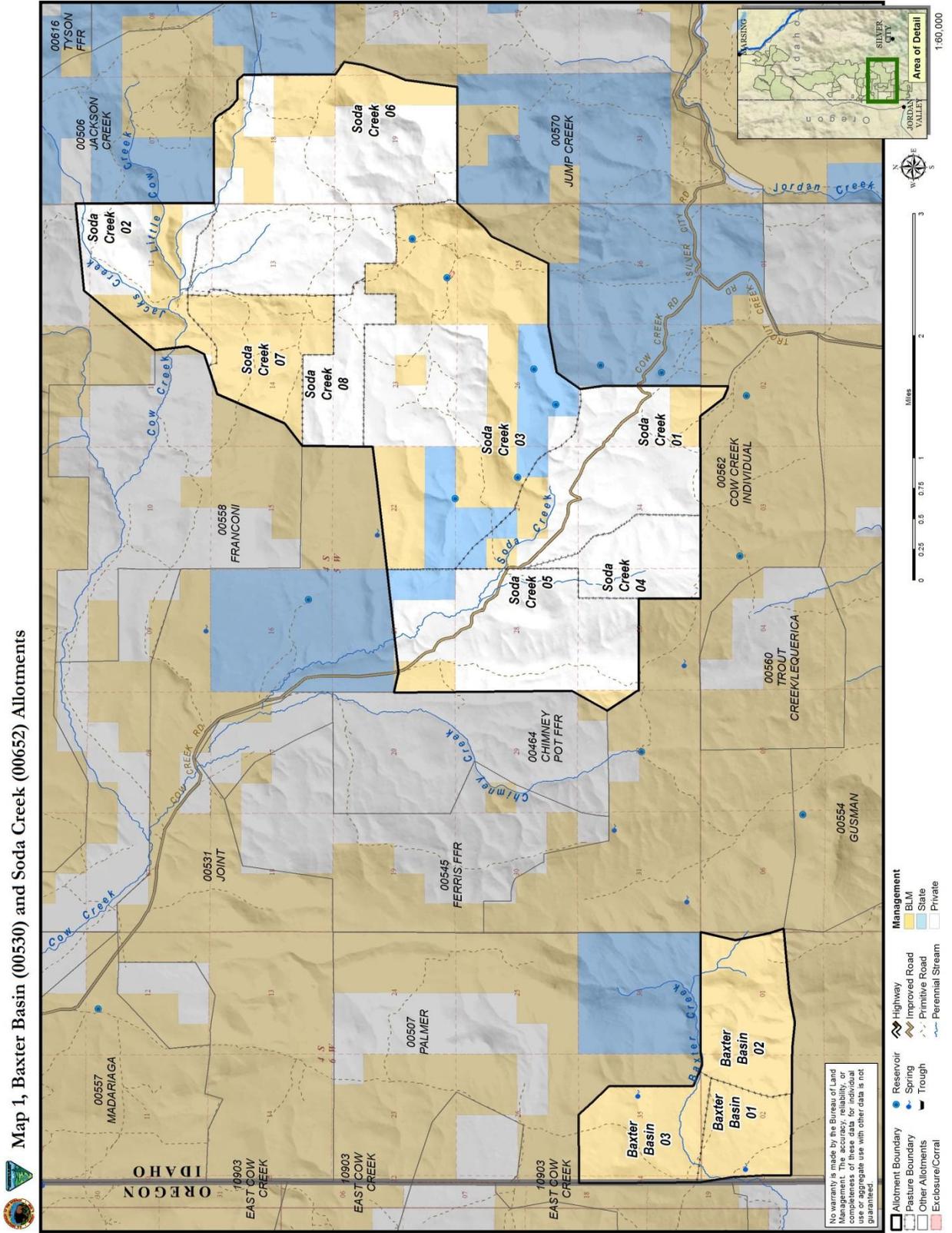
Attachments:

Map 1

BLM Group 2 Protest Responses

cc: Group 2 Mail List

Map 1, Baxter Basin (00530) and Soda Creek (00652) Allotments



Copies sent to: Group 2 Mail List

| Company Name  | First Name    | Last Name  | Address 1                              | City          | ST | Zip   |
|---|---------------|------------|--|---------------|----|-------|
| Boise District Grazing Board                                | Stan          | Boyd       | PO Box 2596                            | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| Chipmunk Grazing Association                                | Elias         | Jaca       | PO Box 175                             | Marsing       | ID | 83639 |
| Colyer Cattle Co.   | Ray & Bonnie  | Colyer     | 31001 Colyer Rd.                       | Bruneau       | ID | 83604 |
| Elordi Cattle Co.   | Jim           | Elordi     | PO Box 55                              | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| Elordi Sheep Camp, Inc.                                     | Richard       | Elordi     | 14448 Bighorn Dr.                      | Nampa         | ID | 83651 |
| Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation                                 | Herb          | Meyr       | 570 E. 16 <sup>th</sup> N.             | Mountain Home | ID | 83647 |
| Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation                                 | President Jim | Jeffress   | PO Box 8224                            | Boise         | ID | 82707 |
| Friends of Mustangs   | Robert        | Amidon     | 8699 Gantz Ave.                        | Boise         | ID | 83709 |
| Gusman Ranch Grazing Association LLC                        | Forest        | Fretwell   | 27058 Pleasant Valley Rd.              | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| Holland & Hart LLP  |               |            | PO Box 2527                            | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| Idaho Conservation League                                   | John          | Robison    | PO Box 844                             | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| Idaho Dept. of Agriculture                                  | John          | Biar       | 2270 Old Penitentiary Rd., PO Box 7249 | Boise         | ID | 83707 |
| IDEQ  |               |            | 1410 N. Hilton                         | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| Idaho Dept. of Lands  |               |            | PO Box 83720                           | Boise         | ID | 83720 |
| Idaho Dept. of Parks & Recreation                           | Director      |            | PO Box 83720                           | Boise         | ID | 83720 |
| Idaho Farm Bureau Fed.                                      |               |            | PO Box 167                             | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| Intermountain Range Consultants                             | Bob           | Schweigert | 5700 Dimick Ln.                        | Winnemucca    | NV | 89445 |
| International Society for the Protection of Horses & Burros | Karen         | Sussman    | PO Box 55                              | Lantry        | SD | 57636 |
| Jaca Livestock  | Elias         | Jaca       | 817 Blaine Ave.                        | Nampa         | ID | 83651 |
| Juniper Mtn. Grazing Association                            | Michael       | Stanford   | 3581 Cliffs Rd.                        | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| Land & Water Fund   | William       | Eddie      | PO Box 1612                            | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
| LS Cattle Co.   | Jeff          | Stanford   | PO Box 217                             | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| LS Cattle Co.   | Jerry         | Stanford   | PO Box 281                             | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| LU Ranching   | Bill          | Lowry      | PO Box 415                             | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| LU Ranching   | Tim           | Lowry      | PO Box 132                             | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910 |
| Moore Smith Buxton & Turcke                                 | Paul          | Turcke     | 950 W. Bannock, Ste. 520               | Boise         | ID | 83702 |
| Natural Resources Defense Council                           | Johanna       | Wald       | 111 Sutter St., 20 <sup>th</sup> Floor | San Francisco | CA | 94104 |
| Oregon Division State Lands                                 |               |            | 1645 NE Forbes Rd., Ste. 112           | Bend          | OR | 97701 |
| Owyhee Cattlemen's Association                              |               |            | PO Box 400                             | Marsing       | ID | 83639 |
| Owyhee County Commissioners                                 |               |            | PO Box 128                             | Murphy        | ID | 83650 |
| Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee                   | Jim           | Desmond    | PO Box 128                             | Murphy        | ID | 83650 |
| Poison Creek Grazing Association LLC                        | Tim           | Mackenzie  | PO Box 443                             | Homedale      | ID | 83628 |
| R&S Enterprise  | Ray           | Mitchell   | 265 Millard Rd.                        | Shoshone      | ID | 83352 |
| Ranges West   |               |            | 2410 Little Weiser Rd.                 | Indian Valley | ID | 83632 |
| Resource Advisory Council                                   | Chair Gene    | Gray       | 2393 Watts Lane                        | Payette       | ID | 83661 |
| Schroeder & Lezamiz Law Offices                             |               |            | PO Box 267                             | Boise         | ID | 83701 |
|   | Senator Mike  | Crapo      | 251 E. Front St., Ste. 205             | Boise         | ID | 83702 |

| Company Name                       | First Name          | Last Name    | Address 1                             | City          | ST | Zip        |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|----|------------|
|                                    | Senator James E.    | Risch        | 350 N. 9 <sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 302  | Boise         | ID | 83702      |
| Shoshone-Bannock Tribes            | Tribal Chair Nathan | Small        | PO Box 306                            | Ft. Hall      | ID | 83203      |
| Sierra Club                        |                     |              | PO Box 552                            | Boise         | ID | 83701      |
| Soil Conservation District         | Cindy               | Bachman      | PO Box 186                            | Bruneau       | ID | 83604      |
| State Historic Preservation Office |                     |              | 210 Main St.                          | Boise         | ID | 83702      |
| State of Nevada Div. of Wildlife   |                     |              | 60 Youth Center Rd.                   | Elko          | NV | 89801      |
| The Fund for the Animals, Inc.     | Andrea              | Lococo       | 1363 Overbacker                       | Louisville    | KY | 40208      |
| The Nature Conservancy             |                     |              | 950 W. Bannock, Ste. 210              | Boise         | ID | 83702      |
| The Wilderness Society             |                     |              | 950 W. Bannock St., Ste. 605          | Boise         | ID | 83702-5999 |
| U.S.F.W.S. Idaho State Office      |                     |              | 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Ste. 368         | Boise         | ID | 83709      |
| USDA Farm Services                 |                     |              | 9173 W. Barnes                        | Boise         | ID | 83704      |
| Western Watershed Projects         | Katie               | Fite         | PO Box 2863                           | Boise         | ID | 83701      |
| Western Watershed Projects         |                     |              | PO Box 1770                           | Hailey        | ID | 83333      |
|                                    | Doug                | Burgess      | 2725 Mule Springs Rd.                 | Homedale      | ID | 83628      |
|                                    | Ted                 | Blackstock   | 6754 Opaline Rd.                      | Given Springs | ID | 83641      |
|                                    | Alan                | Johnstone    | 2740 Egurrola Ln.                     | Homedale      | ID | 83628      |
|                                    | Tim                 | McBride      | 1445 US 95 South                      | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Conrad              | Bateman      | 740 Yakima St.                        | Vale          | OR | 97918      |
|                                    | Gene                | Bray         | 5654 W El Gato Ln.                    | Meridian      | ID | 83642      |
|                                    | Sean & Andrea       | Burch        | PO Box 284                            | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Chad                | Gibson       | 16770 Agate Ln.                       | Wilder        | ID | 83676      |
|                                    | Chad & Dannelle     | Hensley      | 4300 Choctaw Dr.                      | Nampa         | ID | 83686      |
|                                    | Russ                | Heughins     | 10370 W Landmark Ct.                  | Boise         | ID | 83704      |
|                                    | Dan                 | Jordan       | 30911 Hwy. 78                         | Oreana        | ID | 83650      |
|                                    | Floyd               | Kelly Breach | 9674 Hardtrigger Rd.                  | Given Springs | ID | 83641      |
|                                    | Kenny               | Kershner     | PO Box 300                            | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Vernon              | Kershner     | PO Box 38                             | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Lloyd               | Knight       | PO Box 47                             | Hammett       | ID | 83627      |
|                                    | Sandra              | Mitchell     | 501 Baybrook Ct.                      | Boise         | ID | 83706      |
|                                    | Brett               | Nelson       | 9127 W. Preece St.                    | Boise         | ID | 83704      |
|                                    | Ramona              | Pascoe       | PO Box 126                            | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Anthony & Brenda    | Richards     | 8935 Whiskey Mtn. Rd., Reynolds Creek | Murphy        | ID | 83650      |
|                                    | John                | Romero       | 17000 2X Ranch Rd.                    | Murphy        | ID | 83650      |
|                                    | John                | Townsend     | 8306 Road 3.2 NE                      | Moses Lake    | WA | 98837      |
|                                    | John                | Richards     | 8933 State Hwy. 78                    | Marsing       | ID | 83639      |
|                                    | Congressman Raul    | Labrador     | 33 E. Broadway Ave., Ste. 251         | Meridian      | ID | 83642      |
|                                    | Congressman Mike    | Simpson      | 802 W. Bannock, Ste. 600              | Boise         | ID | 83702      |
|                                    | John                | Isernhagen   | 2618 Cow Creek Rd.                    | Jordan Valley | OR | 97910      |
|                                    | Marti & Susan       | Jaca         | 21127 Upper Reynolds Cr. Rd.          | Murphy        | ID | 83650      |
|                                    | Ed                  | Moser        | 22901 N. Lansing Ln.                  | Middleton     | ID | 83644      |
|                                    | Bill                | Baker        | 2432 N. Washington                    | Emmett        | ID | 83617-9126 |
| Lequerica & Sons Inc.              | Tim                 | Lequerica    | PO Box 135                            | Arock         | OR | 97902      |
| Office of Species Conservation     | Cally               | Younger      | 304 N. 8 <sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 149  | Boise         | ID | 83702      |

## Group 2 Protest Responses

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| 2CDHensley        | 1                 | We also request that the correction be made to the Posey Creek statement. This is not a year round creek, but a run off stream only. The de-grade of this creek is also complicated with a road placed on the bank by BLM and needs to be taken into consideration  | pg. 177 of EIS: Posey Creek is identified as an intermittent stream as defined on pg. 167:<br>Intermittent: Contains water for only part of the year, but more than just after rainstorms and at snowmelt  |
| 2TLowry11222013   | 17                | Given the recognition that in the proposed decision "no substantial improvement in native vegetation species composition and distribution is expected to occur with any certainty" I see no reason to make a change. The proposal states that "Alternative 3 will initiate steps to protect the vegetation we currently have". The current management has maintained and protected the vegetation that currently exists . | The BLM agrees and has made these changes to livestock grazing for protection of riparian and Bighorn sheep issues not upland vegetation. However, the BLM recognized remnant upland communities within the seeded community that this decision will maintain or improve vegetative with increased years of deferment in cattle grazing.   |
| 2TLowry11222013   | 18                | The 13.9% of BLM should not negate the use and flexibility of the 86.1% of private. The 266 acres of Lowry FFR are the hay ground, feeding ground, and calving ground for the ranch. It is a balance that cannot be upset without extreme disruption of the ranch's stability.  | Regarding allotments with FFR in their name: the BLM's legal and regulatory management responsibilities for public land resources are not attenuated or reduced by the presence of limited public land acreage within larger parcels of non-federal ownership.   |
| 2TMcBride11252013 | 19                | My cows get there so late in the spring the growing season is over, so there is no effect on young plants.  | Opinion noted.   |
| 2TMcBride11252013 | 20                | The BLM uses sage hen habitat as a reason to cut the AUMs in this permit. There has never been a study that showed that cows have done more damage than predator numbers. Furthermore, the states and the federal government cannot even agree how to manage sage hen, or whether they are even endangered or not.  | On March 5, 2010, the USFWS (2010) published a finding in the Federal Register which found that listing the greater sage-grouse was warranted but precluded by the need to take action on other species facing more immediate and severe extinction threats. The finding has changed the status of sage-grouse from a BLM Type 2 sensitive species to a candidate species under the ESA.(FEIS, page 219) |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| 2TMcBride11252013 | 21                | As far as resting 2 fields a year -I don't understand what benefit that would have. It just puts more pressure on the rest of the fields.   | The BLM has selected Alternative 4 as the Final Decision. The AUMs will be allocated the same for each field as described in the Final Decision, there will not be additional pressure put on the other pastures when rested, unless it is private land. |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 22                | The Proposed Decision states that the Blackstock Springs Allotment will be managed in accordance with Alternative 4 as described in the FEIS (DOI-BLM ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS). However, the grazing schedule presented in the Proposed Decision at page 20 is substantially different from the Alternative 4 grazing schedule presented in the FEIS at page 59. The FEIS failed to complete any environmental effects analysis of an alternative that extends grazing use to 12/18 in all pastures of the Blackstock Springs Allotment. Thus the grazing schedule shown in the Proposed Decision was not analyzed in the draft or final EIS.   | BLM agrees and cleaned up these dates in the final decision.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 23                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #15 that restricts AUMs of Active Use by pasture and establishes an unmanageable date specific pasture use schedule. The grazing schedule authorizes unusable grazing use in 6,000 foot elevation pastures after the viable grazing season. Cold temperatures and snow cover at these elevations in most years would assure inadequate livestock use distribution and negative effects on livestock health and production. The reality is that most of the late season AUMs simply could not be used. In addition the variation in the number of cattle between pastures and among years as required by the grazing schedule is incompatible with practical and efficient range and ranch management. | Opinion noted. The BLM established stocking rates for the Blackstock Springs allotment at 8.5 acres per AUM as identified in Appendix C of the EIS. The BLM selected this alternative to make progress on standards that are currently not meeting.      |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 24                | CGA protests the absolute fixed dates of use over the term of the permit without any option for adaptive management to accommodate variation in annual climatic conditions. The absolute dates and lack of adaptive flexibility assures periodic improper grazing use and prevents any opportunity to improve grazing management consistent with climatic and vegetative growth conditions in any given year.   | Opinion noted. The BLM selected dates that were analyzed in the EIS that considered resources and sustainable grazing over a ten year permit. The BLM also considered the permittees alternative that considered adaptive management and flexibility.  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 25                | CGA protests the grazing schedule requiring complete rest of each pasture in one of each three year cycle. The prescribed rest provides no significant benefit over the deferred use identified in the FEIS for alternative 3.  | The BLM has selected Alternative 3 with deferred use in the Final Decision.  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 26                | CGA protests the absence of a complete analysis in the FEIS of the CGA amended application submitted to the OFO on or about June 15, 2013, which included applications for a fence to split one pasture and for reconstruction of water developments which are needed to achieve the purpose and need of the EIS. CGA protests the absence of a complete analysis in the FEIS of the CGA amended application submitted to the OFO on or about June 15, 2013. The OFO instead relied entirely on the initial application submitted to BLM in July of 2012, which included applications for certain range improvements which are needed to achieve the purpose and need of the EIS. CGA protests the cancellation of their Grazing Permit and Grazing Preference in the absence of any regulatory or statutory requirement. | Construction of new range Improvements were outside the scope of this decision and were not analyzed in detail in the EIS. Range improvements can be analyzed in a separate analysis working with the Owhyee Field Office. See Alternative 7, Section 2.4- Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Study, page 76 in the EIS for the rationale for not considering building of new infrastructure in this permit renewal process. Also, 1.4. PURPOSE AND NEED OF ACTION of the EIS states: The purpose of this action is to provide for livestock grazing opportunities on public lands using existing infrastructure where such grazing is consistent with meeting management objectives, including the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (USDI-BLM, 1997) and the ORMP objectives. |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 27                | CGA protests the application of "other terms and conditions" #8 and #13 through #17 to the Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment because they are not applicable to any part of the public land within   | Those terms and conditions apply to other allotments as identified on the permit.  |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
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|                   |                   | the Allotment.  |  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 28                | CGA protests the grazing schedule and the establishment of grazing date restrictions on the 95% of the 2,000 acre Texas Basin FFR allotment that is private land. There should be no restrictions on the season of use in the allotment because the 88 acres of public land is scattered in 8 discrete locations along fence lines that separate the small parcels from other public land. Only 1 of the 8 public land parcels is greater than 7 acres in size. | Regarding allotments with FFR in their name: the BLM's legal and regulatory management responsibilities for public land resources are not attenuated or reduced by the presence of limited public land acreage within larger parcels of non-federal ownership.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 29                | CGA protests the failure of the Proposed Decision to offer a grazing permit to CGA for the 85 AUMs of Permitted Use currently held by CGA in the Elephant Butte Allotment. CGA owns the "base property" for a USDI-BLM Grazing Preference within the Elephant Butte Allotment.  | The BLM offered those AUMs in the Wild-Rat allotment as requested by the Chipmunk grazing association.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 30                | CGA protests the terms and conditions in Table LVST-6 that fail to recognize the CGA's Permitted Use of 85 AUMs in the Elephant Butte Allotment.  | The BLM offered those AUMs in the Wild-Rat allotment as requested by the Chipmunk grazing association.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 31                | CGA protests the grazing schedule referenced in "other terms and conditions" #12 and depicted in Table LVST-7. The winter use period should be from 1111 to 2/28 since there is no biologically valid reason to restrict the season to 1111 to 12/31.   | The BLM agrees and has made that change in the Final Decision.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 32                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #13 because the only riparian stream segment in the allotment is already rated at PFC. Current livestock use is meeting applicable Rangeland Heath Standards and Land Use Plan Objectives.  | As described on pg. 47-50, Alt. 3 will require riparian monitoring in key riparian areas at the end of the grazing season and/or when deemed necessary by the OFO staff. Since Alt. 3 would allow 2 years of hot season grazing- monitoring will ensure conditions will be maintained and RMP objectives met |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response  |
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| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 33                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #14 because none of the pastures of the Elephant Butte Allotment contain occupied sage-grouse habitat and only pasture 2 is noted to have a remnant perennial grass component.  | Vegetation communities in the Elephant Butte allotment are very different from north and south as the elevation increases and changes from a desert shrub community to a sagebrush community. The desert shrub community in the northern portion of the allotment does not provide adequate habitat conditions for sage-grouse and was determined (Appendix E, Determination, page 127 FEIS) to be non-sage-grouse habitat. However, current vegetative conditions are not providing adequate upland habitat conditions for wildlife overall. Appendix G, Table G-2 also summarizes the current conditions in the Elephant Butte allotment in regards to sage-grouse. |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 34                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #15 because the only access to the Alkali-wildcat Allotment is a narrow gap leading to a steep hillside that cattle will not use unless forced to do so.  | Opinion noted. The BLM has a term and condition to require riding on the allotment to ensure no cattle will be displaced.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 35                | CGA protests the cancellation of 441 AUMs of Permitted Use (and associated Active Use), and the reduction of 189 AUMs of Exchange of Use AUMs from CGA private and state leased grazing lands within the Sands Basin allotment. All of the 153 AUMs from State grazing lands and the additional 275 AUMs from privately owned and leased property should remain available for use by CGA. | Opinion noted. The BLM selected Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment in the Final Decision to maintain or move towards desired conditions.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 36                | CGA protests the Mandatory Terms and Conditions that decrease our Active Use from 999 AUMs to 558 AUMs.   | Opinion noted. See response to protest point 35.  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 37                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #15 that restricts AUMs of Active Use by pasture. When the AUM by pasture restriction is combined with the grazing schedule only 432 AUMs may be used in year 1 and only 507 in year 2. Thus, the 558 AUMs  | Opinion noted. See response to protest point 35.  |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
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|                   |                   | of Active Use shown in the mandatory terms and conditions is not fully available. The restriction of AUMs by pasture creates an unreasonable management scenario in which different numbers of cattle (as many as 79 head) is necessary to obtain the Active Use allowed in each pasture.   |  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 38                | CGA protests the Sands Basin Allotment grazing schedule shown in Table LVST-8. When combined with the assignment of AUMs by pasture, the schedule necessitates a different number of cattle each year and in each pasture ranging from 190 to 269 head.   | Opinion noted. See response to protest point 35.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 39                | CGA protests the fixed dates of use over the term of the permit without any option for flexibility to accommodate climatic conditions in any given year. The absolute dates and lack of flexibility assures periodic improper grazing use and prevents any opportunity to improve grazing management consistent with climatic and vegetative growth conditions in a given year. | The BLM added a term and condition to allow pasture to pasture move dates to be coordinated with the field office on annual basis. |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text   | Protest Response  |
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| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 40                | CGA protests the lack of a monitoring and assessment plan to assure reasonable resource information is available in the future. Furthermore, such plan is needed to document the negative impacts of the excess numbers of wild horses in pastures 2, 3, and 4 of the allotment and to distinguish the effects of livestock grazing from wild horse use                            | <p>Although the BLM does not have a specific monitoring plan, Section 2.1 of EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS states "Monitoring studies would be conducted during the term of the grazing permits in accordance with guidance provided by the BLM Idaho State Office Instruction Memorandum Monitoring Strategies for Rangelands, IM ID-2008-022 (USDI BLM, 2008b). Monitoring studies conducted during the term of the permits would include, but are not limited to, the following: nested plot frequency, upland utilization, browse utilization, photo plots, Interpreting indicators of rangeland health (USDI BLM, 2000) (USDI BLM, 2005), multiple indicator monitoring (MIM), stubble height measurement, bank alteration, riparian woody browse utilization, water quality testing and sage grouse habitat suitability assessments (USDI BLM, 1999c)." Some of this monitoring will be conducted immediately prior to livestock turnout and immediately following livestock removal to determine, to the extent possible, livestock impacts and use levels.</p> <p>Additionally, a term and condition has been added to the final decision to complete monitoring after cattle leave the allotment to distinguish utilization between cattle and wild horses.</p> |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 41                | . CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #14 that limits cattle numbers by pasture. This restriction is unnecessary since the amount of grazing use is already limited by Active Use AUMs in the allotment. The option should remain available for increasing cattle numbers over an abbreviated season of use to improve grazing management in response to annual climatic and | Opinion noted. Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, & Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009).   |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response  |
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|                   |                   | vegetative growth conditions on the ground.   |   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 42                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #16 because excessive numbers of wild horses have yearlong access to uplands, spring, and stream riparian areas. CGA should not be held accountable for grazing use made by wild horses which are managed by BLM. Cattle are off the allotment by May 31 which has resulted in conformance with applicable standards. | BLM added a term and condition to the Final Decision that all utilization measurements taken within wild horse herd management areas will be measured at the end of the cattle season to reflect utilization from cattle only.  |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 43                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #17 because the acknowledged presence of excess numbers of wild horses with yearlong access to the Rats Nest pasture can reduce residual vegetation height to less than the 7" standard. CGA cannot be held responsible for grazing use that is beyond its control.   | <p>Your protest has been noted. As a result, this term and condition has been rewritten to read "Limit perennial herbaceous vegetation height to not less than 7 inches within PPH/PGH-sagebrush in pastures grazed from March 15-June 15 and not less than 4 inches within PPH/PGH-sagebrush in pastures grazed from June 16-October 31." This has been revised to better reflect the analysis and research supporting sage-grouse cover during nesting and early brood rearing.</p> <p>Additionally, BLM added a term and condition to the Final Decision that all utilization measurements taken within wild horse herd management areas will be measured at the end of the cattle season to reflect utilization from cattle only.</p> |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response   |
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| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 44                | CGA protests the grazing schedule requiring complete rest of each pasture in each three year cycle. The prescribed rest provides no biological benefit over the deferred use identified in the FEIS alternative 3.  | The BLM agrees and has selected Alternative 3 as analyzed in the EIS with deferment instead of rest in the Final Decision.                                 |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 45                | CGA protests the cancellation of 105 AUMs of Permitted Use (and associated Active Use) and the elimination of 457 AUMs of Exchange of Use AUMs on CGA private and state leased grazing lands within the Jackson Creek Allotment. CGA is paying a State lease rate on 658 AUMs within the Jackson Creek Allotment and utilizes a corresponding 169 AUMs from private lands. No change in the exchange of use rate for private and State land has been discussed or approved through the CCC process with CGA. The slight to light use shown by utilization data since 1997 refutes any rationale for the reduction of grazing use on public land and by implication any change in use of CGA controlled private and State lands. | Opinion noted. See response to protest point 41.   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 46                | CGA protests "other terms and conditions" #14 that restricts AUMs of Active Use by pasture and establishes an unmanageable and unreasonable date specific pasture use schedule. The date certain grazing prescription precludes any opportunity for adaptive management driven by annual variation in climatic and vegetative growth conditions on the ground. The AUM restrictions by pasture coupled with the dates of use creates a chaotic grazing scheme allowing spring use by 77 cattle in year 1, 111 cattle in year 2, and 122 cattle year 3. The scheme also requires all cattle to be removed from the allotment for 32 days in year 1 before returning  | BLM added a term and condition to the Final Decision that allows pasture to pasture move dates to be coordinated with the field office on an annual basis. |

| Protest ID        | Protest Point No. | Protest Text  | Protest Response  |
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|                   |                   | to the allotment with 132 cattle for the remainder of the season. In year 2 cattle would be off the allotment for 94 days before returning to the allotment with 189 cattle in years 2 and 3. The additional trailing of livestock required to facilitate this chaotic grazing scheme was not analyzed in the FEIS.   |   |
| 2Chipmunk11292013 | 47                | CGA protests the grazing schedule requirement for 2 years in 3 of complete rest in each of pastures 1, 2, and 3. Resting the exotic non-native plant community in pasture 1 is biologically contradictory and unreasonable of proper management. Imposing excessive rest to benefit non-native exotic annuals cannot be justified. Two consecutive years of rest in any of the three spring pastures will substantially increase wildfire risk to each pasture and the surrounding native habitat. Furthermore, the utilization data for all pastures show slight to light use since 1997, which wholly refutes any rationale for consecutive years of rest on the spring use pastures 1, 2, & 3. | Opinion noted.  |
| 2WWP11292013      | 48                | First, we Protest BLM failing to follow the required regulation procedures related to Proposed Decisions. We found the proposed decision in the mailbox. It is unclear when the Protest period actually started.  | The Protestant's filing is within the 15-day protest period. No protest was dismissed due to it being received late or outside the 15-day protest period. |

| Protest ID   | Protest Point No. | Protest Text   | Protest Response  |
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| 2WWP11292013 | 49                | <p>We Protest BLM's failure to address the crisis at hand for the sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits, migratory songbirds, and other rare species that rely on the tattered remnant sage habitats in this landscape. BLM does not engage in informed analysis of habitat fragmentation, degree and severity of impacts across an appropriate landscape, and assessment of population viability or persistence.</p>             | <p>Each allotment was assessed and evaluated and determinations were generated to summarize current conditions and identify casual factors for not meeting rangeland health standards and guide. A range of Alternatives in the FEIS were further developed and an impact analysis was conducted to consider the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of livestock grazing on focal species and their habitat to the pasture level and within the greater cumulative effects analysis area. The level of the analysis is appropriate for the scope and purpose of this document and to modify grazing practices if needed to progress towards meeting rangeland health standards and guide and ORMP objectives.</p> |
| 2WWP11292013 | 50                | <p>This EIS fails to lay out a valid current baseline of the status of habitats, sage-grouse habitat use and movements, the severe loss and fragmentation in much of adjacent Oregon, range that appears to keep be shrinking, and the viability of populations at local and regional levels, or an effective plan to sustain viable populations of sage-grouse under continued grazing pressure. We Protest this.</p> | <p>Refer to response to protest 2WWP11292013 protest point 49.</p>  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 51                | <p>We Protest BLM's greatly inadequate findings, including the many outrageous claims that conditions are just fine - like the claim that so many of the dying, head-cutting springs in Soda Creek are at PFC.</p>   | <p>Best available info. used as required by NEPA. All PFC assessment data sheets are part of the project record and are available to the public</p>   |

| Protest ID   | Protest Point No. | Protest Text   | Protest Response  |
|--------------|-------------------|--|---|
| 2WWP11292013 | 52                | A review of how grazing has been conducted shows the ranchers have not even been following simple schedules that are supposed to govern livestock use on the public lands. We Protest BLM failing to adequately address the magnitude of the livestock conflicts with all other environmental values - of wildlife, aquatic species, wild horses, big game, water quality and quantity, rare plants, native vegetation communities, protective microbiotic crusts, soils, recreational uses and enjoyment, cultural sites, paleontological values, ACECs, etc. Time after time in the FEIS and decisions, BLM goes to great lengths to overlook serious ecological harm, and to conduct analysis in a way that protects the rancher interests, and not the interests of the public lands and public resources. | Opinion Noted: This is not a protest point specific to an allotment condition or to a specific decision element. However, the BLM has not overlooked ecological conditions. The Field Manager for the Owyhee Field Office footnoted in the Proposed Decisions that she (and the BLM) has a steward's responsibility to further the health and resilience of this landscape. The BLM recognizes in that footnote, "Despite the efforts of BLM and the ranching operators, resource conditions are not good (Proposed Decision)." The Proposed Decision considers the current grazing practices, the current conditions of the natural resources, and the alternatives and analysis in the EIS, as well as other information. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 53                | BLM continues significant overstocking in several allotments that are crucial for continued sage-grouse occupation of these lands. We Protest this.  | Each allotment was assessed and evaluated and determinations were generated to summarize current conditions and identify casual factors for not meeting rangeland health standards and guide. A range of Alternatives in the FEIS were further developed and an impact analysis was conducted to consider the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of livestock grazing on focal species and their habitat to the pasture level and within the greater cumulative effects analysis area. The level of the analysis is appropriate for the scope and purpose of this document in modify grazing practices if needed to progress towards meeting rangeland health standards and guide and ORMP objectives.                |

| Protest ID   | Protest Point No. | Protest Text   | Protest Response   |
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| 2WWP11292013 | 54                | We Protest failing across all of these allotments to provide adequate rest, to remove livestock from significant areas so that healing can occur before weeds take over virtually the entire landscape, and species habitats and populations are lost or not able to be recovered. | Opinion noted. Alternative 6 was analyzed in full in the EIS that considered 10 years of rest.   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 55                | If BLM is just going to go ahead and authorize grazing on virtually every acre, then it at least has honestly admit and take a hard look at the harms that will be caused. We Protest that BLM does not do this.   | <p>This protest point is quoting Section 101 (a) from the National Environmental Policy Act. Section 101 (b) goes on to explain how federal agencies should carry out the policy set forth in the Act. Agencies are “to use all practicable means...to improve and coordinate Federal plans, functions, programs, and resources to the end that the Nation may—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;</li> <li>2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;</li> <li>3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;</li> <li>4. preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and variety of individual choice;</li> <li>5. achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and</li> <li>6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.</li> </ol> <p>The BLM believes that NEPA’s hard look requirement has been fulfilled in this EIS because of the inclusion of all of the Act’s considerations</p> |

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|              |                   |   | regarding grazing authorizations made to meet Rangeland Health Standards and Resource Management Plan Objectives for the health of multiple resources and their uses. Opinion noted. The EIS analysis and the natural resources Specialist Reports support the NEPA's hard look requirements.   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 56                | BLM greatly fails to assess the added stress that climate change places on the landscape and weed invasion risk, loss of perennial waters, loss of sensitive and important species habitats and populations, etc.   | Climate Change is Issue #9 in the EIS's issues considered and analyzed, although these are not listed in order of priority. As the issue states; Climate change and livestock grazing are inter-related to the effects of annual grass invasion and wildfire frequency which are expected to worsen as a result of climate change. For further information, please refer to the EIS at section 2.4. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 57                | BLM never bothers to consider closing even a single pasture in any one of the 25 allotments for the term of the permit under any continued grazing alternative. BLM establishes no reference areas at all, and fails to even bother to compare conditions inside vs. outside the tiny enclosures scattered around the landscape.  | Opinion noted. Alternative 6 no grazing was considered and analyzed in full in the EIS.   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 58                | BLM cannot claim that an alternative that just shuffles cattle and sheep disturbance around in a slightly different manner will adequately address the widespread irreparable damage to critically important resources that is being caused by chronic livestock disturbance, including continued abuse of what BLM claims are "historically" degraded lands. We Protest this. We also Protest that BLM does not adequately define what specific time period is "historical" use, and how it determined this. In fact, pointing nebulously to historic use belies the fact that in enclosures constructed just within the past 20 years, there are striking increase in native vegetation | Opinion noted. The BLMs Alternative selected in the Final Decisions adequately addresses the grazing schematic of sheep and cattle that will maintain or move towards desired conditions on an allotment specific level.  |

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|              |                   | community and wildlife and aquatic species habitat components .  |  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 59                | BLM failed to take a hard look at sustainability of grazing use, and conduct capability and suitability analysis, as well as a carrying capacity analysis that incorporated all facets of the adverse disturbance footprint of continued livestock grazing. BLM proceeded to structure its grazing analysis as if every single pasture, and every unexclosed acre, was capable of withstanding large-scale chronic grazing disturbance – in the face of weed invasions coupled with climate change. We Protest this, and the arbitrary and limited alternative considerations. | The BLM fully analyzed 6 Alternatives in the EIS which range from renewing permits at current grazing levels to one which removes all grazing from the Group 2 allotments. Action alternatives. In addition to these alternatives, the BLM considered several other alternatives that it did not analyze in detail for differing reasons. Climate change is considered and addressed in the EIS, was identified as an issue for analysis, and is recognized in the Proposed Decision as a factor used in consideration of the selected alternatives. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 60                | On top of this, there is simply not sufficient site-specific detail to understand the baseline including sensitive species habitat quality and quantity, and the status and precarious state of local and regional populations)] to be able to determine if any continued grazing use is sustainable for many sensitive species. We greatly Protest the lack of necessary baseline information.  | Please see FEIS, Section 3.7.1 for baseline discussions in addition to BLM response to WWP73.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 61                | It will also very likely cause permanent loss of springs and seeps in many areas, and lengths of perennial segments of streams – which will greatly jeopardize the remnant and now isolated redband trout populations about which no current aquatic   | The 'upland utilization' criteria is applied to the <i>uplands</i> . The riparian areas have their own criteria and measurements: 6" SH, 30% browse, and 10% bank alteration as well as the PFC assessment protocol and the MIM process to determine the condition of  |

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|              |                   | habitat condition and population information is provided.   | the riparian areas   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 62                | BLM must tailor this decision to lay out what needs to be done to conserve, enhance and restore sage-grouse. It cannot kick the can down the road   | Refer to response to protest 2WWP11292013 protest point 49.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 64                | This pasture is being managed as an exotic plant community. [WWP believes this violates the RMP. This cannot be the basis for management of important low elevation sensitive species habitat - loggerhead shrike (remaining greasewood, taller salt desert shrubs ARTRWY), sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, rare lizards, etc. BLM's flawed Decision perpetuates all of this, as the agency has made minimal changes, and its actions largely appear to have been cast in stone during its many meetings with ranchers. We Protest all of this, as these salt desert shrub and low elevation ARTRWY communities are very important for loggerhead shrike, sage sparrow, rare lizards and other sensitive species, and there remains areas with habitat for these sensitive species in the sites that BLM places in a sacrifice zone category. | The BLM does not disagree with the importance of shrub steppe habitat for a multitude of wildlife species. Focal species (greater sage-grouse, Columbia spotted frog, Columbia redband trout) were selected that best represented the uplands, riparian, spring, and stream habitat. This management approach uses species that define different spatial and compositional landscape features necessary to support functional and healthy ecosystem processes. |

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| 2WWP11292013 | 65                | Likewise, there is no clear analysis of the effects of the plethora of livestock facilities. Thus, there can be no solid analysis of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the EIS and its Proposed Grazing Decisions. We Protest this.                         | Please see Table CMLV-1 and 2 in section 3.2 of the EIS which contain an inventory of past actions in the analysis area, including the livestock facilities that were built in the Group 2 allotments. By definition, the Affected Environment section of a NEPA document includes those actions that have been taken in the past which have residual effects on the same resources a proposed action would likely affect. The Affected Environment section of the EIS describes in detail the current resource condition--the existing environment--and also describes what past actions contributed to these current conditions. Identifying past and ongoing activities that contribute to existing conditions is helpful for the cumulative effects analysis, which is found in each effects analysis section by resource (3.3 to 3.12). Past actions can usually be described by their aggregate effect without listing or analyzing the effects of individual past actions (CEQ, Guidance on the Consideration of Past Actions in Cumulative Effects Analysis, June 24, 2005). |
| 2WWP11292013 | 66                | We Protest BLM claiming that permittees who have routinely failed to submit actual use have an adequate record of compliance to allow BLM to issue a new permit. Likewise with permittees that failed to rest several of the allotments, as shown in the EIS Appendices. | The BLM agrees that the failure to submit a timely actual report reflects negatively on a permittees requirements and performance. However, I don't feel that this infraction rises to the level of an "unsatisfactory record of performance" as per 43 VFR 4110(b)(1), which would result in the BLM denying their application for permit renewal and not issuing them a grazing permit.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 67                | We also Protest that BLM does not reveal how many AUMs are associated with state lands.  | The BLM does not manage Idaho State Lands. However, this information can be requested to and provided by the Idaho Department of Lands.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 68                | We strongly Protest the confusing combination of Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest into Wild Rat. This appears to be done to cover up needs for large-scale   | Opinion noted.   |

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|              |                   | reductions in livestock.  |  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 69                | BLM failed to consider an adequate range of reductions across the allotments, including Baxter Basin and others, and maintaining large-scale grazing levels and causing expanded undue degradation of the public lands.   | The 6 fully-analyzed alternatives in the EIS considered a range of livestock grazing levels that included reductions from zero to 100%. There are no proposed decisions that expand grazing levels.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 70                | We strongly Protest the use of uniform stocking rate across many pastures in an allotment - example: Blackstock and other allotments. BLM provides no current adequate information on how it arrived at such rates, given the depletion that has been found. There is a complete lack of a capability and suitability analysis and production studies. So there appears to be no basis, in this ever-increasing weedland setting, to support livestock in many of these allotments based on perennial plant production. | Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, & Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009). |
| 2WWP11292013 | 73                | BLM must conduct current site-specific surveys for the rare plants across these allotments before it can finalize its decisions. In Soda Creek, for example, the last surveys were long ago.  | All available data and information was used as required by NEPA. The NPR Team and OFO visited as many special status plant sites as feasible in the allotted timeframe. The Soda Creek occurrence of phacelia minutissima was revisited in 2013 (FEIS page 272 & Special status plant specialist report Addendum).   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 74                | Instead of acting to protect these areas adequately, and ensure conservation of sage-grouse and other sensitive species, BLM is poised to merge Rats Nest with Alkali-Wildcat, and continue high levels of livestock grazing. We oppose any merging of Rats Nest with Alkali-Wildcat. It should be kept distinct and managed for protection of native vegetation through minimization of cattle grazing disturbance.  | The selected alternative in the EIS fully discloses the effects for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest Allotments. The alternative selected will maintain or make significant progress towards meeting desired conditions as rationalized in the Final Decision.   |

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| 2WWP11292013 | 75                | We stress that with the cattle feeding tub and supplement feeding/salting mania that has swept the Owyhee allotments (as ranchers seek to get their cows to subsist on shrubs and minimal dry understory grasses (i.e. essentially mine forage), trampling from a one-time placement of salt supplement or intensive herding event, can significantly damage remaining native sites. Yet there is no adequate limit on this activity to protect upland soils and vegetation. We Protest the failure to fully analyze the adverse impacts of these practices that try to eke out AUMs on depleted range. We Protest that BLM has not banned its use, or considered alternatives like required herding if the aim is really to distribute livestock, rather than to keep them from losing weight on depleted range lands. | The BLM disagrees and has analyzed the effects of salting and or supplementing in Alternatives 1, 2 3, 4 and 5 of the EIS and the Affected Environment sections. A term and condition has been established for these practices as follows: Salt and/or supplements shall not be placed within one-quarter (1/4)-mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas, special status plant populations or water developments.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 76                | Jackson Creek pastures show significant watershed problems - and weeds increasing in some pastures. Native unburned sites are in trouble, as well. We Protest that BLM has not adequately addressed and limited soil impacts and soil erosion and loss across the watersheds.   | This protest point is unclear as it is embedded within a nonsensical flurry of condition descriptions for the Blackstock allotment (addressed in the preceding paragraph) that are then abruptly tied to the Jackson Creek allotment. Based on both allotments failing to meet Standard 1, the BLM recognizes that upland soil impacts need to be improved (see Section 3.4.2.5) and does so by choosing Alternative 4.   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 77                | Certainly the Joint allotment is the type area that BLM should consider resting for the length of the 10 year permit under an expanded range of alternatives so that native understories and bunchgrasses can heal to some degree. We stress that many low sage sites are now suffering medusahead expansion, and this is a VERY unresilient plant community. We Protest that BLM has failed to provide adequate protection and   | This protest point actually consists of two additional preceding paragraphs that include an excerpt from 2012 field observations. WWP falsely implies that these field observations pertain to the Joint allotment when, in fact, they address conditions in pasture 2 of the Madriaga allotment (see p. 2 of the complete field report 20120725_grp2_cow_ck_field_trip available in Project Record). However, based on the Joint allotment failing to meet Standard 1, the BLM |

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|              |                   | significant rest to protect watersheds and sensitive species habitats.   | recognizes that upland soil impacts need to be improved (see Section 3.4.2.4) and does so by choosing Alternative 3.  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 78                | Alkali-Wildcat is dominated by sage-rabbitbrush – and a recent fire – yet BLM fails to address how is failed post-fire grazing policies may have helped cause the sorry state of affairs. Baxter Basin - One pasture is evaluated as an annual grassland. Yet BLM claims the rangeland health standards are met. This is an outrage – BLM proposes to continue beating these lands to death until the entire thing becomes a weedland – as it makes no reductions in Baxter Basin. There is an “unknown” lek right next to Baxter Basin. We Protest the failure to take significant actions to address these concerns. BLM proposes no adequate actions to improve or conserve, enhance and restore these damaged lands. | The selected alternative in the EIS fully discloses the effects for the Alkali-Wildcat and Baxter Basin Allotments. The alternative selected will maintain or make significant progress towards meeting desired conditions as rationalized in the Final Decision. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 79                | We are concerned that BLM concludes in Burgess that in Pastures 1 and 3.....HOW many weeds can be present, yet range staff still claim – because a bunchgrass for a cow to eat is present – that “progress” is being made?....There is no full and fair consideration of the ecological implications of the invasive exotic grasses, and their expected trajectory with continued chronic grazing disturbance being inflicted. We Protest this.  | Data showed significant increase in key perennial upland grasses in trend data that was used heavily in making the determination.   |

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| 2WWP11292013 | 80                | <p>For Madriaga....We Protest BLM continuing to graze such a weed-infested area. BLM must conduct integrated weed management – for invasive annual grasses and white top, and close this allotment in order to prevent the whole area - in the midst of very important sage-grouse habitat, from turning into a weedland.....Madriaga contains 1 active lek, and 2 inactive leks – it appears BLM is trying to wipe out the lek with its high levels of chronic continued grazing disturbance that are proposed to be imposed under actions BLM is likely to adopt.....These concerns plague the Range Veg report analysis, and EIS throughout, and are carried forward in the harmful Proposed Decisions. We Protest all of these EIS and PD deficiencies.</p>   | <p>Based on the allotment failing to meet all Standards, the BLM recognizes that impacts need to be improved and does so by choosing Alternative 3. As discussed in the final decision and FEIS, Alternative 3 will limit AUMs within each pasture, defer grazing during the critical growth periods, and reduce the stocking rate. Available sites for invasive species establishment will be reduced through competition with healthy native perennial species, lowered soil surface disturbance, and supported by BLMs coordinated and ongoing weed control program. Habitat cover and forage conditions will improve for sage-grouse and other species as the community composition and structure improves.</p> |
| 2WWP11292013 | 81                | <p>BLM must provide much more baseline information on the site-specific effects of livestock grazing and trailing on the very important cultural resources. Grazing and trampling disturbance promotes erosion (that may also promote site looting), churns soils, breaks and displaces artifacts, disrupts site stratigraphy, and may ruin the scientific value of sites. Further, given the very significant riparian degradation in this area, and the adverse impacts of spring water developments on cultural sites, and the fact that these projects typically just concentrate extreme disturbance in areas adjacent to springs that have significant cultural values – there are many issues here that need to be addressed so that irreparable harm can be prevented. We Protest the failure to adequately address these very important issues .</p> | <p>As noted in the document for the allotment group, new surveys and cultural site monitoring were conducted in areas identified as potential livestock congregation areas. Sites at these areas were evaluated for impacts that would affect a site's possible eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. Public disclosure of specific site locations in this process is prohibited by the National Historic Preservation Act.</p>  |

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| 2WWP11292013 | 82                | <p>Healthy and viable populations of redband trout and CSF do not merely depend on “properly functioning” wetland and riparian habitat – not as BM defines PFC. We have seen BLM term a coyote willow patch on a bone dry stream as at PFC – after it stomped the drainage to death in early spring year after year – and killed all potential for sustainable perennial flow. We have seen BLM term highly altered and degraded sites as “PFC”. PFC fails to address the actual aquatic habitat conditions – such as sediment load – and MIM does not address aquatic conditions, either. We Protest the EIS and PD deficiencies.</p> | <p>Findings from the PFC and MIM protocols are used in conjunction with available aquatic water quality, habitat conditions and population information to evaluate Standards 2, 3 &amp; 7. Standards 2, 3 &amp; 7 that apply to the riparian &amp; water resources are evaluated in conjunction with Standard 8 (wildlife)</p>  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 85                | <p>We Protest the failure to provide adequate assessment of the full footprint of ecological degradation caused by the Chipmunk EIS-associated livestock entities, as well as the full footprint of the weed risk posed by the cumulative effects of the grazing, trailing, management activities across the landscape.</p>  | <p>The BLM stands by its rationale for the numerous cumulative effects boundaries defined in the EIS and the rationale stated to support these boundary definitions. Each resource heading in the effects analysis sections (3.2 to 3.12) describes how these boundaries were established. The geographic scope of a cumulative effects boundary will often be different for each cumulative effects issue. The geographic scope of cumulative effects will often extend beyond the scope of the direct effects, but not beyond the scope of the direct and indirect effects of the proposed action and alternatives. In other words, the boundary for a cumulative effects analysis ends where a resource no longer feels any effect from the proposed action.</p> |

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| 2WWP11292013 | 86                | We Protest the failure of BLM to comply with its own GSG National Technical Team report, BLM Instruction Memos for GSG, conservation plans for GSG and for other sensitive species and migratory birds, best available science for GSG, migratory birds, pygmy rabbits, redband trout, Columbia spotted frog, and other wildlife as well as rare aquatic species and rare plants. BLM has failed to fully assess the spectrum of significant harmful direct, indirect and cumulative livestock grazing disturbance load and facility impacts in the allotments and across this bi-state ID-OR landscape critical to sage-grouse persistence . | Refer to response to protest 2WWP11292013, protest point number 64. The greater sage-grouse and bighorn sheep are the two primary focal species guiding the CIAA for wildlife. Considering their regional distribution and relationship with neighboring populations, the Northern Great Basin population of greater sage-grouse encompasses 5.7 million acres of north-central Nevada, southeastern Oregon, and southwestern Idaho (Map CMLV-2) and fits well with what is thought to be likely sage-grouse lek connectivity in the northern Great Basin (Makela & Major, 2012).(FEIS, page 252) |
| 2WWP11292013 | 87                | We Protest that BLM has arbitrarily avoided looking at PFC, FAR, NF in a host of intermittent and other drainages, as well as many very important springs.  | All available data and information was used as required by NEPA. The NPR Team did not participate in the design of the data collection, but the OFO visited and assessed as many streams and springs as feasible in the allotted timeframe  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 90                | We Protest the lack of critical information water quality, monitoring, and compliance with the Clean Water Act - ranging from bacterial pollution of high recreational uses area waters to sediment, turbidity, temperature, algae, etc.  | BLM's Standard (7) is to comply with the State's (IDEQ) water quality standards. BLM primarily relies on IDEQ 303(d) impaired waters information (as identified in their Integrated Report) to evaluate water quality and make a determination on Standard 7. If/ when BLM has contradictory data (ie. water temperatures that exceed cold water criteria), a preponderance of evidence strategy is used to make the determination  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 91                | cows and sheep watering at Jump Creek may choke the waters with manure and urine and pathogens, and also pollute waters with other chemicals excreted with livestock waste (such as drugs). Not only are there no water quality monitoring standards to be met and no regularly scheduled monitoring, there are no  | BLM's Standard (7) is to comply with the State's (IDEQ) water quality standards. The States WQS are extensive- see: <a href="http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/standards.aspx">http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/standards.aspx</a>   |

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|              |                   | riparian standards of any kind. We Protest this.  |   |
| 2WWP11292013 | 92                | This repeated grazing and trailing use over the year in many of the Chipmunk allotments is very harmful – as it means cows/sheep can eat native grasses to very low levels in spring, then turn around and do the same thing in fall – stripping protective residual cover that has no chance of regrowing before winter precipitation and winter-early spring runoff. Very significant depletion and loss of native species, plus damage to crusts and soils, is highly likely to continue under this scheme. We Protest this. | The overall impacts on upland vegetation and soils due to trailing following or preceding a grazing season are minor because trailing effects occur on a relatively small proportion of the landscape along designated routes that generally follow established roads and trails, and are of very short duration (1 to 3 days), especially with herding and when no overnight stay is required. Consequently, the impacts are not expected to have lasting effects on uplands for the long-term. Trailing is discussed in Sections 2.1.2, 3.3.2, 3.4.2, and also includes, by reference, the 2012 Trailing EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0011. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 93                | We Protest BLM having greatly failed to evaluate the status of public lands resources within the Jump Creek ACEC, including rare plants, sensitive wildlife species, redband trout, scenic and recreational values.   | Grazing is prohibited in the Jump Creek ACEC. The special status plant Idaho milkvetch is not accessible to livestock and therefore has no impacts from grazing (FEIS, page 272). Grazing impacts adjacent to the Jump Creek ACEC were found not to be a limiting factor (FEIS, page 289).  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 94                | BLM greatly fails to abide by its sensitive species policy, RMP requirements that BLM give priority to sensitive species including to prevent the need for listing, BLM fails to minimize risk to bighorn sheep, sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, Brewer’s sparrow, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, redband trout, rare pants, etc. Instead, BLM imposes 2 bouts of grazing during very harmful periods for these species – including when all would be nesting/giving birth/have young  | Refer to response to protest 2WWP11292013, protest point number 49 and 64.  |

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|              |                   | present, and again in the fall when several of these species may be at special risk due to nearly unregulated levels of grazing use Manager Chandler would allow to occur. We Protest this.  |  |
| 2WWP11292013 | 95                | Adding further to the confusion and highly uncertain effects of the Chipmunk Decisions on bighorn sheep, sage-grouse pygmy rabbit, sage sparrow, nesting golden eagles and prairie falcons, etc. as well as wild horses, is the large-scale trailing burden that is imposed. BLM never provides a shred of info showing that it has ever monitored trailing impacts, or on how it will ever be able to separate trailing from grazing. We Protest this.  | Review page 22 of the FEIS for the scope as well terms and conditions of trailing. Trailing routes that were not discussed in the 2012 Owyhee Field Office Livestock Trailing Environmental Assessment (2012 Trailing EA)(USDI BLM, 2012c) were analyzed in the FEIS. Each discipline analyzed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of trailing. Trailing was analyzed in detail in regards to bighorn because of the significant impacts of disease transmission from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep. Spatial and temporal trailing terms and conditions are required in areas of sensitive species. |
| 2WWP11292013 | 96                | We Protest the lack of clarity and consideration of all direct indirect and cumulative effects to the Rockville allotment, and other allotments in this landscape. BLM provided last spring a Rockville schedule in relation to the Owyhee GBSG allotments. The EIS greatly ignores the footprint, and direct, indirect and cumulative adverse impacts, of the Mackenzie sheep in Rockville - which now appears to be tied even more with Poison Creek and sands basin since BLM has imposed a harmful new trailing route there. | The EIS fully analyzes the effects from trailing livestock, both cattle and sheep. The EIS incorporates the trailing analysis in an Environmental Assessment completed by the Owyhee Field Office in 2012. The EIS identified four new trailing routes that were not included in the EA analysis and fully analyzed the effects of these new routes (EIS at 3.2 to 3.12). Terms and conditions that limit trailing effects to resources were adopted by the EIS from the Owyhee EA.  |

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| 2Isernhagen12032013 | 97                | The decision recently released on the Joint and Ferris FFR allotment is not feasible to work with our grazing situation along with the reduction in AUMs would severely decrease our ability to run a business.  | As noted in the FEIS response to comments, comments CA03, CA04, and CA05 recognize that there could be some impacts to the ranchers and to the economy due to changes in grazing management. As noted on page 291 of the DEIS, the values presented in the document represent the fixed costs for sample ranches because the BLM ID team does not know the enterprise budget for each ranch associated with the Group 2 allotments and cannot know or anticipate how each ranch will respond to changes in allotment management. Each ranch can make a variety of choices, including how they acquire replacement feed (hay/state or private grazing lands), whether to keep, sell, or purchase new animals, how the animals will be managed (transportation, herding, etc.). The DEIS makes clear that the actual values associated with changes in AUMs may be very different for each rancher than what is described in the document. |
| 2IdahoA11272013     | 98                | The State finds these statements (reasons) to not be consistent or fair to the Group 2 permittees. The recent Trout Springs EA and Decision which was also part of the June 26, 2008 Order Approving Stipulated Settlement Agreement did allow for numerous range improvements that were all specifically intended to improve future grazing management. These project proposals were analyzed in the Trout Springs EA. It would seem if BLM could find time for project proposals on some of the Owyhee 68 allotments, they should find the time to address all range improvement projects received on permit renewal applications. ISDA questions why some of the permittee's allotments (i.e. Trout Springs) in the June 26, 2008 Order | There are very few grazing decisions included in the "68 Permit Litigation" that implement range improvements, such as the Trout Springs Allotment. The permit renewals for those allotments that include range improvements were initiated in January of 2009 (Trout Springs and Pole Creek Allotments). The Fossil Butte Allotment permit renewal initiated in 2008, also included in this litigation, proposes water haul sites, which requires the same process as other range improvements. This earlier initiation provided the BLM the opportunity to complete all of the necessary steps to include the implementation of range improvements in those decisions. All other permit renewals associated with this litigation were initiated no earlier than January 27, 2012 (Group 1  |

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|                 |                   | <p>Approving Stipulated Settlement Agreement are allowed to have and use range improvements as a tool and means to move towards meeting Standards while other allotments/permittees (Group 2, allotments) are not allowed to have range improvements in their respective permit renewal proposal as a tool to move towards meeting Standards. While the State realizes that BLM is under a tight time frame to meet court order deadlines, the State still believes that it is not consistent or fair for BLM to allow for some permittees to use all parts of the grazing regulations including 4180.2c and 4120 (Range Improvements) and a full range of management tools to assist in moving towards meeting standards while other permittees are restricted from using all parts of the grazing regulations (specifically Range Improvements-43 CFR 4120) and limited management tools to assist them in moving towards meeting Standards in their respective allotments.</p> | <p>Scoping Document). This timeframe does not provide the BLM the ability to complete the process necessary to include construction of range improvements in the decisions.</p> <p>Additionally, the BLM is not required to include range improvements in the alternatives within the NEPA documents. There are no references in 43 CFR 4100 requiring the BLM to construct range improvements in conjunction with or instead of other tools to modify livestock management on public lands. Finally, there are already hundreds of miles of fence, hundreds of water troughs, and several miles of pipeline serving grazing systems on these allotments, so these tools have been used extensively.</p> <p>The Owyhee RMP also states "Use a minimal level of rangeland developments (e.g., fences, water facilities) to adjust livestock grazing practices to achieve multiple use resource objectives and meet standards for rangeland health" (Page 24, ORMP). My decision to include only a minimal number of new range improvements is consistent with the Owyhee RMP and grazing regulations.</p> |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 99                | <p>In the EIS and the proposed decision, there is no clear rationale on how the BLM arrived at the total of the 808 AUM reductions in the Blackstock Springs Allotment. There are also no mathematical equations on how BLM arrived at the AUMS being reduced by each of the permittees. The EIS and decision do not go into detail how BLM actually arrived at the number of livestock and associated AUM reduction they are proposing to reduce which results in the a total of 808 AUMS (415 for Ted</p>   | <p>Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, &amp; Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009).</p>  |

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|                 |                   | <p>Blackstock; 78 for chipmunk Grazing Association; and 315 AUMS for Alan Johnston) in the Blackstock Springs Allotment. The EIS or in the proposed decision does not identify any forage production data or information (i.e. grams of forage by species that has been clipped and weighed) by pasture that the BLM should have collected according to the process identified by BLM as the method that was used in estimating Initial Stocking Rates (footnote on page 23 of proposed decision). Page 3 of the USDA Technical Reference also states "setting the appropriate initial stocking rate consists of determining (1) how much forage is required by the type and class of animals raised (forage demand); (2) how much forage is produced during the year and how much is available for livestock consumption (available forage); and (3) how long will animals be using the area (duration of grazing). " The EIS and proposed decision fails to identify number 2 above in determining the stocking rate.</p> |   |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 100               | <p>Alternatives 3, 4, and 6 all identify reductions in AUMS and the AUMs are cancelled and not placed into suspension. During the 1995 Department of Interior rule making process, the Department commented as to what might happen to the reduction in permitted grazing use under section 411 0.3-2(b), as well as under Section 4110.4-2 (relating to decrease in land acreage within an allotment). See 9894 Federal Register I Vol. 60, No. 35 I Wednesday, February 22, 1995 I Rules and Regulations. The department states "others stated that reductions should be placed in suspended use rather than eliminated .... Although in some cases reductions made under this Section of</p>   | <p>The BLM is following the 9894 Federal Register I Vol. 60, No. 35, which clearly states that the Department does not believe that it is appropriate to add or carry suspended AUMs on a renewed grazing permit unless there is a reasonable expectation that the AUMs will be returned to active use in the foreseeable future. The EIS and determinations provided a thorough explanation of resource conditions and causal factors for the BLM to make clear decisions on whether the reduction in Active AUMs were likely to be re-activated in the foreseeable future. Reductions in Active AUMs were made on allotments that were not meeting or making significant progress due to current livestock grazing. Clearly, in</p> |

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|                 |                   | <p>the Rule may be carried in temporary suspension, the Department does not believe that it serves in the best interest of either the rangeland or the operator to carry suspended numbers on a permit, unless there is a realistic expectation that the AUMs can be returned to active livestock use in the foreseeable future....." The Final EIS fails to make a determination or analyze what, if any expectations exist in which the AUMS would not be available in the foreseeable future and could returned to active use.</p>  | <p>these situations, resource conditions were impacted to the point that our minimum requirements (Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and ORMP objectives) could not be achieved. This provided me the information to know with certainty that in order to meet or make significant progress towards the standards, the selected reductions were required for the term of the permit. There was no way to predict if any increases would be possible following the ten-year term, nor would it be appropriate for me to expect or predict that information. Also, see Response to Protest # 102.</p> <p>Additionally, regardless of whether the reduced Active AUMs were placed in suspension or eliminated, the exact same process to re-activate those AUMs would be required (43 CFR 4110.3-1).</p> |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 101               | <p>In the EIS and the proposed decision, there is no clear rationale on how the BLM arrived at the total of the 488 AUM reductions in the Joint Allotment. There are no mathematical equations on how BLM arrived at the AUMS being reduced by each of the permittees. The EIS and decision do not go into detail how BLM actually arrived at the number of livestock and associated AUM reduction they are proposing to reduce which results in the a total of 488 AUMS to the permittee John Isernhagen in the Joint Allotment. Neither in the EIS, appendices, or in the proposed decision is there any forage production data or information (i.e. grams of forage by species that has been clipped and weighed) by pasture which the BLM has referenced to in the Ogle and Brazee USDA Technical Note of June 2009 titled Estimating Initial Stocking Rates. Page 3</p> | <p>Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, &amp; Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009).</p>  |

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|                 |                   | <p>of the USDA Technical Reference further states "setting the appropriate initial stocking rate consists of determining (1) how much forage is required by the type and class of animals raised (forage demand); (2) how much forage is produced during the year and how much is available for livestock consumption (available forage); and (3) how long will animals be using the area (duration of grazing)." The EIS and proposed decision fails to clearly identify number 2 above in determining the estimated stocking rates for the Ferris FFR and the Joint Allotments.</p> |   |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 102               | <p>BLM has selected Alternatives 3 for the Joint Allotment. This alternative identifies a 488 reduction of AUMS and these 488 AUMS would be cancelled and not placed into suspension. During the 1995 Department of Interior rule making process, the Department commented as to what might happen to the reduction in permitted grazing use under section 4110.3-2(b), as well as under Section 4110.4-2 (relating to decrease in land acreage within an allotment). See 9894 Federal Register I Vol. 60, No. 35 I Wednesday, February 22, 1995 I Rules and Regulations.</p>         | <p>See Response to Protest # 100. Additionally, I disagree that you believe improvement of resource conditions and making significant progress toward the standards is "a realistic expectation that the AUMs can be returned to active livestock use in the foreseeable future and that if any AUM reduction is warranted, the AUMs should be placed into suspended use." When the new grazing management is implemented and significant progress towards the standards is being achieved, it is not in accordance with 43 CFR 4180 or realistic to conclude that AUMs should return to levels that caused the unattainment of standards. However, if after the new ten year permit expires, analysis shows that an increase in AUMs on a sustained yield basis is compatible with meeting or making significant progress towards the standards, AUMs could be increased at that time.</p> |

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| 2IdahoA11272013 | 103               | <p>The proposed decision claims on page 17 that the selected Alternative 3 for the Joint Allotment retains a level of grazing that reduces the accumulation of fine fuels, and thus will lessen the spread of large wildfires when fire weather conditions are less extreme. The State believes that the selection of Alternative 3 for the Joint Allotment will not reduce fuel loads but in fact will lead to increase fuel loading with the prescribed reductions in AUMS. The State questions why the BLM would want to increase fuel loads by reducing 488 AUMS in an allotment that the proposed decision states on page 7 as "the entire allotment falls within modeled PPHIPGH habitat for sage-grouse and is providing suitable breeding habitat conditions in pastures 2, 3, and 4 and marginal/ate brood-rearing habitat conditions in pasture 2. "</p> | <p>The Joint allotment is managed as a native plant community. The BLM wants to promote healthy native vegetation communities and wants to improve habitat composition, structure, and distribution within PPH/GPH habitat. The selection of Alt. 3 will provide desired perennial grass a period to grow during the critical growth period and promote the reestablishment of a desired native community.</p> |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 104               | <p>) In the EIS and the proposed decision, there is no clear rationale on how the BLM arrived at the total of the 218 AUM reductions in the Madriaga Allotment. There are no mathematical equations on how BLM arrived at the 218 AUMS being reduced in the Madriaga Allotment. The EIS and proposed decision do not go into detail how BLM actually arrived at the number of livestock and associated AUM reduction they are proposing to reduce (218 AUMS) in the Madriaga Allotment. While BLM claims that stocking rates were based on all available monitoring data, including current utilization data, actual use, production data from ESDs and based it on percent public land production (Estimating Initial Stocking Rates NRCS Tech Ref. 2009) the EIS and appendices do not reveal this numerical data.</p>   | <p>Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, &amp; Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009).</p>                          |

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| 2IdahoA11272013 | 105               | On page 18 of the Proposed Decision, the Owyhee Field Manager admits that there was some minimum degree of progress that was currently being made on the allotment, however, progress at a faster rate was achievable and more desirable given the long-term potential benefits to native plant communities and the greater sage-grouse. Current grazing regulations do not require that significant progress has to be made at a faster rate. The grazing regulations only require significant progress (measurable and/or observable) to be made, not progress to be made at the faster rate the field manager is referring to on page 18 of the proposed decision. | The Alternative selected will continue to maintain or move towards desired conditions as analyzed in full in the EIS. A range of alternative was created that provide the BLM with management flexibility to select an option that will best progress conditions towards meeting range health standards and guides and ORMP objectives. Any alternative selected will maintain or move soils, upland vegetation community, riparian vegetation community, sensitive plants, and wildlife habitats towards desired conditions. The selection of an alternative and the rate of progress towards meeting desired conditions will depend on the existing conditions of the allotment/pasture. |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 106               | The State also questions the accuracy on page 12 of the EIS where BLM identified that the Madriaga Allotment was not meeting Standards 1,2,3, and 8 due to current livestock grazing then in their proposed decision BLM admits on page 18 that there was some minimum degree of progress currently being made on the allotment. If there is progress being made on the allotment as the proposed decision identifies, why does the EIS (page 12) claim Standards 1, 2, 3, and 8 on the Madriaga Allotment are not being met due to current livestock grazing management?   | Minimal progress doesn't constitute meeting standards. Please see affected environment in EIS and determination.   |

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| 2IdahoA11272013 | 107               | <p>In the EIS and the proposed decision, there is no clear rationale on how the BLM arrived at the total of the 420 AUM reductions in the Jackson Creek Allotment. There are no mathematical equations on how BLM arrived at the AUMS being reduced by each of the permittees. The EIS and decision do not go into detail how BLM actually arrived at the number of livestock and associated AUM reduction they are proposing to reduce which results in the a total of 420 AUMS (128 AUMS reduced for Tim McBride; 105 AUMS reduced for Chipmunk Grazing Association; and 187 AUMS reduced for LS Cattle Company in the Jackson Creek Allotment.</p>  | <p>Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, &amp; Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009). The AUMs in the Final Decision were also considered by the average actual use by pasture that the permittees have used.</p>  |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 108               | <p>The proposed decision claims on page 25 that the selected Alternative 4 for the Jackson Creek Allotment retains a level of grazing that reduces the accumulation of fine fuels, and thus will lessen the spread of large wildfires when fire weather conditions are less extreme. The State believes that the selection of Alternative 4 for the Jackson Creek Allotment will not reduce fuel loads but in fact will lead to increase fuel loading with the prescribed reductions in AUMS and the two years of rest (in some instances rest in back to back years) in some of the pastures in the Jackson Creek Allotment. The State questions why the BLM would want to increase fuel loads in an allotment that has 92 percent of the allotment located in preliminary priority habitat for greater sage-grouse (proposed decision pg. 11). The Idaho Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force Recommendation states that lowering utilization or reducing spring grazing must be weighed against the increase risk of wildfire.</p> | <p>As noted in the EIS (Section 2.4; pages 74-77), livestock grazing can be used as a tool to reduce fuels and limit fire behavior. Fuel reduction resulting from livestock grazing is most effective in grass-dominated vegetation types and when weather and fuel moisture do not contribute to extreme fire behavior. Also as identified in the EIS in this section, the grazing prescriptions to implement fuel reduction on a landscape scale are not conducive to the implementation of appropriate seasons and intensity of grazing that lead to meeting the Idaho S&amp;G and the ORMP management objectives. Although targeted grazing to provide fuel breaks is also an effective tool to limit the spread of fire, actions to create fuel breaks through grazing or other techniques are outside the scope of this decision to renew livestock grazing permits.</p> |

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| 2IdahoA11272013 | 109               | BLM's EIS fails to conduct an adequate and thorough analysis with the reductions in AUMs along with significant increases in rest and how this increase in fuel loads will reduce the accumulation of fine fuel loads as BLM claims.  | The BLM did carefully consider and dismissed fuel loading from the analysis. See response to 108 above.   |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 112               | On page 8 of the proposed decision under riparian habitat, BLM claims that standards 2 and 3 are making significant progress, yet then BLM claims that current livestock grazing is not providing adequate habitat for aquatic wildlife species (redband trout).  | Correction made to wildlife issue rationale and reflected in the Final Decision   |
| 2IdahoA11272013 | 113               | Page 125 of the Final EIS states "reductions in AUMs are based on average actual use and rest and will allow adequate recovery to upland vegetation" yet Standards 1 and 5 are currently already being met and Standard 4 and 6 are not applicable. The State questions what recovery is necessary when the Standards are currently already being met for uplands?  | This language was cleared up in the Field Managers Final Decision; however the recovery referred to remnant upland communities and maintained or improved seeded communities. |
| 2IdahoB11272013 | 118               | The Proposed Decision (pg. 8 and pg. 23) identify that Standards I, 4, and 8 are already currently being met and Standards 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 do not apply to the Texas Basin FFR. The proposed decision on page 33 further states and clarifies that the Texas Basin Allotment is currently meeting Standard 4 for uplands. In the case of the Texas Basin Allotment, the standards are achieved and are being met or the standards are not applicable to the allotment. The permittee should be allowed to continue to graze as he has been in the past and as he has requested in his grazing permit renewal application since no changes are required based on 43 CFR 4180.2c. | Alternative 2 was carefully considered and analyzed in the EIS. However the Alternative 3 was my Final Decision and rationalized in the decision.                             |

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| 2IdahoB11272013 | 119               | In the EIS and the proposed decision, BLM has provided no clear rationale on how they arrived at the total of the 486 AUM reductions (Proposed Decision Current Situation Table LVST-1 and Table LVST-2 vs. Table PROP 1.6: Permitted Use) for the Jump Allotment(s) from the current situation.  | Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, & Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009). The AUMs in the Final Decision were also considered by the actual use that the permittees have used.   |
| 2IdahoB11272013 | 120               | In the case of the Trout Creek Allotment, the standards are either being achieved, making significant progress towards being met, are not applicable to the allotment, or BLM has determined that grazing was not a significant causal factor in the allotment for those standards not being met. BLM is not required by regulation to make any management changes in the Trout Creek allotment since the standards are either being achieved, making significant progress towards being met, are not applicable to the allotment, or BLM has determined that grazing was not a significant causal factor in the allotment for those standards not being met. However, in the case of the Trout Creek Allotment, on page 21 of the Proposed Decision, the Field Manager has chosen to select Alternative 3 described on page 22 of the proposed decision. Alternative 3 reduces total active AUMS from 726 to 342 active AUMS and has removed all early spring grazing and growing season grazing (Proposed Decision pg. 23). BLM Owyhee Field Manager is proposing a 384 AUM reduction of active AUMS in the Trout Creek Allotment. The State strongly opposes this reduction in active AUMS and the | Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, & Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009). The AUMs in the Final Decision were also considered by the actual use that the permittees have used. Average actual use in Trout Creek allotment was 342 AUMs so those were also taken into considering how the current condition and were carefully considered in the Final Decision. |

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|                 |                   | <p>elimination of early and growing season grazing at certain levels. BLM even claims that the Trout Creek Allotment is conforming to all guidelines. Based on conditions described in the proposed decision and as listed above, the State believes no reduction is warranted in the Trout Creek Allotment and protests the proposed reduction in active AUMS for the Trout Creek Allotment.</p>   |   |
| 2IdahoB11272013 | 121               | <p>In the EIS and the proposed decision, BLM has provided no clear rationale on how they arrived at the total of the 384 AUM reductions (Proposed Decision Current Situation Table LVST-1 vs. Table L VST - 3) for the Trout Creek Allotment from the current situation. There are no mathematical equations on how BLM arrived at the AUMS being reduced by each of the permittees. The ETS and decision does not go into detail how BLM actually arrived at the number of livestock and associated AUM reduction they are proposing to reduce in the Trout Creek Allotment.</p> | <p>Opinion noted. Stocking rates were developed for alternatives 3, 4 and 5 by allotment in Appendix C-2 and used ESDs production data (USDA NRCS, 2010) as a starting point and current average actual use to develop appropriate rates (Reed, Roath, &amp; Bradford, 1999); using the method described in USDA technical reference Estimating Initial Stocking Rates method (USDA NRCS, 2009). Each allotment was carefully considered using current actual use reports and current condition to adjust to appropriate levels that would move resources towards desired conditions.</p> |

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| 2IdahoB11272013 | 122               | <p>BLM's selection for Alternative 3 for the Trout Creek Allotment eliminates early and critical growing season grazing in all years in addition to reducing active AUMS by 384 AUMS in the Trout Creek Allotment. With lower utilization levels identified in the proposed decision (13- 37 percent) along with elimination of early and critical growing season grazing in all years, with a reduction in active AUMS by 384 AUMS, the State believes this is not reducing fuel loads as BLM states on page 30 of their proposed decision when the Field Manager claims the selected alternative retains a level of grazing use that somewhat reduces the accumulation of fine fuels, and thus will lessen the spread of large wildfires when fire weather conditions are less extreme. The State believes that by implementing Alternative 3 for the Trout Creek Allotment, BLM has put at risk the uplands and the riparian areas in this allotment to significant and catastrophic wildfire events.</p> | <p>The Final Decision for Trout Creek was Alternative 2, as modified, with reductions in AUMs. This decision was carefully considered in the analysis in the EIS and best meets the needs of the resources and permittee.</p> |

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| 2IdahoB11272013 | 123               | <p>The State questions the Field Manager authority to arbitrarily decide to "considered modifications to management to provide additional improvements in habitat conditions or to provide for faster progress toward meeting rangeland health standards on the allotments. " The regulations clearly state in 43 CFR 4180.2c that: "the authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable ... upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards ....." This is not the case in the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin Allotment as the Field Manager has clearly and correctly stated on page 8 of the proposed decision; "the evaluations and determinations for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments found that all Standards were either met, or significant progress was being made toward meeting the Standards, it follows that livestock management on the two allotments is in conformance with the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (proposed decision pg. 8). " On page 10 of the proposed decision, the field manager states that "implementation of these alternatives over the next 10 years will allow the Baxter Basin and Soda Creek allotments to meet or make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&amp;Gs while also moving toward achieving the resource objectives outlined in the ORMP. " This statement conflicts with the Field Manager's statement on page 8 when she states "because the evaluations and determinations for the Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments found that all Standards were either met. or significant progress</p> | <p>Site-specific analysis of modifications to management was made at the allotment level see Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 and Appendix C for detailed analysis. Alternatives selected for Soda Creek and Baxter Basin allotments will maintain or move towards desired conditions on the allotments as rationalized in the Final Decision.</p> |

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|            |                   | <p>was being made toward meeting the Standards. it follows that livestock management on the two allotments is in conformance with the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management." The State questions how the permittees or for that matter the general public can understand this confusion in BLM 's Proposed Decision. How can you meet or make significant progress towards meeting the S&amp;Gs when as the Field Manager has described on page 8 that the permittee is already there, meeting or making significant progress on the standards. If this is the case (pg. 8's statement) BLM is not required or bound by regulation to make management changes to the Soda Creek and the Baxter Basin Allotments in accordance to 43 CFR 4180.2c as described above.</p> |                  |