United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Owyhee Field Office
20 First Ave West
Marsing, ID 83639
(208) 896-5912

In Reply Refer To:
4160 ID130

December 16, 2013

CERTIFIED MAIL

Chipmunk Grazing Association
c/o Elias Jaca
P.O. Box 175
Marsing, Idaho 83639

Ted Blackstock
6754 Opaline Rd.
Given Springs, ID 83641

Notice of Field Manager's Final Decision for the Chipmunk Field FFR, Elephant Butte, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild-Rat Allotments

Dear Mr. Jaca and Mr. Blackstock:

Thank you for working with the BLM during this permit renewal process; I appreciate your interest in grazing the allotments in a sustainable fashion and am confident that this Final Decision achieves that objective.

The BLM remains dedicated to processing your grazing permit application for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest, Chipmunk Field FFR, Elephant Butte, Sands Basin and Texas Basin FFR allotments (hereinafter, Jump allotments). We undertook this effort to ensure that any renewed grazing permit(s) on these allotments will be 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[1], resulting in signed Determinations. This Final Decision incorporates by reference the information contained in those documents, as well as the specialist reports, which provide additional information. In addition to your protests as received in the meeting on November 26, 2013, the BLM received other protests regarding the proposed decision from Western Watersheds Project, the State of Idaho, and others.

The BLM also engaged in public scoping and met with members of the public interested in grazing issues in the Jump allotments. The process for completing the Jump Creek, Succor Creek, & Cow Creek Watersheds Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Impact Statement (Chipmunk Group EIS or Group 2

[1] Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for each allotment are assessed and evaluated in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS throughout Section 3.

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)

and were considered during the development of the FEIS. 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, it became clear that resource concerns currently exist on the Jump allotments. To assist us in addressing livestock impacts to public land resources, my office prepared and issued an environmental impact statement[2] (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 three alternatives for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, four alternatives for the Texas Basin FFR allotment, and five alternatives for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat[3]), Elephant Butte and Sands Basin allotments. We also considered other alternatives that we did not analyze in detail. 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 natural resource conditions on the Jump allotments are consistent with 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 Final 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. In addition to timely comments received from you, a number of government entities and agencies, interest groups, and members of the public also provided comments. Comments that 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.

Protest points raised following release of the Proposed Decision and my responses are provided in the attached document. This Final Decision has been revised from the proposed decision, as noted in protest responses provided. Additionally, the Final Decision has been revised to clarify details of the terms and conditions of the permit that will be offered.

Following public availability of the BLM's November 12, 2013, Proposed Decision, review of protest points, and subsequent discussions with you, I am now prepared to issue a final decision to renew your permit to graze livestock within the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest, Chipmunk Field FFR, Elephant Butte, Sands Basin and Texas Basin FFR allotments. Upon implementation of the decision, your permit(s) to graze livestock in the Jump allotments will be fully processed.

[2] EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS analyzed three alternatives for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, four alternatives for the Texas Basin FFR allotment, and five alternatives for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat), Elephant Butte and Sands Basin allotments to fully process permits for livestock grazing management practices.
[3] Permittees on the Alkali-Wildcat and Rat's Nest allotments included in their applications a proposal to restructure these allotments to create the Wild Rat allotment.

This final decision will:

- Describe current conditions and issues on the allotments;
- Briefly discuss the alternative grazing management systems that the BLM considered in the EIS;
- Respond to the applications for grazing permit renewal for use in the Jump allotments;
- Consider protest points received following issuance of the November 12, 2013, proposed decision;
- Outline my final decision to select Alternative 3 in Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat), Alternative 2 in Chipmunk Field FFR, Alternative 3 in Elephant Butte, Alternative 4 in Sands Basin and Alternative 3 in Texas Basin FFR allotments; and
- My rationale for this final decision.

Background

Allotment Setting

Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat) Allotments

The Alkali-Wildcat allotment is located in northwestern Owyhee County, Idaho, approximately 10 miles south of Marsing, Idaho (Map 1). The allotment lies in salt desert shrub land flats and western foothills of the Owyhee Mountains. Jump Creek forms a portion of the northern boundary and Highway 95 forms part of the eastern boundary. Elevations range from approximately 2,500 feet north near Jump Creek to 4,300 feet on the southernmost boundary of the allotment. This one-pasture allotment is primarily grazed April through May annually. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers 100 percent of the 5,161 acres in the allotment (see Map 1).

The Rats Nest allotment is located in northwestern Owyhee County, Idaho, approximately 10 miles south of Marsing, Idaho (Map 1). The allotment lies in the Owyhee Mountains and includes the land feature Shares Snout. The northern boundary is the Elephant Butte allotment, and to the south, west, and east lay the Hardtrigger and Shares Basin allotments. Elevations range from approximately 2,600 feet to more than 4,800 feet at Shares Snout.

This one-pasture allotment is primarily grazed April through May annually. The BLM administers 88 percent (4,891 acres) of the 5,531 acres in the allotment, with private control of 12 percent (640 acres). The Rats Nest allotment also includes a portion of the Hardtrigger Wild Horse Management Area. In accordance with the 1999 ORMP, the appropriate management level (AML) is 98 horses, although the permissible range for the population may extend from 66 to 130 horses in any given year. See Map 1.

Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment[4]

The Chipmunk Field FFR allotment consists of one pasture and has 559 acres of public land, 12,379 acres of private land, and 32 acres of state land, for a total of 12,970 acres (4 percent public land). Because this allotment includes a large acreage of private land, under the current permit, the livestock numbers and dates have varied annually as determined by the permittee, provided that the 72 animal unit months (AUMs[5]) permitted were not exceeded and unacceptable impacts to public land resources did not occur. See Map 2.

[4] 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.

[5] Animal unit month (AUM) means the amount of forage necessary for the sustenance of one cow or its equivalent for a period of one month.

Elephant Butte Allotment

The Elephant Butte allotment is located approximately 10 miles south of Marsing, Idaho (Map 3). The allotment lies in the salt desert shrub land flats and foothills of the Owyhee Mountains. The northern boundary adjoins private cropland, the southern boundary includes portions of the Owyhee Foothills, and Highway 95 forms the western boundary. Elevations range from approximately 2,200 feet in the flats to 3,356 feet near Alkali Spring in the southwest corner of the allotment. The BLM administers 78 percent (7,989 acres) of the 10,224 acres in the allotment, with state and private control of less than 1 percent (24 acres) and 22 percent (2,211 acres), respectively. A five-pasture rotation has been the normal livestock operation in this allotment and usually starts around mid-March and May; winter use occurs in pasture 6 during December. See Map 3.

Sands Basin Allotment

The Sands Basin allotment is located in western Owyhee County, Idaho, approximately 15 miles south of Homedale, Idaho (Map 4). The allotment lies on the western end of the Owyhee Mountains and includes Sands Basin itself. Strodes Basin and Poison Creek allotments form the northern boundary, the Rockville allotment forms the eastern and southern boundaries, and the Oregon state line forms the western boundary. Elevations range from 3,800 feet along Jump Creek to over 5,100 feet in pasture 4. This four-pasture allotment is grazed April through May, with winter grazing occurring in pasture 2 during November. The BLM administers 80 percent (10,861 acres) of the 13,522 acres in the allotment, with state and private control of 9 percent (1,279 acres) and 10 percent (1,382 acres), respectively. The Sands Basin allotment also serves as the Sands Basin Wild Horse Management Area. In accordance with the 1999 ORMP, the appropriate management level (AML) is 49 horses, but the population may range from 33 to 64 horses in any given year. See Map 4.

Texas Basin FFR Allotment[6]

The Texas Basin FFR allotment is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Jordan Valley, Oregon, in Owyhee County, Idaho, and consists of two pastures. The allotment has 91 acres of public land and 1,906 acres of private land, for a total of 1,997 acres (5 percent public land, 95 percent private land). Because this allotment includes a large acreage of private land, under the current permit, the livestock numbers and dates have varied annually as determined by the permittee, provided that the 5 animal unit months (AUMs) permitted were not exceeded and unacceptable impacts to public land resources did not occur. See Map 5.

The Jump allotments lie within the Owyhee Uplands, a sagebrush steppe semi-arid landscape of shrubs and widely spaced bunchgrasses and native vegetation communities. Limited precipitation with cold winters and dry summers constrain plant and animal communities. Where deeper soils exist, the native vegetation is primarily Wyoming big sagebrush with an understory of native perennial bunchgrasses. Low sagebrush can be found in areas of shallow soils with the same native perennial bunchgrass understory. The effective average annual precipitation for these vegetation communities is approximately 8 inches for the drier sites and 13 inches for the more moist sites; precipitation occurs primarily during the winter.[7]

Current Grazing Authorization

You currently graze livestock on the Jump allotments pursuant to a grazing permit issued by the BLM. The terms and conditions of that grazing permit are as follows:

[6] 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.

[7] For more detailed discussion, please refer to the affected environment sections of EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS.

Table LVST-1: Terms and conditions for Chipmunk Grazing Association

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00514 Alkali-Wildcat	234	Cattle	4/1	5/31	100	Active	469
00523 Chipmunk Field FFR	71	Cattle	12/01	12/31	100	Active	72
00513 Elephant Butte	21 21	Cattle Cattle	04/01 11/1	5/31 12/31	100 100	Active	85
00522 Rats Nest	323	Cattle	4/1	5/27	92	Active	557
00521 Sands Basin	600 123	Cattle Cattle	4/1 10/1	6/5 10/31	70 70	Active	999
00472 Texas Basin	5	Cattle	12/1	12/31	100	Active	5

Other terms and conditions:

1. The number of livestock and the season of use on the fenced federal range (FFR) allotments are at the permittee's discretion.
2. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
3. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
4. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.
8. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
9. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreement and range improvement permit in which you are a signatory or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within designated Wilderness requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
10. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
11. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of $25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed $250.00. 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)(1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR § 4150.1 and § 4160.1.

12. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
13. A minimum 4-inch stubble height will be left on herbaceous vegetation within the riparian area along 0.75 miles of Jump Creek at the end of the growing season.
14. Early use (March 1 to March 31) may be authorized on an annual basis in the Elephant Butte allotment.
15. Gates in management fences located inside wild horse herd management areas will be opened within 15 days after the authorized grazing period.
16. Fall use (October 1 to November 30) may be authorized on an annual basis in the Sands Basin allotment.

Table LVST-2: Terms and conditions for Ted Blackstock

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00514 Alkali-Wildcat	77	Cattle	4/1	5/31	100	Active	155
00513 Elephant Butte	67 86	Cattle Cattle	3/15 11/1	5/31 12/31	88 88	Active	305

Other terms and conditions:

1. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
2. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
4. 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.
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. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.
7. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreement and range improvement permit in which you are a signatory or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within designated Wilderness requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
9. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
10. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of $25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed $250.00. 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) (1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR § 4150.1 and § 4160.1.

11. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
12. A minimum 4-inch stubble height will be left on herbaceous vegetation within the riparian area along 0.75 miles of Jump Creek at the end of the growing season.
13. Early use (March 1 to March 31) may be authorized on an annual basis in the Elephant Butte allotment.

As part of a settlement agreement, the following additional terms and conditions were added to the above permits in March of 2000:

- 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;
- 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;
- 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
- Stream bank damage attributable to grazing livestock will be less than 10 percent on a stream segment.

The current permit authorizes annual use as seen in Table 3, below. However, based on recent management actions over the last ten years, it is clear that in most years you have used the allotment with different livestock numbers and seasons compared to the numbers and dates identified in the Mandatory Terms and Conditions, utilizing the flexibility that was authorized in the grazing permit resulting in average actual use.

Table LVST-3: Average actual use compared to active use AUMs

Allotment Name	Baseline Active AUMs	Average Actual Use	Percent Difference Active vs. Average Actual Use AUMs
Alkali-Wildcat	624	312	-50%
Chipmunk Field FFR	72	72	0%
Elephant Butte	390	320	-18%
Rats Nest	557	458	-18%
Sands Basin	999	883	-12%
Texas Basin FFR	5	5	0%

Actual use is important when considering the renewal of a grazing permit because it was actual use rather than authorized levels of use that resulted in current conditions on the allotments. In other words, the current condition of the allotments is not the result of what was authorized under the current permit, but rather is the result of a varied number of AUMs and seasons of use over the past several years.

Resource Conditions

The BLM completed rangeland health assessments, evaluations, specialist reports and determinations for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest, Elephant Butte, and Sands Basin allotments in 2013 and for the

Chipmunk Field FFR and Texas Basin FFR allotments in 2007. Those documents concluded that some of the resources on these allotments were not meeting the Idaho S&Gs.

The Alkali-Wildcat allotment is used as a single pasture. Standards 1 and 4 are not being met, and livestock grazing is not a causal factor. Standards 2, 3, and 8 are not being met and current livestock grazing is a causal factor. Standard 7 is being met; Standards 5 and 6 are not applicable to this allotment.

The Rats Nest allotment consists of a single pasture. Standard 7 applies to the Rats Nest allotment and is being met. Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 are not being met, and current livestock grazing and wild horse use are causal factors. Standards 5 and 6 are not applicable to this allotment.

The Chipmunk Field FFR allotment has one pasture. Standards 1, 4, and 8 are being met, and Standards 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 do not apply to this allotment.

The Elephant Butte allotment has five pastures. Standards 2, 3, and 7 apply to the Elephant Butte allotment and are being met. Standards 1, 6, and 8 are not being met and current livestock grazing is a causal factor. Standards 4 and 5 are not applicable to this allotment.

The Sands Basin allotment has four pastures. Standard 5 applies to the Sands Basin allotment and is being met in pastures 1 and 2. Standards 1, 2, 3, 4 (pasture 4), 6 (pasture 3), 7, and 8 are not being met, and current livestock grazing practices and wild horse use are significant causal factors.

The Texas Basin FFR allotment has two pastures, and Standards 1, 4, and 8 are being met. Standards 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 do not apply to this allotment.

Alkali-Wildcat Allotment

Soils – Uplands

Historic livestock grazing management practices, wildfire, and exotic species are significant causal factors for not meeting watershed standards in the Alkali-Wildcat allotment. Accelerated soil erosion, such as water flow patterns and pedestalled bunchgrasses, reflect a decrease in watershed function and are primarily associated with historic grazing practices. Ground cover trend is inconclusive due to high variability, although one site was influenced by a fire in the 1960s and may still lack proper protection.

Much of the decline in soil stability and hydrologic function can be associated with a change in deep-rooted bunchgrasses, like bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), to more shallow-rooted species, such as Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). The lack of species diversity and the localized invasion of annuals have compromised soil nutrient replenishment. This decreased ecological function leads to a lack of capacity for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow, and indicates soil and hydrologic function are compromised from historic livestock grazing such that the Alkali-Wildcat allotment is not meeting Standard 1.

Vegetation – Uplands [8]

Approximately 65 percent of this one-pasture allotment has burned since the early 1960s, with the most recent fire in 2012. Post-fire seeding occurred in the 1960s, with only remnant crested wheatgrass remaining. This allotment is dominated by a sagebrush/rabbitbrush overstory, with Sandberg bluegrass and invasive annuals co-dominating the understory and bluebunch wheatgrass a minor component. Historic

[8] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.1 and Appendix E.

grazing practices, wildfire, and exotic vegetation are the drivers in failing to meet Standard 4. The Rangeland Health Field Assessment (RHFA) data for the allotment identify a shift toward shallower-rooted bunchgrasses and evidence of soil surface erosion contributing to the departure from site potential and a lack of ecological balance. Trend data support RHFA findings with a documented short-term increase of annual grasses and sprouting shrubs.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas[9]

Alkali-Wildcat is a one-pasture allotment and is not meeting Standards 2 and 3 because of current livestock grazing. Jump Creek, its tributaries, and the tributaries of Squaw Creek are the primary drainages in the Alkali-Wildcat allotment that support riparian-wetland vegetation. Approximately 3.0 total miles of Jump Creek exist within the allotment. As was analyzed in the EIS (Section 3.5.1), approximately 0.75 perennial miles were assessed, rated as being functional at-risk (FAR) and determined not to be meeting Standards 2 and 3. Additionally, Wildcat Spring (a previously developed spring) was determined not to be meeting Standards 2 and 3 because the spring has lost its form and function as a riparian-wetland area and lacks hydric vegetation due to continuous livestock grazing. BLM determined that the FAR-rated reaches of Jump Creek and all of Wildcat Spring are not meeting the Standards, and current livestock grazing management practices are a significant causal factor because continuous spring (April 1 and May 31) grazing is occurring and no deferment or rest treatments have been incorporated as part of a grazing rotation. In addition, Jump Creek and Wildcat Spring primarily serve as the only reliable livestock water during the grazing season and are being heavily utilized annually.

Current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting Standards 2 and 3. The grazing schedules that have been implemented in recent years have not provided rest years, there have been relatively high stocking levels, and the residual vegetation has not been sufficient to maintain or improve riparian-wetland function. Livestock developments were not designed to protect the riparian-wetland water source, and the streams lack the hydric vegetative cover and bank-stabilizing species necessary for the maintenance of stable stream channels.

Standard 7 is being met because none of the streams that occur within the allotment are on IDEQ's 303(d) list of impaired waters.

Special Status Plants[10]

No special status plants are known to occur on the Alkali-Wildcat allotment; therefore this will not be discussed further for this allotment.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[11]

This allotment is managed as a native plant community and is not meeting Standard 4. The combination of historic grazing, invasion of exotic annual grasses, and wildfire have resulted in the vegetation community transitioning from a reference site community of perennial grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass) to a less-desirable community of more grazing-tolerant species such as Sandberg bluegrass and cheatgrass (see Standard 4). This transition exposes the understory and reduces effective nesting, escape, hiding, travel, and foraging cover values for all wildlife associated with sagebrush steppe communities. Because upland habitat

[9] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.5.1 and Appendix E.
[10] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.
[11] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

values are changing to a less-desirable vegetation state, this allotment is failing to provide adequate upland habitat conditions for sagebrush steppe-associated wildlife and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Riparian Habitat

This allotment was determined to be failing Standards 2 and 3 because streams and springs within this allotment are not properly functioning due to current grazing practices (see riparian discussion above). Standard 7 is meeting water quality requirements. Streams, springs, and wetlands that are non-functional (NF) or are FAR are lacking adequate riparian vegetation composition and distribution to provide the structure and function to support a productive environment. Because Standards 2 and 3 are not being met, this allotment is failing to provide adequate riparian habitat conditions for aquatic and terrestrial species and is therefore not meeting Standard 8.

Focal Species

Ninety-one percent of this allotment falls within modeled preliminary priority habitat (PPH)/priority general habitat (PGH) for sage-grouse. A total of two sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments were collected in 2012 and indicated:

- Pasture 1 - Providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions for sage-grouse;

The unsuitable rating is due to the lack of large deep-rooted perennial grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass) in the understory. This condition fails to provide the understory composition and structure for effective nesting, security, and foraging cover values for sage-grouse. This allotment is failing to provide suitable sage-grouse habitat conditions, as indicated by the upland vegetation problems (including a dominance of exotic annuals) that have led to a failure to meet Standard 4, and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Columbia River redband trout are known to occur within the Jump Creek system. Evaluation of Standards 2 and 3 identified streams and springs within this system that are not properly functioning due to current grazing practices (see riparian discussion above). Redband trout require intact channels with well-developed riparian communities that stabilize banks to minimize erosion and create undercuts, minimize impacts of flood events and filter sediments, provide shade to reduce water temperatures, and contribute woody debris to create channel structure and regulate seasonal flows. Because these in-stream and near-stream habitat characteristics are not fully represented, this allotment is not providing adequate riparian conditions to sustain viable populations of redband trout and is therefore not meeting Standard 8.

Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment

Soils – Uplands

The 2006 rangeland health evaluation indicated that slight water flow patterns, pedestaling, terracettes, and plant litter movement were observed at the evaluation site. The remainders of the indicators for Standard 1 rated as a none-to-slight departure from expected conditions and were nearly as expected for proper functioning conditions at the ecological site.

Vegetation – Uplands [12]

This one-pasture allotment is dominated by native plant communities and is meeting Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities). The dominant visual aspect is a mix of mountain big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, and rabbitbrush, with a bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, squirreltail, and Sandberg bluegrass understory. Some cheatgrass is present; however, the native plant community is vigorous and healthy and

[12] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.1 and Appendix E.

able to compete for resources. All indicators of biotic integrity are near expected conditions for this ecological site.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas
No riparian resources are found on the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment.

Special Status Plants[13]
Soft blazingstar is known to occur within this allotment, although the condition of the occurrence is unknown. Although cattle have been known to occasionally graze this species, it is likely marginally palatable and occurs on sparsely vegetated fragile soil inclusions; therefore, it is unlikely to be impacted by livestock herbivory. The native plant community is being maintained, and thus, it is expected that the habitat of this species is being maintained. Therefore, even though the condition of the occurrence is unknown, it is unlikely this species is impacted by livestock grazing other than trailing.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[14]
There is no site-specific wildlife assessment information available for this allotment; however, given that there is no wildlife habitat information available to aid in characterizing condition of composition and structure (i.e., sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments), and absent any information to the contrary, BLM resource specialists have concluded that because Standard 4 is being met (there is a mix of mountain big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, and rabbitbrush, with a bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, squirreltail, and Sandberg bluegrass understory), the native plant community is providing adequate upland overstory/understory composition and structure for identified focal and other shrub steppe associated species and is thus meeting Standard 8.

Elephant Butte Allotment

Soils – Uplands
This is a five-pasture allotment. Current livestock grazing management is a significant causal factor for not meeting upland watershed Standard 1 in portions of pasture 2. Signs of increased erosion, such as water flow patterns and pedestaled bunchgrasses, reflect a decrease in watershed function, while short-term declines in more durable soil cover are evident in microbiotic crusts, rocks, gravel, and persistent litter. A decline in soil structure, organic matter, and non-persistent litter, along with an increase in bare ground, are also apparent. Although native plant conditions are noted to be in excellent condition along some steeper slopes within pasture 2, the more easily accessible lower elevations and gentler grades display a decline in watershed function. With actual use occurring during the spring and winter, wet soils are especially susceptible to mechanical damage and to increasing bare ground. Livestock grazing under wet conditions has thus been the main cause for the physical impacts to soils.

Aside from pasture 2, RHFAs for the allotment show very little to no distinct physical degradation for watershed indicators because most surfaces in the allotment have a high rock and gravel content that protect soils from erosional forces. That is especially the case on the calcareous soils of the salt shrub desert along the gently sloping to flat alluvial plains above the Snake River valley.

[13] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.
[14] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

Vegetation – Uplands
The dominating presence of non-native annual weeds is the determining factor for evaluating the rangeland health of the Elephant Butte allotment under Standard 6 (Exotic Plant Communities). Fire has affected all pastures except pasture 4. Pasture 1 was mildly affected by fire in the 1980s, with only 3 percent burned. Approximately 18 percent of pasture 3 burned in 2002. Pastures 2 and 5 have had multiple fires throughout several years, with 67 percent and 57 percent of the area burned, respectively. There is no record of post-fire seeding occurring within the allotment. Invasive annuals dominate the understory of these pastures, with a subdominant overstory of mixed shrubs consisting of Wyoming big sagebrush, shadscale saltbush, spiny hopsage, or budsage. Remnant native vegetation is being maintained in pastures 1, 3, 4, and 5, and these pastures are meeting Standard 6. Perennial grasses and annual weeds are static, according to trend data, and shrub cover is declining. Pasture 2 is not meeting Standard 6, and current grazing management practices have been identified as a significant causal factor due to mechanical damage during spring use (see soil discussion above). Recent data show remnant native populations are degraded, although some native species populations in higher elevation are in excellent condition. Trend data within the native vegetation show a significant increase in cheatgrass in the short term and a static trend in perennial grasses. Shrub cover is decreasing for shadscale saltbush and increasing at one site for low sagebrush. Whitetop is present at one site in pasture 2, has been chemically treated, and will continue to be monitored and treated as a part of the Boise District weed program. This noxious weed site is not a factor in the pasture failing to meet Standard 6.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas
Approximately 0.5 perennial miles of Squaw Creek occur in pasture 2 of the allotment. The stream is inaccessible to livestock and has twice been assessed in proper functioning condition (PFC). The two springs that occur in pastures 2 and 3 are developed, with the water source supplying cattle troughs. The riparian-wetland areas that are associated with the springs/seeps have lost their form and function and were not assessed using the PFC protocol. The two areas are currently occupied by upland species and weeds. Standard 7 is being met because IDEQ has identified that all of the streams that traverse BLM lands within the allotment are fully supporting the beneficial uses assigned to the watershed. Therefore, it was determined that current livestock grazing management practices conform with the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management applicable to Standards 2, 3, and 7.

Special Status Plants[15]
There are six special status plants known to occur within this allotment. Cusick's pincushion (*Chaenactis cusickii*) and soft blazingstar (*Mentzelia mollis*) are co-located within the same habitat in pasture 3. Cusick's pincushion is also known to occur in pasture 5. Idaho milkvetch (*Astragalus conjunctus*) occurs in the southern portion of pasture 2. Malheur cryptantha (*Cryptantha propria*), false naked buckwheat (*Eriogonum novonudum*), and Antelope Valley beardtongue (*Penstemon janishiae*) all occur in the same general area in pasture 2.

Livestock present no threats to soft blazingstar and Cusick's pincushion on this allotment. However, this Standard is not being met due to extensive OHV and trash dumping impacts within the habitats of Cusick's pincushion and soft blazingstar in pasture 3.

The Idaho milkvetch population is in good condition and the Standard is being met for this specific species.

[15] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.

The habitats of Malheur cryptantha, false naked buckwheat, and Antelope Valley beardtongue are generally intact. Livestock impacts are limited within these habitats due to the lack of forage within the unique soil inclusions. This Standard is being met for these species' habitats.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[16]
Pastures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are managed as exotic pastures. Upland habitats managed under Standard 6 do not meet the requirements of Standard 8. Due to current livestock grazing and the dominance of exotic species in this allotment, vegetation composition, structure, and function are lacking or absent in these communities and have substantially reduced effective nesting, hiding, escape, travel, and foraging cover values for all upland wildlife species. These exotic communities further create large open spaces, diminish habitat connectivity, and increase sagebrush community fragmentation.

Focal Species

Twenty-two percent of this allotment falls within modeled PPH/PGH habitat for sage-grouse. A total of five sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments collected from 2009 to 2012 indicated:

- Pasture 1 - Non-habitat for sage-grouse
- Pasture 2 - Northern portion: non-habitat for sage-grouse; southern portion: providing suitable breeding habitat conditions
- Pasture 3 - Non-habitat for sage-grouse
- Pasture 4 - Non-habitat for sage-grouse
- Pasture 5 - Non-habitat for sage-grouse

A majority of the acreage in this allotment is non-habitat for sage-grouse because the shadscale/cheatgrass plant community does not provide adequate habitat composition, structure and function. This is also consistent with PPH/PGH modeling map that identifies that 78 percent of this allotment is outside the range of sage-grouse habitat. However, in the remaining 22 percent of the allotment, the southern portion of pasture 2 increases in elevation and the sagebrush community becomes more favorable with a desirable canopy cover of bluebunch wheatgrass in the understory. Sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments recorded that this southern portion of the pasture is providing favorable overstory/understory composition of sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass for effective nesting, escape, security, and foraging cover for sage-grouse.

Rats Nest Allotment

Soils – Uplands
Current livestock grazing management practices and wild horses are significant causal factors for not meeting upland watershed Standard 1 in the Rats Nest allotment. Based on the declining conditions reflected in the available trend data, portions of the Rats Nest allotment are not maintaining adequate nutrient, energy, and hydrologic function.

Although rangeland health field assessments identified no soil or hydrologic concerns, contrasting results from four trend sites resulted in higher departure ratings, with bare ground increasing over the short and long term. This undesirable presence of unprotected soils, paired with a decrease in protective non-persistent litter, show that a decline in litter producing deep-rooted bunchgrasses and other vegetation is taking place. There is little indication of improvement for larger vegetation and associated soil and

[16] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

hydrologic function. In pasture 4, signs of increased erosion, such as water flow patterns and historic and active pedestaled bunchgrasses, reflect a decrease in watershed function. Soil surface resistance to erosion is reduced, especially where native deep-rooted bunchgrasses are missing and where interspaces are not stabilized by persistent cover. Observations during a field trip in 2012 confirmed these impacts, along with mechanical damage from hoof action, increased water flow patterns, soil surface sealing, and an absence of microbiotic crusts.

Year-round wild horse grazing and prolonged impacts from the 1972 Alkali Springs fire also contribute to reduced soil and hydrologic function. Even after four decades, a very distinct dominance of rabbitbrush and lack of sagebrush structural groups is present. The decreased ecological function and impaired soils resulting from repeated spring use in the absence of rest indicate that soil and hydrologic function are compromised and that livestock management is a significant causal factor for not meeting Standard 1 in the Rats Nest allotment.

Vegetation – Uplands
Approximately 57 percent of this allotment has been affected by wildfire since the 1970s. This allotment is predominately sagebrush overstory with Sandberg bluegrass understory. Invasive annual grass species are present in trace amounts. Although the RHFA data indicate only a slight to moderate reduction in deep-rooted bunchgrasses, the trend data identify an apparent decrease in deep-rooted bunchgrasses and shrub density at all sites and an increase of invasive annual weeds at half of the sites. Livestock grazing during the critical growing period and season-long wild horse grazing are causal factors for failing to meet Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities). Russian olive and tamarisk are present in the northernmost portion of the allotment. These sites are currently being treated as part of the Boise District weed program monitoring and treatment program and will continue to be treated in the future.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas[17]
Squaw Creek and Rats Nest Gulch are the primary drainages in the Rats Nest allotment that support riparian-wetland vegetation. About 3.5 miles of Rats Nest Gulch were determined to be FAR because there was a high (more than 30 percent) proportion of noxious weeds present, lateral cutting of the stream channel was occurring, and there was a lack of deep-rooted plant species. The three springs that have been evaluated range from NF to FAR. Coyote Spring was recently re-assessed as FAR with a downward trend because there were sloughing and erosion impacts occurring from livestock trailing and hoof shearing; the spring is developed, with the trough placed at the spring source. Upper Rats Nest Spring was rated NF because the riparian-wetland area has lost its extent, form, and function, and there are no hydric species present or the saturated soils to support them.

Current livestock grazing management practices and wild horses are significant causal factors for not meeting Standards 2 and 3. The grazing schedules that have been implemented in recent years have not provided rest years, and the residual vegetation has not been sufficient to maintain or improve riparian-wetland function. Therefore, current livestock grazing management practices do not conform to the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management applicable to Standards 2 and 3.

Standard 7 is currently being met in the Rats Nest allotment because the streams are fully supporting the watershed's beneficial uses.

[17] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.5.1 and Appendix E.

Special Status Plants[18]
Idaho milkvetch is the only special status plant known to occur within this allotment, and only at one occurrence. Although this occurrence is currently experiencing impacts from wild horses, the site is being maintained.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[19]

Upland Habitat
The Rats Nest allotment is managed as a native plant community and was determined to be failing to meet Standard 4 due to current livestock grazing practices and wild horses. Evaluation under Standard 4 determined that the vegetation community is transitioning from a reference site community of robust perennial grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass) to a less-desirable community of more grazing-tolerant species such as Sandberg bluegrass and cheatgrass. This transition exposes the understory and reduces effective nesting, escape, hiding, travel, and foraging cover values for all wildlife associated with sagebrush steppe communities. The data show that the upland community is changing to a less-desirable vegetation state; thus, this allotment is failing to provide adequate upland habitat conditions for sagebrush steppe wildlife species and therefore is not meeting Standard 8. In addition, the interior 12 percent of this pasture is dominated by annual grasses (i.e., cheatgrass), reducing habitat connectivity and fragmenting sagebrush steppe community.

Riparian Habitat
Evaluation under Standards 2 and 3 identified streams and springs within this allotment that are not properly functioning due to current livestock grazing practices and wild horses. Streams, springs, and wetlands that are NF or are FAR are lacking adequate riparian vegetation composition and distribution to provide the structure and function to support a productive environment. As Standards 2 and 3 are not being met, this allotment is failing to provide adequate habitat conditions to support viable aquatic and terrestrial species populations and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Focal Species
Fifty-nine percent of this allotment falls within modeled PPH/PGH habitat for sage-grouse. A total of eight sage-grouse breeding assessments collected in 2012 identified:

- Pasture 1 - Providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions for sage-grouse;

The primary cause for not meeting sage-grouse habitat criteria is reduced canopy cover and height of large deep-rooted perennial grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue) in the understory, indicating that functional nesting, brood-rearing, escape, and hiding cover values are not fully being provided in these pastures. In addition, the plant community's transition from the reference community to more grazing-tolerant species such as Sandberg bluegrass and cheatgrass further reduces understory cover values for sage-grouse. The presence of annual grassland areas in the interior of the pasture further reduces habitat values by fragmenting the sagebrush community and reducing patch connectivity. Overall, this allotment is failing to provide adequate sage-grouse habitat conditions and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Columbia River redband trout are known to occur within the Squaw Creek system. Standards 2 and 3 identified streams and springs within this system that are not properly functioning or meeting water quality

[18] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.
[19] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

parameters due to wild horses and current livestock grazing practices. Redband trout require intact channels with well-developed riparian communities that stabilize banks to minimize erosion and create undercuts, minimize impacts of flood events and filters sediments, provide shade to reduce water temperatures, and contribute woody debris to create channel structure and regulate seasonal flow. Because these in-stream and near-stream habitat characteristics are not fully represented, this allotment is not providing adequate riparian conditions to sustain viable populations of redband trout and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Sands Basin Allotment

Soils – Uplands

Current livestock grazing management practices and wild horse use are significant causal factors for not meeting upland watershed Standard 1 in pastures 3 and 4; pastures 1 and 2 are meeting the Standard. Although soil conditions in pasture 3 are fairly stable, there is an extreme decline in hydrologic function related to invasive annuals. Indicators of hydrologic function associated with litter amount and plant community composition and distribution are compromised in pasture 3 and portions of pasture 4, especially when associated with an unusually thick and extensive cover of silica-rich medusahead litter that is altering the moisture and nutrient regime of the soils. As a result, this direct relationship between soil and overall biotic integrity is at an extreme departure due to a lack of species diversity and dominance of invasive grasses that adversely affect soil and hydrologic function.

In pasture 4, signs of increased erosion, such as water flow patterns and historic and active pedestaled bunchgrasses, reflect a decrease in watershed function. Soil surface resistance to erosion is reduced, especially where native deep-rooted bunchgrasses are missing and where interspaces are not stabilized by persistent cover. Observations during a field trip in 2012 confirmed the above stated impacts along with mechanical damage from hoof action, increased water flow patterns, soil surface sealing, and absent microbiotic crusts. The decreased ecological function and impaired soils, the result of year-long wild horse grazing, and repeated spring use by livestock in the absence of rest, indicate that soil and hydrologic function are compromised and current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting Standard 1 in the Sands Basin allotment.

Vegetation - Uplands

Of the four pastures in the Sands Basin allotment, pastures 1 and 2 are dominated by range seedings, and pasture 4 is dominated by native plant communities. Much of pasture 3 has been seeded, but both the seeded and unseeded areas have been substantially invaded by annual grasses. Therefore, pastures 1 and 2 were evaluated under and are meeting Standard 5 (Seedings), pasture 3 was evaluated under and is failing to meet Standard 6 (Exotic Plant Communities) and pasture 4 was evaluated under and is failing to meet Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities).

Pastures 1 and 2: These pastures are meeting Standard 5 (Seedings). Most of pasture 1 burned in 1960 and was aerially seeded after the fire. In pasture 1, Wyoming big sagebrush and rabbitbrush are dominant, with crested wheatgrass between shrubs. Few forbs and native grasses are present. In pasture 1, trend in perennial grasses is mostly static, but an increased occurrence of cheatgrass has been detected in recent years. A majority of pasture 2 was burned and drill-seeded with crested wheatgrass in the early 1980s. Pasture 2 has a diversity of native perennial shrubs, forbs, and grasses intermixed with crested wheatgrass. Cheatgrass is found in patches on one side of the pasture. In pasture 2, both bluebunch wheatgrass and crested wheatgrass have declined since 1988, while Sandberg bluegrass has remained static. The density and frequency of shrubs, including Wyoming big sagebrush, low sagebrush, and rabbitbrush, have increased.

Pasture 3: In 2002, this pasture burned almost in entirety and was seeded after the fire. However, since treatment, this pasture has been substantially invaded by annual weeds, which now make up the dominant

vegetation in much of the pasture. While there are some inclusions of intact seedings and native communities within pasture 3, the biotic integrity of the pasture has been dramatically compromised due to the dominance of exotic annual species and season-long wild horse use and fire. This pasture is not meeting Standard 6 (Exotic Plant Communities, other than Seedings). Species diversity is low, with trend data reflecting a decline in perennial grasses and shrubs and an increase in annual grasses. Noxious weeds, including Canada thistle and Russian olive, have been chemically treated in this pasture and will continue to be monitored and treated as a part of the Boise District weed program.

Pasture 4: Pasture 4 was evaluated under Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities) and found not to be meeting the Standard, with current grazing management practices identified as a primary causal factor due to spring and fall cattle use, coupled with season-long wild horse use. Wildfire also contributed as a causal factor, to a lesser degree. The majority of this pasture burned in the 1960s and was subsequently seeded with crested wheatgrass. The 2002 Trimbly fire affected approximately15 percent of the pasture, which was treated with a native seed mix. The existing condition for most of the pasture is dominated by a sagebrush/rabbitbrush overstory and Sandberg bluegrass, with invasive annuals scattered throughout the understory, according to the Trimbly fire ESR (USDI BLM, 2005). Trend data show a decline in sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and squirreltail, but an increased occurrence of rabbitbrush has been detected in the most recent years. Noxious weeds including puncture vine, purple loosestrife, and whitetop have been chemically treated in this pasture and will continue to be monitored and treated as a part of the Boise District weed program.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas
Standards 2 and 3 are not applicable to pastures 1 and 3 of the Sands Basin; however they are applicable to pastures 2 and 4, which are not meeting the Standards because of current livestock and wild horse grazing.

Jump Creek is the primary perennial drainage in the Sands Basin allotment that supports riparian-wetland vegetation. The stream traverses both BLM and private lands in pastures 2 and 4. About 1.0 mile of Jump Creek that traverses BLM lands was determined to be FAR because there were insufficient deep-rooted, bank-stabilizing plant species present to protect the system during high flows. Sands Basin Spring Complex was rated FAR based on the presence of headcuts that compromise the vertical stability of the wet meadow area. The grazing schedules that have been implemented in recent years have not provided rest years, and the residual vegetation has not been sufficient to maintain or improve riparian-wetland function. Year-long wild horse and current livestock grazing management practices have not provided for meeting Idaho's water quality Standards.

Standard 7 is currently not being met in pasture 4 of the Sands Basin allotment, and the streams that occur on BLM land are not in conformance with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management because the streams are 303(d) listed for sediment and temperature. The Standard is being met in pastures 1, 2, and 3 because the streams have been de-listed for sediment and are not 303(d) listed for flow alteration.

Special Status Plants[20]
No special status plants are known to occur on Sands Basin allotment; therefore, this will not be discussed further for this allotment.

[20] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[21]

Uplands

Pastures 1 and 2 are managed as seedings and meeting Standard 5. However, pastures 1 and 2 have inadequate sagebrush occurrence in the overstory and reduced occurrence, structure, and function of perennial grasses and forbs in the understory. It can be anticipated that habitat conditions may improve as sagebrush recolonizes the seedings and diversifies the plant community. However, at this time, pastures 1 and 2 are failing to provide a full complement of upland habitat overstory/understory conditions for most sagebrush steppe wildlife and therefore are not meeting Standard 8.

Pasture 3 is managed as an exotic plant community due to the dominance of cheatgrass and medusahead. Upland habitats managed under Standard 6 frequently do not meet the requirements of Standard 8. Vegetation composition, structure, and function are lacking or absent in these communities substantially reducing effective nesting, hiding, escape, travel, and foraging cover values for all upland wildlife species. These exotic communities further create large open spaces, diminish habitat connectivity, and increase sagebrush community fragmentation.

Pasture 4 is managed as a native plant community but has been determined not to be meeting Standard 4 due to wild horses and current livestock grazing practices. Currently, there is a shift in the potential plant community from a Wyoming sagebrush/bluebunch reference community to a Wyoming sagebrush/Sandberg-cheatgrass community. The downward trend in plant community composition is favoring shallow-rooted grass species that do not provide a robust growth form or structure to provide an effective interface of overstory and understory plant composition, structure, and function for sagebrush steppe dependent species. Based on the downward trend and shift in the plant community, therefore, this allotment is failing to provide adequate upland habitat conditions for sagebrush steppe species and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Riparian Habitat

The determination for the Sands Basin allotment found that Standards 2, 3, and 7 were not met, because streams and springs are not properly functioning or meeting water quality parameters, resulting from current grazing practices and wild horses. Streams, springs, and wetlands that are FAR lack adequate riparian vegetation composition and distribution to provide the structure and function to support a productive environment. As Standards 2, 3, and 7 are not being met, the allotment is failing to provide adequate riparian conditions to support viable aquatic and terrestrial species populations and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Focal Species

The entire allotment falls within modeled PPH/PGH habitat for sage-grouse. A total of 23 sage-grouse breeding and late brood-rearing habitat assessments collected from 2000 to 2012 identified:

- Pasture 1 - Providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions;
- Pasture 2 - Providing marginal breeding and suitable late brood-rearing habitat conditions (mesic habitat assessment);
- Pasture 3 - Providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions;
- Pasture 4 - Providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions.

[21] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

All of the pastures within this allotment are failing to provide suitable breeding habitat conditions for sage-grouse. Pastures 1 and 2 were rated as unsuitable and marginal due to less-than-desirable height (pasture 1) and canopy cover (pasture 2) of large perennial grasses and forbs. However, in pasture 2, the unsuitable rating was driven by habitat conditions in the lower basin that were more deficient than suitable conditions on the upper slopes. Because these pastures are failing to provide adequate sage-grouse habitat conditions, the allotment is not meeting Standard 8.

Pasture 3 was determined to be providing unsuitable breeding habitat conditions due to less-than-desirable canopy cover of large perennial grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass). In addition, pasture 3 is managed as an exotic plant community, which characteristically has reduced habitat quality, reduced connectivity, and increased sagebrush community fragmentation. In addition, pasture 4 was determined to be providing less than desirable canopy cover and height of large perennial grasses. Although sagebrush overstory conditions were variable, undesirable nesting, hiding, and foraging cover values in the understory are occurring in these pastures. Therefore this allotment is failing to provide adequate habitat condition for sage-grouse and is not meeting Standard 8.

Columbia River redband trout are known to occur within the Jump Creek system. Analysis under Standards 2, 3, and 7 identified streams and springs within these systems that are not properly functioning or meeting water quality parameters due to current grazing practices. Redband trout require intact channels with well-developed riparian communities that stabilize banks to minimize erosion and create undercuts, minimize impacts of flood events and filters sediments, provide shade to reduce water temperatures, and contribute woody debris to create channel structure and regulate seasonal flow. Because these in-stream and near-stream habitat characteristics are not fully represented, this allotment is not providing adequate riparian conditions to sustain viable populations of redband trout and therefore is not meeting Standard 8.

Texas Basin FFR Allotment

Soils – Uplands

Rangeland health field evaluations indicate that soils are protected by rock and gravel, limiting the amount of bare soil. There were no gullies or rills observed. Some pedestaling was observed on bluegrass plants with exposed roots, indicating recent soil loss. The resistance to soil surface erosion matches that expected for the site, due to abundant rock and gravel.

Vegetation – Uplands

This one-pasture allotment is dominated by native plant communities and is meeting Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities). The dominant visual aspect is a sagebrush overstory and a Sandberg bluegrass and bluebunch wheatgrass understory, with higher-than-expected shrub cover and scattered cheatgrass. Although bluebunch wheatgrass vigor appeared to be reduced, seedhead production of Sandberg bluegrass was observed. Little recruitment of interspatial bluebunch wheatgrass plants was observed. Livestock grazing occurs after the critical growth period of perennial grasses and appears to be appropriate to maintain soils, plant vigor and infiltration.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas[22]

No riparian resources are present on the Texas Basin FFR allotment.

[22] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.5.1 and Appendix E.

Special Status Plants[23]
No special status plants are known to occur on the Texas Basin FFR allotment; therefore this will not be discussed further for this allotment.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[24]

Uplands
This allotment is managed as a native plant community and is meeting Standard 4 (based on the 2007 Determination). Because Standard 4 is being met, an assumption is being made that at least minimally adequate upland habitat values occur and are meeting the needs of upland sagebrush/grass species and therefore is meeting Standard 8.

Focal Species
This entire allotment falls within PPH. Two sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments collected in 2012 indicated:

- Pasture 1 – Providing unsuitable sage-grouse breeding habitat conditions;
- Pasture 2 – Providing unsuitable sage-grouse breeding habitat conditions

In 2012, sage-grouse breeding habitat assessments were conducted and provided new information on spring habitat conditions. The assessments concluded that breeding habitat conditions in pastures 1 and 2 are unsuitable due to the reduced abundance of large perennial grasses that reduce the understory cover element and increase detection by predators. Standard 8 is not providing habitats suitable to maintain viable populations of threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species. This conclusion is inconsistent with the 2007 Determination that stated sage-grouse habitat conditions were suitable.

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

The BLM's 2013 Determination for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat), Chipmunk Field FFR, Elephant Butte, Sands Basin, and Texas Basin FFR allotments identified grazing management practices that did not conform to the BLM's Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Idaho. Specifically, grazing management did not conform to the following guidelines:

> *Guideline 1: Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote significant progress toward adequate amounts of ground cover (determined on an ecological site bases) to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture storage, and stabilize soils.*
>
> *Guideline 2: Locate livestock management facilities away from riparian areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian-wetland functions.*
>
> *Guideline 3: Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote soil conditions that support water infiltration, plant vigor, and permeability rates and minimize soil compaction appropriate to site potential.*
>
> *Guideline 4: Implement grazing management practices that provide periodic rest or deferment during critical growth stages to allow sufficient regrowth to achieve and maintain healthy, properly functioning conditions, including good plant vigor and adequate cover appropriate to site potential.*

[23] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.7.1 and Appendix E.
[24] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.1 and Appendix E.

Guideline 5: Maintain or promote grazing management practices that provide sufficient residual vegetation to improve, restore, or maintain healthy riparian-wetland functions and structure for energy dissipation, sediment capture, ground water recharge, streambank stability, and wildlife habitat appropriate to site potential.

Guideline 6: The development of springs, seeps, or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions, wildlife habitat, and significant cultural and historical/archaeological/paleontological values associated with the water source.

Guideline 7: Apply grazing management practices to maintain, promote, or progress toward appropriate stream channel and streambank morphology and functions. Adverse impacts due to livestock grazing will be addressed.

Guideline 10: Implement grazing management practices and/or facilities that provide for complying with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.

Table LVST-4: Evaluation of Standards and Guidelines under current BLM grazing management

Allotment	Standards Met	Standards not Met, but Making Significant Progress	Standards not Being Met	Standards not Being Met *and* Current Livestock Grazing Significant Causal Factor	Standards not Applicable	Guidelines
Alkali-Wildcat	7	None	1, 4	2, 3, 8	5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Chipmunk Field FFR	1, 4, 8	None	None	None	2,3,5,6,7	None
Elephant Butte	2, 3, 7	None	None	1, 6, 8	4, 5	1, 3
Rats Nest	7	None	None	1, 2, 3, 4, 8	5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Sands Basin	5	None	None	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8	None	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10
Texas Basin FFR	1, 4, 8	None	None	None	2,3,5,6,7	None

Since the Alkali-Wildcat, Elephant Butte, Rats Nest, and Sands Basin allotments are not meeting one or more of the Idaho S&Gs because of current livestock management practices, the BLM used these guidelines as a starting point for developing grazing schedules to bring the authorized actions within the allotment into compliance with resource objectives.

Issues[25]

Throughout the internal and external (public) scoping process and project development period, the BLM interdisciplinary team identified the following issues concerning livestock grazing management in one or more of the Chipmunk Group allotments:

1. Risk to California bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis california*; hereinafter, bighorn sheep) and domestic sheep: Evidence suggests that contact with domestic sheep can transmit disease, cause

[25] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 1.5.

mortality to bighorn sheep individuals, and reduce long-term herd health. The risk of contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep is considerable in the analysis area, and the effects to bighorn sheep are potentially significant.

2. Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*; hereinafter, 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.
3. Riparian vegetation conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Special Status Plant Species: Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.
7. Noxious and invasive weeds: Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.
8. Livestock trailing: Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds and riparian vegetation.
9. Socioeconomic impacts: Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.
10. Wildfire fuels: Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.
11. Climate Change: The issue of climate change and its relationship to the final federal action of renewing grazing permits is twofold. Livestock grazing in Owyhee County contributes CO2 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.
12. Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA): Livestock grazing competes with foraging and habitat of wild horses.

Analysis of Alternative Actions

The range of alternatives developed include: Alternative 1 – No Action/Current Condition, Alternative 2 – Permittee's Application, Alternative 5 – Sheep-to-Cattle Conversion (not applicable to these allotments), Alternative 6 – No Grazing, as well as Alternatives 3 and 4, which were developed based on resource constraints. These alternatives were developed in response to current conditions on the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest, Chipmunk Field FFR, Elephant Butte, Sands Basin, and Texas Basin FFR allotments and the issues identified above to ensure that any renewed grazing permit would result in maintaining good conditions and improving unsatisfactory conditions on the allotments. Overall, six alternatives were considered and analyzed in the EIS, with Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 considered in detail and analyzed for the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat), Elephant Butte, and Sands Basin allotments; Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6 for the Texas Basin FFR allotment; and Alternatives 1, 2 and 6 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment.

The following sections describe the general theme of each of the alternatives for the Jump allotments, for full details refer to the Chipmunk Group 2 Final EIS # DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS and Appendix D for full permittee proposals.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Alternative 1 would allow a continuation of your current management on the allotments. This includes flexibility in the FFR allotments that would authorize livestock grazing at your discretion. The Jump allotments would be authorized as described on your existing permit. Interim terms and conditions imposed by the U.S. District Court in February 29, 2000, are also included.

Alternative 2 – Permittee Applications[26]

Alternative 2 would authorize livestock grazing consistent with your application. The management on the Chipmunk and Texas Basin FFR allotments is based on percent public land and the season of use is described as March 1 through February 28, and livestock numbers and AUMs vary depending on total acres of unfenced BLM lands within the allotment boundaries.

Alternative 3 – Deferred Grazing[27]

Alternative 3 would utilize deferment, built around the application of resource constraints where there were issues and/or where Standards were not being met. Stubble height, browse (where applicable), streambank alteration in key riparian areas, and maintenance of perennial grass height on upland key species would be identified as terms and conditions.

Alternative 4 – Season-based[28]

The grazing schedules for the Jump allotments would include deferment and/or rest under Alternative 4. Resource constraints were applied where there were issues and/or where Standards were not being met.

Alternative 6 – No Grazing

This alternative would result in no grazing during a 10-year period for the Jump 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 renew your grazing permit for 10 years with modified terms and conditions consistent with the following:

Chipmunk Field FFR allotment – Alternative 2 as described in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS

Elephant Butte allotment – Alternative 3 as described in the EIS, as modified:

1. A rider will be required a minimum of 1 day per week on the allotment to actively manage cattle away from the natural boundary into Alkali-Wildcat pasture of Wild Rat allotment.

Sands Basin allotment – Alternative 4 as described in the EIS

Texas Basin FFR allotment – Alternative 3 as described in the EIS

---

[26] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Alternative 2 in Section 2.2.2 and due to the complexity of the permittees proposal refer to Appendix D for full details.
[27] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Alternative 3 in Section 2.2.3.
[28] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Alternative 2 in Section 2.2.4.

Wild Rat allotment – Alternative 3 as described in the EIS

Implementation of these alternatives, as modified, over the next 10 years will maintain performance under Standards in the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment; and allow the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest (Wild Rat), Elephant Butte, Sands Basin and Texas Basin FFR 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 renewed grazing permit(s) will be as follows:

Table LVST-5: Chipmunk Grazing Association Mandatory Terms and Conditions

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL[29]	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00523 Chipmunk Field FFR	155	Cattle	3/1	2/28	4	Active	72
00521 Sands Basin	600 123	Cattle Cattle	4/1 10/1	6/5 10/31	70 70	Active	558
00472 Texas Basin	9	Cattle	3/1	2/28	5	Active	5
Wild Rat	576	Cattle	4/1	11/14	95	Active	1097

Other terms and conditions:

1. The number of livestock and the season of use on the Chipmunk Field FFR are at the permittees discretion.
2. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
3. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
4. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
5. 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. Use of supplements other than the standard salt or mineral block on public land requires prior approval from the authorized officer.
6. 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.
7. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.
8. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
9. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreement and range improvement permit in which you are a signatory or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within designated Wilderness requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.

[29] PL is based on percentage of BLM lands in the Allotment.

10. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
11. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of $25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed $250.00. 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)(1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR § 4150.1 and § 4160.1.
12. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
13. Gates in management fences located inside wild horse herd management areas will be opened within 15 days after the authorized grazing period.
14. Wild Rat allotment: Grazing in Alkali-Wildcat pasture will be used in the spring 2 in 3 years (4/1-5/31) and will be used in fall (9/15-11/14) 1 in 3 years. Livestock numbers will not exceed 300 head, not to exceed authorized AUMs. Grazing in Rats Nest pasture will be used in the spring 2 in 3 years (4/1-5/31) and will be used in fall (9/15-11/14) 1 in 3 years. Livestock numbers will not exceed 276 head, not to exceed authorized AUMs.
15. Sands Basin will be grazed according to the schedule, not to exceed 600 head or AUMs by pasture. Pasture use will not exceed 193 AUMs in pasture 1; 239 AUMs in pasture 2; 188 AUMs in pasture 3; and 319 AUMs in pasture 4.
16. Sands Basin and Wild Rat allotments will maintain a minimum of 6-inch stubble height, 30 percent browse (where applicable), and less than 10 percent bank alteration will be maintained in key riparian areas at the end of the grazing season.
17. Sands Basin and Wild Rat allotments will maintain an average of greater than 18 cm (7 inches) perennial grass height on upland key species.
18. Pasture to pasture move dates will be coordinated with the field office on annual basis.
19. 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.

Table LVST-6: Ted Blackstock Mandatory Terms and Conditions

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00513 Elephant Butte	72 72	Cattle Cattle	3/15 11/1	5/31 12/31	70 70	Active	417

Other terms and conditions:

1. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
2. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
4. 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. Use of supplements other than the standard salt or mineral block on public land requires prior approval from the authorized officer.
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. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred

objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.

7. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreement and range improvement permit in which you are a signatory or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within designated Wilderness requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
9. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
10. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of $25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed $250.00. 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)(1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR § 4150.1 and § 4160.1.
11. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
12. Grazing in Elephant Butte will be as described in the livestock schedule.
13. Elephant Butte allotment will maintain a minimum of 6-inch stubble height, 30 percent browse (where applicable), and less than 10 percent bank alteration will be maintained in key riparian areas at the end of the grazing season.
14. Elephant Butte allotment will maintain an average of greater than 18 cm (7 inches) perennial grass height on upland key species.
15. A rider will be required at least 1 day per week on the allotment to actively manage cattle away from the natural boundary away from Alkali-Wildcat pasture of Wild Rat allotment.
16. Pasture to pasture move dates will be coordinated with the field office on annual basis.

Livestock Management

Livestock management will be as described in the schedules below (Tables LVST-7 through -10). No grazing schedule is identified for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment. This allotment consists of only one pasture and is meeting all standards with the current livestock management.

Elephant Butte Allotment

The grazing schedule identified in table LVST-7 will be established for pastures in the Elephant Butte allotment and made a term and condition of the grazing permit. The Elephant Butte allotment is adding an additional pasture with 1,050 acres from Alkali-Wildcat allotment and establishing pasture 6 by using a natural boundary. Allotment acres were 6,339 and will now be 7,389 acres.

Table LVST-7: Elephant Butte grazing schedule

Pasture	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1	11/1-2/28	3/15-5/31	3/15-5/31
2	3/15-5/31	11/1-2/28	11/1-2/28
3	3/15-5/31	3/15-5/31	11/1-2/28
4	3/15-5/31	11/1-2/28	3/15-5/31
5	11/1-2/28	3/15-5/31	3/15-5/31
6	3/15-5/31	3/15-5/31	11/1-2/28

Sands Basin Allotment

The grazing schedule identified in table LVST-8 will be established for pastures in the Sands Basin allotment and made a term and condition of the grazing permit.

Table LVST-8: Sands Basin grazing schedule

Pasture	Year 1	Year 2
1	4/1-4/30	Rest
2	5/1-6/5	Rest
3	Rest	4/1-4/30
4	Rest	5/1-6/5

Texas Basin FFR Allotment

The grazing schedule identified in table LVST-9 will be established for pastures in the Texas Basin FFR allotment and made a term and condition of the grazing permit.

Table LVST-9: Texas Basin FFR grazing schedule

Pasture	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1	3/1-6/30	3/1-6/30	7/1-2/28
2	7/1-2/28	7/1-2/28	3/1-6/30

Wild Rat Allotment

The grazing schedule identified in table LVST-10 will be established for pastures in the Wild Rat allotment and made a term and condition of the grazing permit. This alternative combines Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest allotments and moves 1,050 acres from the Alkali-Wildcat pasture to Elephant Butte pasture 6. Alkali-Wildcat pasture acres were 6,211 and now will be 5,161 acres.

Table LVST-10: Wild Rat grazing schedule

Pasture	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1 (Alkali-Wildcat)	4/1-5/31	4/1-5/31	9/15-11/14
2 (Rats Nest)	4/1-5/31	4/1-5/31	9/15-11/14

Notes on the Terms and Conditions

Chipmunk Grazing Association will be offered a grazing permit(s) for a term of 10 years for the Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments. Adoption of Alternative 3 in the Wild Rat allotment, as supplemented, will result in a reduction in AUMs from your current permit; however, the affected 84 active use AUMs will not be transferred to suspension, in conformance with regulatory direction at 43 CFR § 4110.3-2. Ted Blackstock will be offered a grazing permit(s) for a term of 10 years for the Elephant Butte allotment.

Permitted use within allotments will be as follows:

Table LVST-11: Permitted use

Allotment	Active Use AUMs	Suspension AUMs	Permitted Use AUMs
Elephant Butte	417	0	417
Chipmunk Field FFR	72	0	72
Sands Basin	558	0	558
Texas Basin FFR	5	0	5
Wild Rat	1,097	160	1,257

Other Notes on the Final Decision

Finally, it is my final decision not to authorize additional projects[30]. 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 final decision. Implementation of this final 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 Chipmunk Grazing Association records as a grazing permit holder for the Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat allotments, and Ted Blackstock's records as a grazing permit holder and have determined that both have a satisfactory record of performance and are qualified applicants for the purposes of a permit renewal.

Justification for the Final Decision

Based on my review of the EIS, the rangeland health assessment/evaluation, determinations, specialist reports and other documents in the project record, it is my final decision to select Alternative 2 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment; Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat (3, modified) allotments; and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment. I have made this selection 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 Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments meeting or making significant progress toward meeting the resource objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho S&Gs.

Issues Addressed

Earlier in this decision, I outlined the major issues that drove the analysis and decision making process for the Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat allotments. I want you to know that I focused my attention on the allotment-specific issues as I weighed each alternative and

[30] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 2.4.

made my decision. My selection of Alternative 2 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat allotments, and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment was in large part because of my understanding that these selections best addressed the specific issues, given the BLM's legal and land management obligations. I spent hours with members of my staff and the NEPA Permit Renewal Team to discuss pros and cons for each alternative. Ultimately, I had to choose the alternative that best protects the resource while considering your livestock operation, current resource conditions, and expectations from you as the permittee, and the BLM as the responsible office.[31]

Issue 1: Risk to California bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis california; hereinafter, bighorn sheep) and domestic sheep: Evidence suggests that contact with domestic sheep can transmit disease, cause mortality to bighorn sheep individuals, and reduce long-term herd health. The risk of contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep is considerable in the analysis area, and the effects to bighorn sheep are potentially significant.

Because you are not authorized to graze domestic sheep on the Jump allotments, this issue is not applicable.

Issue 2: Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus; hereinafter, sage-grouse): Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas

[31] 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 are 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 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.

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 5: 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.

The sage–grouse is an indicator species for the sagebrush ecosystem, thus the attributes of suitable sage-grouse habitat provide an effective barometer for health of the sagebrush ecosystems that dominate the Jump allotments. Sage-grouse habitat quality is inseparable from the 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.

Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment[32]

Upland watershed, vegetative, and wildlife habitat conditions (there are no riparian areas on public land in this allotment) will continue to meet Standards 1, 4, and 8 and the needs for sage-grouse and other wildlife with a continuation of current management (Alternative 2). Current management (reflected in your application) on this allotment has resulted in good vegetative resource conditions, as identified in EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS (Affected Environment sections). Proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow will continue to be maintained or improved, and allows the allotment to continue to meet Standards and achieve ORMP objectives.

Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat Allotments [33]

Watershed, vegetative, and upland/riparian wildlife habitat conditions will improve throughout these allotments under Alternative 3, due to this alternative's focus on improving the health and vigor of plant communities through resource constraints and deferment. Although the Texas Basin FFR allotment is currently meeting Standard 4, recent sage-grouse habitat assessments raised questions about breeding habitat suitability. Spring and early summer grazing for 2 of 3 years, deferred to fall grazing the third year, will, as compared to repeated grazing during the critical growing period, will promote improvement to vegetative health and vigor of upland plant communities, as evidenced by improved composition and structure and thereby benefiting sage-grouse because of increased forage and cover elements for nesting/early brood rearing sage-grouse.

The newly created Wild Rat allotment is currently not meeting Standard 4 (Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest) due to current livestock management; here, too, spring and early summer grazing in 2 of 3 years, with rest in the third year (compared to repeated grazing during the critical growing period), will promote improvement to vegetative health and vigor. Increased years of deferment give the allotment opportunity to make significant progress toward meeting upland vegetation health and vigor. A 7-percent reduction in AUMs based on exchange of use to the Elephant Butte allotment in pasture 6 will further recovery to upland vegetation health and vigor and ORMP objectives.

[32] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.4 and Appendix E.
[33] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.5 and Appendix E.

As stated in the EIS, under Alternative 3, "a deferred grazing strategy will be implemented outside the critical growing season intended to stimulate vegetation vigor and reproduction and in time enhance upland shrub steppe and riparian habitat plant composition and structure for wildlife." Because sage-grouse is an indicator species for the sagebrush ecosystem, those conditions that specify healthy habitat for sage-grouse are indicative of the health of the system in general. Effective upland habitat and sage-grouse habitat composition and structure are closely related to vegetation community conditions discussed in Standard 4. Improved plant community composition and structure will result in greater security cover for nesting and brood-rearing sage-grouse from predators and increasing preferred forb diversity and availability.

I expect the quality and quantity of the upland communities in these two allotments to progress to make significant progress toward meeting desired wildlife habitat management objectives and Standards 1, 4, and 8, primarily because of the benefits sage-grouse will receive due to reduced spring grazing pressure on the plant community and subsequent improvement in conditions of upland and riparian habitats. In the short term (1 to 6 years, two rotations) habitat conditions will show increased forage and cover elements. In the long term (7 to 12 years, four rotations), vegetation composition and structure will be expected to continue making significant progress toward meeting Standard 8 and achieve desired ORMP management objectives.

Elephant Butte Allotment[34]

The Elephant Butte and Alkali-Wildcat allotments boundaries will be realigned. Acres (1,050) from Alkali-Wildcat will become part of the Elephant Butte allotment, creating a new pasture 6 in Elephant Butte; the remainder of the Alkali-Wildcat allotment will be combined with Rats Nest to create the new Wild Rat allotment. See Map 3.

The Elephant Butte allotment has six pastures. Elephant Butte is currently meeting Standard 6 on all pastures except pasture 2; the allotment's new pasture 6 is not meeting Standard 4. Restoring areas dominated by exotic annuals to shrubs and deep-rooted perennial grasses will not occur through a simple modification or even cessation of livestock grazing. Rather, such restoration will require targeted vegetation treatments such as seeding and herbicide applications. However, spring grazing 2 in 3 years and deferred to fall use 1 in 3 years and pasture 2 spring grazing 1 in 3 years, compared to repeated grazing during the critical growing period in all years, will allow opportunity to improve vegetative health and vigor on remnant native plant communities. Increased years of deferment allow opportunity to make significant progress toward meeting upland vegetation health and vigor[35].

The majority of the acreage in the Elephant Butte allotment is non-habitat for sage-grouse because the shadscale/cheatgrass plant community does not provide adequate habitat composition, structure and function. This is also consistent with the PPH/PGH modeling map that identifies that 78 percent of this allotment is outside the range of sage-grouse habitat (Makela & Major, 2012). However, in the remaining 22 percent of the allotment, the southern portion of pasture 2 is providing favorable overstory/understory composition of sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass for effective nesting, escape, security, and foraging cover for sage-grouse. Alternative 3 will continue to provide adequate forage and cover for wildlife and healthy plant communities for sage-grouse habitat in pasture 2 of the Elephant Butte allotment as evidenced by improved composition and structure and thereby benefiting sage-grouse because of improving increased foraging forage and cover elements for nesting/early brood rearing sage-grouse.

[34] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.5 and Appendix E.
[35] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.2.4 and Appendix E.

Sands Basin Allotment

The Sands Basin allotment has four pastures. Standard 5 applies to pastures 1 and 2 of the Sands Basin allotment and is being met. Standards 4 (pasture 4) and 6 (pasture 3) are not being met, and current livestock grazing practices and wild horses are significant causal factors.

Alternative 4 will authorize spring grazing the first year and rest the second year of a 2-year rotation as compared to current repeated grazing during the critical growing period. Increased years of rest allow opportunity to make significant progress toward meeting upland vegetation health and vigor. In addition, reductions in AUMs will provide opportunity to make significant recovery to upland vegetation and ORMP objectives.

All pastures in this allotment have been identified as not providing adequate sage-grouse habitat conditions. In pastures 1 and 2, upland habitat conditions for sage-grouse are inadequate because of a reduced overstory/understory occurrence and structure of sagebrush and perennial grasses and forbs. Sage-grouse require large areas of relatively undisturbed sagebrush steppe habitat. The incorporation of deferment and rest into the grazing schedule will reduce grazing pressure and allow sagebrush regeneration and establishment, resulting in greater distribution and abundance of sagebrush, enhancing sagebrush patch size and improving connectivity between fragmented sagebrush habitats, thereby improving sage-grouse habitat condition. However, while full sagebrush recovery and effective overstory structure and function for sage-grouse nesting and hiding cover is expected to take 20 years or more, these changes can begin the recovery process.

Pasture 3 is managed as an exotic plant community. Vegetation composition, structure, and function are lacking or absent in these communities, substantially reducing effective nesting, hiding, escape, travel, and foraging cover for all upland wildlife species. These exotic communities further create large open spaces, diminish habitat connectivity, and increase sagebrush community fragmentation. Alternative 4 will allow a better opportunity for native plant species to compete with invasive annuals and to improve abundance, composition, and structure and will benefit nesting and brood-rearing sage-grouse and other sagebrush steppe species because it will improve forage and cover. I recognize that, due to the competitive advantage of invasive species over native species, recovery of these communities will be very slow and wildlife use will track the health and improvement to the distribution, composition, and structure of the native plant community. However, I believe Alternative 4 provides the best opportunity to protect the vegetation we currently have and move conditions forward, without eliminating livestock use.

Pasture 4 is managed as a native plant community determined to be not meeting Standard 4. Because Standard 4 is not being met, upland habitat conditions for wildlife are also not adequate; this is consistent with sage-grouse breeding habitat assessment information that found this pasture is not providing adequate perennial grass cover. Currently, there is a shift in the potential plant community favoring shallow-rooted grass species that do not provide the robust growth form or structure needed to provide an effective interface of overstory and understory plant composition, structure, and function for sagebrush steppe dependent species. The additional deferment and rest will interrupt grazing pressure and allow plants to recover vigor and health. As a result, the native plant community composition and structure will improve and sage-grouse will benefit from the increase security and nesting cover and the increased availability of forbs.

Issue 3: Riparian vegetation conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.

AND

Issue 4: 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.

Chipmunk Field FFR and Texas Basin FFR Allotments

Because riparian areas do not exist on public land on this allotment, Issues 3 and 4 will not be discussed.

Elephant Butte Allotment[36]

Under Alternative 3, the allotment will become a six-pasture allotment by combining approximately two-thirds of the Alkali-Wildcat allotment (1,050 acres) with the original five pastures of the Elephant Butte allotment. As a result, 0.5 miles of perennial stream, 1.0 miles of intermittent stream, and four springs will be influenced by the impacts of spring grazing during 2 years, and by fall grazing during the third year of a 3-year rotation. Under current management, this configuration is not meeting Standards 2, 3, and 7 within the portion of Alkali-Wildcat that would make up pasture 6. Since the other five pastures are meeting the Standards under current management and the alternative will incorporate one year of deferred grazing, they will continue to be met. The allotment will be used during the spring for 2 years and during the fall the third year of a 3-year rotation, compared to the current situation of grazing during the spring annually. The changes in season of use will eliminate the current use of the riparian areas in both spring and fall annually, and the newly configured allotment will make progress toward meeting Standards 2, 3, and 7. The changes in season of use and active AUM reduction would minimize both the primary and secondary impacts of livestock grazing (see Table RIPN-26 in the EIS).

Under Alternative 3, reduced grazing frequency in riparian areas will improve plant vigor, diversity, and regeneration and improve riparian functions to dissipate energy of high flows, trap sediments, stabilize streambanks, provide shade to streams, deliver woody debris, and improve water quality. Improved herbaceous and woody cover in riparian zones due to deferment and rest reduced grazing pressure will benefit Columbia redband trout and other aquatic species because of reduced trampling of spring spawning and egg laying sites, decreased erosion and sediment loading, enhanced shade and woody debris delivery, greater channel structure and flow regulation, and improve water quality in Squaw Creek.

Sands Basin Allotment

Alternative 4 implements a 2-year rotation for the Sands Basin allotment, with 1 year of spring use and 1 year of rest. Consequently, 1.4 miles of perennial stream, 2.8 miles of intermittent stream, and four springs would be affected by the impacts associated with spring grazing once every 2 years. Implementing a year of rest and allowing only spring use, compared to current spring and fall use, would allow the riparian areas and water resources that occur in pastures 2 and 4 to meet Rangeland Health Standards 2, 3, and 7. The reduction in AUMs over the life of the permit, coupled with the seasonal grazing restrictions, would allow quicker progress than Alternatives 1 and 2 toward attaining desired conditions. These changes will minimize both the primary and secondary impacts of livestock grazing because the removal of hydric vegetation and riparian area trampling will be minimized. Additionally, the floodplains ability to retain moisture would improve, erosion would decrease, stream temperatures would decrease, and aquatic species habitat would improve.

I anticipate that the quality and quantity of the riparian communities in the Sands Basin allotment (pastures 2 and 4) will make significant progress toward meeting desired habitat management objectives and meeting

[36] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.5.1 and Appendix E.

Standard 8. Under Alternative 4[37], reduced grazing frequency and rest in riparian areas will improve plant vigor, diversity, and regeneration and improve riparian functions to dissipate energy of high flows, trap sediments, harden streambanks, provide shade to streams, deliver woody debris, and improve water quality. Improved herbaceous and woody cover in riparian zones due to deferment/rest and reduced grazing pressure will benefit Columbia redband trout and other aquatic species because of reduced trampling of spring spawning and egg laying sites, decreased erosion and sediment loading, enhanced shade and woody debris delivery, greater channel structure and flow regulation, and improve water quality.

In the short term (1 to 6 years, two rotations) focal species habitat conditions will show measurable and observable improvement as riparian habitat conditions improve. In the long term (7 to 12 years), riparian habitat composition and structure and aquatic habitat conditions should be much improved and making significant progress toward meeting desired management objectives as well as Standard 8 for wildlife.

Wild Rat Allotment

Under Alternative 3, the Wild Rat allotment will consist of two pastures, including approximately one-third of the Alkali-Wildcat and Rats Nest allotments (Map 1). Currently, the pastures are not meeting the riparian Standards 2 and 3. Standard 7 is being met. Alternative 3, as modified, will add deferment to the allotment 1 of 3 years, spring use 2 in 3 years. The removal of herbaceous riparian vegetation and soil compaction will decrease, and streambanks will stabilize improving aquatic species habitat. Since this alternative would have one year of deferment, the newly configured allotment will make progress toward meeting Standards 2 and 3[38].

Reduced grazing frequency in riparian areas will improve plant vigor, diversity, and regeneration and improve riparian functions to dissipate energy of high flows, trap sediments, harden streambanks, provide shade to streams, deliver woody debris, and improve water quality. Improved herbaceous and woody cover in riparian zones will benefit Columbia redband trout and other aquatic species by reduced trampling of spring spawning and egg laying sites, decreased erosion and sediment loading, enhanced shade and woody debris delivery, greater channel structure and flow regulation, and improve water quality in Jump Creek[39].

In the short term (1 to 6 years, two rotations) focal species habitat conditions will show measurable and observable improvement in riparian herbaceous and woody plant habitat conditions. In the long term (7 to 12 years), riparian habitat composition and structure and aquatic habitat conditions should be much improved and making significant progress toward meeting desired management objectives, as well as Standard 8 for wildlife.

Issue 6: Special Status Plant Species: Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.

Texas Basin FFR and Sands Basin Allotments

No special status plant species exist on the public lands in these allotments; therefore, Issue 6 will not be addressed.

[37] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.6 and Appendix E.
[38] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.5.2.4 and Appendix E.
[39] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.6.5 and Appendix E.

Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment

Even though the condition of the soft blazingstar occurrence is unknown, it is likely that impacts associated with livestock grazing will be marginal, given the upland vegetation of this allotment is meeting Standard 4, which is necessary to maintain suitable habitat of this species. However, concern remains for the potential impact of spring livestock grazing (trampling when soils are moist and fragile and herbivory during the growing season) in consecutive years and the subsequent prolonged recovery of special status plants. There is insufficient information to determine if this alternative will make significant progress toward meeting Standard 8; however, it is likely this occurrence will remain in its current state and not decline given the stable conditions of the uplands.

Elephant Butte Allotment

Concerns exist regarding the stress on special status plants in pastures 3 (Cusick's pincushion) and 5 (soft blazingstar), due to a longer duration of critical growing season use in 2 out of 3 years than in Alternative 1. The longer time frame increases the likelihood of herbivory and trampling when the fragile soil of the habitat are moist and most susceptible to damage, and seedling plants will be uprooted and killed, reducing seed set for the population. One benefit of the early spring use (starting 3/15) is that livestock graze invasive grasses before native perennial bunchgrasses are available, thus potentially reducing invasives in special status plant habitats.

Wild Rat Allotment

This alternative will continue to meet Standard 8 in the short term (less than 10 years) by maintaining the current condition of Idaho milkvetch within the Rats Nest portion of the allotment. The addition of deferment to a current condition of spring use in all years will allow for maintenance of this species and upland vegetation over the life of the permit. However, recommendations for recovery between spring grazing cycles are 2 years deferment to 1 year critical growing season use.

Issue 7: Noxious and invasive weeds: Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.

Chipmunk Field FFR Allotment

Because no noxious and invasive weeds are known exist on public land, Issue 7 is not applicable for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment.

Elephant Butte, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat Allotments [40]

My selection of Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat allotments, and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment will maintain or improve riparian and vegetative communities, because both alternatives were designed to improve rangeland health conditions. Acknowledging that any grazing has the potential to introduce and spread invasive weeds and non-native annual grasses, a reduction in active use and deferment or rest in the alternatives selected will result in proportionally less soil surface disturbance and fewer animals to carry seed to, from and within the allotment in fur, on hooves, and in their digestive system. Compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, the risk of invasive species spreading is lower under Alternatives 3 and 4 as native perennial species health and vigor is improved and progress is made toward

[40] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.2 and Appendix E.

the ORMP vegetation management objective. Alternatives 3 and 4 will promote native perennial species and therefore reduce the competition of invasive species establishment.

The Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat allotments have 19 occurrences of weed species, but this is not a significant cause of the failure to meet Standard 4 in these allotments[41]. Although no allotments were identified as having noxious weed occurrences at levels to cause the allotment to fail to meet Rangeland Health Standards, the Sands Basin allotment was identified as having 33 occurrences, a relatively high level (more than 15) and richness of noxious weeds (more than three species). Although any grazing has the potential to introduce and spread invasive weeds and non-native annual grasses, the reduction in active use inherent in Alternatives 3 and 4 will result in proportionally less soil surface disturbance and fewer animals to carry seed to and from the allotment in fur, on hooves, and in their digestive system. The decrease in the grazing frequency of growing-season use will allow native perennial species to complete the annual growth cycle more often in the absence of defoliation by livestock grazing, thus increasing their vigor and resilience, and making them more competitive with weed species. As compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, the risk of invasive species spreading is lower under Alternatives 3 and 4 as health and vigor of native perennial species is improved and progress is made toward meeting the ORMP vegetation management objective. Available sites for invasive species establishment will be reduced through competition with healthy native perennial species. BLM's coordinated and ongoing weed control program will still be required in any alternative of livestock grazing in the allotment.

Issue 8: Livestock trailing: Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds and riparian vegetation.

Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat Allotments

Effects from livestock trailing/crossing will include minor trampling and up to 10 percent utilization. Due to the short duration of trailing, grazing effects from cattle trailing are expected to be minimal. Direct grazing from sheep trailing will 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 will 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 Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and ORMP objectives.

Issue 9: Socioeconomic impacts: Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.

Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat Allotments

Over the long term, your grazing operation relies upon maintenance of the natural resources, including productive and healthy rangelands capable of supplying a reliable forage base. Selection of an alternative based in unsustainable grazing practices that do not meet rangeland health standards will result in less-reliable amounts of forage over the long term, in addition to reducing economic opportunities from

[41] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 3.3.1 and Appendix E

ecosystem services and alternate socioeconomic resources, such as recreation, that rely on healthy, functional, and aesthetically pleasing open spaces and wildlife habitats.

I have considered a wide range of issues at the allotment level, including the social and economic impacts that result from modifying grazing authorizations. We worked hard to develop a socio-economic analysis that would, as accurately as possible, provide the best information about socio-economic impacts expected from the different alternatives, and I have utilized this information in making my final decision.

I have minimized reductions in grazing use levels on allotments where current levels are compatible with meeting rangeland health standards and ORMP objectives and where not compatible, have attempted to select alternatives designed to meet resource needs.

Issue 10: Wildfire fuels: Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.[42]

Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat Allotments 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 will be theoretically possible to use targeted grazing to create fuel breaks on these allotments with the hope that those fuel breaks will 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 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments, and Alternative 4 for the Sands 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 at 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 is focused on improving native upland and riparian plant communities on these allotments, and targeted grazing to create fuel breaks will not support that improvement.

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.[43]

Issue 11: Climate Change: Livestock grazing is inter-related to the effects of annual grass invasion and wildfire frequency which are expected to worsen as a result of climate change.

Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat Allotments

[42] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 2.4 Alternatives considered and dismissed.
[43] For more detailed discussion, please refer to EIS number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0014-EIS Section 2.4.

Climate change is another factor I considered in building my decision around Alternative 2 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments, and Alternative 4 for the Sands 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 selected alternatives combined seasons, intensities, and durations of livestock use to promote long-term plant health and vigor. Assuming that climate change affects the arid landscapes in the long-term, the native plant communities on these allotments will be better armed to survive such changes. The native plant health and vigor protected under these alternatives will provide resistance and resilience to additional stressors, including climate change.

Issue 12: Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA): Livestock grazing competes with foraging and habitat of wild horses.

Sands Basin and Wild Rat Allotments[44]

I recognize that a portion of the livestock impacts on these allotments is the result of wild horse use; as you know, changes in HMA management are outside the scope of this decision. Wild horse herd management areas exist on these allotments and is my responsibility is to manage the resources on these allotments using the tools available to me. Where there are impacts to upland or riparian areas caused by cattle and wild horse use, I can address only that part of the problem over which I have control. Selection of Alternative 3 for the Wild Rat allotment and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment will improve range resources; such benefit will accrue both to your operations and to the wild horse herds by ensuring a lower amount of competition for available forage throughout the grazing season, and improving wild horse habitat.

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 and still allow grazing on the allotments. In selecting Alternative 2 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments (modified), and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin 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 operation and on regional economic activity, and (3) your past performance under previous permits. The resource issues identified are primarily related to the improper seasons and site-specific intensities of grazing use. By implementing these alternatives, the resource issues identified will be addressed. The

[44] I understand the wild horse numbers are above the high end of the AML on the Sands Basin and Hardtrigger HMA's, which is also causing deteriorated range conditions and non-attainment of the Standards. The Idaho BLM has requested gathers on both HMAs. The Hardtrigger HMA was scheduled to be gathered in October 2012 and October 2013. This gather was cancelled both times due to higher emergency gathers and a lack of funding for gathering/holding horses. The Sands Basin HMA was proposed to be gathered in September 2013, but was also cancelled due to higher emergency gathers and a lack of funding for gathering/holding horses. I will continue to request gathers be conducted on these HMA's, but I am only addressing livestock management issues in this decision as stated in the Purpose and Need.

suspension of grazing for a 10-year period is not the management decision most appropriate at this time in light of these factors.[45]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my decision to select Alternative 2 for the Chipmunk Field FFR allotment, Alternative 3 for the Elephant Butte, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments (as modified), and Alternative 4 for the Sands Basin allotment because livestock management practices under these alternatives best meet the ORMP objectives allotment-wide and the Idaho S&Gs. Alternatives 1 and 2 fail to implement livestock management practices on the Elephant Butte, Sands Basin and Wild Rat allotments that would meet the objectives and standards. Specifically, both alternatives fail to implement actions that would meet Standards 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands), 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain), and Standard 8 (Threatened and Endangered Animals). Alternative 6 has the potential to remove significant economic activity 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 leads me to believe elimination of livestock grazing from the Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR, and Wild Rat 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 Elephant Butte, Chipmunk Field FFR, Sands Basin, Texas Basin FFR and Wild Rat allotments 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 final decision will result in taking appropriate action to modifying existing grazing management in order to make significant progress toward achieving rangeland health.

[45] A tremendous amount of thought and effort went into developing grazing management systems that are responsive to your allotments' specific resource needs, geography, and size. We attempted to address all resource and operational concerns and the resource and stewardship requirements mandated to the BLM. We recognize that each allotment has different ecology and management capability due to the size and location/topography that result in various issues and priorities; all attempts to coordinate grazing throughout the entire allotment were made by me and my staff with you and informed by the interested public with these features in mind. I recognize the difficulty of not only responding to BLM's (mandated) needs to protect the resources, but recognize as well the needs and capability that you, the permittees, have. I believe I have balanced those needs of the resource and your capabilities with the information I have to the extent possible.

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 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. 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:

Loretta V. Chandler
Owyhee Field Office Manager
20 First Avenue West
Marsing, Idaho 83639

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 persons 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
Oywhee Field Manager

Works Cited

Makela, P., & Major, D. (2012). *A framework to identify greater sage-grouse preliminary priority habitat and preliminary general habitat in Idaho.* White Paper, USDI BLM, Boise, ID. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=makela%20major%20sage-grouse%20preliminary%20priority%20habitat&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CD8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.blm.gov%2Fpgdata%2Fetc%2Fmedialib%2Fblm%2Fid%2Fwildlife%2Fsensitive_species%2Fsagegrouse_habitat.Parf

USDI BLM. (2005). *Trimbly Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Closeout Report.*

Attachments:
Maps 1-5
BLM Group 2 Protest Responses

Cc: Group 2 Mail List

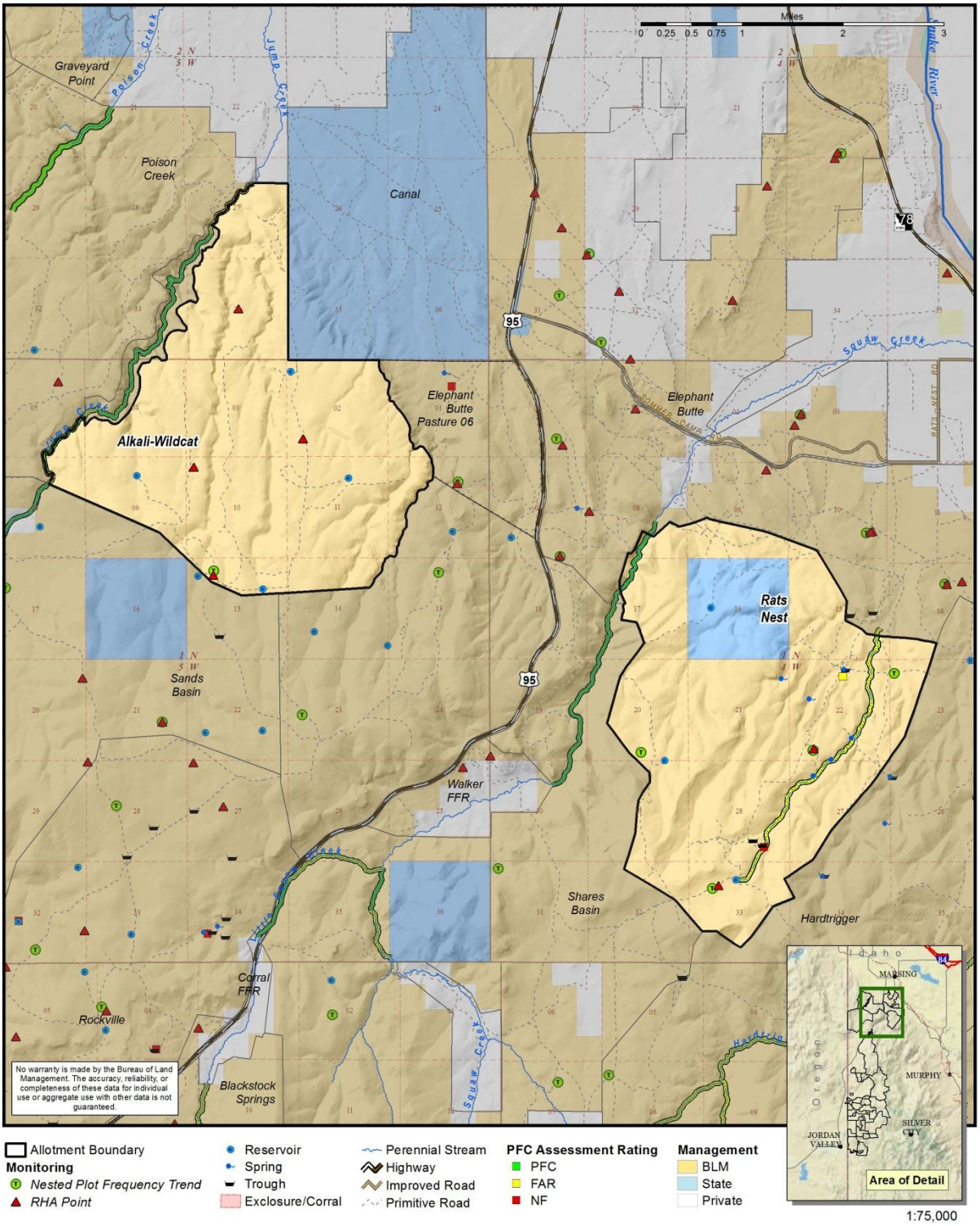
Group 2 Mail List

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. 16th 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 &	Karen	Sussman	PO Box 55	Lantry	SD	57636

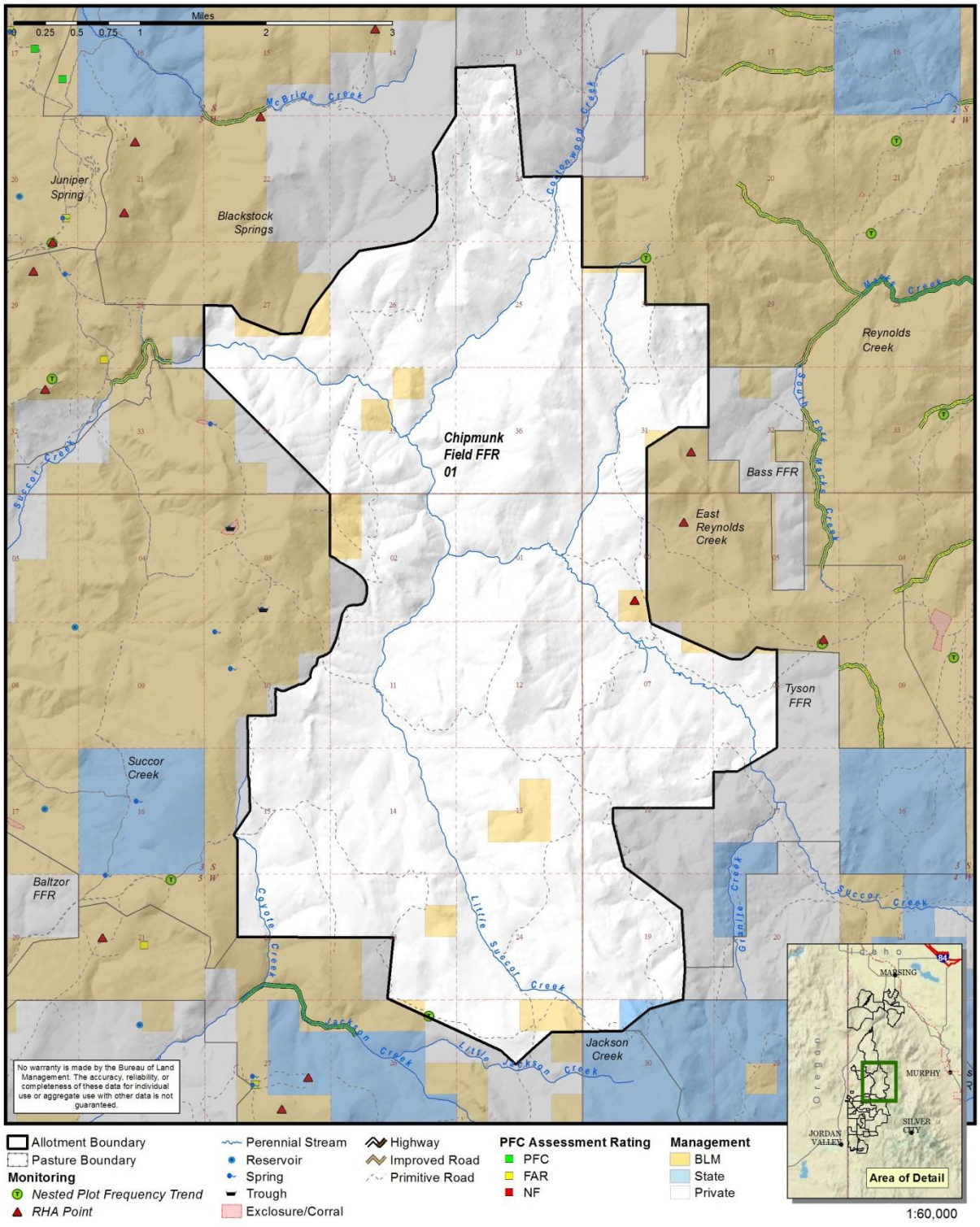
Company Name	First Name	Last Name	Address 1	City	ST	Zip
Burros						
Jaca Livestock	Elias	Jaca	817 Blaine Ave.	Nampa	ID	83651
Juniper Mtn. Grazing Association	Michael	Stanford	3581 Cliffs Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910
Land & Water Fund	William	Eddie	PO Box 1612	Boise	ID	83701
LS Cattle Co.	Jeff	Stanford	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., 20th 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
	Senator James E.	Risch	350 N. 9th 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	501Baybrook Ct.	Boise	ID	83706
	Brett	Nelson	9127 W. Preece St.	Boise	ID	83704

Company Name	First Name	Last Name	Address 1	City	ST	Zip
	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. 8th St., Ste.149	Boise	ID	83702

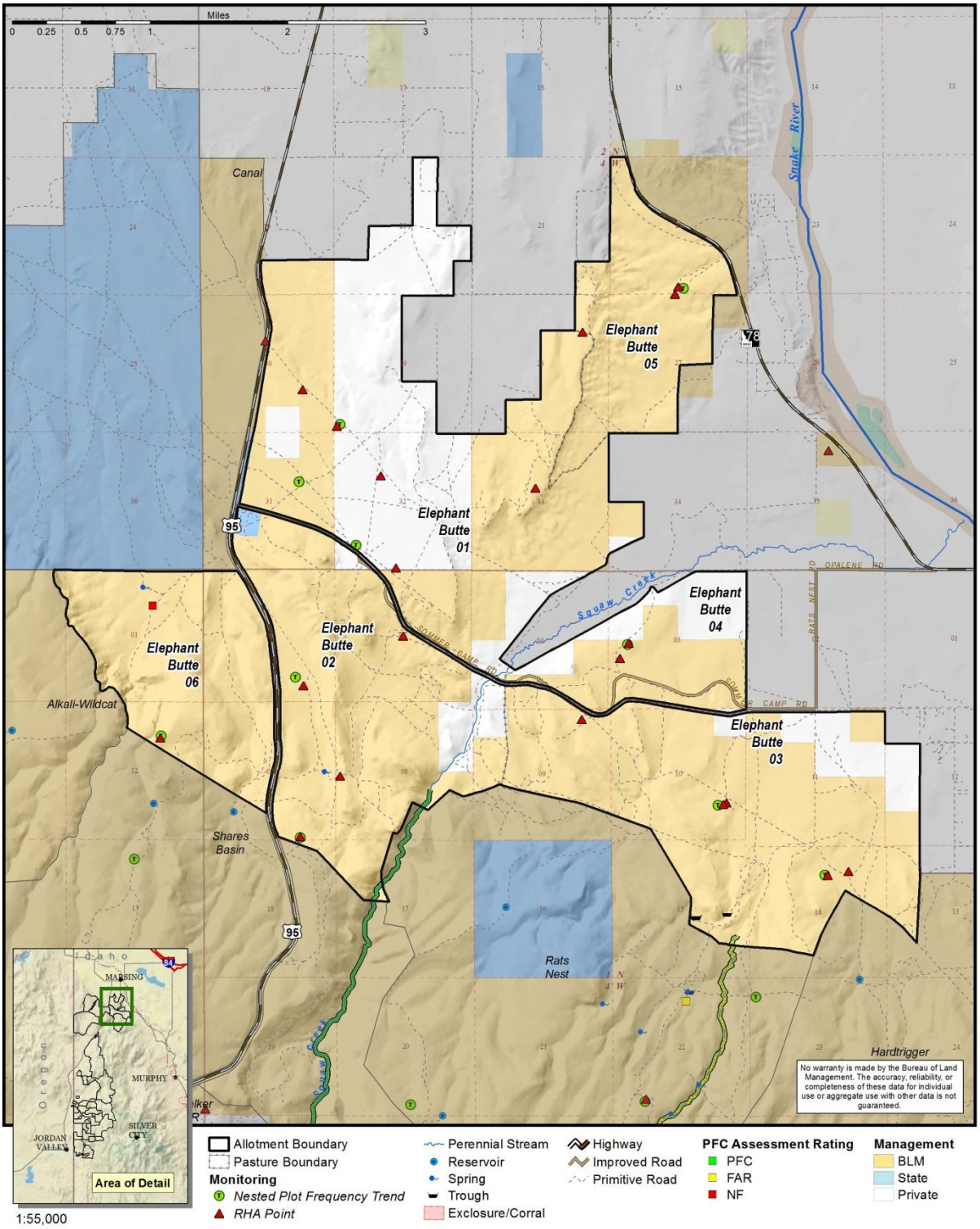
Map 1, Alkali-Wildcat (00514) and Rat's Nest (00522) Allotments (Wild-Rat)



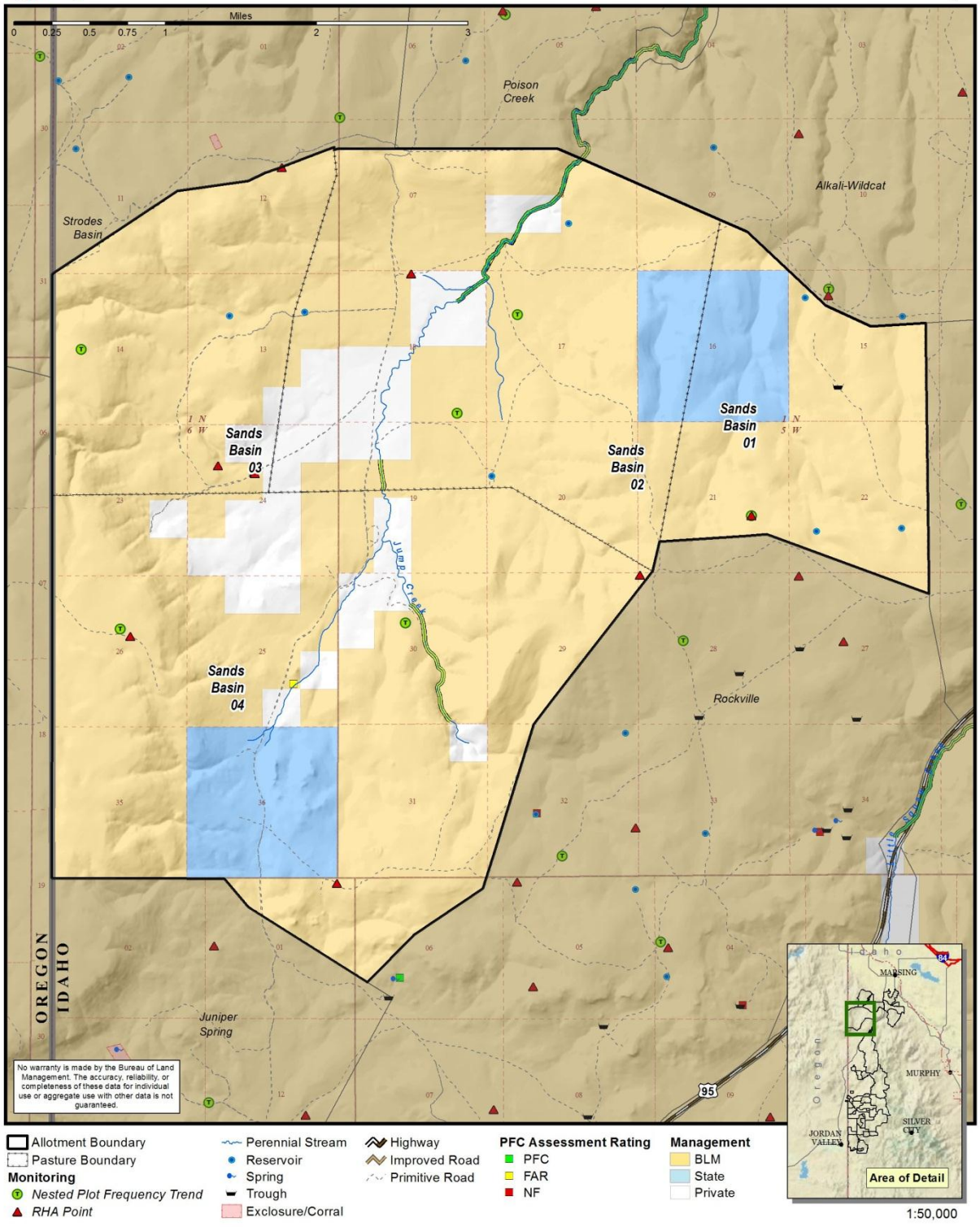
Map 2, Chipmunk Field FFR (00523) Allotment



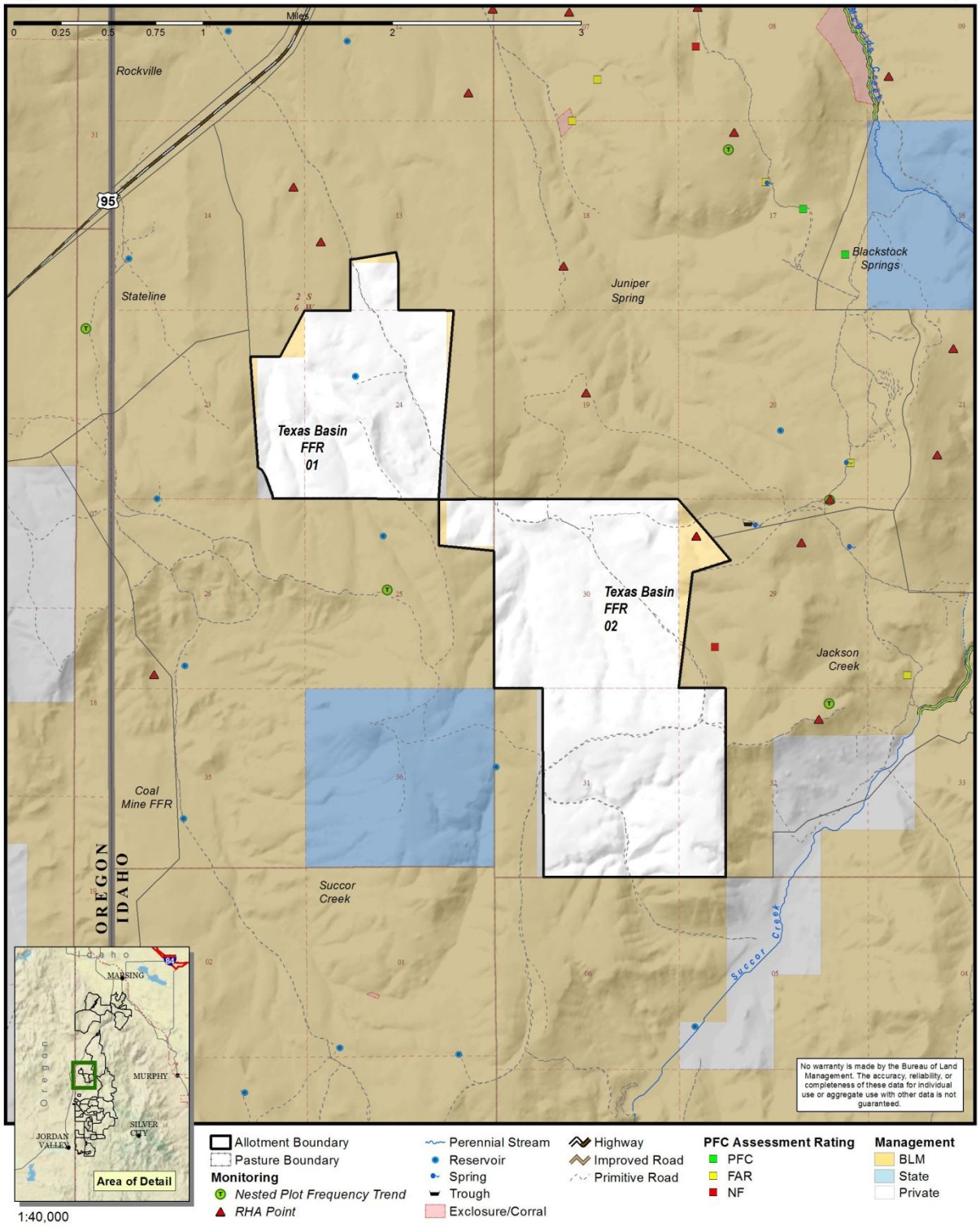
Map 3, Elephant Butte (00513) Allotment



Map 4, Sands Basin (00521) Allotment



Map 5, Texas Basin FFR (00472) Allotment



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: 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
		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
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 to 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 additional275 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
		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
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	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. 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.
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
		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.	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. 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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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
		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
2WWP11292013	49	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.	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.
2WWP11292013	50	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.	Refer to response to protest 2WWP11292013 protest point 49.
2WWP11292013	51	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.	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

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
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.	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— 1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; 2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; 3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; 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; 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 6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources. 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

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
			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 exclosures 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 exclosures 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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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 *uplands*. 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

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2WWP11292013	80	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.	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.
2WWP11292013	81	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 .	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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2WWP11292013	82	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.	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 & 7. Standards 2, 3 & 7 that apply to the riparian & water resources are evaluated in conjunction with Standard 8 (wildlife)
2WWP11292013	85	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.	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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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: http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/standards.aspx

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.	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. 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. 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.
2IdahoA11272013	99	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 A UM reduction they are proposing to reduce which results in the a total of 808 AUMS (415 for Ted	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
		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.	
2IdahoA11272013	100	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	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

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.	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. 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).
2IdahoA11272013	101	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	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
		of the USDA Technical Reference further states "setting the appropriate initial stocking rate consists of determining (I) 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.	
2IdahoA11272013	102	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.	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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2IdahoA11272013	103	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. "	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.
2IdahoA11272013	104	) 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.	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
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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2IdahoA11272013	107	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.	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 average actual use by pasture that the permittees have used.
2IdahoA11272013	108	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.	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&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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2IdahoA11272013	109	BLM's EIS fails to conduct an adequate and through 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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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.	
2IdahoB11272013	121	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.	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). 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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2IdahoB11272013	122	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.	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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
2IdahoB11272013	123	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 I 0 of the proposed decision, the field manager states that "implementation of these alternatives over the next IO 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. " 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	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.

Protest ID	Protest Point No.	Protest Text	Protest Response
		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&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.	