



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Burley Field Office
15 East 200 South
Burley, Idaho 83318
(208) 677-6600



Scoping Information Package Loughmiller and Salmon Tract-U2 Permit Renewal

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to renew the livestock grazing permits associated with the Loughmiller and Salmon Tract-U2 Allotments in accordance with the Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP). Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of winter 2014. Comments received in response to this solicitation may be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the Proposed Action and to identify alternatives to the Proposed Action that meet the purpose and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to consider applications to renew grazing permits and, where appropriate, authorize livestock grazing on the Loughmiller and Salmon Tract-U2 Allotments located in Twin Falls County, Idaho.

The Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP) identifies the subject allotments as available for domestic livestock grazing. Where consistent with the goals and objectives of the MFP, and Idaho's Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (1997), it is BLM policy to authorize livestock grazing to qualified operators. If authorized, livestock grazing will be consistent with BLM policy and in a manner that maintains or improves project area resource conditions and achieve the objectives described in the MFP. The analysis and authorization are needed here and now because;

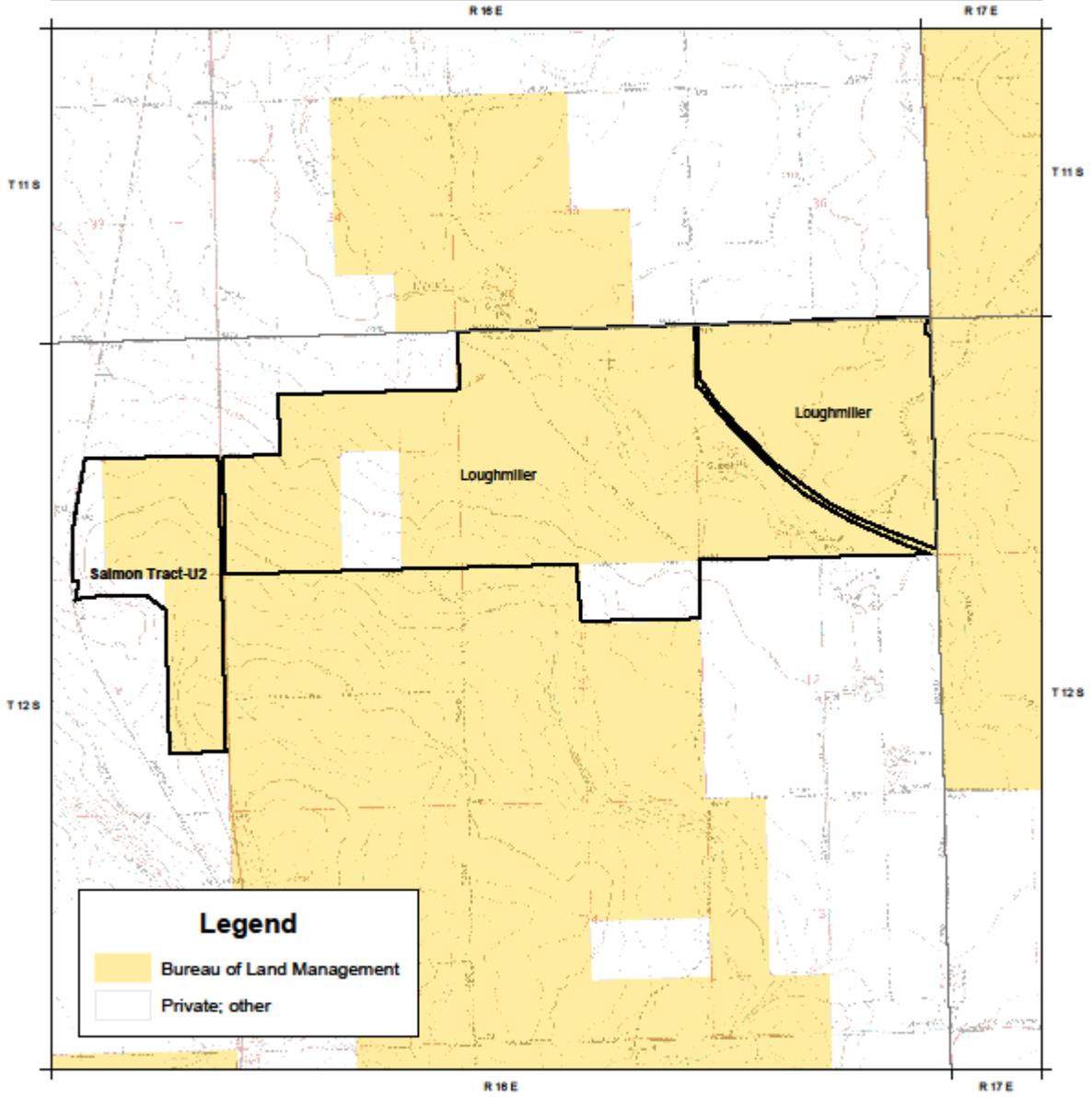
- The permittees on the above named allotments have submitted applications to renew their grazing permits.
- The grazing application for permit renewal includes a proposal for a range improvement project (fence).

- There is a need to incorporate additional flexibility in management of the allotments in order for the BLM and permit holders to be able to adapt to changing resource conditions and management objectives.
- BLM's policy is to fully process (renew grazing permits through environmental analysis) utilizing information from the land health evaluations. Rangeland Health Assessments and Evaluations have been completed on these allotments.

Based on these Rangeland Health Assessments (RHAs) and Evaluation Report, there may be a need to update livestock management and incorporate this latest information into the grazing permits. The Evaluation Report of the Loughmiller and Salmon Tract-U2 Allotments achieving the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health was completed in 10/2014. These reports state that both allotments are achieving Standards 1 (Watersheds), 5 (Seedings) and 8 (Threatened and Endangered Species).

Issuing grazing permits for these allotments is in conformance with statutes, regulations and plans (Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976, Public Rangeland Improvement Act of 1978, and 43 CFR Part 4000, Group 100) that concern livestock grazing on public lands. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 USC 315), was enacted to stop injury to the public grazing lands (excluding Alaska) by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development; and to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range. In accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, the BLM established grazing districts within the project area, and allocated grazing preferences to qualified operators. In addition, the BLM developed programs to implement the Taylor Grazing Act's goal of providing for "the orderly use, improvement and development" of the public range lands. The Taylor Grazing Act was superseded by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). Under FLPMA, the BLM adopted land use plans that provide management direction for multiple uses of public lands. The Public Range Improvement Acts provides, in part that the BLM "manage, maintain and improve the condition of public rangelands so that they become as productive as feasible for all rangeland values."

Map 1



Legend

- Bureau of Land Management
- Private; other

 The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

Map Created: 8/27/2014

1:35,311

0 0.175 0.35 0.7 1.05 1.4

Data displayed in UTM Zone 11N, NAD83

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed. The following cannot be made Section 508 compliant. For help with its data or information, please contact the BLM Idaho State Office Webmaster at 208-373-4000.



Existing Condition

Loughmiller Allotment

The Loughmiller Allotment is approximately 3.5 miles north of Hollister, Idaho. The allotment contains a total of 1,835 acres of which 1,675 acres are public land and 160 acres are private land. It is surrounded by both BLM and private rangeland and crop lands. Elevations range from 4,310 to 4,400 feet. Vegetation is comprised of seeded rangeland. The Standards for Rangeland Health that apply to this allotment are as follows:

Standard 1 (Watersheds)

Watersheds provide for the proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Standard 5 (Seedings)

Rangelands seeded with mixtures, including predominately non-native plants, functioning to maintain life form diversity, production, native animal habitat, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle.

Standard 8 (Threatened and endangered plants and animals)

Habitats are suitable to maintain viable populations of threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species.

According to the 2014 Loughmiller Allotment Rangeland Health Assessment and Evaluation, three of the eight Standards for Rangeland Health are applicable for this allotment. It was determined that Standards 1, 5 and 8 were being achieved and Standards 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 do not apply. See enclosures.

Salmon Tract-U2 Allotment

The Salmon Tract-U2 Allotment is approximately three miles north of Hollister, Idaho. The allotment contains a total of 379 acres of which 315 acres are public land and 64 acres are private land. It is surrounded by private range land and crop land to the north, west and south. To the east, Highway 93 separates it from adjacent public land. Elevations range from 4,310 to 4,400 feet. Vegetation is comprised of seeded rangeland. The Standards for Rangeland Health that apply to this allotment are as follows:

Standard 1 (Watersheds)

Watersheds provide for the proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Standard 5 (Seedings)

Rangelands seeded with mixtures, including predominately non-native plants, functioning to maintain life form diversity, production, native animal habitat, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle.

Standard 8 (Threatened and endangered plants and animals)

Habitats are suitable to maintain viable populations of threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species.

According to the 2014 Salmon Tract-U2 Allotment Rangeland Health Assessment and Evaluation, three of the eight Standards for Rangeland Health are applicable for this allotment. It was determined that Standards 1, 5 and 8 were being achieved and Standards 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 do not apply. See enclosures.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action (permittee's application) would implement the following grazing management plans and renew the ten-year grazing permit for C.E. Brackett Cattle Co. within the Loughmiller and Salmon Tract-U2 Allotments.

Allotment	Kind/Number	Season of Use	% Public Land	AUM's
Loughmiller	300 C	3/1-2/28	91	616
Salmon Tract-U2	300 C	3/1-2/28	100	178

This plan includes an expanded season of use and increase in AUMs to further improve the two allotments already meeting rangeland health standards. Maximum grazing flexibility would be allowed between 3/1 and 2/28, with AUMs meeting the current available forage based upon desired use levels (up to 60%) and allow annual authorizations to meet resource issues. A deferred rotation system would be implemented using both allotments with different seasons of grazing each year per pasture. Thereby, allowing each pasture within the allotments periodic spring, summer, fall and winter grazing and/or rest. The allotments would remain separate on the permit, but grazed as one unit in conjunction with adjacent private land.

A ½ mile fence would be removed and a ¾ mile fence would be constructed along the canal that runs through the middle pasture within the Loughmiller Allotment (see Map 2). The Proposed Action would convert the Loughmiller Allotment from three unequal size pastures to four more equal size pastures. This action would result in the implementation of a five pasture deferred grazing rotation system using both allotments (see Map 3).

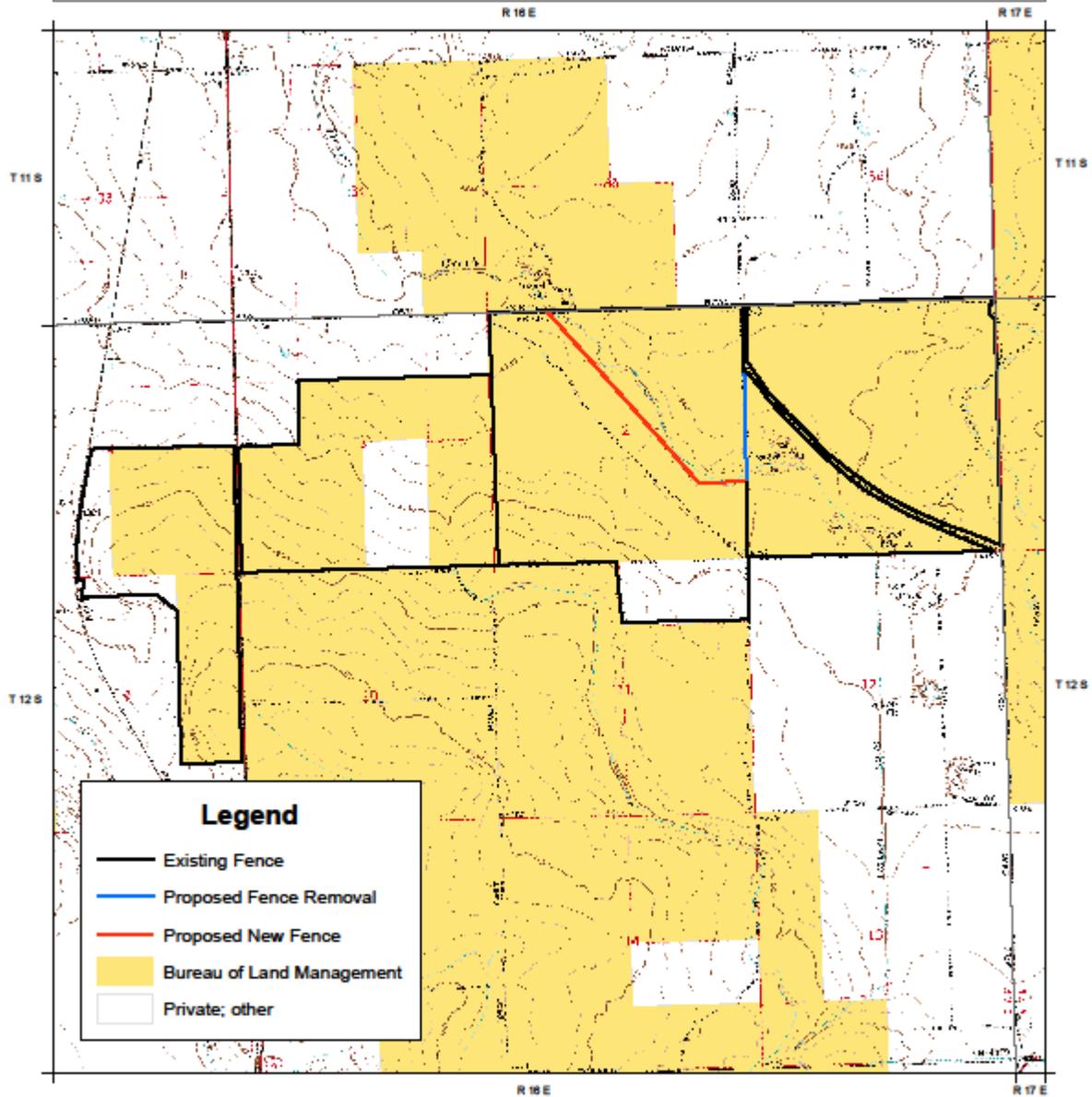
Management Flexibility

Flexibility would be allowed for annual changes in management due to natural occurrences, such as drought, unusually wet years, wildfire, or other circumstances so long as it is approved in advance by the authorized officer. Flexibility in both allotments would include making adjustments to the on and off dates or numbers as long as the approved use level is not exceeded and other management objective are being met. Flexibility in dates for both allotments will include not repeating the same

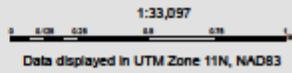
dates the following year to ensure maintenance and/or improvement of range conditions. Flexibility in livestock numbers for both allotments would be limited to no more than 300 head of livestock at any one time and the number of days would be adjusted to ensure utilization levels and approved actual use AUMs are not exceeded.

Annual AUM adjustments would be allowed each year based on monitoring of previous year's use and objectives for each pasture. If monitoring data is not collected, only the AUMs on the permit (616 and 178) would be authorized for that year.

Map 2



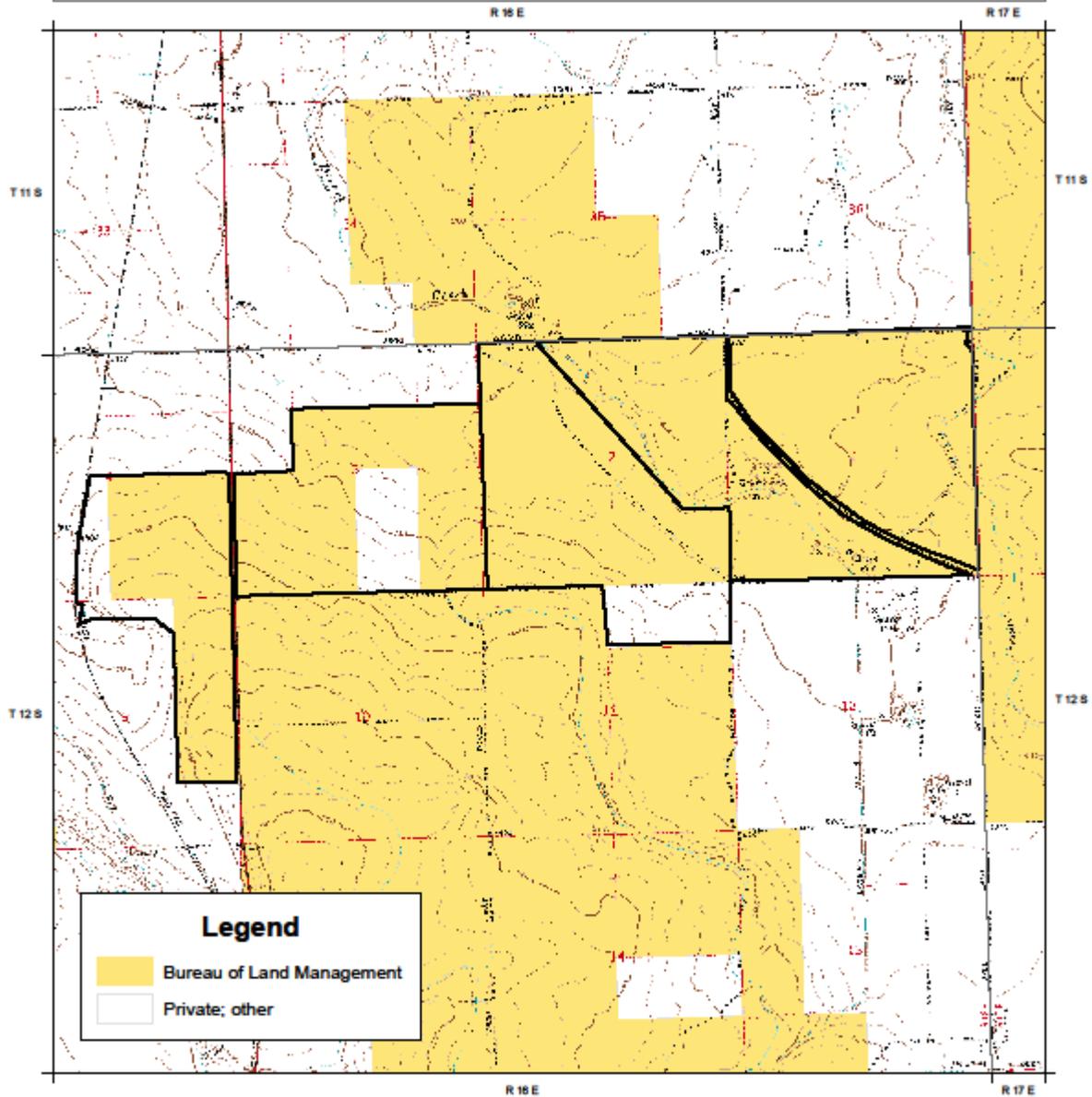
The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.



Map Created: 8/27/2014

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use is not guaranteed. The following cannot be made Section 508 compliant. For help with its data or information, please contact the BLM Idaho State Office Webmaster at 208-373-4000.

Map 3



The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use is not guaranteed. The following cannot be made Section 508 compliant. For help with its data or information, please contact the BLM Idaho State Office Webmaster at 208-373-4000.

1:33,919

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
Data displayed in UTM Zone 11N, NAD83



Map Created: 8/27/2014

Preliminary Issues

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

- Migratory Birds – Potential impacts to migratory birds including some BLM sensitive species.
- Soils – Potential impacts to soil.
- Vegetation – Potential impacts to vegetation.
- Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants – Potential spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Preliminary Alternative Development

Alternative 1 (No Action-Current Management-Actual Use)

Under Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative would renew the permit at current levels with no changes in grazing management or removal and construction of range improvements.

Allotment	Kind/Number	Season of Use	% Public Land	AUM's
Loughmiller	159 C	4/20 – 8/31	88	610
Salmon Tract-U2	40 C	5/1 – 6/24	100	72

Alternative 2 (No Grazing)

Under the “No Grazing” alternative the grazing permit for both allotments would not be renewed and livestock grazing on public lands within these allotments would not be authorized. In essence, the permittee would retain preference in the allotments, but would not be authorized to graze their livestock for 10 years. Existing range improvements would not be maintained by the grazing operators (except where fences separate the allotments from private land) nor would annual grazing bills be issued.

Even though livestock grazing would not be authorized on public lands within the allotment, a series of management actions would still occur. These actions would likely include continuing long-term trend studies, authorizing other livestock to continue trailing through the allotment, winterizing range improvements such as trough systems since there will be no requirements to maintain them.

Under Alternative 2, crossing permits would still be issued if needed and justified. Such permits would be issued in accordance with CFR 4130.6-3. Crossing permits (also known as trailing permits) would be coordinated with the permittees prior to issuance. Any crossing permit issued would restrict numbers of livestock to 300 cattle. No overnight use would be allowed.

After the 10-year period, the allotment could be reconsidered for livestock grazing.

Management Actions Consistent for Alternative 1:

Management Flexibility

Flexibility would be allowed for annual changes in management due to natural occurrences, such as drought, unusually wet years, wildfire, or other circumstances so long as it is approved in advance by the authorized officer. Flexibility in the number of days would be adjusted to ensure AUMs utilized are not exceeded.

Crossing Permits

Crossing permits may be issued if needed and justified. Such permits would be issued in accordance with 4130.6-3. Before issuing crossing permits (also known as trailing permits), BLM would coordinate with the permittees. Collectively, crossing permits issued would restrict numbers of livestock to 300 cattle annually.

Monitoring

Resource objectives will be monitored using the following protocols:

- *Implementation Monitoring*
 - Upland utilization would be collected at the end of the growing season and periodically during the grazing season, as necessary, and conducted using approved methodology described in the *Interagency Technical Reference 1734-03 Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements* and subsequent updates.
 - Utilization data will be collected at key areas. Selected key areas will be representative of the effects of grazing management within the pasture/use area. These allotments will be managed for moderate utilization (up to 60%) on key non-native seeded forage species.

*It is recognized that attainment of specific use levels on a year to year basis is difficult due to unpredictable climate variables (Holechek et al. 2004 pg 235). The use levels described above are targets across a 5-10 year time period.

Grazing use criterion combined with other monitoring data e.g. actual use, climate, trend, photo points etc., would be periodically assessed as needed to determine achievement of resource goals and objectives described below. Assessment of criterion may also be used to adjust grazing use the following year.

- *Effectiveness Monitoring*
 - Upland trend monitoring would continue to be conducted utilizing methodology contained in *Interagency Technical Reference 1734-04 Sampling Vegetative Attributes*.

Decision to be Made

The BFO Manager will decide whether to authorize livestock grazing activities as described in the Proposed Action, Alternative 1 and Alternative 2.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the Proposed Action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by November 28, 2014 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA.

Written comments must be submitted to Michael Courtney, Field Manager, 15 East 200 South, Burley ID, 83318. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to id_burley_fo@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

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

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Jason Theodozio, Rangeland Management Specialist, 15 East 200 South, Burley, ID, 83318, or (208) 677-6621.

Sincerely,

/s/Jim Tharp

Jim Tharp
Acting Burley Field Manager