

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-ID-I040-2012-027-EA
Roostercomb Trailing EA
8/16/2012

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

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PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Merrill Beyeler of Beyeler Ranches and Karl Snyder, *et al.* have applied for crossing (trailing) permits to cross public lands administered by the Salmon Field Office (SFO). Merrill Beyeler of Beyeler ranches and Karl Snyder, *et al.* submitted crossing applications on 11/4/2011 and 12/26/2011, respectively.

Both applications request permission to use a cross-county route that affects an approximately 3,000 foot long segment, located in the Roostercomb Allotment. Livestock crossing and the associated route is necessary in order to facilitate cattle movement from Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands to United States Forest Service (USFS) managed lands. Both crossings would occur concurrently and are proposed to occur between July 18 and July 24 annually. The applicants propose to follow the same route/timeframe through the grazing season of 2017, with crossing occurring in an alternating manner two of four years (for the two “off” years, the route is not utilized because the origin pastures are rested).

RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PLANS

Livestock crossing across BLM administered lands would be authorized in accordance with 43 CFR 4130 and 4160, and would be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The BLM is required, under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Taylor Grazing Act to respond to requests for livestock crossing across BLM administered lands. Crossing would be in accordance with the Lemhi Resource Management Plan of 1987, as amended.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action – Issue Livestock Crossing Permit

BLM proposes to issue crossing permits to Beyeler Ranches, LLC and Karl Snyder, *et al.* as follows: one year crossing, followed by two years no crossing, followed by two years crossing. Beyeler Ranches proposes to cross 230 head of cattle and Karl Snyder, *et al.* propose to cross 300 head of cattle across public lands in the Roostercomb Allotment for 1 day in between the dates of 7/18 – 7/24 (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of cattle, annual timeframe, crossing events by grazing season year.

Permittee	Number of cattle (managed as one herd)	Annual Timeframe	2013	2014-2015	2016-2017
Beyeler Ranches, LLC	230	7/18–7/24	One crossing	No crossing	One crossing each grazing season
Karl Snyder, et al.	300	7/18–7/24	One crossing	No crossing	One crossing each grazing season

The term of the crossing permits would be from 03/01/2013 to 02/28/2018 (five grazing seasons, starting in 2013). Livestock would be herded along the approximately 3,000 foot corridor depicted in Figure 1 (attached), which is located in T. 17 N., R. 23 E., Section 25, in the Meadow Creek Pasture of the Roostercomb Allotment. Trailing would be cross-county. Riders on horseback and herd dogs would guide the cattle along the crossing corridor. Motorized vehicles would not be used. Crossing would occur on moderately steep, north-west facing slopes. Crossing typically takes less than half a day. Table 2 shows the number of acres proposed to be crossed, and the percentage of the allotment that could be impacted.

Table 2. Length of trailing route, allotment acreage, total acres affected, and percent of total allotment acres affected.

Allotment	Approx. Crossing Event Length	Allotment Acreage	Total Acres Crossed*	% of Allotment (Crossing Acres / Total Allotment Acres *100)
Roostercomb	3,000 ft.	4,291	10	0.2

*Assuming a 150-foot wide trailing corridor.

The Crossing Permit for Beyeler Ranches, LLC would appear as follows:

MANDATORY TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Allotment Number	Allotment Name	Pasture	Livestock Number	Livestock Kind	Earliest Crossing	Latest Crossing	% PL	AUMs
06208	Roostercomb	Meadow Creek	230	Cattle	7/18	7/24	100	8

OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Crossing will occur along the route outlined in the attached map.
- This permit applies to active trailing use only, no overnight stays are authorized.
- Livestock crossing activity will be limited to established routes to the extent where practical and reasonable for livestock movement.

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Billing notices are issued which specify fees due. Billing notices, when paid, become part of the crossing permit. Fee payments are due on the date specified on the billing notice and MUST be paid in full prior to livestock crossing activities.
- This permit is issued solely for the purpose of moving livestock across public lands for proper and lawful purposes, as needed for the orderly administration of rangelands. This permit confers no priority for renewal, and cannot be transferred or assigned.

The Crossing Permit for Rick Snyder, et al. would appear as follows:

MANDATORY TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Allotment Number	Allotment Name	Pasture	Livestock Number	Livestock Kind	Earliest Crossing	Latest Crossing	% PL	AUMs
06208	Roostercomb	Meadow Creek	300	Cattle	7/18	7/24	100	10

OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Crossing will occur along the route outlined in the attached map.
- This permit applies to active trailing use only, no overnight stays are authorized.
- Livestock crossing activity will be limited to established routes to the extent where practical and reasonable for livestock movement.

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Billing notices are issued which specify fees due. Billing notices, when paid, become part of the crossing permit. Fee payments are due on the date specified on the billing notice and MUST be paid in full prior to livestock crossing activities.
- This permit is issued solely for the purpose of moving livestock across public lands for proper and lawful purposes, as needed for the orderly administration of rangelands. This permit confers no priority for renewal, and cannot be transferred or assigned.

Alternative 1 – No Action

The BLM would deny the application and would not issue a crossing permit. Trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands in the Roostercomb Allotment would not occur.

Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

The BLM considered alternatives that modified crossing dates or modified the proposed route within the same allotment; feasible alternate routes to the destination allotment do not exist and the short timeframe applied for is the only timeframe that works for management purposes. Roads to truck cattle do not exist. Because the applicant’s proposal would result in only negligible impacts to the environment as described in the Environmental Impacts section below, it was not necessary to consider modifications to the proposal. BLM has not identified any unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The SFO is divided into 84 grazing allotments on 492,000 acres of BLM administered lands. Generally, the lower elevation rangeland in the field office is grazed in the spring, fall and winter. The higher elevations are grazed in the spring, summer, and fall. Livestock trailing occurs at different times throughout the year to facilitate these general seasons of grazing use. Furthermore, timing of trailing events may vary annually based on factors such as forage production, drought, resource conditions, weather, wildfire, and individual livestock operations. Trailing events across BLM administered lands within the SFO range in distance from less than one mile to approximately ten miles and in duration from less than one hour to one day per

crossing event. There are no crossing permits that authorize overnight use on Salmon BLM-managed public lands.

The area subject to this proposal is located approximately five miles southwest of Lemhi, Idaho. The allotment affected by the applications is included in the Improve (I) category of selective management in the 1987 Lemhi Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP describes "Category I" allotments as: "Most of the public lands in the allotment are proposed for retention; range condition and trend are unsatisfactory; site potential for improvement is high; resource conflicts are high; opportunities exist for positive economic return from public investments; and present management appears to be unsatisfactory." Draft RMP, Appendix B, p. B-1

A Standards and Guides Determination was completed in June 1998. When the determination was signed, the existing grazing management practices and/or levels of grazing on the Roostercomb Allotment were achieving or making significant progress toward the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and conformed to the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. Standard 1: Watersheds and Standard 4: Native Plant Communities were "Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards." Standard 6: Exotic Plant Communities was "Not Meeting the Standard, and is Not Making Significant Progress towards meeting the Standard". Standard 5: Seedings did not apply to the Roostercomb Allotment. In 2004, the ID team completed a RHA to determine whether the allotment was still achieving standards. The ID team concluded that upland conditions were still similar to those at the time of the 1998 determination, and a new determination was not completed. Achieving or making significant progress towards these functions and conditions is required of all uses of public lands as stated in 43 CFR 4180.1.

Within the Meadow Creek Pasture of the Roostercomb Allotment, elevation ranges from approximately 6,000 to 7,000 feet. Slopes are variable, ranging from 0-50 percent. The average annual precipitation in the area is 10-15 inches; most of the precipitation occurs during the winter and spring months. Winter precipitation is typically in the form of snow. The soils in this area are mostly gravelly loams. Bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, three-tip, mountain, and Wyoming big sagebrush are the dominant plant species present today. Existing permitted active use in the Roostercomb Allotment is 636 AUMs. As shown in Table 2, the proposed trailing route comprises 0.2% of the total acreage of the allotment to be crossed.

There are no wild or scenic river corridors, floodplains, wetland, or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the crossing corridor. There are no designated Wilderness areas within the SFO. There are no Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, historic trails, or sites listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places within the allotment. There is no known habitat or occurrence of any plant or animal species listed pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. There are no known cultural areas or Indian sacred sites within the allotment.

There are no known greater sage-grouse leks in the allotment; the nearest known leks are approximately 3½ miles to the northwest and 4 miles to the east of the proposed crossing route. Breeding, nesting and wintering habitat does not exist along the trailing route due to elevation, topography and slope position. Greater sage-grouse may use the area for late

brood rearing. The crossing route falls within the outer boundary of sage-grouse preliminary priority habitat, as mapped, due to the use for late brood rearing.

The primary recreational use along the trailing route and surrounding allotment is big game hunting. Non-motorized recreation consists of horseback riding and an occasional hiker.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Proposed Action

A wide range of resources were considered during the development of the EA. Table 3 displays the resources that were considered.

Table 3. Resources Considered in Developing the EA.

Resources Considered	Effects
Air Quality	Negligible amounts of dust would become airborne due to the movement of cattle.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Cultural Resources	No effects because none are known to be present along trailing route (cultural resource survey completed in 2012).
Environmental Justice (EO 12898)	The proposed crossing event would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Floodplains	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Vegetation	Some vegetation would be likely to be consumed or trampled during the crossing event. Impacts would be negligible because the pasture has adequate forage to accommodate the estimated 18 (8 for Beyeler Ranches and 10 for Karl Snyder) AUMs that could be consumed or trampled during the crossing events.
Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants	Due to the local origin (adjacent BLM lands) of the livestock and confinement to established routes, it is unlikely that the proposed crossing event would introduce or spread noxious weeds or invasive plants that

Resources Considered	Effects
	are not already present along the crossing route.
Migratory Bird Treaty Act Species	The proposed trailing activities would only last for a few hours. Any migratory birds that are present when trailing activities occur, could easily avoid the activity. If affected at all, the migratory birds would be temporarily displaced for only an hour or two.
Native American Religious Concerns	No effects because none are known to exist along trailing route
Threatened/Endangered Plants; Sensitive Plants	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Threatened/Endangered Fish; Sensitive Fish	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Threatened/Endangered Animals; Sensitive Animals	<p>Identified trailing routes occur along established routes and trailing use occurs outside of important seasons of use (e.g. nesting or winter). If species are present when trailing activities occur, at most they would be temporarily displaced for an hour or two. Trailing activities are not expected to alter habitat for any threatened, endangered, or sensitive animals.</p> <p>The crossing route falls within sage-grouse preliminary priority habitat as mapped, however breeding, nesting and wintering habitat does not occur along the crossing corridor. Additionally because of the crossing timeframe, crossing could not impact breeding or nesting sage-grouse.</p>
Wastes: Hazardous or Solid	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Water Quality: Surface and Ground	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas	No effects because none are present

Resources Considered	Effects
	along trailing route.
Wild and Scenic Rivers: eligible, suitable or designated	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Tribal Treaty Rights	The proposed crossing event would not affect treaty rights.

The proposal involves up to 530 head of livestock traveling cross-country on overland routes. The livestock would originate from the BLM Little Sawmill Allotment and would cross approximately 3,000 feet of the Roostercomb Allotment; they would not require water or feeding during the crossing event. The permittees have managed their livestock grazing permits in accordance with all applicable standards.

The livestock authorized to cross public lands would be the same kind as permitted in the allotments crossed. Therefore, it is unlikely there would be effects that are different in kind or scope than normal grazing activities, except that the intensity of all these impacts would be minimal due to the brief duration of the crossing activity and the nature of the area to be crossed by the livestock. Further, this livestock crossing event would not have the potential to affect the allotment's ability to meet Idaho Standards of Rangeland Health in the future because there is adequate forage to accommodate livestock and wildlife, and no other resources are affected by the crossing activity.

There are no uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects that might be caused by the proposed crossing event. Nor are there unique or unknown environmental risks that need to be accounted for in the analysis.

Direct and Indirect Effects of the No Action Alternative

The permittees would not be able to move cattle 3,000 feet across the Roostercomb Allotment to USFS managed lands, resulting in the loss of late summer forage.

Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope of the proposed crossing permit would be limited to the 3,000 feet by 150 feet corridor, comprising approximately 10 acres of BLM-managed lands within the livestock crossing route.

The bounds for cumulative impacts to soils, vegetation; including BLM Sensitive Species, wetland and riparian areas, rangeland health standards, noxious weeds, wildlife; including threatened and BLM sensitive species and livestock grazing would be limited to those 4,291 acres within the Roostercomb Allotment. Since the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action would be negligible, the possibility of cumulative impacts from this action of permitting livestock to cross the allotment would be negligible as well.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

The BLM currently does not have any range improvement projects planned within this allotment or within any neighboring allotments. No future changes to the grazing management in this allotment are anticipated. When considered with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, there are no known incremental effects of the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative.

No significant individual or cumulative impacts would be anticipated in the Roostercomb Allotment as a result of the proposed action which allows 530 head of cattle to trail through the Allotment.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- Merrill Beyeler of Beyeler Ranches – Little Sawmill-South Hayden Permittee
- Rick Snyder – Little Sawmill-South Hayden Permittee
- Dean Shiner of Shiner Ranches – Roostercomb Permittee utilizing Meadow Creek Pasture of Roostercomb Allotment.

This crossing proposal was included in a Scoping Package for the Salmon Livestock Trailing EA that was posted to the Salmon Field Office website on December 23, 2011. No comments were received on this proposal.