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Bureau of Land Management

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Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-ID-I040-2012-029-EA

Ryegrass/N. Hayden Trailing EA
8/27/2012

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PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Francis Tonsmeire applied for a crossing permit on January 18, 2012 to cross public lands administered by the Salmon Field Office (SFO).

The application requests permission to use a cross-county route that affects an approximately 1.5-mile long segment, located in the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment. Livestock crossing and the associated route is necessary in order to facilitate cattle movement from United States Forest Service (USFS) managed lands to privately owned lands. The crossing would occur between the dates of August 20 and September 30 annually. The livestock would be herded within the approximately 1.5-mile long corridor depicted in Figure 1 (attached), which is located in T. 17 N., R. 23 E., sections 8 and 9 in the BLM Ryegrass and Bear Creek/McNutt Pastures of the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment. Trailing would be cross-country and would be done with horses and herding dogs; motorized vehicles would not be used. The applicant proposes to follow the same route/timeframe through 2018. The applicant currently has the grazing preference for the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment.

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 (RMP), as amended.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action – Issue Livestock Crossing Permit

BLM proposes to issue a crossing permit to Francis Tonsmeire to annually cross 230 cattle across public lands in the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment. Crossing would occur between August 20 and September 30 each grazing season from 2012 - 2017 (Table 1).

Table 1. Permittee, number of cattle, annual timeframe and length of permit.

Permittee	Number of cattle	Annual Timeframe	2012 - 2017
Francis Tonsmeire	230	8/20 - 9/30	One crossing each grazing season

The term of the crossing permit would be from March 1, 2012 to February 28, 2018 (six grazing seasons). Livestock would be herded along the approximately 1.5-mile long corridor depicted in Figure 1 (attached), which is located in T. 17 N., R. 23 E., sections 8 and 9 in the BLM Ryegrass and Bear Creek/McNutt Pastures of the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment. Trailing would be cross-country and would occur once each season between August 20 and September 30. It is anticipated that the trailing event would take no more than 8 hours to complete for each group of

cattle crossed; cattle would be crossed in separate groups as they are gathered from USFS-managed lands. Riders on horseback and herd dogs would guide the cattle along the crossing corridor. Motorized vehicles would not be used.

Crossing would occur along a 1.5-mile long route, which, assuming a 150-foot wide trailing corridor, which would result in a total of 27 acres of impact, or 0.4% of the allotment. 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. Trailing Event Length	Total Acres	Trail Acres*	% of Allotment (Trail Acres / Total Allot Acres *100)
Ryegrass/N. Hayden	1.5 miles	7.018	27	0.4

*Assuming a 150-foot wide trailing corridor.

The Crossing Permit for Francis Tonsmeire would appear as follows:

MANDATORY TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Allotment Number	Allotment Name	Pasture	Livestock Number	Livestock Kind	Earliest Crossing	Latest Crossing	% PL	AUMs
06207	Ryegrass/N. Hayden	BLM Ryegrass and Bear Cr./McNutt	230	Cattle	8/20	9/30	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.

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 Ryegrass/N. Hayden 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 timeframe applied for is the only timeframe that works for management purposes. Roads to truck cattle do not exist along the crossing route. Because the applicant's proposal would result in only negligible impacts to the environment as described in the Environmental Consequences 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 1 mile to approximately 10 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 6 miles southeast of Lemhi, Idaho. The allotment affected by the request was included in the Custodial (C) and Improve (I) categories of selective management in the 1987 Lemhi RMP; the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment is currently comprised of what were the McNutt, Basin, and portions of the then Roostercomb Allotment at the time of the RMP. The RMP describes "Category C" allotments as: "allotments that have low potential or consist of small isolated tracts and present management appears satisfactory". 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 Guidelines Determination was completed in June 1998. At the time of the determination on the Ryegrass/North Hayden Allotment; Standard 2: Riparian Areas and Wetlands and Standard 3: Stream Channel/Floodplain were "Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards [meeting it]." Standard 5: Exotic Plant Communities and Standard 6: Seedings did not apply to the Ryegrass/North Hayden Allotment Creek Allotment. In 2004, the ID team completed a Rangeland Health Assessment to determine whether upland health was still achieving standards. The ID team concluded that upland conditions were similar to those at the time of the 1998 determination, and a new determination was not completed. Subsequent riparian assessments have also confirmed that riparian condition is making progress towards meeting standards. 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 Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment/N. Hayden, elevation ranges from approximately 5,500 to 8,000 feet. Slopes are variable, ranging from 0-50 percent. The average annual precipitation in the area is 10-20 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 annual permitted active use in the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment is 586 AUMs. As shown in Table 2, the proposed trailing route comprises 0.4% of the total acreage of the allotments to be crossed.

There are no wild or scenic river corridors, floodplains, wetland, or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the crossing corridors. Dry Creek, an ephemeral stream, would be crossed; it is unlikely water would be in the stream at the time of crossing. There is no known habitat or occurrence of any plant or animal species listed pursuant to the Endangered Species Act within the crossing corridor. There are no designated Wilderness Areas within the SFO. There are no Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, or historic properties listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places within the crossing corridor. There are no ceremonial sites or specific treaty rights resources known to occur within the crossing corridor.

There is one known greater sage-grouse lek in the allotment, which is approximately 0.5 mile east of the crossing route. Greater sage-grouse may use the allotment for nesting, late brood rearing, and wintering habitat. The crossing route falls within the outer boundary of sage-grouse preliminary priority habitat, as mapped.

Primary recreational use consists of hunting. Non-motorized recreation consists of horseback riding and an occasional hiker.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

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.

Resources Considered	Effects
Cultural Resources	Section 106 review and Class III inventory indicate that there are no effects to historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect of the proposed undertaking. Each route would be monitored as a component of Section 106 compliance in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office.
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 likely be consumed or trampled during the crossing event. Impacts would be negligible because the pastures have adequate forage to accommodate the estimated 8 AUMs that could be consumed or trampled during the crossing events.
Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants	Due to the local origin (adjacent federally-managed 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 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.

Resources Considered	Effects
Native American Religious Concerns	The BLM is not aware of specific ceremonial sites or resources associated with ceremonial practices in the vicinity of the proposed crossing 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. Route crosses an ephemeral draw and has No Effect to fish or their habitats.
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, and breeding and nesting habitat occur along the crossing corridor. Because of the crossing timeframe, crossing could not impact breeding or nesting sage-grouse because sage-grouse breed and nest in the spring and early summer.</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 to wetlands/riparian zones: Route crosses almost entirely on uplands and a short crossing of the ephemeral draw Dry Creek and would have no measurable effect to riparian habitats.

Resources Considered	Effects
Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Wild and Scenic Rivers: eligible, suitable or designated	No effects because none are present along trailing route.
Tribal Treaty Rights	The identified crossing would occur over a confined, established trailing route, would be of short duration with minimal or no effects to surrounding habitats, and would not affect tribal access to public lands.

The proposal involves up to 230 head of livestock traveling cross-country on overland routes. The livestock would cross approximately 1.5 miles of the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment; they would not require water or supplemental feeding during the crossing event.

The livestock to be crossed would be the same kind as permitted in the allotment. 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 1.5 miles downhill and across the Ryegrass BLM Pasture of the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment to privately-owned lands. Cattle would have to be trailed uphill further onto USFS-managed lands, and then trailed approximately 5.5 miles up and down various drainages through USFS-managed lands, until they could be trailed down the Hayden Creek road. Cattle would remain on USFS-managed lands longer than they would if they could cross the 1.5 miles of BLM-managed lands to private lands. This alternative route would take longer, would be more arduous, and would thus result in more impacts to the overall environment than the relatively straightforward cross-country route over BLM-managed public lands.

Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope of the proposed crossing permit would be limited to the 1.5-mile long by 150-foot wide corridor, comprising approximately 27 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 7,018 acres within the Ryegrass/N. Hayden 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 proposed. When considered with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, there are no known incremental effects of the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative.

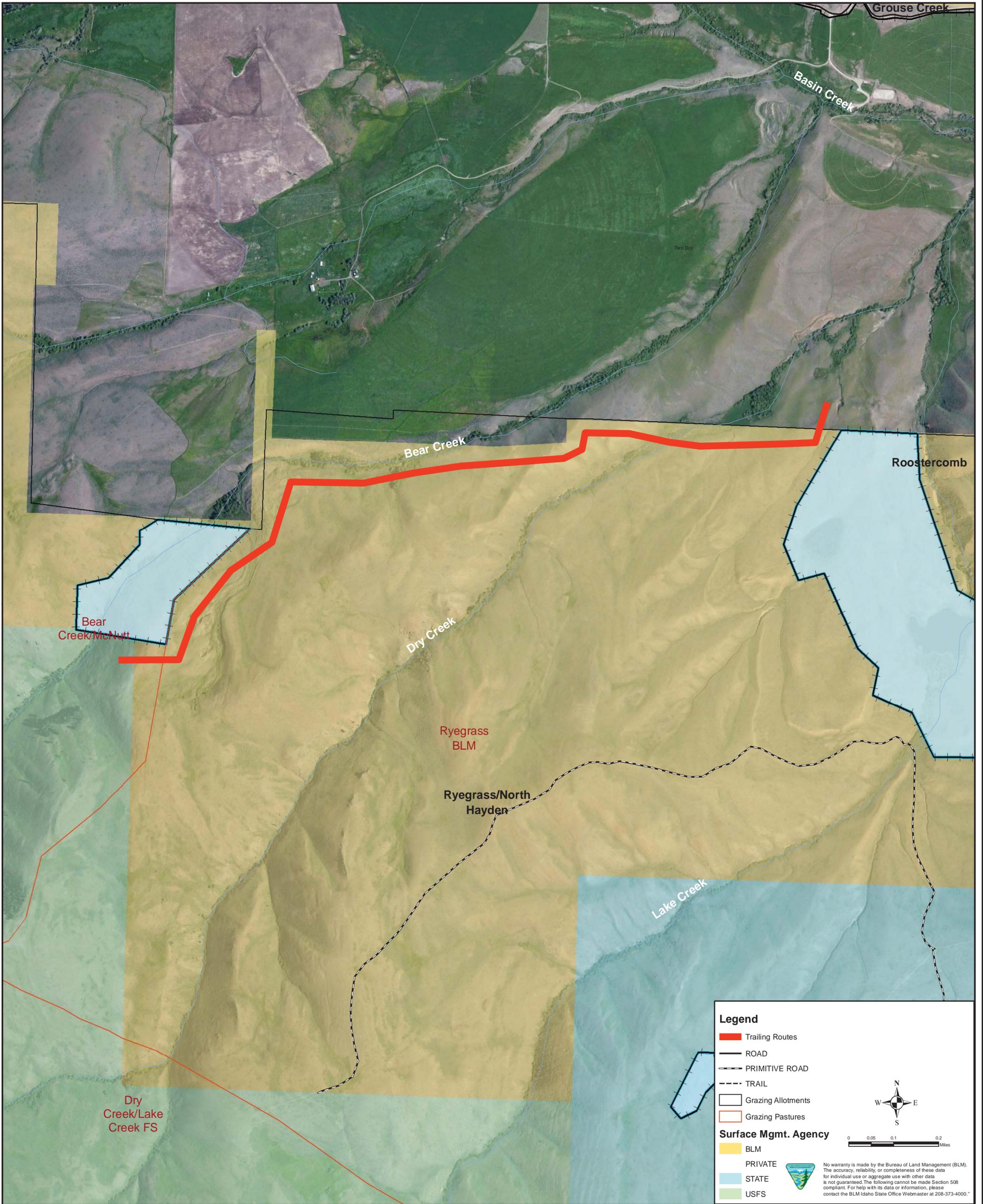
No significant individual or cumulative impacts would be anticipated in the Ryegrass/N. Hayden Allotment as a result of the proposed action which allows 230 head of cattle to trail through the allotment.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- Francis Tonsmeire – Ryegrass/N. Hayden Permittee
- Brian Adams, ranch field operations – Ryegrass/N. Hayden 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.

Figure 1:
Authorized Route for Crossing Permit # I0402012013, Tonsmeire



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