

Pah Rah Grazing Allotment

Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0048-EA

May 2013



Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Sierra Front Field Office proposes to issue a new term livestock grazing permit for the Pah Rah Grazing Allotment (Allotment). The Allotment is located approximately 24 miles northeast of Reno, Nevada.

The Allotment's permit is currently held by the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (Tribe) and authorizes grazing of 45 cattle from September 1 to December 31 for a total of 180 animal unit months (AUMs). The permit was issued under the Appropriations Act effective March 1, 2010 and would expire on February 28, 2020. The permit contains standard terms and conditions and is included in Appendix A of the final EA.

A review of the Allotment was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of BLM specialists in hydrology, range management, botany and wildlife biology. The review considered the vegetative trend and condition, rangeland health, livestock utilization, plant and animal habitat, riparian health and water quality.

The Proposed Action, at the request of the current permit holder, is to issue a new 10-year term livestock grazing permit that would authorize grazing use by 72 cattle from September 1 through November 15 each year, and result in forage consumption of 180 AUMs, annually. The standard terms and conditions included in the current permit would apply (see Appendix A).

The Proposed Action includes a vegetative treatment to remove juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) trees on up to 500 acres. Removal of the trees would improve greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) habitat characteristics and modify fire behavior by reducing fire intensity and spotting potential.

In order to address the presence of salt cedar (*Tamarisk ramosissima*), the Proposed Action includes herbicide application to remove the invasive tree from Tamarisk Spring.

Determination

On the basis of the information contained in the *Pah Rah Grazing Allotment Final Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0048-EA), I have determined that the Proposed Action does not constitute a federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the *context* and *intensity* of the impacts described in the EA.

Context

The Allotment is among the smaller allotments on the Carson City District and includes 4,504 acres of public land and 1,358 acres of privately-owned land. The elevation ranges from 4,200 feet on the north end of the Allotment near Pyramid Highway at Mullen Pass to 6,200 feet at the south end which borders private land.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The final EA described effects to resources that would be both beneficial and adverse. Under the Proposed Action, dormant vegetative forage would continue to be consumed by cattle, an adverse effect. The continuation of livestock grazing would be beneficial, as this supports the regional and larger society. Juniper trees would be removed on up to 500 acres, and in the short-term would adversely affect those wildlife species using the trees for nesting or cover. In the long-term, removal of the juniper trees would be beneficial to those species associated with sagebrush communities. Removal of the juniper trees would not involve ground disturbing activities such as road construction, and no mechanized equipment would be used to cut the trees (all activities would be done by hand). Removal of a salt cedar at Tamarisk Spring would adversely affect those wildlife species that use the tree for nesting or cover, however in the long-term removal of the invasive species would benefit wildlife and prevent the species spread to other riparian zones within the Allotment. No adverse effects are significant.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The Proposed Action would have no adverse effect on public health and safety; implementation of the treatment to remove juniper trees on up to 500 acres may improve public and firefighter safety by reducing the likelihood of a large catastrophic wildland fire.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The Proposed Action would have no effect on historic or cultural resources, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern).

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of the Proposed Action are well known and are not highly controversial. The BLM has long standing experience in managing livestock grazing, implementing vegetative and herbicide treatments.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no known effects of the Proposed Action which are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future actions within the Allotment, if they were to occur, would be subject to separate environmental analysis.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

No significant cumulative effects were identified in the final EA. Any other actions proposed in the Allotment would be evaluated as to whether the actions effects added to the Proposed Action would cause cumulatively significant effects.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss of destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Based on a review of the cultural resources present within the Allotment, the BLM has determined that any historic properties within the Allotment would not be affected by the Proposed Action (CRR 3-3647).

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA or 1973.

No federally listed species under the ESA, or its critical habitat for such species occurs within the Allotment.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (2001). Implementation of the Proposed Action would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



Leon Thomas
Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office

5-8-13

Date