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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply Refer To:
4160 ID130

November 26, 2013

REGISTERED MAIL

Joe Parkinson
123 West Highland View Drive
Boise ID 83702

Notice of Field Manager's Proposed Decision

Dear Mr. Parkinson:

Thank you for working with the BLM through the permit renewal process for the Munro FFR allotment; I appreciate your interest in grazing the allotment in a sustainable fashion and am confident that this proposed decision achieves that objective.

The BLM completed a Rangeland Health Assessment/Evaluation, and Determination (USDI BLM, 2013) for the Munro FFR allotment in 2013, supplementing the Evaluation and Determination completed in 2006. The BLM undertook this effort to ensure that any renewed grazing permit on this allotment is consistent with the BLM's legal and land management obligations. This proposed decision incorporates those documents by reference and the information contained therein.

On January 11, 2013, the Owyhee Field Office initiated by letter the collective public scoping process for Groups 3 through 5 of the Owyhee 68 grazing permit renewal process. These groups are referred to as the Toy Mountain, South Mountain, and Morgan groups, respectively. The Munro FFR allotment is one of 20 allotments within the Toy Mountain Group (Group 3). The letter informed recipients that the purpose of the public outreach effort was to identify resource and management issues associated with the Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines (Idaho S&Gs) and the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) for the purpose of developing grazing management alternatives for all three groups, including for the Toy Mountain Group NEPA document. The letter also served to request additional resources and monitoring information that could help the BLM to complete the permit renewal process. The letter encouraged commenters to submit comments and information by February 25, 2013, for each group of allotments, but did not set a closing date for the receipt of public comments. The scoping document was also presented to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe and Owyhee County Commissioners.

BLM mailed you a letter May 25, 2011, summarizing progress and future actions to comply with the 2008 Stipulated Settlement Agreement in renewing your grazing permit. That letter also requested that you complete an application for renewal of your permit to graze livestock in the Munro FFR allotment. In late May, you met with BLM to discuss allotment conditions, objectives, and livestock management. Additionally, you were asked during the 2013 meetings to complete an application for grazing permit renewal and update any previously submitted application.

After evaluating conditions on the land, meeting with you, and reviewing information received from the public, it became clear that limited resource concerns currently exist on the Munro FFR allotment. You submitted an application for renewal of this grazing permit, received by the BLM on May 31, 2011. Following discussion with the BLM in 2013, you provided an updated application for permit renewal, received by the BLM on May 20, 2013.

As a focus of addressing the impacts of renewing your livestock grazing permit, my office prepared and issued the Toy Mountain Group Draft Environmental Assessment¹ (EA) in which we considered a number of options and approaches to maintain and improve resource conditions within the 20 allotments of the Toy Mountain Group. Specifically, the BLM considered and analyzed in detail five alternatives. We also considered other alternatives that we did not analyze in detail. Our objective 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 the natural resources in the Munro FFR allotment conform to the goals and objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho S&Gs. This proposed decision incorporates by reference the analysis contained in the EA.

I am now prepared to issue a proposed decision to renew your permit to graze livestock within the Munro FFR allotment. Upon implementation of the decision, your permit to graze livestock on this allotment will be fully processed using the revisions to the grazing regulations² in 1995, adoption of the Idaho S&Gs in 1997, and implementation of the ORMP in 1999.

This proposed decision will:

- Describe current conditions and issues on the Munro FFR allotment;
- Briefly discuss the alternative grazing management schemes that the BLM considered in the EA;
- Respond to the application for grazing permit renewal for use in the Munro FFR allotment;
- Outline my proposed decision to select Alternative 2; and
- State my reasons for proposing this decision.

Background

Allotment Setting

The Munro FFR allotment is located approximately 4 miles north of Triangle, Idaho (See Map 1). The allotment consists of 1 pasture and has 78 acres of public land (13 percent), 0 acres of state land, and 506 acres of private land (87 percent). In addition to allocating livestock grazing within

¹ EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA analyzed 5 alternatives for livestock grazing management practices to fully process permit renewal within the Toy Mountain Group of allotments.

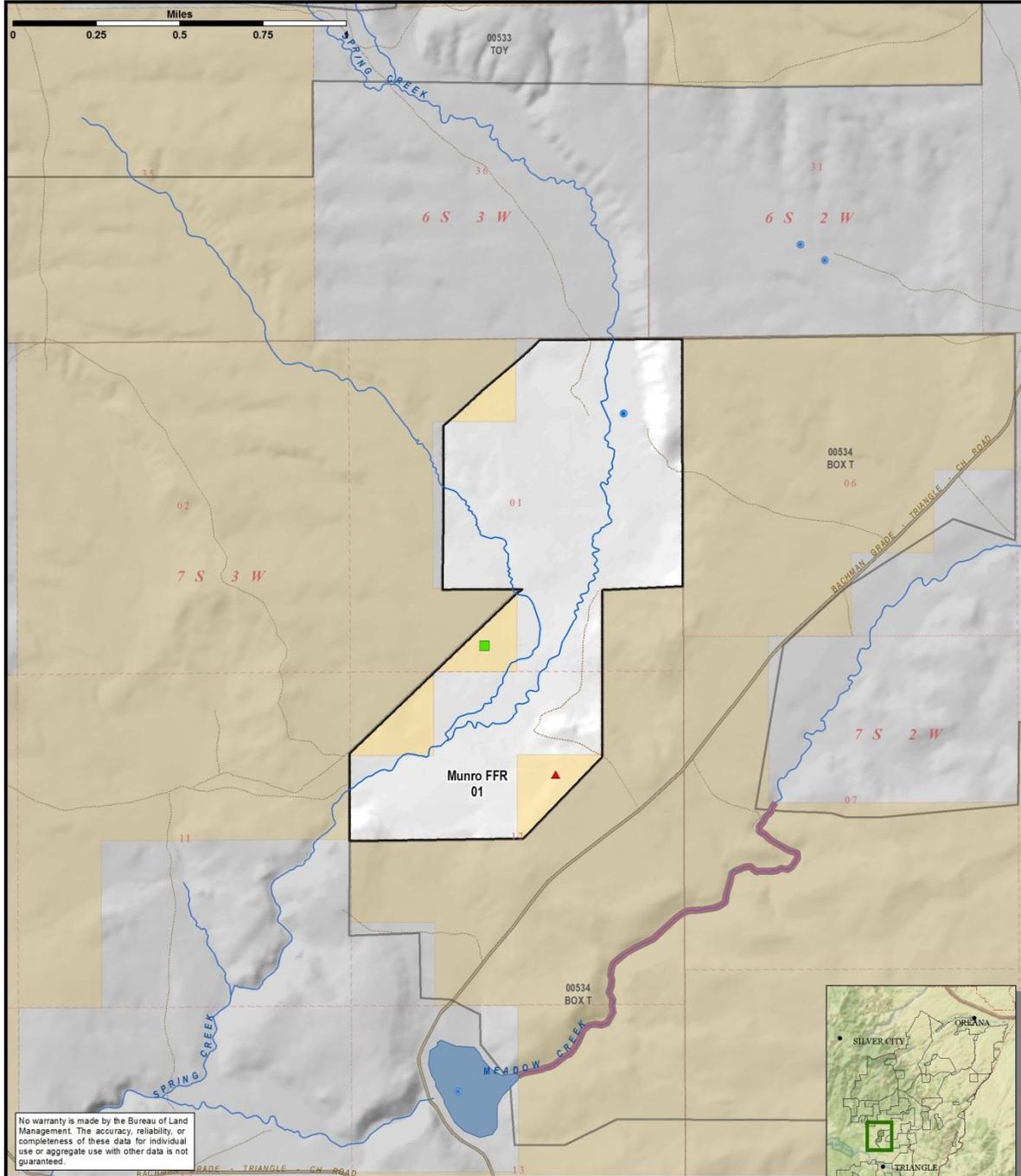
² 43 CFR Subpart 4100 is the federal regulations that govern public land grazing administration.

the Munro FFR allotment, the ORMP identified issues associated with management activities with a listing of resource concerns and applicable ORMP resource objectives. Resource concerns identified include the ecological condition of vegetation communities and special status species (sage-grouse).

The elevation within the Munro FFR allotment ranges from 5,188 feet to 5,313 feet. The allotment lies within the Owyhee Uplands, a sagebrush steppe semi-arid landscape of shrubs and cool-season bunchgrasses where native vegetation communities are diverse. Limited precipitation with cold winters and dry summers constrains plant and animal communities. Primary vegetation types are dominated by low or mountain big sagebrush as the shrub layer, with native perennial bunchgrasses and forbs in the understories.



Map 1: Munro FFR (00461) Allotment



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.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Allotment of Interest Boundary | Stock Pond | Assessment Rating | Perennial Stream | Management |
| Pasture Boundary | Spring | PFC | Intermittent Stream | BLM |
| Range Monitoring | Trough | FAR | Improved Road | State |
| Nested Plot Frequency Trend | Exclosure | NF | Primitive Road | Private |
| RHA Point | | | Water Body | |



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Current Grazing Authorization

You currently graze livestock within the Munro FFR allotment pursuant to a grazing permit issued by the BLM. That permit is the only authorization to graze livestock on public land within the Munro FFR allotment and has a permitted use of 15 AUMs, all of which are active use and none are suspension AUMs. Although the existing permit identifies a season of use between 12/1 and 12/31, it also includes a term and condition that the number of livestock and season of use within the allotment is at the permittee's discretion. The terms and conditions of the existing grazing permit are as follow in Table LVST-1:

Table LVST-1: Mandatory and other terms and conditions of the existing permit to graze livestock within the Munro FFR allotment

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00461 Munro FFR	15	Cattle	12/1	12/31	100	Active	15

Terms and conditions:

1. The number of livestock and season of use on the fenced federal range (FFR) allotment #00461 are at your discretion.
2. Turnout is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. Your certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
4. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter (1/4)-mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas, and water developments.
5. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
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. Livestock enclosures located within your grazing allotments are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvement permits in which you are a signatory or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within wilderness study areas requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
9. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, land offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turnout. 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, but 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. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schematic(s). Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
12. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
13. United States District Court for the District of Idaho imposed terms and conditions
 - 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

Although the current permit authorizes an annual use of 15 animal unit months (AUMs³) of forage from public land and a season of use between December 1 and December 31, actual use data provided annually by you have identified non-use between 2005 and 2012. However, you identified during a May 2013 meeting that the actual use report did not include incidental grazing use that occurs on the public parcels in the allotment that you have fenced separate from private land.

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

Resource Conditions

The BLM evaluated grazing practices and conditions in the Munro FFR allotment through 2013. The Evaluation and Determination documents concluded that resources on the Munro FFR allotment were meeting all applicable Idaho S&Gs. Specifically, the BLM determined Standards 1, 2, 4, and 8 of the applicable Standards for Rangeland Health are being met in the Munro FFR allotment. Standards 3, 5, 6, and 7 are not applicable to this allotment.

Vegetation - Uplands

The Idaho S&Gs Standard 4-Native Plant Communities is met in the Munro FFR allotment. One rangeland health assessment was completed in the Munro FFR allotment in 2002. The overall rating for biotic integrity of the site was a none-to-slight departure from reference site conditions. In

³ 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.

addition, the assessment identified that large bunchgrasses (e.g., bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue) were present. Although rabbitbrush is present, adequate mountain big sagebrush and bitterbrush are established. Adequate seed-heads for recruitment and stand maintenance were present at the time of the assessment and the plant community was intact and vigorous.

The ORMP vegetation management objective (VEGE-1) is to improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory vegetation health/condition on all areas. With 20 percent of the allotment in early seral condition and 0 percent in late seral condition, the objective to improve applies to the Munro FFR allotment.⁴ A conclusion of whether the ORMP objective to improve vegetation health/condition is met cannot be reached in the absence of trend data. Recent reported grazing limited to incidental use is a practice that should not limit progress toward meeting the ORMP vegetation objective.⁵

Watersheds

Watershed assessment indicators show some departure from expected conditions for the ecological site, although none excessive enough to determine that Standard 1 would not be met. Overall, the plant community and soil conditions are adequate to provide for proper nutrient and hydrologic cycling and energy flow. The absence of additional rangeland health assessments or additional data and the apparent non-use between 2005 and 2012 lead to the conclusion that current livestock management is compatible with attainment of Standard 1 for the Munro FFR allotment.⁶

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas

Standard 2 is being met in the Munro FFR allotment. A wet meadow area that is contributing flow to Spring Creek was assessed in 2012 using the PFC protocol. The riparian-wetland area supports a diverse and vigorous herbaceous community. There are no perennial or intermittent streams on public lands within this allotment; therefore, Standard 3 does not apply.⁷

Special Status Plants

No populations of special status plant species are known to occur in the Munro FFR allotment.⁸

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals

The Munro FFR allotment consists of one pasture and is dominated by sagebrush steppe habitats. The public land within this allotment has been fenced off from the private land and has received complete rest for the last 8 years, except for some incidental grazing. Standard 8 is met in the Munro FFR allotment.⁹

⁴ The ORMP objective for upland vegetation is to improve unsatisfactory vegetation health/condition, defined as greater than 10 percent in early seral condition or less than 40 percent in late seral condition.

⁵ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.1.1, Section 3.3.13.1.1, and Appendix F.

⁶ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.1.2 and Section 3.3.13.1.2.

⁷ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.1.3 and Section 3.3.13.1.3.

⁸ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.1.4 and Section 3.3.13.1.4.

⁹ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.3.5 and Section 3.3.13.1.5.

Issues

Through the scoping process and development of the rangeland health assessments, evaluation reports, and determinations, the BLM interdisciplinary team identified the following issues concerning livestock grazing management in one or more of the Toy Mountain Group allotments:

Issue 1: *Improve upland vegetation plant communities, and in particular, reverse the shift from desirable to undesirable native plant communities.*

Issue 2: *Improve watershed conditions within upland sites.*

Issue 3: *Limit juniper encroachment into shrub-steppe vegetation types.*¹⁰

Issue 4: *Prevent introduction and spread of noxious and invasive annual species (e.g., cheatgrass).*

Issue 5: *Improve riparian vegetation and stream-bank stability associated with streams and springs/seeps.*

Issue 6: *Protect special status plants and improve the habitats supporting special status plants.*

Issue 7: *Improve wildlife habitats, and habitats necessary to meet objectives for sagebrush-dependent species, including sage-grouse.*

Issue 8: *Consider whether grazing can be used to limit wildfire.*

Issue 9: *Consider the two-fold issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits. 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.*

Issue 10: *Consider impacts to regional socioeconomic activity generated by livestock production.*

Analysis of Alternative Actions

Based on the current condition of the Munro FFR allotment and the issues identified above, the BLM considered a number of alternative livestock management schemes in the EA to ensure that any renewed grazing permit would result in the maintenance or improvement of conditions on the allotment. Specifically, the BLM analyzed five alternatives in detail, identified a number of actions

¹⁰ Juniper encroachment is not an issue within the Munro FFR allotment, because the elevation of public lands within the allotment are generally below 5,300 feet and juniper only occurs as widely scattered trees.

common to all alternatives, and considered but did not analyze in detail a number of other possible actions.¹¹ The BLM considered the following alternatives in detail:

Alternative 1 - Current Situation

The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit for use in the Munro FFR allotment consistent with the summarized actions that have led to the current conditions. The same terms and conditions of the existing permit would be included in the permit offered. The number of livestock and season of use on the Munro FFR allotment, an allotment that includes a high percentage of private land, would be unchanged from the existing permit and at the discretion of the permittee. Permitted use in the allotment would be 15 AUMs of active authorized use and 0 suspension AUMs.¹²

Alternative 2 - Applicant's Proposed Action

BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit for use in the Munro FFR allotment in accordance with terms and conditions of the existing permit and as modified by the application received by BLM. The number of livestock and season of use on the Munro FFR allotment would be at the discretion of the permittee. Permitted use in the allotment would be unchanged from the existing permit with an authorized active use of 15 AUMs and suspension of 0 AUMs.¹³

Alternative 3

The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit for use in the Munro FFR allotment with terms and conditions that constrain seasons, intensities, duration, and frequency of grazing use. While seasons of grazing use would be constrained, livestock numbers would be defined at the permittee's discretion. Permitted use in the allotment would be unchanged from the existing permit with an authorized active use of 15 AUMs and suspension of 0 AUMs.¹⁴

Alternative 4

The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit for use in the Munro FFR allotment with terms and conditions that constrain seasons, intensities, duration, and frequency of grazing use consistent with constraints that would be more limiting than those under Alternative 3. In addition to defining seasons of authorized use, livestock numbers authorized within the allotment would be defined. Permitted use in the allotment would be unchanged from the existing permit with an authorized active use of 15 AUMs and suspension of 0 AUMs.¹⁵

Alternative 5 - No Grazing

No grazing would be authorized on public lands within the allotment for a term of 10 years. The application for grazing permit renewal would be denied and no grazing permit would be offered.

¹¹ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.2 and Section 2.4.13.

¹² For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.4.13.1

¹³ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.4.13.2

¹⁴ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.4.13.3

¹⁵ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.4.13.4

The Preliminary EA(#DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA) detailing the above alternatives was made available for public review and comment for a 15-day period ending November 12, 2013. Comments that were received were used to complete the EA and draft a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

Proposed Decision

After considering current grazing practices, current conditions of the natural resources, the alternatives and analysis in the EA, comments received from you and other interested publics, and other information, it is my proposed decision to renew your grazing permit for 10 years consistent with Alternative 2. Because current livestock management practices have resulted in meeting all Idaho S&Gs and your application requested the continuation of those practices, Alternative 2 will allow the Munro FFR allotment to continue to meet the standards while also moving toward achieving the resource objectives outlined in the ORMP.

Terms and conditions from Alternative 3, other than number 1 that constrains seasons of use, will replace those under the selected Alternative 2, so as to not duplicate Standard Terms and Conditions included in all permits issued by BLM.

The terms and conditions of the renewed grazing permit are defined in Table LVST-1.

Table LVST-1: Mandatory and other terms and conditions of the offered permit to graze livestock within the Munro FFR allotment with implementation of the decision

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
00461 Munro FFR	2	Cattle	5/1	11/15	100	Active	15

The following grazing permit terms and conditions specific to the Munro FFR allotment will be included in the permit offered:

1. The number of livestock and season of use authorized on the Munro FFR allotment (0461) is at the permittee's discretion, as long as authorized active use of 15 AUMs from public lands is not exceeded.

The following applicable Boise District grazing permit terms and conditions would be included in the permit offered:

1. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
2. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. Livestock enclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.

Notes on the Terms and Conditions

You will be offered a grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Munro FFR allotment, with an active use of 15 AUMs and no suspension AUMs, as summarized in Table 2.

Table LVST-2: Permitted grazing use within the Munro FFR allotment with implementation of the proposed decision

Active Use	Suspension	Permitted Use
15 AUMs	0 AUMs	15 AUMs

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 your record as a grazing permit holder for the Munro FFR allotment, and have determined that you have a satisfactory record of performance and are a qualified applicant for the purposes of a permit renewal.

Justification for the Proposed Decision

Based on my review of EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA, the Rangeland Health Assessment/Evaluation, Determination (USDI BLM, 2013), and other documents in the grazing files, it is my decision to select Alternative 2. I have made this selection for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because of my understanding that implementation of this decision will continue to 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 Munro FFR allotment continuing to meet the Idaho S&Gs and making progress toward meeting the resource objectives of the ORMP.

Issues Addressed

Earlier in this decision, I outlined the major issues that drove the analysis and decision-making process for the Munro FFR allotment. I want you to know that I considered each alternative in light of the specific issues raised in conjunction with this allotment before I made my decision. My selection of Alternative 2 was in large part because of my understanding that this selection best addressed those issues, given the BLM's legal and land management obligations.

Issue 1: Improve upland vegetation plant communities, and in particular, reverse the shift from desirable to undesirable native plant communities.

Although the season of use identified in the decision is between May 1 and November 15, flexibility provided in terms and conditions of the permit will continue to allow a season of use at your discretion. You have recently used the allotment to a limited level during an unidentified period of the year.¹⁶ Additionally, discretion provided to you whereby BLM does not restrict livestock numbers within the allotment, an allotment that includes significant land ownership other than the public domain (13 percent), has not resulted in recorded utilization exceeding the maximum allowable limit of 50 percent set in the ORMP. You have suggested that the current practice of limiting livestock grazing on the public land parcels to incidental use would be continued.¹⁷ Your livestock management practices have contributed to a finding that Standard 4 was met in the Munro FFR allotment. Livestock management practices at your discretion that have limited both seasons and intensity of livestock use consistent with appropriate livestock management and have allowed bunchgrass species to maintain health and vigor, lead to the conclusion that Standard 4 will continue to be met under alternative 2. Meeting the Standard would also result in meeting the ORPM objective to improve unsatisfactory vegetation health and condition.¹⁸

Issue 2: Improve watershed conditions within upland sites.

Under Alternative 2, livestock grazing in the Munro FFR allotment could include the opportunity for yearly spring grazing that would increase physical impacts during the wettest period, because the permittee retains the flexibility to change grazing management at his discretion. However, Alternative 2 would likely not differ from the current situation (Alternative 1) where current grazing practices on fenced public land of the allotment would continue to receive almost complete rest every year with little incidental grazing. As a whole, the allotment would maintain soil and hydrologic function under Alternative 2, when compared to the current condition.¹⁹

Issue 3: Limit juniper encroachment into shrub steppe vegetation types.

Although the expansion of juniper dominance is an issue within other allotments of the Toy Mountain Group, juniper encroachment is less of an issue within the Munro FFR allotment because the elevation of public lands within the allotment is generally below 5,300 feet and juniper currently only occurs as widely scattered trees.

Issue 4: Prevent introduction and spread of noxious and invasive annual species (e.g., cheatgrass).

¹⁶ Recent actual use reported has identified no use, but a conversation with you identified that the four public land parcels within the boundary of the Munro allotment have been fenced separately from private land and incidental use of the public land parcels has occurred in recent years.

¹⁷ See Appendix E of the EA

¹⁸ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.2.1 and Section 3.3.13.2.2.1

¹⁹ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.2.2 and Section 3.3.13.2.2.2

In Idaho, the BLM works closely with the Idaho Department of Agriculture, Tribal governments, and county governments to combat noxious weeds. Cooperative weed management arrangements utilize local, state and Federal resources to inventory and treat weed infestations on both public and private lands. Populations are recorded, treated, monitored, and retreated as their presence is known. Although no sites with noxious weeds have been identified on public land in the Munro FFR allotment, undiscovered noxious weeds may exist. Noxious weed control is ongoing.

Issue 5: Improve riparian vegetation and stream-bank stability associated with streams and springs/seeps.

Because the Munro FFR allotment would be used during the same seasons and under the same terms as the current permit, it would continue to meet the riparian-wetland Standards under Alternative 2.²⁰

Issue 6: Protect special status plants and improve the habitats supporting special status plants.

Continued livestock management practices under Alternative 2 and consistent with recent actions would not affect special status plant species, because no populations of BLM special status plant species are known to occur on public lands in the Munro FFR allotments.

Issue 7: Improve wildlife habitats, and habitats necessary to meet objectives for sagebrush-dependent species, including sage-grouse.

Under Alternative 2, grazing management on the public land within the Munro FFR allotment is expected to be the same as the current situation. Munro FFR allotment would continue to receive almost complete rest every year. This is expected to maintain the same conditions for wildlife species as currently exist. Sagebrush steppe and riparian habitats would continue to provide adequate habitat for sage-grouse, spotted frogs, and migratory birds. Standard 8 would continue to be met under Alternative 2 on the allotment in upland and riparian habitats.²¹

Issue 8: Consider whether grazing can be used to limit wildfire.

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 would be theoretically possible to graze livestock at the landscape scale to reduce fire behavior or use targeted grazing to create fuel breaks on the Toy Mountain Group allotments with the hope that livestock grazing would 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 Munro FFR allotment will not significantly alter fire behavior during extreme conditions or the BLM's ability to fight wildfire in the area.

²⁰ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.2.3 and Section 3.3.13.2.2.3

²¹ For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 3.2.5 and Section 3.3.13.2.2.5

Wildfire behavior is dependent on a number of factors, including climatic conditions and current weather, as well as the size and connectivity of fuels, fuel loading, fuel moisture, and topographic slope. Although landscape-scale livestock grazing has the potential to reduce fine fuels to a degree, fire intensity and spread in sagebrush steppe and salt desert shrub vegetation communities during periods of extreme fire behavior through mid-summer would be little altered in the absence of heavy livestock grazing prior to the fire season. At the same time, the period when grazing could reduce fine fuels prior to the fire season is also the season of active growth of native perennial bunchgrass species. Annual heavy livestock grazing during the active growing season to reduce fine fuels would not be consistent with maintaining or improving native perennial herbaceous species health and condition, as summarized in Appendix E of the EA. The BLM's current permit renewal process is focused on improving native upland and riparian plant communities, and landscape-scale grazing to reduce fine fuels to a level or at a time necessary to control fire behavior would not support that improvement.

While targeted grazing may have potential application to develop and maintain strategic fire breaks, its application needs to be considered in combination with other fuels management tools. In addition, targeted grazing to create fire breaks would alter the role of permit renewal. Grazing authorized by permit renewal would provide authorization to use public land resources, while fuels management changes the objective to manipulate vegetation attributes. Targeted grazing to establish fuel breaks, as well as landscape-scale grazing to reduce fuels, are outside the purpose and need of the EA that analyzes the consequences of implementing livestock management practices identified in the applications and alternatives for grazing permit renewal authorizing cattle grazing to meet Rangeland Health Standards and resource management objectives.²²

Issue 9: Consider the two-fold issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits. 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.

Climate change is another factor I considered in building my decision around Alternative 2 for the Munro FFR allotment. This allotment is currently meeting applicable Idaho Standards and Guidelines, thus your practices are ensuring sufficient resource health and resilience to provide resource protection going into an uncertain future.

Issue 10: Consider impacts to regional socioeconomic activity generated by livestock production.

During the scoping process, concerns were raised about the impacts of modifications or reductions in grazing to regional socio-economic activity. I share this concern and have taken these concerns into consideration in making my decision; however, my primary obligation is to ensure that the new grazing permit protects resources in a manner consistent with the BLM's obligations under the Idaho S&Gs and the ORMP. As noted above, I have selected Alternative 2 for the Munro FFR

²² For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0021-EA Section 2.3.

allotment in large part because actions proposed accomplish those latter goals, in addition to maintaining the existing level of grazing use.

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 would result in less-reliable amounts of forage over the long term, in addition to reducing economic opportunities from ecosystem services and alternate socio-economic resources, such as recreation, that rely on healthy, functional and aesthetically pleasing open spaces and wildlife habitats.

Additional Rationale

Thought and effort went into developing grazing management that is responsive to the Munro FFR allotment's specific resource needs, geography, and size. These considerations were made to address all concerns and requirements mandated to the BLM. Each allotment of the Toy Mountain Group has different ecology and management capability due to the size and location/topography that result in various issues and priorities. Attempts to coordinate grazing within the allotment were made by me and my staff with you and the interested public. I recognize the difficulty of not only providing the mandated needs for the resources, but also the needs and capability that you, the permittee have. I have balanced the needs of the resource and your capabilities to the extent possible, based upon the information available.

I did consider selecting Alternative 5 - No Grazing for this allotment; 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 allotment. In selecting Alternative 2 for the Munro FFR allotment, rather than Alternative 5, I especially considered (1) BLM's ability to meet resource objectives using the selected Alternative 2, (2) the impact of implementation of Alternative 5 on your operations and on regional economic activity, and (3) your past performance under previous permits. By implementing Alternative 2, the limited resource issues identified specific to the Munro FFR allotment will be addressed. Declining to authorize grazing for a 10-year period is not the management decision most appropriate at this time, in light of these factors.

Finding of No Significant Impact

A FONSI was signed on November 20, 2013 and concluded that the proposed decision to implement Alternative 2 is not a major federal action that will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. That finding was based on the context and intensity of impacts organized around the ten significance criteria described at 40 CFR § 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. A copy of the FONSI for EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0022-EA is available on the web at:
http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/owhce_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal.html

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my decision to select Alternative 2 over other alternatives, because livestock management practices under this selection best meet the ORMP objectives allotment-wide and the

Idaho S&Gs consistent with the projected ability of BLM to oversee grazing on the Munro FFR allotment over the next 10 years. While Alternative 1 would implement livestock management practices in this custodial allotment similar to that which will occur under the decision (Alternative 2), the period of use that will appear on the offered permit will more closely reflect when you have used the allotment in recent years and show intent to use it during the term of the renewed permit. Both Alternatives 1 and 2 provide flexibility in seasons of grazing and livestock numbers at your discretion, as long as authorized active use AUMs from public land are not exceeded and resource values on public land are not adversely affected. Terms and conditions of the permit that allow your discretion with seasons of use and livestock numbers have resulted in all Idaho S&Gs to be met.

Constraining seasons of authorized grazing use or livestock numbers in the Munro FFR allotment under Alternatives 3 or 4, above and beyond the limitations you have recently implemented, are not warranted at this time.

Alternative 5 would limit the economic activity of your livestock operation in 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 maintenance or improvement anticipated by implementation of the decision, lead me to believe elimination of livestock grazing from the Munro FFR allotment is unnecessary at this point.

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 Munro FFR allotment as 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 terms 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 proposed decision will result in taking appropriate action to modifying existing grazing management in order to make significant progress toward achieving rangeland health.

Right of Protest and/or Appeal

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other interested publics may protest the proposed decision under Sec. 43 CFR § 4160.1 and 4160.2, in person or in writing within 15 days after receipt of such decision to:

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

The protest, if filed should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the proposed decision is in error.

In accordance with 43 CFR § 4160.3(a), in the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become the final decision of the authorized officer without further notice unless otherwise provided in the proposed decision.

In accordance with 43 CFR § 4160.3(b), upon a timely filing of a protest, after a review of protest received and other information pertinent to the case, the authorized officer shall issue a final decision.

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 or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final. 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 above. 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 person named in the copies sent to section of this decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4.421 and on the Office of the Regional 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
Field Manager
Owyhee Field Office

Works Cited

- USDI BLM. (1999). *Owyhee Resource Management Plan*. Marsing, ID.
- USDI BLM. (2013). *Evaluation and Determination: Achieving the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Conformance with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for the Munro FFR (0461) Allotment, 2013 Supplement*. Marsing, ID.

Copies sent to:

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#	
Friends of Mustangs	Robert	Amidon	8699 Gantz Ave.	Boise	ID	83709	1	
Soil Conservation District	Cindy	Bachman	PO Box 186	Bruneau	ID	83604	2	
	Bill	Baker	2432 N. Washington	Emmett	ID	83617-9126	3	
	Conrad	Bateman	740 Yakima St.	Vale	OR	97918	4	
Idaho Dept. of Agriculture	John	Biar	PO Box 790	Boise	ID	83707	5	
Boise District Grazing Board	Stan	Boyd	PO Box 2596	Boise	ID	83701	6	
	Gene	Bray	5654 W El Gato Ln.	Meridian	ID	83642	7	
Colyer Cattle Co.	Ray & Bonnie		Colyer	31001 Colyer Rd.	Bruneau	ID	83604	8
	Senator Mike	Crapo	251 East Front Street STE 205	Boise	ID	83702	9	
Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee	Jim	Desmond	PO Box 38	Murphy	ID	83650	10	

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
Land & Water Fund	William	Eddie	PO Box 1612	Boise	ID	83701	11
Western Watershed Projects	Katie	Fite	PO Box 2863	Boise	ID	83701	12
Gusman Ranch Grazing Association LLC	Forest	Fretwell	27058 Pleasant Valley Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	13
	Chad	Gibson	16770 Agate Ln.	Wilder	ID	83676	14
Resource Advisory Council	Chair Gene	Gray	2393 Watts Lane	Payette	ID	83661	15
	Russ	Heughins	10370 W Landmark Ct.	Boise	ID	83704	16
Jaca Livestock	Elias	Jaca	817 Blaine Ave.	Nampa	ID	83651	17
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	President Jim	Jeffress	PO BOX 8224	Boise	ID	82707	18
	Dan	Jordan	30911 Hwy. 78	Oreana	ID	83650	19
	Floyd	Kelly Breach	9674 Hardtrigger Rd.	Given Springs	ID	83641	20
	Kenny	Kershner	PO Box 300	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	21
	Vernon	Kershner	PO Box 38	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	22
	Lloyd	Knight	PO Box 47	Hammett	ID	83627	23
	Congressman Raul	Labrador	33 E. Broadway Ave STE 251	Meridian	ID	83642	24
The Fund for the Animals, Inc.	Andrea	Lococo	1363 Overbacker	Louisville	KY	40208	25
LU Ranching	Tim	Lowry	PO Box 132	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	26
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	Herb	Meyr	570 E 16th N.	Mountain Home	ID	83647	27
R&S Enterprise	Ray	Mitchell	265 Millard Rd.	Shoshone	ID	83352	28
	Ed	Moser	22901 N. Lansing Ln.	Middleton	ID	83644	29
	Brett	Nelson	9127 W. Preece St.	Boise	ID	83704	30
	Ramona	Pascoe	PO Box 126	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	31
	Anthony & Brenda	Richards	8935 Whiskey Mtn. Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	32
-	John	Richards	8933 State Hwy. 78	Marsing	ID	83639	33
	Senator James E.	Risch	350 N 9th Street STE 302	Boise	ID	83702	34
Idaho Conservation League	John	Robison	PO Box 844	Boise	ID	83701	35
	John	Romero	17000 2X Ranch Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	36
	Bob	Salter	6109 N. River Glenn	Garden City	ID	83714	37
Intermountain Range Consultants	Bob	Schweigert	5700 Dimick Ln.	Winnemucca	NV	89445	38

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
	Congressman Mike	Simpson	802 West Bannock STE 600	Boise	ID	83702	39
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	Tribal Chair Nathan	Small	PO Box 306	Ft. Hall	ID	83203	40
Juniper Mtn. Grazing Association	Michael	Stanford	3581 Cliffs Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	41
	John	Townsend	8306 Road 3.2 NE	Moses Lake	WA	98837	42
Moore Smith Buxton & Turcke	Paul	Turcke	950 W. Bannock, Ste. 520	Boise	ID	83702	43
Natural Resources Defence Council	Johanna	Wald	111 Sutter St., 20 th Floor	San Francisco	CA	94104	44
Office of Species Conservation	Cally	Younger	304 N. 8 th STE 149	Boise	ID	83702	45
Owyhee County Commissioners			PO Box 128	Murphy	ID	83650	46
Holland & Hart LLP			PO Box 2527	Boise	ID	83701	47
Idaho Cattle Association			PO Box 15397	Boise	ID	83715	48
IDEQ			1410 N. Hilton	Boise	ID	83701	49
Idaho Dept. of Lands			PO Box 83720	Boise	ID	83720	50
Idaho Farm Bureau Fed.			PO Box 167	Boise	ID	83701	51
International Society for the Protection of Horses & Burros	Karen	Sussman	PO Box 55	Lantry	SD	57636	52
Oregon Division State Lands			1645 NE Forbes Rd., Ste. 112	Bend	OR	97701	53
Owyhee Cattlemen's Association			PO Box 400	Marsing	ID	83639	54
Schroeder & Lezamiz Law Offices			PO Box 267	Boise	ID	83701	55
Sierra Club			PO Box 552	Boise	ID	83701	56
State Historic Preservation Office			210 Main St.	Boise	ID	83702	57
State of Nevada Div. of Wildlife			60 Youth Center Rd.	Elko	NV	89801	58
The Nature Conservancy			950 W. Bannock, Ste. 210	Boise	ID	83702	59
The Wilderness Society			950 W. Bannock St., Ste. 605	Boise	ID	83702-5999	60
U.S.F.W.S. Idaho State Office			1387 S. Vinnell Way, Ste. 368	Boise	ID	83709	61
USDA Farm Services			9173 W. Barnes	Boise	ID	83704	62

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
Western Watershed Projects			PO Box 1770	Hailey	ID	83333	63
Josephine Ranch	Steve	Boren	1050 N. Briar Lane	Bosie	ID	83712	64
	John E	Edwards	15804 Tyson Rd	Murphy	ID	83650	65
Northwest Farm Credit Services, FLCA	Maudi	Hernandez	16034 Equine Drive	Nampa	ID	83687	66
	Rohl	Hipwell	18125 Oreana Loop Rd.	Oreana	ID	83650	67
	Marti & Susan	Jaca	21127 Upper Reynolds Cr. Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	68
Lequerica & Sons Inc.	Tim	Lequerica	PO Box 113	Arock	OR	97902	69
	Charles	Lyons	11408 Hwy 20	Mountain Home	ID	83647	70
	Craig & Georgene	Moore	P.O. Box 14	Melba	ID	83641	71
	Scott & Sherri	Nicholson	P.O. Box 690	Meridian	ID	83680	72
	Joseph	Parkinson	123 W. Highland View Dr.	Boise	ID	83702	73
Zion First National Bank	Bertha	Scallon	500 5th St.	Ames	IA	50010	74
	Elmer	Stahl	17965 Oreana Loop Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	75
Estate of Charles Steiner	John	Steiner	24597 Collett Rd.	Oreana	ID	83650	76
	Robert	Thomas	17947 Shortcut Rd.	Oreana	ID	83650	77
Idaho Fish & Game	Rick	Ward	3101 S. Powerline Rd.	Nampa	ID	83686	78
Northwest Farm Credit Services			815 N. College Rd	Twin Falls	ID	83303	79
Ranges West			2410 Little Weiser Rd.	Indian Valley	ID	83632	80