

**Wilson Creek FFR
0537**

**INITIAL ALLOTMENT AND PERMIT/LEASE REVIEW
and
RANGELAND HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

2013 Supplement to the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment Initial Allotment Review and Rangeland Health Assessment

The Initial Allotment Review and Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines Assessment for the Wilson Creek FFR allotment was drafted in 2006 as a portion of the grazing permit renewal process. Until 2013, no rangeland health determination was completed and the permit authorizing grazing use in this allotment has not been fully processed for renewal. The current document consists of the 2006 RHA, in full, supplemented by new information available since the 2006 document was completed. Portions of this 2013 document that supplement the 2006 document are presented in this two-field table format with the header above, while those portions carried forward unchanged from the 2006 document are outside the two-field tables. The 2013 Supplement to the document includes data compiled between 2006 and 2013, as well as the completion of the 2013 evaluation report and determination consistent with the Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Desk Guide for Idaho Bureau of Land Management, May 2009. The 2013 determination for the Wilson Creek FFR allotment is compiled at the end of this document.

Field Office: **Owyhee**

Date: **December 2006**

1. Allotment Name/Number: **Wilson Creek FFR / 0537**
2. Name(s) of Permittee(s)/Preference Code: **Thenon Elordi, Jr. / 1101474**
3. Permit Expiration Date(s): **02/28/2007**
4. Acres of: Public: **810** Private: **2,233** State: **0** Other: _____
5. Percent public land in the allotment: **27**

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Updated land Status Acreage and Percent Public Land

Table ALLOT-2: Land status acreage* for the Wilson Creek FFR allotment

Public	State	Private	Total
616 (22%)	0	2,208 (78%)	2,824

*Acreages represent best available estimates

The estimated land acreages are based on corrected fence locations and GIS mapping information.

Currently, the allotment is permitted at 78 AUMs, with livestock grazing authorized at the permittee's discretion

6. Is public land large contiguous block(s) of public land, isolated parcel(s) or both?
The public land is in four isolated parcels
7. Is the public land fenced separately from the private land? **No**

8. Is any public land within the allotment identified for exchange/disposal in the land use plan?
YES Percent of Allotment **100%** If yes, two year notification sent? **No**
9. Does BLM have administrative access separate from the grazing permit/lease? **NO**
10. Does public have legal access to the allotment? **No (all parcels are isolated by private lands)**
11. Is the public land physically isolated from the adjoining public land?
Public land is fenced into an FFR. A few of the isolated tracts of public land continue outside the allotment boundary but are separated by fencing from other public lands. But all parcels are only between 200-360 acres in size. No large parcels (all less than 640 acres).
12. What is the livestock grazing management category? (M, I, or C) **M**
13. List all Land Use Plan (LUP) objectives and decisions (consider resource list for No. 14 below for objectives and decisions in the LUP), other grazing decisions, and other NEPA documents pertaining to the allotment:
Owyhee RMP (December 30, 1999) and Proposed Owyhee RMP and EIS (July 1999) - See Land Use Plan Review below.
Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (August 12, 1997) - see guidelines 1-20 below.
14. Check the Standards, Guidelines, and Resources that are applicable to this allotment. Following ID Team disclosure of information and data (monitoring data, studies, inventories, etc, information from other agencies, local governments, and the public) and the ensuing discussions, briefly describe in the comment section any issues (with supporting information). This information will be used to determine if existing data is adequate, or if more information is needed to determine compliance with the Idaho Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

Standard, Guideline, or Resource Issue	Check (if applicable)	Comments
Watershed (Standard 1)	X	<p>In 2001, one rangeland health evaluation was completed in this allotment in a loamy 13-16" ecological site. The moderate ratings were associated with water flow patterns, pedestalling, and terracettes. Water flow patterns were observed as interconnected, long, and dominating the site. Pedestals and terracettes were noted as being common, especially within flow patterns. Soil surface resistance to erosion was identified as friable with granular/blocky structures, abundant rock and vegetative cover higher than expected. Based on this evaluation, the watershed appears to provide for proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to the soil type. There were no rills, gullies or wind disturbed areas on the site. Although plant cover was adequate, the western juniper encroachment was more common than expected and has altered the site composition.</p>
Riparian Areas, Wetland (Standard 2)	X	<p>Wilson Creek – Wilson Creek is an intermittent stream crossing public land in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment. The 0.5 miles of stream was observed in September of 1995. There was a continuous flow of water but the riparian vegetation had been primarily replaced by upland vegetation. The vegetation appeared unsuitable for controlling erosion, stabilizing streambanks, and shading water areas. Invader and shallow rooted species were a major component of the floodplain. Age class and structural diversity of riparian/wetland vegetation were not appropriate. Noxious weeds were not reported. Lotic PFC assessments have not been completed.</p> <p>Wilson Creek found in this allotment is not identified on pages 87-93 in the 1999 Final Owyhee RMP as possessing riparian or fishery habitat for management purposes.</p> <p>Springs - Two springs were examined in September of 1995. They had been heavily grazed and trampled. Lentic PFC assessments have not been completed in this allotment.</p>
Stream Channel, Flood Plains (Standard 3)	X	<p>Wilson Creek –The 0.5 miles of stream was observed in September of 1995. There was a continuous flow of water but the riparian vegetation was not in good condition had largely been replaced by upland vegetation. Stream width/depth ratio, gradient, and sinuosity were not appropriate. The stream was entrenched and did not have access to the floodplain. Pugging was evident over much of the area. Streambanks were exposed and not stable.</p>
Native Plant Communities (Standard 4)	X	<p>In 2001, one rangeland health evaluation was completed in this allotment in a Loamy 13-16" ecological site. Sandbergs bluegrass, Japanese brome, cheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass were more common than expected, and western juniper encroachment was noted. The functional/structural groups showed slightly more Sandberg bluegrass and less bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue than expected. The native plant community was supporting proper functioning of ecological processes. Plant vigor and seed production of perennial species were adequate to enable reproduction and recruitment of plants in response to favorable climatic conditions. There was adequate litter and vegetation cover present for site protection relative to site potential.</p> <p>There is no utilization data or trend information for this allotment.</p>
Seedings		NA

Standard, Guideline, or Resource Issue	Check (if applicable)	Comments
(Standard 5)		
Exotic Plant Communities (Standard 6)		NA
Water Quality (Standard 7)	X	<p>Wilson Creek originates on the allotment and flows ½ mile on public land; at least ¼ mile is riparian. Wilson Creek is a tributary within the Cherry Creek assessment unit. IDEQ has not assessed the unit, has not assigned beneficial use water quality standards and has not listed pollutants.</p> <p>See Standards 2 and 3, above.</p>
Threatened & Endangered Plant & Animals (Standard 8)	X	<p>The riparian area and springs have not been assessed using the current Proper Functioning Condition protocol. Structural diversity, composition and vigor of hydric vegetation are at least partially lacking in these stream reaches resulting in habitat that is generally not adequately providing for the needs for dependant special status animals.</p> <p>Most of the uplands of the allotment are near reference conditions, The functional and structural groups are less then expected in regards to large decreaser bunchgrasses, however, the site is providing habitat that is adequate for the needs of most dependant special status and other wildlife species. Historic grazing, recent drought and juniper encroachment are factors contributing to a ‘moderate’ rating for some indicators. The localized lack of large bunchgrasses, exotic annuals and increased juniper is limiting cover structure and forage for sage grouse, numerous song birds, pygmy rabbits and others including a diversity of insects, rodents, birds and others that are critical prey for most raptors including prairie falcons, northern harriers and ferruginous hawks. Site stability is being provided by ground cover and litter.</p> <p>The allotment has key habitat for sage grouse. Sage grouse lek surveys from 1994 to 2003 have identified active leks within and in close proximity of this allotment.</p> <p>This allotment is within elk spring/summer/fall and mule deer winter/yearlong habitats. As previously mentioned, it appears that resource conditions are providing for adequate big game habitat.</p> <p>Botany – No federally listed plant species are known to occur in this allotment although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) considers all of Idaho to be within the potential range of Ute ladies’-tresses (<i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i>), a federally threatened orchid species (USFWS 2002).</p> <p>One BLM Special Status Plant Species occurs on the allotment, although the CDC has not confirmed its location. Bacigalupi’s calico-flower (<i>Downingia bacigalupii</i>) status is a type 4 species, and tolerates moderate disturbance.</p>

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management		Data Adequacy, Comments, Concerns
1	Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote significant progress toward adequate amounts of ground cover to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture storage and stabilize soils.	<p>Adequate data exists; the watershed appears to provide for proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to the soil type.</p> <p><i>2013 Supplement to the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment Initial Allotment Review and Rangeland Health Assessment</i></p> <p>There are indications of moderately accelerated erosion in 2001. Site visit (2013) confirms 2001 RHE indicative of majority of ecological sites in allotment. Healthy juniper stands of multiple age classes. Mostly Phases I and II juniper stands, but some Phase III, particularly in upper elevations (northeastern portions) of allotment. Watershed and soil observations from recent site visits are discussed in more detail under Standard 1.</p>
2	Locate livestock management facilities away from riparian areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian-wetland functions	NA
3	Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote soil conditions that support water infiltration, plant vigor, and permeability rates and minimize soil compaction appropriate to site potential.	See Number 1, above
4	Implement grazing management practices that provide periodic rest or deferment during critical growth stages to allow sufficient regrowth to achieve and maintain healthy, properly functioning conditions, including good plant vigor and adequate vegetative cover appropriate to site potential.	See Number 1, above
5	Maintain or promote grazing management practices that provide sufficient residual vegetation to improve, restore, or maintain healthy riparian-wetland functions and structure for energy dissipation, sediment capture, ground water recharge, streambank stability, and wildlife habitat appropriate to site potential.	Adequate data exists; and as was stated under Standard 2, it appears that the riparian vegetation is dominated by upland xeric vegetation. The vegetation appears unsuitable for controlling erosion, stabilizing streambanks, and appropriately shading water areas.

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management		Data Adequacy, Comments, Concerns
6	The development of springs, seeps or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions, wildlife habitat, and significant cultural and historical/ archaeological/ paleontological values associated with the water source.	NA
7	Apply grazing management practices to maintain, promote, or progress toward appropriate stream channel and streambank morphology and functions. Adverse impacts due to livestock grazing will be addressed.	Adequate data exists; and as was stated under Standard 3, stream width/depth ratio, gradient, and sinuosity were not appropriate. The stream was entrenched and did not have access to the floodplain. Streambanks were exposed and not stable.
8	Apply grazing management practices that maintain or promote the interaction of the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow that will support the appropriate types and amounts of soil organisms, plants and animals appropriate to soil type, climate and landform.	See Number 1, above
9	Apply grazing management practices to maintain adequate plant vigor for seed production, seed dispersal, and seedling survival of desired species relative to soil type, climate and landform.	See Numbers 1, above
10	Implement grazing management practices and/or facilities that provide for complying with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.	See Standard 7, above.
11	Use grazing management practices developed in recovery plans, conservation agreements, and Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultations to maintain or improve habitat for federally listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and animals.	See discussions under Standard 8 and Number 1 (above).
12	Apply grazing management practices and/or facilities that maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions necessary to sustain native plant populations and wildlife habitats in native plant communities.	See discussions under Standard 8 and Number 1 (above).
13	On areas seeded predominantly with non-native plants, use grazing management practices to maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions to achieve healthy rangelands.	NA
14	Where native communities exist, the conversion to exotic communities after disturbance will be minimized.	See Number 1, above
15	Use non-native plant species for rehabilitation only in those situations where: a) native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities, b) native plant species cannot maintain or achieve the standards or c) non-native plant species provide for management and protection of native rangelands Include a diversity of appropriate grasses, forbs, and shrubs in rehabilitation efforts.	NA
16	On burned areas, allow natural regeneration when it is determined that populations of native perennial shrubs, grasses, and forbs are sufficient to re-vegetated the site. Rest burned or rehabilitated areas to allow recovery or establishment of perennial plant species.	NA
17	Carefully consider the effects of new management facilities (e.g., water developments, fences) on healthy and properly functioning rangelands prior to implementation.	NA
18	Use grazing management practices, where feasible for wildfire control, and to reduce the spread of targeted undesirable plants (e.g., cheatgrass, medusahead wildrye, and noxious weeds) while enhancing vigor and abundance of desirable native or seeded species.	NA
19	Employ grazing management practices that promote natural forest regeneration and protect reforestation projects until the Idaho Forest Practices Act requirements for timber stand replacement are met.	NA

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management		Data Adequacy, Comments, Concerns
20	Design management fences to minimize adverse impacts, such as habitat fragmentation, to maintain habitat integrity and connectivity for native plants and animals.	NA

Land Use Plan Review		
Livestock Grazing	X	<p>This allotment is identified as a "Maintain" allotment in the 1999 Owyhee RMP. It is a Fenced Federal Range (FFR) allotment. Generally, these allotments include less than 50% public lands intermingled with unfenced private and State lands. Livestock grazing is generally authorized as season long (3/1 - 2/28) and at the grazing permittee's discretion, as long as grazing management guidelines are adhered to.</p> <p>Active Permitted Use – 78 AUMs</p> <p>Actual use grazing reports were submitted by the grazing permittee for 1990, 1991, 1994, 2001, and 2005. The following information was submitted for each year: 1990 – 77 cattle from 7/1-9/30 consumed 235 AUMs; 1991 – 126 cattle from 6/20-9/28 consumed 418 AUMs; 1994 – 100 yearlings from 7/15-9/15 consumed 207 AUMs; 2001 – 70 cattle from 7/12-8/15 and 9/1 to 9/15 consumed 118 AUMs; and 2005 – 115 cattle from 11/1-11/30 consumed 113 AUMs.</p> <p>LVST 1: Provide for sustained level of livestock use compatible with meeting other resource objectives. VEGE 1: Improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory vegetation health/condition on all areas. SOIL 1: Improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory watershed health/condition on all areas. SOIL 2: Achieve stabilization of current, and prevent the potential for future, localized accelerated soil erosion problems (particularly on streambanks, roads, and trails).</p>
Cultural	X	There are no recorded sites within the allotment boundaries.
Fire, Fuel		NA
Fisheries		NA
Forestry		NA
Land	X	Under Objective LAND 2 of the Owyhee RMP these lands are in Zones 3 and 4 and may be made available for potential disposal.
Minerals		NA
Recreation		NA
Special Status Species	X	<p>SPSS1: Manage special status species and habitats to increase or maintain populations at levels where their existence is not longer threatened and there is no need for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.</p> <p>PLANTS</p>
Wild Horses		NA
Wildlife	X	WLDF1: Maintain or enhance the condition, abundance, structural stage and distribution of plant communities and special habitat features required to support a high diversity and desired populations of wildlife.
Water Quality	X	WATR 1-meet or exceed State of Idaho water quality standards
Riparian	X	RIPN 1-maintain or improve riparian-wetland areas to attain proper functioning and satisfactory conditions.

15. Describe BLM's ability or inability to manage the allotment by considering the following, as applicable: Whether there is legal access; whether % federal land comprises majority of the allotment; whether the public land acreage is small (less than 640 acres) and surrounded by private land(isolated); whether the federal land is fenced separate from the private land; etc.

There are 810 acres of public land in the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment, which account for 27 percent of the total allotment. The public lands are in four isolated parcels with no public access, as they are surrounded by state or private lands. A few of the isolated tracts of public land continue outside the allotment boundary but are separated from other public lands by fencing. Public lands in the allotment are identified for exchange or disposal.

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There are 616 acres of public land in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment, which account for 22 percent of the total allotment.

BLM is unable to manage the allotment due to its limited land ownership and a lack of separation from private lands. The actions on the private lands determine how the allotment is used and managed.

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Although total public land and the percent public land may be minimal in an allotment, public and/or administrative access may be limited, and the absence of high-value resources may lead to categorization of the allotment with a low priority for management attention, the BLM's obligation is to manage public lands.

Based on the information above the following is recommended to the field manager: (check the appropriate category)

1. ____ Review of existing information indicates that there is no livestock grazing or other issue. Available information is adequate to complete the evaluation and determination. (see numbers 5,6,7,8, 11, and 15 above). **This is the RHA. Complete the evaluation/ Determination Form.**
2. X Review of available information indicates that grazing or other issues are known to exist. However, the allotment has no or limited potential for management (see numbers 5,6,7,8,11, and 15 above). Available information is adequate to complete the evaluation and determination. **This is the RHA for this allotment. Complete the Evaluation/Determination form and consider the public land for disposal.**
3. ____ Review of existing information indicates the physical characteristics (e.g., slope, rock, location on the landscape, and lack of livestock forage) of the tract deter livestock grazing use on the public land. **Consider not issuing a new livestock grazing permit or lease. Further documentation is not recommended.**
4. ____ Review of existing information indicates that an issue(s) may or may not exist. The allotment is considered manageable (see #s 5,6,7,8,11, and 15 above). **Available**

information is adequate to complete the RHA. Complete RHA and the evaluation/determination.

5. _____ Review of existing information indicates that an issue(s) exists. The allotment is considered manageable (see #s 5,6,7,8,11, and 15 above). More information is needed to determine current conditions. **Gather additional information and data. Complete the RHA and evaluation/determination.**

List the names and title of the member of the ID team involved with this review:

Name	Title
Jake Vialpando	Supervisory Rangeland Management Spec.
Bruce Zoellick	Fisheries Biologist
John Doremus	Wildlife Biologist
Kathi Kershaw	Natural Resource Specialist
Mike Mathis (retired)	Wildlife Biologist
Dianna Sampson	GIS Specialist
Brian McCabe	Archaeologist
Kelley Moore	Lands/Realty
Zig Napkora	Hydrologist
Pam Druliner	Fisheries
Pat Kane	Weeds/Range
Ryan Homan	Recreation Specialist
Paul Seronko	Environmental Protection Specialist/Soils

Prepared by: Ecosystem Management Inc., Contractor November 2006

Modified by: Jake Vialpando – Team Lead December 15, 2006

Field Manager’s Finding and Rationale:

Field visits completed in 2001 indicate that healthy, productive, and diverse plant communities are being adequately maintained as they are appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform to provide for nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow on public lands in this allotment. However, available data associated with riparian/wetland areas and stream bank/floodplains has identified current resource conditions are inadequate to support healthy systems and habitats. Based on the monitoring information available, current livestock grazing management in the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment is adequate for maintenance and potentially improvement of upland resources, but not for riparian/wetland areas.

This allotment includes only 27% Federal land (810 BLM acres versus 2,233 Private acres) and 100% of these lands are identified for disposal in the 1999 ORMP. BLM lands found within this allotment are isolated, landlocked by private lands, and inaccessible without acquiring permission from the private land owners. BLM does not have legal access or the ability to appropriately manage livestock grazing in this allotment.

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This allotment includes only 22 percent Federal land (616 BLM acres and 2,208 private acres) and 100 percent of these lands are identified for disposal in the 1999 ORMP.

Therefore, it is my conclusion to: (1) accept the above mentioned recommendation from the ID Team that there are livestock grazing or other issues known to exist, however, the allotment has no or limited potential for management; (2) conclude that the available information is adequate to complete the evaluation and determination; (3) accept this Initial Allotment Review as the

Rangeland Health Assessment; and (4), move forward and complete the Evaluation and Determination for this allotment.

Field Manager

Date

<i>2013 Supplement to the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment Initial Allotment Review and Rangeland Health Assessment – List of Reviewers</i>	
Name	Title
Jake Vialpando	Project Manager
Bonnie Claridge	Fisheries Biologist
Tim Carrigan	Wildlife Biologist
Jayson Murgoitio	GIS Specialist
Brian McCabe	Archaeologist
Peter Torma	Range Management Specialist
Ryan Homan	Recreation Specialist
Kavi Koleini	Soils
Gillian Wigglesworth	Botanist
Jessica Gottlieb	Writer-Editor

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Livestock Grazing Management

Table ALLOT-1 shows the reported actual use in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment between 1997 and 2012. Actual use was not reported by pasture

Table ALLOT-1: Reported actual use in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment 1997-2012

Year	Date	AUMs
2011-2012	No Data	
2010	5/1-5/30	77
2009	12/1-12/31	79
2008	5/1-12	77
2007	12/1-12/31	78
2006	No Data	
2005	11/1-11/30	113
2002-2004	No Data	
2001	7/12-8/15 and 9/1-9/15	118
1997-2000	No Data	

The AUMs are calculated as if the allotment were 100 percent public land, even though the allotment is mixture of private and public land. For this reason, AUMs may exceed permitted AUMs.

Based on actual use and information from the permittee, livestock use (seasons and cattle numbers) within this allotment has varied by year.

In 2012, upland utilization collected in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment documented 43 percent Poa species and 20 percent bluebunch wheatgrass use.

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Evaluation Findings and Determination

Standard 1 (Watersheds)

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

Soils on the BLM-administered public land in the allotment are dominated by the Snell-Sharesnout complex (USDA NRCS, 2003). These upland soils occur on the foothills and flanks of South Mountain. The dominant ecological site associated with the Snell soils is the Loamy 13-16", Mountain big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass – Idaho fescue. Less common are the shallower Sharesnout soils, which support Shallow Claypan 12-16", Low sagebrush/ Idaho fescue ecological sites on convex sideslopes. In either reference plant community phase, juniper trees are only occasionally present, if at all.

A field team evaluated rangeland health in 2001 at a location representative of the majority of BLM-administered public land in the allotment. The evaluation documents soil and site stability conditions on a Loamy 13-16" ecological site. The field team documented a network of long water flow patterns throughout the evaluation area. Inch-high pedestals and terracettes were common throughout the site, particularly in water flow paths. The water flow paths, pedestals, and soil surface degradation indicate accelerated erosion has occurred. Snell soils are generally well- to excessively drained. Water flow patterns and pedestals rarely occur on this site under the reference plant community phase. Various age classes of Juniper were common throughout the site. The field team estimated juniper canopy cover between 6 and 15 percent. The 2001 assessment noted that juniper appeared to be affecting infiltration adversely.

Members of the ID team visited this allotment in 2013, and the team's findings with respect to soil and watershed conditions are summarized here. The team traveled from the pasture 5 entrance at Cliffs, northeast along the road ascending the Wilson Creek drainage. From these vantage points, the team gained partial views of the BLM-administered public lands in pasture 2. Soils on the BLM-administered public lands in this allotment are generally situated along the steep ridges and hillsides between Wilson Creek and Garten Creek. Evidence of bare ground or accelerated erosion was not plainly obvious during the site visit. The watershed was well vegetated. Plant assemblages are providing litter to the soil each year, cycling nutrients, and providing pathways for energy flow. Bare ground was within normal ranges for the soils in this pasture.

Juniper trees were common to dominant members of the plant community at upper elevations of the allotment. In pasture 1, relatively large patches of bare ground beneath juniper canopies indicated a high potential for erosion. However, the multiple age classes of juniper trees growing in varying densities, combined with little if any evidence of juniper mortality, indicate a high potential for downward trends in watershed function in the future.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard, Livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; Livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Guidelines

- Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; Guideline No(s).

Rationale for Evaluation Finding and Determination

This allotment fails to meet the watershed standard due to juniper encroachment, rather than current livestock grazing. Indications of accelerated erosion are likely the result of a transition away from the reference plant community composition to a phase that supports too much juniper and lacks the deep-rooted perennial bunchgrasses necessary to interrupt overland flow and dissipate runoff for proper infiltration, retention, and release of water. Current livestock grazing has not caused this condition. Although it is possible that historic season-long grazing practices could have accelerated juniper encroachment indirectly by removing the fine fuels necessary to carry juniper-killing fires, season-long grazing hasn't occurred in this allotment recently. Also, when livestock are in the allotment, utilization is likely focused on private land because it is gentler terrain and generally more productive than the BLM-administered public land, which is rugged by comparison. The 2001 evaluation supports this determination by documentation of good seed head production and recruitment of perennial plants.

Standard 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands)

Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning condition appropriate to soil type, climate, geology, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Three springs that occur on BLM lands in pasture 1 were assessed in 2012; two were rated functioning-at-risk (FAR) and one was rated non-functioning (NF) (Map RNGE-1). One unnamed spring that was FAR had headcuts present, creating vertical instability, there was mechanical alteration of the soils causing drying and loss of the riparian area extent. The last unnamed spring that was FAR was heavily trampled, there was erosion occurring, the area was heavily grazed, and the spring source was not protected. The unnamed spring that was NF had upland species encroaching, the developments were in disrepair, and the spring source was not protected.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard, Current Livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; Current Livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Guidelines

- Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; Guideline No(s). 5,6

Rationale for Evaluation Finding and Determination

Standard 2 is not being met in pasture 1 of the Wilson Creek FFR allotment, for the reasons stated above.

Current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting Standard 2. Residual vegetation has not been sufficient to maintain or improve riparian-wetland function, and the spring developments were not designed to protect the ecological function of the riparian-wetland areas. Although recent actual use reports indicate relatively short periods of use during the spring and winter, the recent grazing schedule has not allowed for rest years, and the cattle have congregated in the spring areas in pasture 1. Therefore, current livestock grazing management practices do not conform with the Idaho Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management applicable to Standard 2.

Standard 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain)

Stream channels and floodplains are properly functioning relative to the geomorphology (e.g., gradient, size shape, roughness, confinement, and sinuosity) and climate to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard, Current Livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; Current Livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Guidelines

- Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; Guideline No(s). 7

Rationale for Evaluation Finding and Determination

Approximately 0.5 miles of Wilson Creek that traverses pasture 1 in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment was visited in 1995. The riparian vegetation had been primarily replaced by upland vegetation, and appeared unsuitable for controlling erosion, stabilizing streambanks, and shading water areas. Invader and shallow rooted species were a major component of the floodplain. Age class and structural diversity of riparian/wetland vegetation were not appropriate. Noxious weeds were not reported. A lotic PFC assessment has not been completed. However, based on both the prior information as well as the more recent condition of three springs adjacent to the reach of stream, it was assumed that the stream remains in similar condition. Therefore, Standard 3 is not being met in pasture 1 of the allotment, and is not in conformance with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management applicable to Standard 3.

Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities)

Healthy, productive, and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants are maintained or promoted as appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

The 2006 Initial Allotment and Permit/Lease Review, Rangeland Health Assessments, and aerial imagery are the basis for evaluation of the Native Plant Communities Standard. Actual use and utilization are limited and therefore have minimal contribution to this evaluation. The 2006 assessment consisted of one field evaluation conducted in 2001 that was located in the northern portion of pasture 4. The overall biotic attribute summary was a slight to moderate departure from reference condition. This allotment is not meeting Standard 4, with indicators associated with hydrologic and soil stability along with the biotic indicator of functional/structural groups, plant mortality, and invasive plants drifting from reference condition. Bare ground was higher than expected and biological crusts were reduced. Observations of pedestals were linked to historical soil loss. Deep-rooted, large bunchgrasses are reduced and Sandberg bluegrass and juniper are higher than expected. Shrub mortality was noted with potential links to bug infestation. Invasive grasses are scattered but limited and juniper is present in higher amounts and identified as a dominant on site along with Sandberg bluegrass. Juniper invasion is further confirmed in pastures 1 and 2 using 2011 aerial imagery. The Shallow Claypan 12-16" and Loamy 13-16" ecological sites where juniper occurs identify juniper as an invasive species that when dominant, results in a new state requiring management inputs to restore ecological function of the reference site sagebrush/bunchgrass state. While trend data are not available for this site, the greater than expected presence of juniper and its highly competitive ability to maximize resources may be giving way to higher bare ground than expected.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard; current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Guidelines

- Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

- Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; Guideline No(s).

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Rationale for Evaluation Finding

The Wilson Creek FFR allotment is not meeting Standard 4 due to a shift in species composition triggered by historic grazing and invasion of juniper as a result of an altered fire regime. The shift in species composition towards more grazing tolerant species and invasive species alters the energy flow of the system by introducing gaps in time and space which equate to resource availability for invasive species (Reisner, Grace, Pyke, & Doescher, 2013), ultimately compromising the ecological integrity of the allotment.

Although precise dates of current livestock grazing management by pasture are unknown the permit currently allows for year round grazing. Incorporating rest years into the grazing management practices would potentially enhance recruitment of plants when favorable climatic events occur providing a more resilient plant community in response to environmental stressors such as invasive species increase. However, rest is not the only solution to enhance recruitment of plants.

Standard 5 Rangeland Seeding

This standard does not apply in this allotment.

Standard 6 Exotic Plant Communities

This standard does not apply in this allotment

Standard 7 (Water Quality)

Surface and ground water on public lands comply with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard, Livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; Livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Rationale for Evaluation Finding and Determination

Standard 7 is not applicable to the Wilson Creek FFR allotment because IDEQ has not assessed the streams that occur within the allotment. Beneficial uses have not been assigned nor have pollutants been identified. However, BLM has documented springs in poor condition.

Standard 8 (Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals)

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

Botany

No Federally listed threatened or endangered plants are known to occur in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment.

The 2006 IAR identifies the presence of one BLM special status plant, Bach's calico-flower (*Downingia bacigalupii*) in the Wilson Creek FFR, although IFWIS (Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System (IDFG, 2011)) has not confirmed its location. The latest record of this occurrence is from 1977 and was buffered with a 1.25-mile radius due to locational uncertainty. Given the dry environment of BLM administered lands within the buffered portion of the Wilson Creek FFR and the locational description of Dougherty Creek, which does not occur in the Wilson Creek FFR, it is highly unlikely this occurrence is located within the Wilson Creek FFR and therefore is dismissed from further discussion.

Wildlife

No Federally listed threatened or endangered animals are known to occur in the Wilson Creek FFR allotment. One candidate species, the Columbia spotted frog, could potentially occur in the allotment, as surveys have never been conducted in the allotment and potential habitat does exist on private lands. A second candidate species, the greater sage-grouse, has designated Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) in pastures 2, 3, 4, and 5. On BLM-administered lands, PPH occurs in pastures 2 and 4, for a total of 221 acres. The remainder of the allotment is designated Preliminary General Habitat (PGH); thus, all of the Wilson Creek FFR is defined as sage-grouse habitat. As many as 11 mammal, 21 bird, two amphibian, two fish, and three reptile species with BLM special status (including Watch List Species) potentially occur within the allotment. One special status animal species, Brewer's sparrow, is recorded in the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System within the allotment; additionally, ferruginous hawk have been identified within 0.1 mile of the allotment and western toads were discovered in 2013 on BLM land in pasture 1.

Standard

- Standard does not apply
- Meeting the Standard
- Not meeting the Standard, Livestock grazing management practices are significant factors
- Not Meeting the Standard; Making significant progress toward
- Not Meeting the Standard; Livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors

Guidelines

- Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; Guideline No(s). 5 & 6

Rationale for Evaluation Finding and Determination

The evaluation and determination for special status animals (Standard 8) was based on evaluations for Standards 1, 2, and 4, as their analyses directly reflect conditions of wildlife habitat on uplands, riparian areas, and springs in the allotment. Wilson Creek FFR was visited in 2013 to qualitatively evaluate BLM-administered lands for special status animal species habitat.

Upland habitats were found to not be meeting Standard 4; however, it was determined that livestock grazing management practices were not significant factors leading to the determination. Livestock grazing could potentially contribute to a decline in upland herbaceous vegetation, as the current permit allows for an unrestricted grazing period. Actual use grazing reporting has been limited in the allotment and only to the allotment level, but in recent years (2007-2011), the permittee has alternated between spring and late-fall/winter grazing. If continued, uplands would be grazed outside the active growing season every other year. The prevalence of juniper invasion threatens the quality of habitat for sagebrush-dependent special status animal species. However, some special status species may benefit from juniper existence, such as bat species that can use the area for roosting sites.

Riparian areas and springs were determined to not be meeting standards and livestock grazing management practices are significant factors. The 0.5 mile of Wilson Creek not meeting Standards (2) is a concern for riparian-dependent special status animal species such as willow flycatcher; however, Wilson Creek is not identified as redband trout habitat, nor have any trout been documented. The condition of springs on BLM-administered lands in the allotment is also a concern, as they potentially supply late brood-rearing habitat for sage-grouse and breeding habitat for amphibian species including western toad. One spring was rated as non-functioning and two were rated as functioning-at-risk.

Determination:

I have determined that Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8 of the applicable Standards for Rangeland Health are not being met in the Wilson FFR allotment. Standards 5, 6 and 7 are not applicable to this allotment. Current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors in not meeting Standards 2, 3 and 8, whereas current livestock management practices are not significant factors toward the failure to meet Standard 1, 4 and 8. Livestock management practices do not conform with the applicable Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines 5, 6, and 7 for several Standards.



Field Manager
Owyhee Field Office



Date

2013 Supplement to the Wilson Creek FFR Allotment Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines Assessment

Updated Wilson Creek FFR map



RNGE-1: Wilson Creek FFR (00537) Range and Riparian Overview

