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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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In Reply Refer To:
4160 ID130

November 21, 2013

REGiSTERED MAIL

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Craig and Rhonda Brasher
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Corral Creek Grazing Association, LLC
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LU Ranching Co.
Box 415
Jordan Valley OR 97910

Notice of Field Manager's Proposed Decision

Dear Permittees:

Thank you for your applications to renew grazing permits on the South Mountain Area allotment and for working with us throughout the permit renewal process. I appreciate your interest in grazing the allotment in a sustainable fashion and am confident that this proposed decision achieves that objective.

As you know, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) evaluated current grazing practices and current conditions in the South Mountain Area allotment in 2013. We undertook this effort to ensure that any renewed grazing permits on the allotment are consistent with the BLM's legal and land management obligations. As part of the BLM's evaluation process BLM completed a Rangeland Health Assessment, Evaluation, and Determination. The proposed decision incorporates, by reference, the information contained in those documents.

The BLM also engaged in public scoping during this renewal process and met with members of the public interested in grazing issues in the South Mountain Area allotment. BLM initiated scoping by letter dated January 11, 2013.

The letter informed recipients that the purpose of the public outreach effort was to identify resource and management issues associated with the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Idaho S&Gs) and the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) for the purpose of developing grazing management alternatives for a number of allotments, including the South Mountain Area allotment. The letter also sought additional resources and monitoring information in the possession of the interested public that could help the BLM to complete the permit renewal process.

In addition to the scoping period identified above, members from the NEPA Permit Renewal Team met with you and/or Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) on February 4 and 27, July 15, and August 27 to discuss your grazing permit renewal application and current allotment conditions, and to share information about the allotment. During these meetings, we discussed with you our preliminary conclusions regarding Idaho S&Gs and made grazing management recommendations associated with your grazing permit renewal application.

On August 30, 2013, BLM issued the completed 2013 Rangeland Health Assessments, Evaluations, and Determinations for the Group 4 South Mountain allotments (which included the South Mountain Area allotment) to you and all interested publics of record. Issuance of the Rangeland Health Assessments and Determinations afforded you an opportunity to meet with my staff to discuss any additional grazing management changes and your application, and to provide input for completion of the Group 4 EA. In addition, a preliminary environmental assessment (without a FONSI) was issued to the public on October 18, 2013, for 15-day review and comment. Issuance of the preliminary EA afforded yet another opportunity for grazing permittees and interested publics to provide additional input on the EA. Also, a member of our Owyhee Field Office met with the IDL and Mr. Lequerica to discuss the alternatives for the South Mountain Area allotment during the 15-day comment period.

The scoping document was also presented to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe and Owyhee County Commissioners.

To understand this decision, it is important to recognize that multiple past attempts to renew livestock grazing in the South Mountain Area allotment on BLM lands have been attempted. These attempts usually ended with various landowners and interested public unable to determine how to best manage livestock grazing in this allotment. Throughout these various attempts, little change in on the ground grazing management practices has occurred.

Alternative 2 was developed to build on these past attempts and take a fresh approach to resolve and solve resource issues through a collaborative effort. This alternative employs an ecosystem management approach, where the affected landowners (private, BLM, and State) work on issues together. It allows for all lands, independent of ownership, to become healthy, sustainable lands that provide social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. Alternative 2 would initially solve the resource issues on BLM-administered lands as required by law. It would also provide for additional monitoring on all lands. This monitoring would be completed collectively by BLM, IDL, and permittees to ensure that all affected landowners involved examine and address the same issues in our efforts to improve the lands and the resources within the allotment.

During this collaborative process and after further evaluating conditions on the land and meeting with you, we identified resource concerns that currently exist on the South Mountain Area allotment.

To focus on addressing livestock impacts to the public land resource, my office prepared and issued an environmental assessment[1] (EA) in which we considered a number of options and approaches to maintain and improve resource conditions. Specifically, the BLM considered and analyzed in detail five alternatives for the South Mountain Area allotment. We also considered other alternatives that we did not analyze in detail, as described in the EA. Our goal in developing alternatives was to consider options that were important to you, the permittee, and to consider options that, if selected, would ensure that the natural resources in the South Mountain Area 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 you a proposed decision authorizing livestock grazing within the South Mountain Area allotment. Upon implementation of the decision, your permit to graze livestock on this allotment will be fully processed.

This proposed decision will:

- Describe current conditions and issues on the allotments;
- 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 South Mountain Area allotment;
- Outline my proposed decision to select Alternative 3 and Alternative 2 (Modified); and
- Explain my reasons for this proposed decision.

Background

Allotment Setting

The allotment lies within the Owyhee Uplands, a sagebrush steppe semi-arid landscape of shrubs and widely spaced bunchgrasses where native vegetation communities are diverse. The South Mountain Area allotment is composed of three major ecological sites. They include a shallow claypan low sagebrush/Idaho fescue site, a loamy mountain big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass-Idaho fescue site, and a loamy mountain big sagebrush/Idaho fescue site. The elevation in the allotment ranges from approximately 5,000 to 8,000 feet.

The South Mountain Area allotment is located in Owyhee County, Idaho, approximately 14 miles southeast of Jordan Valley, Oregon (see Map 1). It runs in a northwest to southeast direction and lies to the west, south, and southeast of South Mountain. Currently, four operators are permitted to graze cattle on the South Mountain Area allotment with a total of 745 AUMs. Within the allotment there are four pastures (known as pastures 1, 2, 3, and 4) that do not have a specific season of use or rotation of livestock under the current permit. Permitted use occurs from June 1

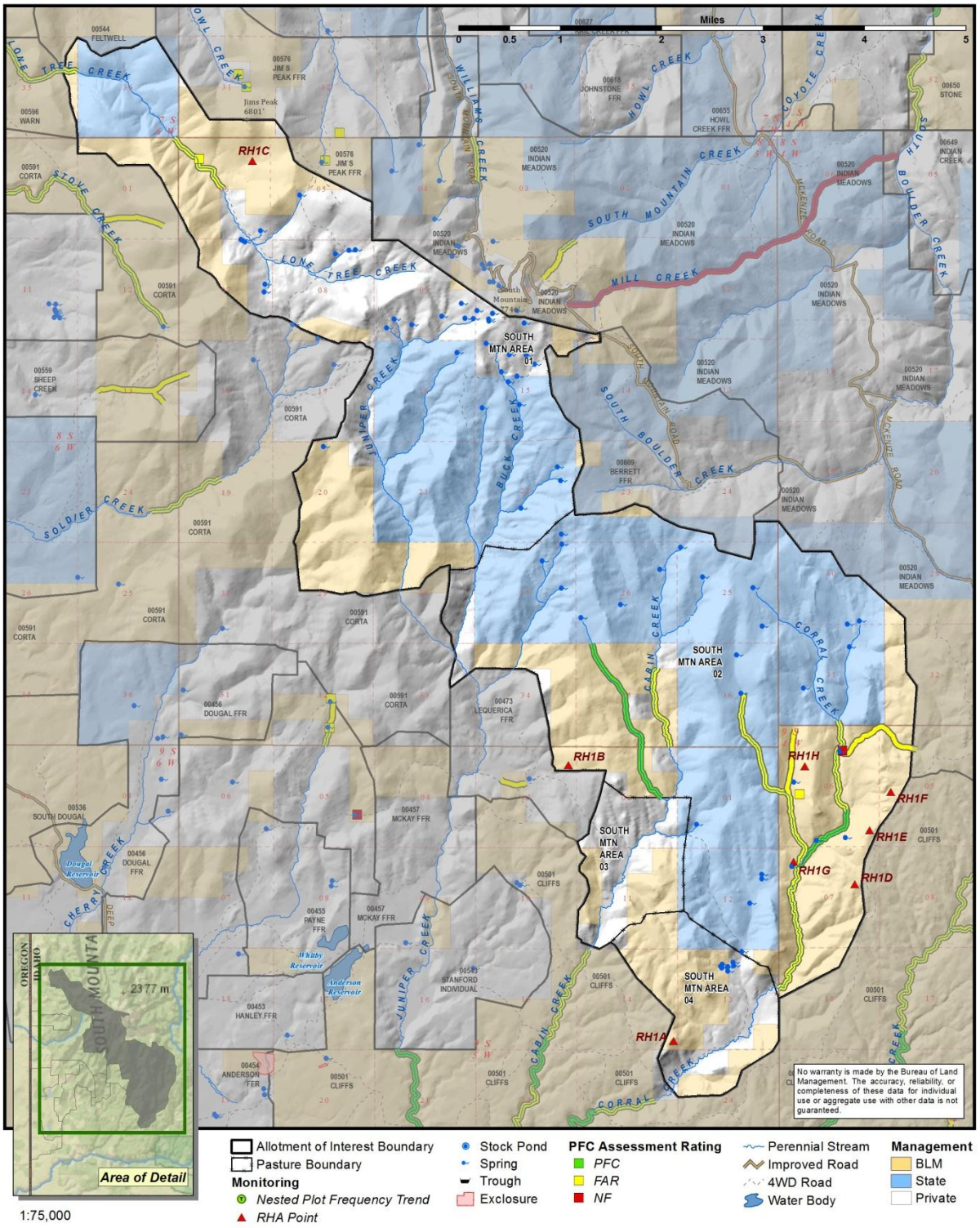
[1] EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2012-0022-EA analyzed five alternatives for the South Mountain Area allotment to fully process permits for livestock grazing management practices.

to September 30 each year with no rest or deferment. Resource concerns identified in the ORMP included the ecological condition of vegetation communities, perennial surface water present, known riparian/wetland ecosystems, and redband trout. A summary of the acres of land are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: South Mountain Area Allotment (Acres)

Pastures	Public	State	Private	Total
1	2130	2816	2065	
2	2899	5012	371	
3	266	57	306	
4	710	72	398	
Total	6,006 (35%)	7,957 (46%)	3,340 (19%)	17,303 (100%)

Map 1: South Mtn Area (00561) Allotment



Current Grazing Authorization

Lequerica and Sons, Craig and Ronda Brasher, Corral Creek Grazing Association, and LU Ranch are currently authorized to graze livestock within the South Mountain Area allotment in accordance with permits issued by the BLM. The permitted use and the terms and conditions of those grazing permits are as follows in Table 2:

Table 2: Permitted Grazing Use within the South Mountain Area Allotment.

Permittee	Active Use	Suspension	Permitted Use
Lequerica and Sons	95	0	95
Craig and Ronda Brasher	184	0	184
Corral Creek Grazing Association	300	0	300
LU Ranch	166	0	166
Total	745	0	745

In accordance with the current permit, Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 AUMs (92 AUMs, 184 AUMs, 300 AUMs, and 166 AUMs, respectively) are below the AUMs in Table 2 because increasing the cattle numbers would exceed the active AUMs. However, this does not preclude use to the active AUMs for each permittee.

Table 3: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Lequerica and Sons

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Lequerica and Sons	96	Cattle	6/1	9/30	24	Active	92

Table 4: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Craig and Ronda Brasher

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Craig and Ronda Brasher	117	Cattle	6/1	9/30	40	Active	184

Table 5: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Corral Creek Grazing Association

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Corral Creek Grazing Association	312	Cattle	6/1	9/30	24	Active	300

Table 6: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for LU Ranch

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
LU Ranch	112	Cattle	6/1	9/30	34	Active	166

Table 7: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for the South Mountain Area Allotment

Other Terms and Conditions:

"In accordance with Section 415, H.R. 2055 (Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2012), this permit is issued with the same terms and conditions as the expired or transferred permit or lease. This permit or lease may be canceled, suspended, or modified in whole or in part to meet the requirements of applicable laws and regulations."

1. Turnout is subject to Boise District Range Readiness Criteria.
2. Your certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
3. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter (1/4)-mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas, or water developments.
4. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
5. 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.
6. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotments are closed to all domestic grazing use.
7. 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 a wilderness study area requires prior consultation with the authorized officer.
8. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands 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.
9. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of $15.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed $150.00. 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) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR 4150.1 and 4160.1.
10. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schematic(s). Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
11. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.
12. Craig and Ronda Brasher and Lequerica and Sons would graze in pasture 1, while Corral Creek Grazing Association and LU Ranch would graze in pasture 2, 3, and 4.
13. A minimum 4-inch stubble height will be left on herbaceous vegetation within the riparian area along 0.5 mile of juniper creek and 5.6 miles of corral creek in allotment 0561 at the end of the growing season as identified in the fisheries objective of the Owyhee EIS.
14. Regular riding of cattle off of corral, cabin, and lone tree creeks would occur, beginning no later than July 15, 20XX and would continue for the remainder of the grazing season. Cattle would be regularly moved from the here said creek to private and State lands.

As part of a settlement agreement, the following additional terms and conditions have been applied since March of 2000:

1. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation, where streambank stability is dependent upon it, will have a minimum stubble height of 4 inches on the streambank, along the greenline, after the growing season;
2. 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;
3. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian areas, other than the streambanks, will not be grazed more than 50 percent during the growing season, or 60 percent during the dormant season; and
4. Streambank damage attributable to grazing livestock will be less than 10 percent on a stream segment.

Livestock Management

In 2009, the allotment was divided into two geographical areas (southern and northern areas) by a pasture fence. The southern area includes pastures 2, 3, and 4 while the northern area includes pasture 1. This fence was constructed by the permittees on lands managed by the IDL to help with livestock management. Since construction of the fence, LU Ranch and the Corral Creek grazing association have generally grazed the southern portion of the allotment (pastures 2, 3, and 4), while Lequerica and Sons, LU Ranches, and the Brashers have generally grazed the northern portion of the allotment (pasture 1). Within the past 16-year period (1997-2012), livestock use has occurred from June 3 to September 30, with an average use of 621 AUMs, a median use 659 AUMs, and a maximum use of 745 AUMs.[2] With respect to livestock numbers, the permittees have used a maximum of 756 head of cattle at any one time on the allotment as evidenced by actual use reports. Since 1997, when actual use has been submitted by all permittees, AUMs have been within 10 percent of the permitted AUMs in 6 years resulting in use close to the permitted AUMs.

Resource Conditions

A Rangeland Health Assessment was completed for the South Mountain Area allotment in 2003, which was subsequently updated with an evaluation and determination completed in 2013.

Standards 1 (Watersheds), 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands), 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain), 4 (Native Plant Communities), 7 (Water Quality), and 8 (Threatened and Plants and Animals) of the applicable Idaho S&Gs are not being met in the South Mountain Area allotment. Standards 5 (Seedings) and 6 (Exotic Plant Communities) are not applicable to this allotment. Current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors in not meeting Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8.

[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.

Vegetation – Upland[3]

Current livestock grazing is a contributing factor in not meeting Standard 4. However, the cause for not meeting Standard 4 throughout a majority of the allotment is an altered fire regime and subsequent juniper expansion. There are four pastures within the allotment, each of which is affected differently by livestock as described below.

Pastures 1, 3, and 4 are not meeting the standard due to juniper invasion. In general, plant diversity has decreased, and there is an imbalance of desirable deep-rooted to less desirable shallow-rooted grasses, which is exacerbated by juniper invasion and current season-long livestock management.

Pasture 2 of the South Mountain Area allotment is not meeting Standard 4 due to current livestock management and juniper invasion. Pasture 2 is lacking large bunchgrasses in the uplands, has compacted soils, poor diversity of species, and has a lack of structure, insufficient litter, and production to maintain proper nutrient cycling. It has an altered plant community composed of mostly invasive species. Current season-long grazing (6/1-9/30) at the current stocking rate is out of balance with the forage production. In addition, trend and photo plot data suggest recent presence of juniper seedlings. This is not a result of livestock grazing but is an overall vegetation concern in the pasture.

In all pastures (1, 2, 3, and 4), in areas of steep terrain, shallow soils, and juniper dominance, current livestock grazing management does not appear to be a significant factor. However, sites located in gentle terrain or adjacent to riparian areas are receiving season-long livestock use (6/1-9/30); the impacts of this use results in multiple defoliation during the critical growth period. Therefore, livestock grazing management is a significant factor. In such areas, the native plant communities are compromised and not being maintained in a way that provides proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow requirements.

Overall, livestock grazing is a significant factor in this allotment not meeting standards where livestock use is occurring season-long. This is especially true on the gentler slopes. In addition, pasture 2 is not meeting Standard 4 at the current stocking rate. It is also being affected by season-long grazing that has caused a reduction in large bunchgrasses in the uplands, compacted soils, poor diversity of species, and a lack of structure, insufficient litter, and production to maintain proper nutrient cycling.

Watersheds[4]

The South Mountain Area allotment is not meeting Standard 1 for watershed function. Accelerated erosion is occurring in upland areas of the allotment where western juniper is encroaching and along stream terraces where soil has been compacted. In both cases, the deep-rooted perennial bunchgrasses necessary for watershed function are under-represented. Flow patterns are evident along stream terraces, with high levels of bare ground, pedestalled plants, insufficient ground cover, and altered plant communities that negatively impact infiltration and

[3] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Sections 3.3.6.1 of the EA and the 2013 South Mountain Area decision.
[4] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Sections 3.3.6.1 of the EA and the 2013 South Mountain Area decision.

runoff. The Corral Creek stream terrace been grazed season-long by concentrations of livestock deleterious to watershed conditions.

The repeated grazing during the critical growth period for deep-rooted perennial bunch grasses does not provide conditions for successful reproduction and recruitment of the deep-rooted perennial bunch grasses necessary for proper watershed function, resulting in the allotment failing to meet Standard 1.

Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas [5]

The South Mountain Area allotment is not meeting Standards 2 and 3, and livestock grazing management practices are significant factors. In the South Mountain Area allotment, Standard 2 is not being met in pastures 1 and 2, but is being met in pasture 3. In pasture 4, there are no known water resources on BLM-administered lands.

Within pasture 1, 0.8 mile of Lone Tree Creek was assessed Functioning At-Risk (FAR). Within pasture 2, 0.9 mile of Cabin Creek were most recently rated FAR, 1.8 miles of Cabin Creek were in Proper Functioning Condition (PFC), 3.7 miles of Corral Creek's tributaries were rated FAR, 2.5 miles of Corral Creek were FAR, and 0.8 miles were PFC. Issues identified as a result of current livestock grazing include lack of plant vigor, lack of woody species recruitment, poor wetland rating, head cutting that threatens vertical stability, unstable banks, stream segments dominated by early seral shallow-rooted species (such as Kentucky bluegrass and red top), riparian areas not widening, and poor plant vigor.

Issues were also identified for springs in the allotment: invasive species were present; the herbaceous vegetation had been utilized heavily; and the riparian soils had been altered by trampling.

Standard 7 is not being met in pasture 1 because there are streams on the 303(d) list due to habitat bio-assessments (E.coli).

Overall, current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting Standards 2, 3, and 7. Residual vegetation has not been sufficient to maintain or improve riparian-wetland function; the recent grazing schedule has not allowed for rest or deferment years; and the springs are not properly functioning.

Special Status Plants [6]

One special status plant is known to occur within the allotment on private and State land; no special status plants are known to occur on BLM-administered lands. There is insufficient information on which to make a determination about the effects of livestock grazing on any special status plants that may occur on BLM-administered lands within this allotment.

[5] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Sections 3.3.6.1 of the EA and the 2013 South Mountain Area decision.
[6] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Sections 3.3.6.1 of the EA and the 2013 South Mountain Area decision.

Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals[7]

The South Mountain Area allotment is not meeting Standard 8 for special status animal species due to unhealthy riparian and upland habitat conditions due to livestock.

Historically, a majority of the allotment provided suitable habitat for sage-grouse and supported significant populations. Currently, sage-grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) and Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) occupy 46 percent of the South Mountain Area allotment for all land ownerships; however, only 13 percent of the allotment's sage-grouse habitat is on public land. In general, the allotment has had some amount of juniper encroachment which has encroached into areas that once were sagebrush. This process is continuing to move into the remaining sagebrush habitat.

Sage-grouse breeding habitat is largely limited due to steepness of terrain and areas compromised by juniper expansion. No active sage-grouse leks are known to occur within South Mountain Area allotment. The closest active lek to the allotment is located 2 miles west, just inside the Oregon border. What sagebrush remains is being affected by current season-long grazing practices, as evidenced by a shift from desirable grasses to less-desirable short-rooted grasses and invasive plant species such as cheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass, and Wyethia.

Current season-long grazing practices (6/1 to 9/30) are detrimental to riparian areas, springs, and semi-wet meadows because wetland vegetation is not allowed to regrow and establish sufficient height to protect areas from spring runoff events. Also, because grazing is occurring season long, regrowth of riparian-dependent vegetation is not occurring, thus not allowing bank-stabilizing vegetation to improve. Additionally, desirable wetland herbaceous plants are lost in favor of less desirable short-rooted grasses and weedy species. The value of these riparian areas in this arid landscape to special status species cannot be overstated because they provide important habitat for species like Columbia spotted frogs, redband trout, and late brood-rearing sage-grouse, all of which area are affected by the deteriorating wetland conditions.

Overall, current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting Standard 8: annual season long grazing (6/1-9/30) results in poor riparian conditions and upland habitats that are shifting away from desirable grasses to less-desirable grasses.

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

In addition to a discussion of land health standards, the BLM's 2013 Determination for the South Mountain Area allotment identified that grazing management practices did not conform to the following BLM Idaho S&Gs:

> *Guideline 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 cover appropriate to site potential.*

[7] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Sections 3.3.6.1 of the EA and the 2013 South Mountain Area decision.

Guideline 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.

Guideline 7: Apply grazing management practices to maintain, promote, or progress toward appropriate stream channel and streambank morphology and function. Adverse impacts due to livestock grazing will be addressed.

Guideline 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.

Guideline 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.

Since the allotment is not meeting one or more of the Idaho S&Gs because of current livestock management practices, the BLM used these guidelines as a starting point for developing grazing schemes to bring the authorized actions within the allotment into compliance with resource objectives.

Issues

Throughout the internal and external (public) scoping process and project development period, the BLM interdisciplinary team identified issues concerning livestock grazing management in one or more of the South Mountain group allotments. The identified issues that may be applicable to the South Mountain Area allotments are listed below[8]:

- *Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse* (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)*:* Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas of the South Mountain Group allotments contain altered sagebrush community composition, structure, and function that are affecting sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitat-dependent species. Other areas in the group are outside of defined sage-grouse habitat.

- *Fish and amphibian habitat conditions:* Stream, floodplain, wetland, and mesic (moderately moist) habitat conditions are directly related to conditions within the riparian vegetation community. Altering of the riparian community may affect the health and sustainability of fish and amphibian populations.

- *Soil compaction:* Soil compaction from the physical presence of livestock remains a concern with moist soils, especially in areas with shallow and fine-textured soils. The hazard of compaction of wet soils with hoof action of livestock may be present, resulting in a reduction of infiltration and soil moisture holding capacity in fine-textured soils.

[8] For more detailed information, please refer to section 1.6.3 of the EA.

- *Riparian vegetation conditions:* Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.

- *Climate change:* The issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits is twofold. 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.

- *Upland vegetation and watershed conditions:* Livestock grazing is affecting upland vegetation by reducing or removing native vegetation communities that protect watershed soil and hydrologic function.

- *Special status plant species:* Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat, and reproduction of individual plants within South Mountain Area allotment.

- *Noxious and invasive weeds:* Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.

- *Livestock trailing:* Livestock trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds, and riparian vegetation.

- *Cultural resources:* Livestock grazing has the potential to damage or displace artifacts and features of a historic property, which may alter the characteristics that qualify it for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- *Paleontological resources:* Livestock grazing has the potential to cause breakage and displacement of fossils.

- *Wildfire fuels:* Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.

- *Socioeconomic impacts*: Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.

Analysis of Alternative Actions

Based on the current condition of the South Mountain Area allotment and the issues identified above, the BLM considered a number of alternative livestock management schemes in the EA. The alternative schemes were considered to ensure that any renewed grazing permits for the allotment would maintain or improve satisfactory conditions (where they exist), and/or allow the allotment to meet or make significant progress toward meeting standards where unsatisfactory conditions exist. Overall, five alternatives were considered and analyzed in the EA. The range of alternatives developed include: Alternative 1 – Current Condition, Alternative 2 – Permittee's Application, and Alternative 5 – No Grazing, as well as Alternatives 3 and 4, which were developed to address resource issues and improve conditions. The following describes the allotment-specific authorizations and actions under each alternative:

1. Alternative 1 would allow a continuation of current management on the South Mountain Area allotment for Lequerica and Sons, Craig and Ronda Brasher, Corral Creek Grazing Association, and LU Ranch. This would permit 647 cattle from 6/1-9/30 with 745 AUMs.

2. Alternative 2 would authorize livestock grazing as applied for by Lequerica and Sons, Craig and Ronda Brasher, Corral Creek Grazing Association, and LU Ranch in coordination with the IDL. This alternative also included a 2-year grazing system that would permit 643 cattle from 6/11-9/20. Included in the application was an initial 17 percent reduction in AUMs and 9 grazing tools to help manage grazing within the allotment. The main tools in the proposal included adjustments in AUMs depending upon riparian proper functioning condition (PFC) monitoring, photo point monitoring, and construction of approximately 5.5 miles of fencing to be built by the permittees and IDL on state, private lands and BLM lands. Implementation of this alternative could result in a 28 percent reduction in AUMs depending on riparian monitoring.

   The 2-year grazing system would be implemented as follows in Table 8:

Table 8: Alternative 2 South Mountain Area Allotments 2-Year Grazing System

Pastures	Year 1	Year 2	# Cow/Calf Pairs	Authorized* AUMs	Grazing schedule based on available AUMs
Lone Tree Creek North (Pasture 1)	6/11-8/15	7/28-9/20	110 Lequerica	241	65 days
Lone Tree Creek South (Pasture 2)	8/15-9/20	6/11-7/28	110 Lequerica	174	47 days
Buck Creek West (Pasture 1)	7/26-9/20	6/11-8/25	117 Brasher 21 Lowry	350	76 days
Buck Creek East (Pasture 2)	6/11-7/26	8/25-9/20	117 Brasher 21 Lowry	211	46 days
Cabin Creek[1] North/South (Pasture 1)	6/11-7/24	8/5-9/20	101 Lowry 294 Lequerica	625	45 days
Corral Creek[1] North/South (Pasture 2)	7/24-9/20	6/11-8/5	101 Lowry 294 Lequerica	792	57 days

*Authorized AUMs include IDL, private and BLM AUMS

3. Alternative 3 would issue livestock grazing permits to Lequerica and Sons, Craig and Ronda Brasher, Corral Creek Grazing Association, and LU Ranch with a maximum level of use up to 409 AUMs. As part of the grazing permit a 3-year deferred-rotation grazing system would be implemented for all permittees. The 3-year grazing system would allow up to 748 cattle for all permittees with no more than 58 days of use each year. Also included in the permit are riparian monitoring terms and conditions. This alternative would result in a 49 percent reduction in permitted AUMs over 3-years.

The grazing system would be implemented as follows in Table 9:

Table 9: Alternative 3 South Mountain Area Allotments 3-Year Grazing System

Permittee	Year	Pasture	Date On	Date Off	Days	# Cows	AUMs
LU Ranch	Year 1	2,3,4	6/11	8/7	58	130	84
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 1	2,3,4	6/11	8/7	58	358	164
LU Ranch	Year 2	2,3,4	7/16	9/11	58	130	84
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 2	2,3,4	7/16	9/11	58	358	164
LU Ranch	Year 3	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	130	67
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 3	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	358	130
Craig and Ronda Brasher	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	135	103
Lequerica and Sons	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	111	51
LU Ranch	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	14	6
Brasher	Year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	135	103
Lequerica and Sons	year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	111	51
LU Ranch	year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	14	6
Brasher	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	135	82
Lequerica and Sons	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	111	40
LU Ranch	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	14	5

4. Alternative 4 would issue livestock grazing permits to Lequerica and Sons, Craig and Ronda Brasher, Corral Creek Grazing Association, and LU Ranch with a maximum level of use up to 288 AUMs. The 3-year grazing system would allow up to 647 cattle for all four permittees with no more than 48 days of use each year. The alternative would result in a 74 percent reduction in AUMs over 3-years. The season of use and AUMs were reduced to provide for faster improvement and further long-term sustainability for riparian and wildlife resources.

   The grazing system would be implemented as follows in Table 10:

Table 10: Alternative 4 South Mountain Area Allotments 3-Year Grazing System

Permittee	Year	Pasture	Date On	Date Off	Days	# Cows	% PL	AUMs
LU Ranch	1	2,3,4	5/14	6/30	48	114	34	61
Corral Creek Grazing Association	1	2,3,4	5/14	6/30	48	310	24	117
LU Ranch	2	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	114	34	59
Corral Creek Grazing Association	2	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	310	24	113

Permittee	Year	Pasture	Date On	Date Off	Days	# Cows	% PL	AUMs
LU Ranch	3	2,3,4	rest					
Corral Creek Grazing Association	3	2,3,4	rest					
Craig and Ronda Brasher	1	1	5/15	6/30	48	117	40	74
Lequirica	1	1	5/14	6/30	48	95	24	36
LU Ranch	1	1	5/14	6/30	48	11	24	4
Craig and Ronda Brasher	2	1	10/1	11/15	46	117	40	71
Lequirica	2	1	10/1	11/15	46	95	0.24	34
LU Ranch	2	1	10/1	11/15	46	11	0.24	4
Craig and Ronda Brasher	3	1	rest					
Lequirica	3	1	rest					
LU Ranch	3	1	rest					

5. Alternative 5 would deny the applications for grazing permit renewal in whole and not authorize grazing for a period of 10 years for the South Mountain Area allotment. The permittees would retain their grazing preference on these allotments.

Proposed Decision

After considering the current grazing practices, the current conditions of the natural resources, and the alternatives and analysis in the EA, as well as other information, it is my proposed decision to authorize grazing for a period of 10 years as outlined below:

Summary of Proposed Decision

My proposed decision is to initially implement Alternative 3 as outlined in the EA once this decision is effective. Thereafter, upon completion of Alternative 2 Implementation Conditions[9]

[9] These Conditions are a supplemented version of the Allotment Management Plan you submitted with your grazing application.

(hereinafter, the Conditions) 1-4, I will implement Alternative 2, Modified, for the remainder of the life of the permit[10]. (Both the Conditions and Alternative 2, Modified, are described below.)

The Conditions under which Alternative 2 would be implemented are as described below.[11]

1. Permittees and the IDL will construct two internal pasture fences totaling 5.5 miles which will be verified by the BLM. The purposes of the two fences are to create four pastures (Lone Tree Creek North, Lone Tree Creek South, Cabin Creek North and Corral Creek North) which will be used to implement the livestock rotation. No fence construction is allowed on BLM land(see information stricken through in bold)
    - *Lone Tree Creek North and Lone Tree Creek South pastures will be split by approximately,* 1.5 miles of fence across private land.
    - *Cabin Creek North and Corral Creek North will be split by approximately,* 4 miles of fence across IDL land.

2. Baseline PFC assessments will be established as follows:
    - Baseline PFC assessments will be completed along Juniper Creek, Buck Creek, Cabin Creek, and Corral Creek as was outlined in your proposal. (I have added Lone Tree Creek to your proposal as noted in bold).

    "IDL would conduct Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments on State land along Juniper Creek, Buck Creek, Cabin Creek, Corral Creek, and ***Lone Tree Creek*** *every 5 years."*

3. Collection of the baseline PFC assessment and follow-up assessments will include both BLM and IDL personnel and include collection of PFC data on IDL or BLM lands. (I have included BLM in your proposal as noted in bold.)

    "IDL and ***BLM*** *would conduct Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments on State or BLM lands along Juniper Creek, Buck Creek, Cabin Creek, Corral Creek, and Lone Tree Creek every 5 years."*

4. One (1) photo point (each, riparian and upland) will be established in each of the six pastures (Lone Tree Creek North, Lone Tree Creek South, Buck Creek West, Buck Creek East, Corral Creek, and Cabin Creek) on BLM, private, or State land as agreed to by the permittees, BLM, and IDL lands. Permittees are responsible for submitting this monitoring annually with your annual use reports. (I have included the number (6), permittee, BLM, and IDL lands in your proposal as noted in bold.)

[10] This Decision is what will authorize Alternative 2 upon completion of Alternative 2 Implementation Conditions[10] (hereinafter, the Conditions) 1-4. No new decision will be written to implement this alternative.

[11] These conditions reflect proposed conditions found on your application of dated 8/19/2013 from the IDL. Italicized texts are the conditions as stated in your application. We have included specific changes to your conditions in bold to provide for better clarity for the BLM, IDL, and Permittee. This is especially true due to potential change in jobs by BLM, State, and IDL and in the event you sell your ranch.

*"IDL anticipates the establishment of one upland and one riparian photo point location per pasture **(6)** as agreed to by **BLM, Permittee, and IDL**; permittees agree to monitor each pasture annually and submit photos and documentation to BLM and the State for review."*

5. Data collected at the three MIM monitoring sites measured at Lone Tree Creek, Cabin Creek, and Corral Creek will be used in conjunction with PFC monitoring when determining the riparian long term health. (I have included this in your proposal as noted in bold.)

   *"If streams are not improving after 5 years of PFC and annual indicator monitoring, the permittees agree to reduce the season of use by 7 days in pastures that are not improving. If the streams are determined to be PFC after 5 years, the season of use would be increased by 7 days in the pastures that are improving as long as we maintain desired riparian conditions. Monitoring would be collected primarily by IDL; BLM monitoring **(MIM monitoring at Lone Tree Creek, Cabin Creek, and Corral Creek)** will also be used to help determine long-term health of these streams. IDL, permittees, and BLM agree to meet annually to determine if adjustments within the permitted season of use are needed to further ensure improvements to riparian health."*

6. Ninety-five (95) percent of the livestock must be removed by September 20, compared to the 90 percent you requested. (I have included this in your proposal as noted in bold.)

   *"At least **95** percent of the livestock will be off of the allotment by September 20, and 100 percent of the livestock will be off the allotment by October 7."*

7. Consistent with the IDL requirements, placement of salt/mineral supplements will be at least one-half (1/2) mile from any riparian area, spring, stream meadow, or aspen stand. This was changed in the BLM mandatory terms and conditions.

Further explanations for the above changes or clarifications are discussed in the rationale section of this document.

The terms and conditions of the grazing permit(s) would be as follows in Tables 11-16 under Alternative 3:

Table 11: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Lequerica and Sons

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Lequerica and Sons	37	Cattle	6/11	12/1	24	Active	51

Table 12: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Craig and Ronda Brasher

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Craig and Ronda Brasher	45	Cattle	6/11	12/1	40	Active	103

Table 13: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Corral Creek Grazing Association

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Corral Creek Grazing Association	119	Cattle	6/11	12/1	24	Active	163

Table 14: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for LU Ranch

Allotment	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
LU Ranch	47	Cattle	6/11	12/1	34	Active	91

Table 15: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for All Permittees

Terms and Conditions:

1. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
2. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.
7. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. 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.
9. 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 BLM 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, 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 schedule(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. In pastures 1, 2, 3, and 4, a stubble height of no less than 6", woody browse use no greater than 30 percent incidence of use on most years lead growth, and bank alteration no greater than 10 percent measured at the end of the growing season in key riparian areas.
14. Weekly livestock herding would be required to move cattle away from riparian areas from July 1 to September 30.
15. Due to topography and juniper, 95 percent of the cattle must be off the allotment by the yearly off date on your grazing schedule.
16. The remaining cattle will need to be removed 15 days after the yearly off date as outlined in your grazing schedule not to exceed your permitted AUMs.

Other Terms and Conditions

1. Until all requirements are met to implement Alternative 2 (modified), AUMs on the South Mountain Area allotment will not exceed 409 AUMs.
2. The permitted AUMs will be allocated as follows: Lequerica and Sons will be allocated 51 AUMs; Craig and Ronda Brasher will be allocated 103 AUMs; Corral Creek Grazing Association will be allocated 164 AUMs; and LU Ranch will be allocated 91 AUMS

Table 16: South Mountain Area Allotment Grazing Schedule

Permittee	Year	Pasture	Date On	Date Off	Days	# Cows	AUMs
LU Ranch	Year 1	2,3,4	6/11	8/7	58	130	84
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 1	2,3,4	6/11	8/7	58	358	164
LU Ranch	Year 2	2,3,4	7/16	9/11	58	130	84
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 2	2,3,4	7/16	9/11	58	358	164
LU Ranch	Year 3	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	130	67
Corral Creek Grazing Association	Year 3	2,3,4	10/1	11/15	46	358	130
Craig and Ronda Brasher	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	135	103
Lequerica and Sons	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	111	51
LU Ranch	Year 1	1	6/11	8/7	58	14	6
Brasher	Year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	135	103
Lequerica and Sons	Year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	111	51
LU Ranch	Year 2	1	7/16	9/11	58	14	6

Brasher	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	135	82
Lequerica and Sons	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	111	40
LU Ranch	Year 3	1	10/1	11/15	46	14	5

Once you have completed the identified requirements described above, you would graze as follows in Tables 17-22 under Alternative 2 modified[12].

Table 17: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Lequerica and Sons

Permittee	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Lequerica and Sons	92	Cattle	6/1	10/7	24	Active	94

Table 18: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Craig and Ronda Brasher

Permittee	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Craig and Ronda Brasher	108	Cattle	6/1	10/7	40	Active	183

Table 19: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for Corral Creek Grazing Association

Permittee	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
Corral Creek Grazing Association	294	Cattle	6/1	10/7	24	Active	300

Table 20: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for LU Ranch

Permittee	Livestock		Grazing Period		% PL	Type Use	AUMs
	Number	Kind	Begin	End			
LU Ranch	114	Cattle	6/1	10/7	34	Active	165

[12] In order to fully implement Alternative 2, your permitted begin and end dates must be the same as the grazing system begin and end dates. An adjustment in your grazing permit application's proposed season of use is needed to ensure your cattle are grazing within the permitted season of use. We have adjusted the end date from 9/30 to 10/7 and adjusted cattle numbers so they do not exceed permitted AUMs. This change did not result in a change in your permitted AUMs or adjustment in your grazing system. It also does not affect the analysis in the EA since the grazing system season of use and cattle numbers are what have been determined appropriate for improving resource conditions on the allotment.

Table 21: Mandatory and Other Terms and Conditions for All Permittees

Terms and Conditions:

1. Grazing use will be in accordance with the grazing schedule identified in the final decision of the Owyhee Field Office Manager dated _____. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes to the scheduled use require approval.
2. Turn-out is subject to the BLM Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.
4. Permittees agree to salt/mineral placement at least one-half (1/2) mile from any riparian area, spring, stream meadow, or aspen stand.
5. 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.
6. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(B), the permittee must notify the BLM field manager, by telephone with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal lands. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (C), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with such discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remains or objects.
7. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. 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.
9. 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 BLM 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, 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 schedule(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. You are required to follow the South Mountain Area Grazing Plan.

Table 22: Alternative 2 South Mountain Allotment 2-Year Grazing System

Pastures	Year 1	Year 2	# Cow/Calf Pairs	Authorized AUMs	Grazing schedule based on available AUMs
Lone Tree Creek North (Pasture 1)	6/11-8/15	7/28-9/20	110 Lequerica	241	65 days
Lone Tree Creek South (Pasture 2)	8/15-9/20	6/11-7/28	110 Lequerica	174	47 days

Buck Creek West (Pasture 1)	7/26-9/20	6/11-8/25	117 Brasher 21 Lowry	350	76 days
Buck Creek East (Pasture 2)	6/11-7/26	8/25-9/20	117 Brasher 21 Lowry	211	46 days
Cabin Creek[1] North/South (Pasture 1)	6/11-7/24	8/5-9/20	101 Lowry 294 Lequerica	625	45 days
Corral Creek[1] North/South (Pasture 2)	7/24-9/20	6/11-8/5	101 Lowry 294 Lequerica	792	57 days

[1]Cabin Creek and Corral Creek pastrues will be used for turnout. Gates will be left open and cattle allowed to drift

Allotment Grazing Plan:[13]

1. South Mountain Allotment would be split into three units, each on a 2-year rotation:
    - *Lone Tree Creek Unit:* Lequerica Brothers, two pastures.
    - *Buck Creek Unit:* Common use by Craig Brasher and LU Ranching, two pastures.
    - *Cabin Creek/Corral Creek Unit:* Common use by LU Ranching and Lequerica Brothers, four pastures with Cabin Creek South and Corral Creek South used as turn-out pastures. Gates will be left open and cattle allowed to drift into Cabin Creek North and Corral Creek North pastures according to rotation.
2. Livestock control and compliance with the scheduled rotation includes intensive herding and the use of natural barriers. Permittee agrees to ride riparian/creek bottoms weekly between July 15 and September 15 to push cattle to upland grazing. A natural barrier ridgeline divides Lone Tree Creek Unit from Buck Creek Unit; and a natural barrier ridgeline divides Buck Creek West from Buck Creek East.
3. 5.5 miles of pasture fences would need to be constructed on State, private, and BLM lands creating four pastures:
    - *Lone Tree Creek North and Lone Tree Creek South pastures will be split by approximately* 1.5 miles of fence across private land
    - *Cabin Creek North and Corral Creek North will be split by approximately* 4 miles of fence across IDL land.
4. Permittees agree to salt/mineral placement at least one-half (1/2) mile from any riparian area, spring, stream meadow, or aspen stand.
5. IDL has identified eleven potential springs on State land for livestock water development; up to five springs with troughs or stock ponds would be developed for livestock water.
6. IDL and BLM would conduct Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments on State or BLM lands along Juniper Creek, Buck Creek, Cabin Creek, Corral Creek, and Lone Tree Creek every 5 years.

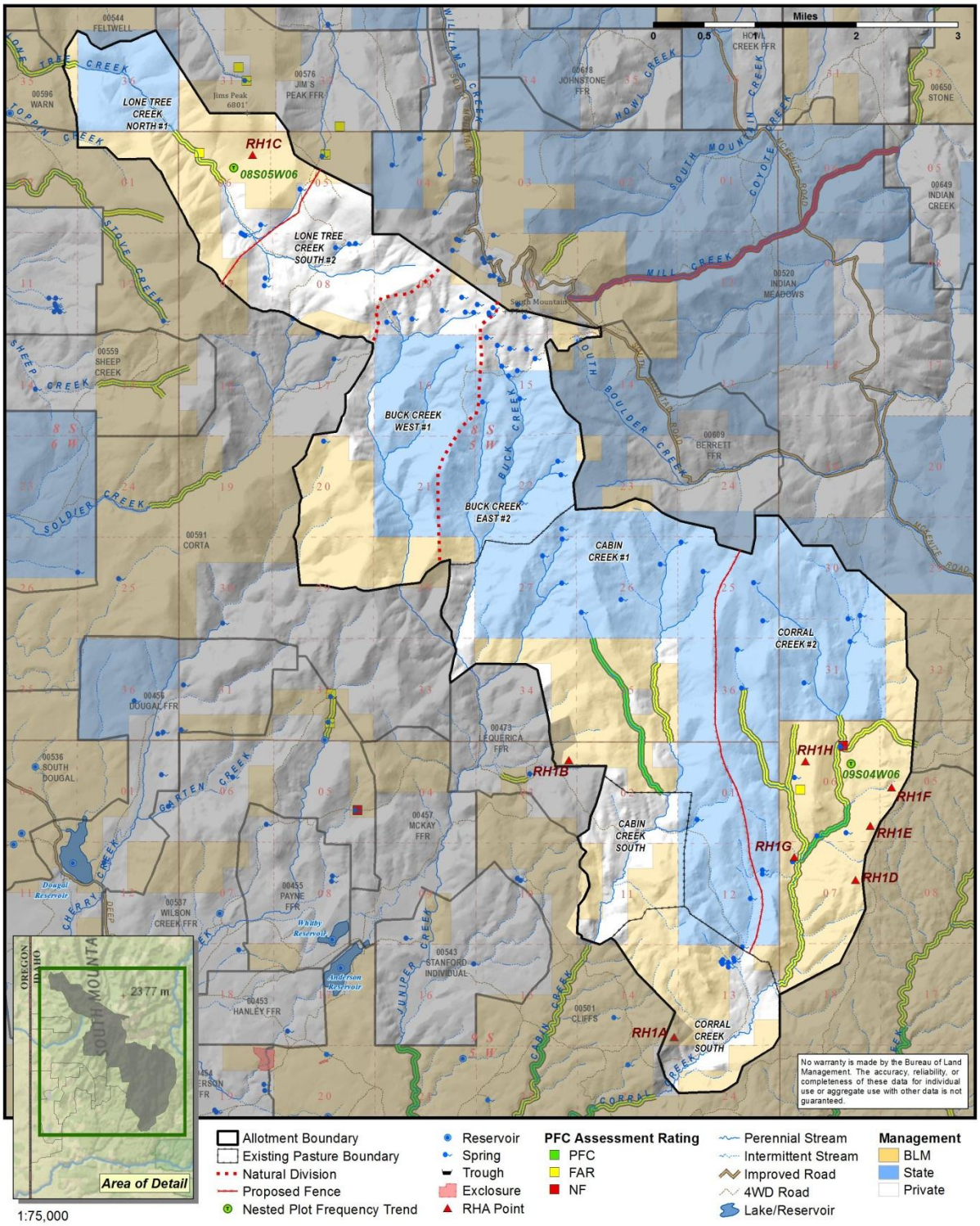
[13] The grazing plan submitted with your application has been supplemented as noted and described as the Alternative 2 Implementation Conditions.

7. IDL anticipates the establishment of one upland and one riparian photo point location per pasture as agreed to by BLM, permittees, and IDL; permittees agree to monitor each pasture annually and submit photos and documentation to BLM and the State for review.
8. If streams are not improving after 5 years of PFC and annual indicator monitoring, the permittees agree to reduce the season of use by 7 days in pastures that are not improving. If the streams are determined to be PFC after 5 years, the season of use would be increased by 7 days in the pastures that are improving as long as we maintain desired riparian conditions. Monitoring would be collected primarily by IDL; BLM monitoring (MIM monitoring at Lone Tree Creek, Cabin Creek and Corral Creek) will also be used to help determine long-term health of these streams. IDL, permittees, and BLM agree to meet annually to determine if adjustments within the permitted season of use are needed to further ensure improvements to riparian health.
9. At least 95 percent of the livestock will be off of the allotment by September 20, and 100 percent of the livestock will be off the allotment by October 7.

Table 23: Alternative 2 Allocation of BLM AUMs Used in South Mountain Allotment

Pastures	Year 1 BLM AUMs	Year 2 BLM AUMs
Lone Tree Creek North	57	47
Lone Tree Creek South	31	42
Buck Creek West	99	135
Buck Creek East	82	46
Cabin Creek North/South	152	162
Corral Creek North/South	200	190

Map 1: South Mtn Area (00561) Allotment



Notes on the Terms and Conditions

You will be initially offered a 10-year grazing permit under Alternative 3 that allows for no flexibility in your permit Terms and Conditions. Alternative 3 will results in a reduction of 336 AUMs. These AUMs will be placed in Suspension as noted in Table 24.[14]

Once Conditions 1 through 4 have been met, you will be issued a new permit to begin grazing as outlined in Alternative 2 (modified) for the remainder of the 10-year permit. The 336 AUMs that were placed in suspension will be moved to Active Use as noted in Table 25. However, the allotment will only be grazed with 621 AUMs in year 1 and 622 AUMs year 2; this number of authorized AUMs will continue for 5 years until the allotment monitoring data is reviewed. After 5 years of grazing at this AUM level, grazing will be reduced or increased by 7 days/by pasture depending on the outcome of the monitoring. AUMs cannot exceed 745 AUMs.

Table 24: Permitted Grazing Use within the South Mountain Area Allotment under Alternative 3

Permittee	Active Use	Suspension	Permitted Use
Lequerica and Sons	51	44	51
[Craig and Ronda Brasher	103	81	103
Corral Creek Grazing Association	164	136	164
LU Ranch	91	75	91
Total	409	336	409

Table 25: Permitted Grazing Use within the South Mountain Area Allotment under Alternative 2

Permittee	Active Use	Suspension	Permitted Use
Lequerica and Sons	95	0	95
Craig and Ronda Brasher	184	0	184
Corral Creek Grazing Association	300	0	300
LU Ranch	166	0	166
Total	745	0	745

Other Notes on the Proposed Decision

Project maintenance obligations identified in current range improvement permits and cooperative agreements for range improvements are unchanged by this proposed decision. Implementation of this proposed decision is contingent upon maintenance of projects in a functioning condition (i.e., boundary and internal fences are in such good and functioning condition as to assure their ability to accomplish the purposes for which they were constructed, barriers to livestock movement).

[14] AUMs have been placed in suspension because until alternative 2 is implemented.

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 records as grazing permit holders for the South Mountain Area allotment and have determined that you have satisfactory records of performance and are qualified applicants for the purposes of permit renewals.

Justification for the Proposed Decision

Based on my review of EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0022-EA, the Rangeland Health Assessment, Evaluation, Determination, and other documents in the grazing files, it is my proposed decision to select Alternative 3 for the South Mountain Area allotment until Implementation Conditions numbers 1 through 4 have been met. Once met and verified by BLM, this decision automatically implements Alternative 2, and a permit under Alternative 2 will be issued. Implementation of this decision would best 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 would result in the South Mountain Area allotment meeting or making significant progress toward meeting the resource objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho S&Gs.

Issues Addressed

Earlier in this decision, I outlined the major issues that drove the analysis and decision-making process for the South Mountain Area allotments. I want you to know that I considered the issues through the lens of each alternative before I made my decision. I am proposing this decision because of my understanding that this approach best addresses those issues, given the BLM's legal and land management obligations.[15]

I concluded that before Alternative 2 could be implemented the two fences covering approximately 5.5 miles would need to be constructed. I also concluded that the baseline PFC monitoring and photo point monitoring would need to be established. As part of my decisions for selecting Alternative 2, I did consider your willingness to construct the fences and submit the photo point monitoring to the BLM, with limited involvement from the Owyhee Field Office. I also considered that all permittees were willing to initially reduce AUMs based on resource conditions and further reduce AUMs based on monitoring. I also believe that the support of the IDL and the permittees is important to the success of this alternative and improvement in conditions within the allotment due to the different land ownership.

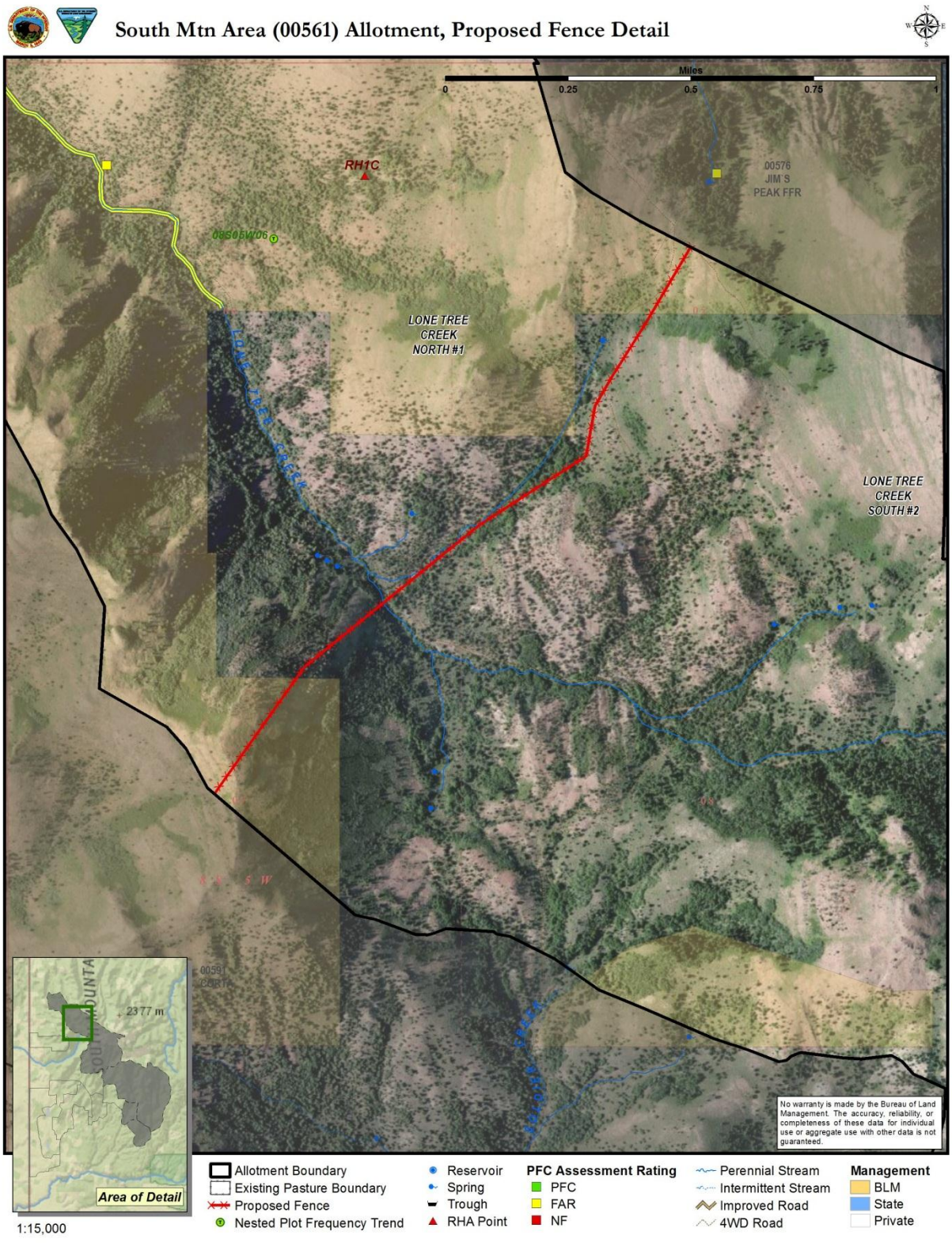
Because the construction of the two fences is important to implementing Alternative 2, I did consider using cowboys or riders while the two fences were being built. However, I don't believe this would be sufficient to keep cattle in the correct pasture. If the cattle are not in the correct

[15] As you know, your allotment is part of the Owyhee 68 Allotments, which is a large group of allotments subject to the permit renewal process that must be completed by December 31, 2013.

pasture, this would result in cattle drifting or staying in the same pasture. This would result in season-long grazing which has shown to cause resources to not make significant progress.

I will not authorize construction of the approximately ½-mile of fence that was proposed on BLM land that would split the Lone Tree Creek North and Lone Tree Creek South pastures because it does not meet the Purpose and Need of the EA. However, my decision to not allow the construction of the fence on BLM land does not preclude construction of this fence in the future under a separate NEPA analysis (see Map below).

I do not require the fence proposed on BLM lands in the North pasture (see Map below) to be built before implementing the grazing system. I believe weekly herding can be used to keep cattle in the correct pastures since the gap in the fence is small (approximately ¼-mile), and furthermore you will already be in the allotment herding livestock off the riparian areas, which should provide you time to ride these areas ensuring livestock are in the correct pastures. You would still be able to build these sections of fence on private land if you choose.


South Mtn Area (00561) Allotment, Proposed Fence Detail
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
0.75
1
RH1C
00576
JIM`S
PEAK FFR
08S05W06
LONE TREE
CREEK
NORTH #1
LONE TREE CREEK
LONE TREE
CREEK
SOUTH #2
SOUTH FORK
2377 m
Area of Detail
1:15,000
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 Boundary
Existing Pasture Boundary
Proposed Fence
Nested Plot Frequency Trend
Reservoir
Spring
Trough
RHA Point
PFC Assessment Rating
PFC
FAR
NF
Perennial Stream
Intermittent Stream
Improved Road
4WD Road
Management
BLM
State
Private

I do require the PFC monitoring and the six photo points to be established before Alternative 2 is implemented because this monitoring will document how the streams within each of the pastures are changing with the implementation of Alternative 2. To help determine the streams long-term health, I have also incorporated the BLM MIM monitoring that is already established at Lone Tree Creek, Cabin Creek, and Corral Creek because MIM monitoring will provide further information to document how the streams are changing that is not include in PFC assessments. Also, this monitoring will be used to determine if AUMs may increase or decrease. Without this baseline information, there would be no monitoring information to determine how to adjust AUMs.

Prior to compliance with the Conditions 1 – 4, I am proposing to implement Alternative 3 because it will immediately make significant progress to meeting standards. I also believe that this alternative will provide a significant initial improvement for all the resources in the allotment. Once the initial Conditions are met, Alternative 2 would then be implemented for the remainder of the 10-year permit because it will also make significant progress to meeting standards.

Both of these alternatives implemented separately or together over the next 10 years would allow the South Mountain Area allotments to meet or make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&Gs while also moving toward achieving the resource objectives outlined in the ORMP. Each alternative provides different outcomes for individual resources. Below is how Alternative 3 and if/when Alternative 2 (modified) is implemented will affect the following issues identified in the EA.

Issue: Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus): Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas of the South Mountain Group allotments contain altered sagebrush community composition, structure, and function that are affecting sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitat-dependent species.[16]

AND

Issue: Upland vegetation and watershed conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting upland vegetation by reducing or removing native vegetation communities that protect watershed soil and hydrologic function.[17]

AND

Issue: Soil compaction: Soil compaction from the physical presence of livestock remains a concern with moist soils, especially in areas with shallow and fine-textured soils. The hazard of compaction of wet soils with hoof action of livestock may be present, resulting in a reduction of infiltration and soil moisture holding capacity in fine-textured soils.[18]

[16] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.
[17] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.
[18] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.3.2 in the EA.

Alternative 3 is expected to improve native vegetation because the 3-year grazing system would only allow for livestock use outside of the critical growing period for perennial grasses and forbs. This is expected to improve the health, vigor, reproduction, and seedling establishment for herbaceous plants in all pastures (1, 2, 3, and 4) in the short (< 5 years) and long term (5 + years). Because season-long use would not be allowed, areas adjacent to riparian areas would receive less grazing pressure. This combined with periodic herding livestock away from the streams would allow for the vegetation to improve nutrient cycling, vigor, and health. Overall, Alternative 3 would reduce AUMs which would reduce livestock impacts on upland vegetation resources and semi-wet meadows, allowing the native herbaceous vegetation an opportunity to complete its life cycle more frequently in the absence of defoliation. This would allow for remnant deep-rooted bunchgrasses in those areas most easily accessible to livestock an opportunity to reproduce. For these reasons, Alternative 3 would improve overall vegetation health, allowing for significant progress towards meeting the vegetation standard.

Alternative 3 would reduce the potential for soil trampling throughout the entire allotment due primarily to the substantial reduction in AUMs. Trampling along stream terrace and toe-slope soils of Corral, Cabin, and Lone Tree creeks would be reduced due to the avoidance of hot-season use every 3rd (third) year and the implementation of herding practices. Bare ground would decrease under this alternative due to a reduction in AUMs and would improve (lessen) more rapidly and to a greater extent than Alternative 2 because the amount of use is substantially less. Short-term (< 5 years) differences in bare ground between this proposal and current management would be too small to observe or measure. This proposal would decrease the amount and continuity of bare ground throughout the allotment relative to the current conditions over the long term (5+ years). Indicators of accelerated erosion would also begin to diminish in many areas of the allotment over the long term, except in areas where juniper encroachment has reduced the sagebrush steppe vegetation. Overall the allotment would begin to make significant progress towards Standard 1.

Alternative 3 is expected to improve the limited sage-grouse habitat, which is only 13 percent of the public land, through the implementation of a 3-year grazing system and through a reduction in AUMs. Because only 35 percent of the allotment is public land, sage-grouse habitat changes in upland vegetation would have limited benefit for sage-grouse until juniper trees are reduced. However, for this limited upland habitats, grazing in the South Mountain Area allotment would be deferred during the critical growth period 2 of every 3 years, allowing relief for upland habitats and the wildlife species that depend on them. The only pastures that have sage-grouse PPH-sagebrush are Lone Tree Creek 1 and Lone Tree Creek 2. This alternative would result in herbaceous upland plant health and vigor improvement. It also would result in the absence of gazing during the sage-grouse nesting season, the migratory bird nesting season, and when small mammals are feeding on protein-rich vegetation. Special status animal species like sage-grouse, dependent on these habitats, would see an increase in herbaceous cover and height during the nesting season. Alternative 3 would make significant progress towards meeting Standard 8 for upland special status animal species and upland general wildlife species by incorporating defined use periods, reducing AUMs, and deferring spring use.

If or when alternative 2 is implemented, the issues outlined above would be affected as follows:

Alternative 2 is expected to improve native vegetation because the 2-year grazing system would allow for deferment during the critical growth period for each of the six pastures 1 out of every 2

years. Because this alternative included fencing to create new pastures, 17 percent initial reduction in AUMs, PFC monitoring, and photo point monitoring the specific effects to the allotment are different than Alternative 3. For the Cabin Creek and Corral Creek (formally pastures 2, 3, and 4), the deferred grazing system combined with a reduction in days and a reduction in AUMS would allow for improved perennial grasses and forbs health, vigor, reproduction, and seedling establishment. Also, this grazing system would reduce repeated defoliation during a single growing season, which is detrimental to plant vigor, productivity, and viability.

For the Lone Tree Creek North, Lone Tree Creek, South Buck Creek West, and Buck Creek East (formally part of pasture 1), the deferred grazing system combined with a reduction in days and a slight reduction in AUMs would allow for slower improvement in perennial grasses and forbs health, vigor, reproduction, and seedling establishment mainly due to similar AUMs. These changes would reduce repeated defoliation in the same growing season, which is detrimental to plant vigor, productivity, and viability.

In the short term (< 5-years), the bunchgrass vigor within the Lone Tree Creek North, Lone Tree Creek South, Buck Creek West, and Buck Creek East is expected to improve slowly due to similar AUMs. In the short term (< 5 years), the bunchgrass vigor within the Corral Creek and Cabin Creek pasture is expected to improve faster due to fewer AUMs compared to Alternative 1. In all pastures deferment during the critical growth period, a reduction in days, herding, and PFC monitoring should allow for improved deep-rooted bunchgrass/sagebrush health, production, improved nutrient cycling, and energy flow requirements in the long term (5+years). Also, the termination of season-long grazing (6/1-9/30) would allow for improved vegetation health in areas around riparian areas. For this reason, the allotment would make significant progress to meeting Standard 4, although the progress would be slower than under Alternative 3.

Under Alternative 2, livestock would continue to trample soils, but the likelihood of trampling wet soils would be reduced because the use period would be shortened, particularly in the southern pastures (Corral Creek and Cabin Creek). The pasture rotation in the northern part (Lone Tree Creek North, Lone Tree Creek South, Buck Creek West, and Buck Creek East) of the allotment would not reduce soil trampling effects to the extent of those in the southern portion because increasing animal units in the north nearly offsets the potential benefit of the shortened grazing period. However, the pasture rotation would offer some benefits to stream terrace areas throughout the allotment because hot-season grazing would be largely avoided every other year. The required herding of livestock to uplands would further relieve stream terrace areas of grazing pressure during the hot season, diminishing the physical effects of soil trampling on stream terraces.

Indirect affects to soils from the proposal would be similar to but less adverse than those described under current grazing. Grazing animals would continue to consume the vegetation that would otherwise be left to benefit soil and watershed function by covering bare ground and decomposing in place. Short-term (< 5 years) differences in bare ground between this proposal and current grazing would be too small to observe or measure. However, this proposal would decrease the amount and continuity of bare ground in southern portions of the allotment relative to current grazing system over the long term (5+ years). Indicators of accelerated erosion would continue to be evident in northern portions of the allotment but would begin to diminish in southern portions over the long term.

In conclusion, the allotment would begin to make progress towards Standard 1 over the long term (5 + years) because this alternative offers less use overall, a more intensive pasture rotation grazing system, and herding livestock away from streams and adjacent stream terraces during the hot season. This would result in improved soil conditions. Soils situated along stream terraces and toe-slopes of the Corral Creek and Cabin Creek drainages would progress more rapidly than those of the Lone Tree Creek drainage. The allotment would not make progress toward Standard 1 where juniper continues to encroach into sagebrush-steppe habitat.

Alternative 3 is expected to improve the limited sage-grouse habitat which is only 13 percent of the public land through the implementation of a 3-year grazing system and through a reduction in AUMs. Because only 13 percent of the allotment is public land, sage-grouse habitat changes in upland vegetation would have limited benefit for sage-grouse until juniper trees are reduced. However, under this alternative benefits to herbaceous upland plant health and vigor, grazing would be absent during the sage-grouse nesting season, the migratory bird nesting season, and when small mammals are feeding on protein-rich vegetation. This would result in an increase in herbaceous cover and height during the nesting season for ground nesting birds, including sage-grouse. Overall, Alternative 3 would make progress towards meeting Standard 8 for upland special status animal species and upland general wildlife species by incorporating defined use periods, reducing AUMs, and deferring spring use

Alternative 2 is expected to improve the limited sage-grouse habitat, which is only 13 percent of the public land, through the implementation of a 2-year deferred grazing system and initial AUM reduction. Because only 35 percent of the allotment is public land, sage-grouse habitat changes in upland vegetation would have limited benefit for sage-grouse until juniper trees are reduced. However, under this alternative the limited sage-grouse habitat would see an increase in cover and available standing biomass during the critical spring and early-summer seasons versus the current grazing system. During the every other year of critical growing season use, a 50 percent limit on utilization of current year's growth would be in place that would afford some level of protection to sage-grouse through a slow increase in cover. The only pastures in the permittees alternative that have sage-grouse PPH-sagebrush are Lone Tree Creek 1 and Lone Tree Creek 2. Overall, Alternative 2 would make slow progress towards meeting Standard 8 for upland special status animal species and upland general wildlife species by incorporating defined use periods, reducing AUMs, and deferring spring use every other year.

Issue: Riparian vegetation conditions: Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.[19]

AND

Issue: Fish and amphibian habitat conditions: Stream, floodplain, wetland, and mesic (moderately moist) habitat conditions are directly related to conditions within the riparian vegetation community. Altering of the riparian community may affect the health and sustainability of fish and amphibian populations.[20]

[19] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.
[20] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.

Under Alternative 3, riparian habitats and the animal species that depend on streams and wetlands would improve slowly by affording some hot-season grazing relief and incorporating a term and condition requiring herding livestock away from streams between July 1 and September 30. Benefits would occur for Columbia River redband trout breeding habitat and Columbia spotted frog breeding habitat because Alternative 3 would not allow grazing during the majority of these species' breeding seasons, greatly reducing direct impacts from livestock trampling. For riparian areas, a reduction in the number of days, monitoring terms and conditions, and a reduction in AUMs would improve the health and composition of riparian vegetation that is needed to support functioning riparian areas along Cabin Creek, Corral Creek, and Lone Tree Creek. Alternative 3 would improve overall riparian and wildlife habitat conditions, allowing for significant progress.

If or when alternative 2 is implemented the issues outlined above would be affected as follows:

If and when Alternative 2 is implemented, the BLM expects that wildlife habitat and riparian areas would make slower, but still significant, progress towards meeting the Idaho S&Gs. For riparian habitats and the animal species that depend on them, wetlands would improve slowly by reducing hot-season grazing use. Incorporating a term and condition that requires herding livestock away from streams after July 15 should help mitigate the effects. For riparian areas, a reduction in the number of days, PFC monitoring, and initial reduction in AUMs and herding of livestock would improve the health and composition of riparian vegetation that is needs to support functioning riparian areas within the allotment. Specifically, the PFC monitoring will identify how well the riparian-wetland areas are holding together during high-flow event. Changes in grazing management based on this monitoring would allow for the streams to maintain fisheries habitat, small bird habitat, and forage over time. The riparian photo point monitoring would allow for annual documentation used to identify change in riparian conditions necessary for wildlife. Alternative 2 would improve overall wildlife habitat conditions, allowing for significant progress towards meeting and achieve RMP objectives.

Issue: Special Status Plant Species: Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.

Because no special status plant species are known to exist on public land, this issue does not apply to the allotment.

Issue: Noxious and invasive weeds: Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.

Any grazing has the potential to introduce and spread invasive weeds and non-native annual grasses through soil surface disturbance and transportation of seed to and from the allotment in fur, on hooves, and in their digestive system. Available sites for invasive species establishment will be reduced through competition with healthy native perennial species. Although Alternatives 4 and 5 would further reduce or eliminate the potential for livestock to introduce and spread invasive and non-native annual species as compared to Alternatives 3 and 2, livestock remain only one of a number of vectors for seed dispersal and soil surface disturbance. BLM's coordinated and ongoing weed control program would still be required in the absence of livestock grazing in the allotment. Vegetative community resistance to noxious and invasive annual invasion will increase

over time as this more limited grazing strategy is implemented. Alternatives 2 and 3 will meet the ORMP vegetation management objective to improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory vegetation health/condition by elimination season-long grazing (6/1-9/30) and a reduction in AUMs, which would improve nutrient cycling, vigor, and health. This provides upland vegetation the resiliency to compete with non-native species found in the allotment.

Issue: Cultural resources: Livestock grazing has the potential to damage or displace artifacts and features of a historic property, which may alter the characteristics that qualify it for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.[21]

AND

Issue: Paleontological resources: Livestock grazing has the potential to cause breakage and displacement of fossils.[22]

One site is known to occur on the allotment. Issues with potential livestock congregation areas are not expected based on documented site information. For this reason grazing under these alternatives are not expected to impact cultural resources.

Issue: Livestock trailing: Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds, and riparian vegetation.

None of the alternatives has proposed trailing activities as part of the grazing permit renewal process.

Issue: Socioeconomic impacts: Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.[23]

During the NEPA and public comment process, some raised the concern that selection of certain alternatives considered in the EA could impact regional socioeconomic activity. I share this concern, and I have taken these concerns into consideration in making my decision; however, my primary obligation is to ensure that the new grazing permit(s) 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 Alternatives 3 and 2 for the South Mountain Area allotment, in large part because those selections accomplish those latter goals.

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

[21] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.
[22] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.3.6.1, 3.3.6.2.2.1 and 3.3.6.2.3.1 in the EA.
[23] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 3.2.7 in the EA.

I have proposed Alternatives 3 and 2 for the South Mountain Area allotment, based on the following rationale: The increased deferment of grazing and reduction in AUMs in both Alternatives 3 and 2 would enable the allotment to make progress toward meeting standards, thereby benefitting shrub steppe and riparian species. It is clear that Alternative 3 would make significant progress to meeting standards faster for all resources than would Alternative 2, which also will make significant progress. Each operator on this allotment has a clear interest in the success of Alternative 2 (modified), as demonstrated by your monetary commitment to build projects, your willingness to monitor the allotment, and your willingness to adjust grazing use based on the monitoring. I have also considered IDL's commitment and the revenue that could be lost on their land, should they make changes to their permit. In the end, the goal with an allotment with multiple owners is not only to improve BLM-administered lands but also to improve on all lands within the allotment. I believe we can accomplish this goal by working together under this decision (proposed).

Issue: Wildfire fuels: Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.[24]

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 use targeted grazing to create fuel breaks on these allotments with the hope that those fuel breaks 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 Alternatives 2 or 3 for the South Mountain Area allotment would not significantly alter the BLM's ability to fight wildfire in the area.

Although a number of sources identify the potential to use grazing to reduce fine fuels on a landscape scale, identified benefits are greatest with targeted grazing that strategically maintains fuel breaks to aid fire suppression actions. Landscape-scale fuels reduction with livestock grazing has its greatest application in grass-dominated vegetation types and specifically within seedings of grazing-tolerant introduced grasses and annual grasses. Such conditions do not exist on this allotment. In addition, the levels of livestock grazing and the season of yearly use necessary to reduce fine fuels prior to the fire season are not conducive to sustaining native perennial herbaceous species. This is one of the main reasons a targeted grazing system to control fire is not viable at this time. The BLM's current permit renewal process is focused on improving native upland and riparian plant communities on this allotment, and targeted grazing to create fuel breaks would not support that goal.

The selected alternatives retain a level of grazing use that reduces the accumulation of fine fuels and thus would lessen the spread of large wildfires when fire weather conditions are less extreme. More importantly, it is designed to benefit and promote the health and vigor of native perennial species on the allotment, thereby limiting the dominance of annual species and so limiting the accumulation of continuous fine fuels and extreme fire behavior, while enhancing post-fire recovery.

[24] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 2.3 in the EA.

Issue: Climate Change: The issue of climate change and its relationship to the proposed federal action of renewing grazing permits is twofold. 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 stresses the ecosystem's vegetation.[25]

Climate change is another factor I considered in building my decision around these alternatives. Climate change is a stressor that can reduce the long-term competitive advantage of native perennial plant species. Since livestock management practices can also stress sensitive perennial species in arid sagebrush steppe environments, I considered the issues together, albeit based on the limited information available on how they relate in actual range conditions. Although the factors that contribute to climate change are complex, long term, and not fully understood, the opportunity to provide resistance and resilience within native perennial vegetation communities from livestock grazing-induced impacts is within the scope of this decision. The selection of Alternatives 3 and 2 would at minimum maintain and in the long term improve plant health and vigor. Assuming that climate change affects the arid landscapes in the long term, the native plant communities on this allotment would be better armed to survive such changes and to progress toward meeting Idaho S&Gs; under this alternative(s), native plant health and vigor would be better able to provide resistance and resilience to additional stressors, including climate change. The incorporation of monitoring will allow us to track conditions on this allotment and respond appropriately should conditions change.

Additional Rationale

BLM developed grazing management schemes responsive to your allotment's specific resource needs, geography, and size. Each allotment has different ecology and management capability due to the size and location/topography, resulting in various issues and priorities. We attempted to coordinate grazing throughout the entire allotment, developing a scheme responsive to BLM's legal and regulatory responsibilities and cognizant of the non-federal landowner's needs and responsibilities. I believe we have balanced those needs, those of the resource, and your capabilities in this proposed decision.

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 Alternatives 2 and 3 for the South Mountain Area allotment, rather than Alternative 5, I especially considered: 1) BLM's ability to meet resource objectives using the selected alternatives, 2) the impact of implementation of Alternative 5 on the your operations and on regional economic activity, and 3) your past performance under previous permits. The resource issues identified are primarily related to the improper seasons and site-specific intensities of grazing use. By implementing these alternatives, the resource issues identified would be addressed. Suspension of grazing for a 10-year period is not the management decision most appropriate at this time in light of these factors.

[25] For more detailed discussion, please refer to Section 1.6.3 in the EA.

My proposed decision did included modification and or clarifications to your application that I did not previously discuss. These modifications and clarifications are explained below.

I am requiring 95 percent of the cattle be removed by September 20 because improvement in stream health is needed. Gathering livestock is important, and fewer strays will result in less trampling or grazing in these areas. Also, gathering livestock is an important requirement of all permittees, and stray cattle not removed off the allotment can result in problems for you.

To keep salting practices uniform across BLM and State land, salting ½-mile from any riparian area, spring, stream meadow, or Aspen is will be applied to BLM lands. I believe this better meets our resource needs and would allow for ease of implementation across all lands.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my decision to select Alternatives 3 and 2 for the South Mountain Area allotment. Under both alternatives, livestock management practices meet the ORMP objectives allotment-wide and the Idaho S&Gs consistent with the projected ability of BLM to oversee grazing on this allotment over the next several years.

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 South Mountain Area 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 term 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 would 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 would 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 in 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(s) 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.

For any person named in the decision who 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
Owyhee Field Manager

Copies sent to:

- See attached Group 4 – Proposed Decisions Mailing List

Group 4 – Proposed Decisions Mailing List

Organization	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
	Craig & Rhonda	Brasher	4401 Edison	Marsin	ID	86369	7
	Gene	Bray	5654 W El Gato Ln.	Meridian	ID	83642	8
Colyer Cattle Co.	Ray & Bonnie	Colyer	31001 Colyer Rd.	Bruneau	ID	83604	9
	Senator: Mike	Crapo	251 East Front Street STE 205	Boise	ID	83702	10
Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee	Jim	Desmond	PO Box 38	Murphy	ID	83650	11
	Frankie	Dougal	36693 Juniper Mtn. Rd	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	12
Land & Water Fund	William	Eddie	PO Box 1612	Boise	ID	83701	13
	Thenon & Jana	Elordi	59010 Van Buren	Thermal	CA	92274	14
Western Watershed Projects	Katie	Fite	PO Box 2863	Boise	ID	83701	15
Gusman Ranch Grazing Association LLC	Forest	Fretwell	27058 Pleasant Valley Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	16
	Chad	Gibson	16770 Agate Ln.	Wilder	ID	83676	17
Resource Advisory Council	Chair: Gene	Gray	2393 Watts Lane	Payette	ID	83661	18

Organization	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
	Russ	Heughins	10370 W Landmark Ct.	Boise	ID	83704	19
Jaca Livestock	Elias	Jaca	817 Blaine Ave.	Nampa	ID	83651	20
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	President: Jim	Jeffress	PO BOX 8224	Boise	ID	82707	21
	Dan	Jordan	30911 Hwy. 78	Oreana	ID	83650	22
	Floyd	Kelly Breach	9674 Hardtrigger Rd.	Given Springs	ID	83641	23
	Kenny	Kershner	PO Box 300	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	24
	Vernon	Kershner	PO Box 38	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	25
	Lloyd	Knight	PO Box 47	Hammett	ID	83627	26
	Congressman: Raul	Labrador	33 E. Broadway Ave STE 251	Meridian	ID	83642	27
Corral Creek Crazing Assoc.	Tim	Lequerica	P.O. Box 135	Arock	OR	97902	28
The Fund for the Animals, Inc.	Andrea	Lococo	1363 Overbacker	Louisville	KY	40208	29
LU Ranching	Bill	Lowry	PO Box 132	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	30
LU Ranching	Tim	Lowry	PO Box 132	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	31
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	Herb	Meyr	570 E 16th N.	Mountain Home	ID	83647	32
R&S Enterprise	Ray	Mitchell	265 Millard Rd.	Shoshone	ID	83352	33
	Sandra	Mitchell	PO Box 70001	Boise	ID	83707	34
	Ed	Moser	22901 N. Lansing Ln.	Middleton	ID	83644	35
	Brett	Nelson	9127 W. Preece St.	Boise	ID	83704	36
	Ramona	Pascoe	PO Box 126	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	37
	Anthony & Brenda	Richards	8935 Whiskey Mtn. Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	38
-	John	Richards	8933 State Hwy. 78	Marsing	ID	83639	39
	Senator: James E.	Risch	350 N 9th Street STE 302	Boise	ID	83702	40

Organization	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
Idaho Conservation League	John	Robison	PO Box 844	Boise	ID	83701	41
	John	Romero	17000 2X Ranch Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	42
	Bob	Salter	6109 N. River Glenn	Garden City	ID	83714	43
Intermountain Range Consultants	Bob	Schweigert	5700 Dimick Ln.	Winnemucca	NV	89445	44
	Congressman: Mike	Simpson	802 West Bannock STE 600	Boise	ID	83702	45
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	Tribal Chair: Nathan	Small	PO Box 306	Ft. Hall	ID	83203	46
Juniper Mtn. Grazing Association	Michael	Stanford	3581 Cliffs Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	47
	Doug	Terry	P.O. Box 11	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	48
	John	Townsend	8306 Road 3.2 NE	Moses Lake	WA	98837	49
Moore Smith Buxton & Turcke	Paul	Turcke	950 W. Bannock, Ste. 520	Boise	ID	83702	50
Natural Resources Defence Council	Johanna	Wald	111 Sutter St., 20th Floor	San Francisco	CA	94104	51
Office of Species Conservation	Cally	Younger	304 N. 8th STE 149	Boise	ID	83702	52
Owyhee County Commissioners			PO Box 128	Murphy	ID	83650	53
Holland & Hart LLP			PO Box 2527	Boise	ID	83701	54
Idaho Cattle Association			PO Box 15397	Boise	ID	83715	55
IDEQ			1410 N. Hilton	Boise	ID	83701	56
Idaho Dept. of Lands			PO Box 83720	Boise	ID	83720	57
Idaho Farm Bureau Fed.			PO Box 167	Boise	ID	83701	58
International Society for the Protection of Horses & Burros	Karen	Sussman	PO Box 55	Lantry	SD	57636	59

Organization	Name		Address	City	ST	Zip	#
Larrusea Cattle Co			P.O. Box 124	Arock	OR	97902	60
Oregon Division State Lands			1645 NE Forbes Rd., Ste. 112	Bend	OR	97701	61
Owyhee Cattlemen's Association			PO Box 400	Marsing	ID	83639	62
Schroeder & Lezamiz Law Offices			PO Box 267	Boise	ID	83701	63
Sierra Club			PO Box 552	Boise	ID	83701	64
State Historic Preservation Office			210 Main St.	Boise	ID	83702	65
State of Nevada Div. of Wildlife			60 Youth Center Rd.	Elko	NV	89801	66
The Nature Conservancy			950 W. Bannock, Ste. 210	Boise	ID	83702	67
The Wilderness Society			950 W. Bannock St., Ste. 605	Boise	ID	83702-5999	68
U.S.F.W.S. Idaho State Office			1387 S. Vinnell Way, Ste. 368	Boise	ID	83709	69
USDA Farm Services			9173 W. Barnes	Boise	ID	83704	70
Western Watershed Projects			PO Box 1770	Hailey	ID	83333	71