



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Owyhee Field Office  
20 First Ave West  
Marsing, ID 83639  
(208) 896-5912



In Reply Refer To:  
4160 ID130

November 26, 2013

**REGISTERED MAIL**

Tom Gluch  
Box 257  
Jordan Valley, OR 97910

**Notice of Field Manager's Proposed Decision**

Dear Tom:

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

The BLM recently evaluated current grazing practices and current conditions in the Gluch FFR Allotments. The BLM undertook this effort to ensure that any renewed grazing permits on these allotments are consistent with the BLM's legal and land management obligations. As part of the BLM's evaluation process, rangeland health Assessments, Evaluations and Determinations were completed. This proposed decision incorporates those documents by reference and the information contained therein.

On January 11, 2013, the Owyhee Field Office initiated by letter the collective public scoping process for Groups 3 through 5 of the Owyhee 68 grazing permit renewal process. These groups are referred to as the Toy, South Mountain, and Morgan groups, respectively. The Gluch FFR Allotment is one of 19 allotments in the Morgan group. The letter informed recipients that the purpose of the public outreach effort was to identify resource and management issues associated with the Idaho Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines (Idaho S&Gs) and the Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) for the purpose of developing grazing management alternatives for all three groups, including Morgan Group Allotments Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) EA # DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA (hereinafter, "Morgan Group EA")<sup>1</sup>. The letter requested comments and information be received

---

<sup>1</sup> EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA analyzed five alternatives for livestock grazing management practices to fully process permits within the Gluch FFR Allotment.

by February 25, 2013 for each group of allotments but did not set a closing date for the receipt of public comments.

In addition, my staff and members from the NEPA Permit Renewal Team, met with you on April 19, 2013, to discuss the grazing permit renewal application we received on May 31, 2011, current allotment conditions, and to share information about your livestock operations within this allotment. During this meeting, we discussed with you our preliminary conclusions regarding rangeland health standards and guidelines and made grazing management recommendations associated with your grazing permit renewal application, which you updated at that time. After evaluating conditions on the land and meeting with you and the public, it became clear that resource concerns currently exist on the Gluch Allotment.

The Initial Allotment Review and Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines Assessment for the Gluch FFR Allotment was drafted in 2006 as a portion of the grazing permit renewal process. Until 2013, no rangeland health determination had been completed and the permit authorizing grazing use in this allotment had not been fully processed for renewal. On August 27, 2013, BLM issued the completed 2013 Rangeland Health Assessments (RHA), Evaluations, and Determinations for the Group 5 Morgan Group Allotments (for which included the Gluch FFR Allotment) to you and all interested publics of record. Issuance of the RHAs and Determinations afforded you an opportunity to meet with my staff to discuss any additional grazing management changes, your application, and to provide input for completion of the Group 5 Morgan Group EA. Additionally, a preliminary environmental assessment (without a FONSI) was issued to the public on October 25, 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 and inform me in preparation of completing a proposed grazing decision. We did not receive comments from you regarding the determination. Thank you for meeting with us on November 14, 2013 and for your comments on the public review EA; they were considered in preparation of the final EA and this Proposed Decision.

As a focus of addressing livestock impacts to public land resources, my office prepared and issued the Morgan Group EA in which we considered a number of options and approaches to maintain and improve resource conditions within the nineteen allotments of the Morgan Group. Specifically, the BLM considered and analyzed in detail five alternatives. We also considered other alternatives that we did not analyze in detail. Our objective in developing alternatives was to consider options that were important to you as the permittee, and to consider options that, if selected, would ensure that the Gluch FFR Allotment's natural resources conform to the goals and objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Idaho S&Gs). This proposed decision incorporates by reference the analysis contained in the EA.

I am now prepared to issue a proposed decision to renew your permit to graze livestock within the Gluch FFR 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 allotment;

- Briefly discuss the alternative grazing management schemes that the BLM considered in the EA;
- Respond to the application for grazing permit renewal for use in the Gluch FFR Allotment;
- Outline my proposed decision to select Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment; and
- Explain my reasons for proposing this decision.

## Background

### *Allotment Setting*

#### **Gluch FFR Allotment**

The Gluch FFR Allotment is approximately 4 miles south of Jordan Valley, Oregon, crosses the Idaho-Oregon state line, and is part of the South Mountain Core Area. The allotment consists of approximately 3,200 acres, of which 751 are BLM administered public lands, 1,722 are state lands, and 726 are private (Map 1). The presence and expansion of invasive annual grasses are a concern in this allotment.

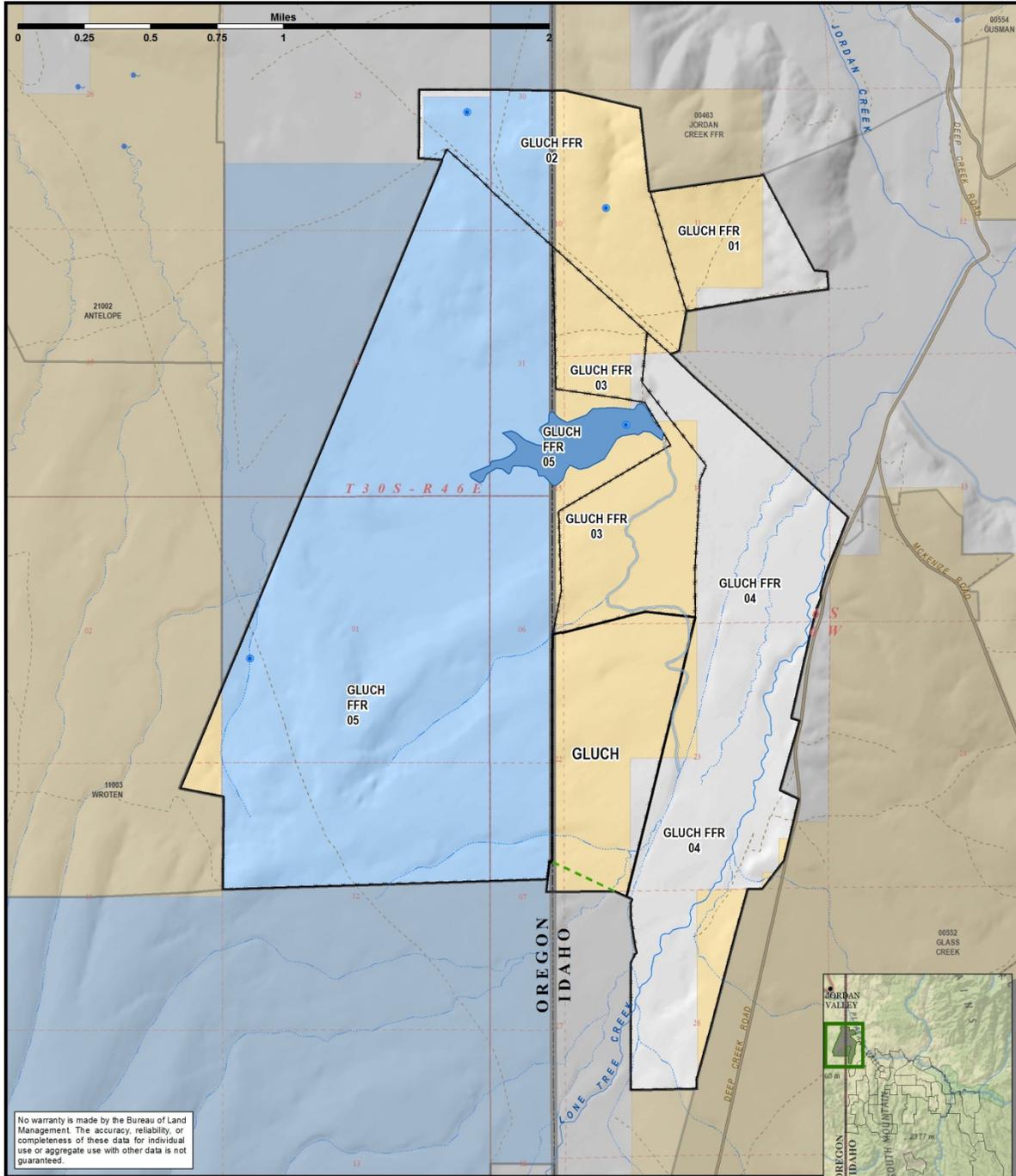
In the ORMP, the Gluch FFR Allotment was placed in the *Maintain* Selective Management Category. Maintain allotments are managed with minimal expenditure of appropriated funds and maintained for current satisfactory resource conditions. They must also meet or make progress toward meeting the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health.

The ORMP identified 105 AUMs of active preference for livestock grazing. The season of use identified on the grazing permit is December 1-31 for billing purposes only, allowing the permittee to grazing cattle any time during the grazing year (3/1-2/28) at the permittee's discretion for a total of 105 AUMs. Total actual and permitted use on the Idaho portion of the Gluch FFR Allotment ranged between 49 and 105 AUMs from 1990 to 2006 and averaged 70 AUMs. Levels of use under the State of Oregon lease on the Oregon portion of the Gluch FFR Allotment are not documented. Although the Gluch FFR Allotment actual use has been reported as one pasture, there have been fences in place on the allotment since at least the early 1980s. Pasture 1 has been used in the winter and spring repeatedly as a feed ground (January 1 through April 1). Pasture 2 has been used repeatedly in the spring (April 1 to May 1); pasture 3 has been used repeatedly in the spring (May 1 to June 1). Pasture 4 was used in conjunction with the hay fields mainly for fall use. However, it has been used any time of the year repeatedly; use was authorized under an exchange-of-use agreement. Pasture 5 is a water gap with the reservoir and minimal Idaho BLM lands are associated with this pasture; it is mostly made up of Oregon state lands and is used in the spring and summer.

Elevations range from 4,500 to 4,600 feet. The terrain is flat to rolling. Most landform features are rhyolitic in origin, consisting primarily of valley bottomlands and rolling hills. The majority of the soils in the allotment are shallow to moderately deep and well drained. Soils are clayey to loamy and vary in surface and subsurface rock fragments. These soils formed in residuum and alluvium that were derived predominantly from welded rhyolitic tuff. The associated ecological sites consist primarily of Loamy 11-13" (basin big sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass community) and Shallow Claypan 12-16" (low sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue community).



# Map 1: Gluch (00553) and Gluch FFR (0466) Allotments



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 | Reservoir  | Perennial Stream    | Improved Road  | <b>Management</b> |
| Pasture Boundary   | Spring     | Intermittent Stream | Primitive Road |                   |
| Previous Fenceline | Trough     | Canal/Ditch         | BLM            |                   |
| Exclosure          | Water Body |                     | State          |                   |
|                    |            |                     |                | Private           |



1:30,000

The Gluch FFR Allotment is not meeting Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities) due to historic livestock grazing practices and exotic plant invasion. The allotment lies within modeled PPH for sage-grouse and provides seasonal breeding, upland summer, riparian, and winter habitat for sage-grouse, although the riparian/wetland habitat is on private land within the allotment and is not discussed in the analysis. The ephemeral draw that was identified by DEQ that does not provide for cold water beneficial uses (includes conditions for aquatic species); it therefore does not meet Standard 7 and therefore does not meet Standard 8. Standard 8 (Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals) is not being met due to historic and current livestock grazing, water quality, upland habitat conditions and habitat conditions for sage-grouse. Standards 1 (Watersheds) and 6 (Exotic Plant Communities, Other Than Seedings) are also not meeting, due to both current and historic grazing practices, exotic species presence and soils conditions.

***Current Grazing Authorization***

**Gluch FFR Allotment**

**Table 1:** Current permit summary for the Gluch FFR Allotment

Operator Name & No.	Livestock Kind & No.	Season of Use	% PL	AUMs		
				Active	Suspended	Permitted
Tom Gluch	103 Cattle	12/1-12/31	100	105	0	105

Other Terms and Conditions:

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 allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
7. Rangeland improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvement permits in which you are a signature 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 turn out. 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 \$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.

10. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your grazing schematic. Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
11. Utilization may not exceed 50% of the current year's growth.

In addition to terms and conditions of the existing permit, terms and conditions for stubble height, woody browse, utilization, and stream bank alteration imposed on the grazing permit by the United States District Court for the District of Idaho would be included in terms and conditions of the offered permit. Mandatory and other terms and conditions of the current permit are defined as listed in Table 1 and the following numbered bullets:

- The number of livestock and season of use on the fenced in federal range (FFR) allotment #0466 is at your discretion.
- Key herbaceous riparian vegetation, where stream bank stability is dependent upon it, will have a minimum stubble height of 4 inches on the stream bank, along the greenline, after the growing season;
- Key riparian browse vegetation will not be used more than 50 percent of the current annual twig growth that is within reach of the animals;
- Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian areas, other than the stream banks, will not be grazed more than 50 percent during the growing season, or 60 percent during the dormant season; and
- Stream bank damage attributable to grazing livestock will be less than 10 percent on a stream segment.

The current permit authorizes an annual use of 105 animal unit months (AUMs<sup>2</sup>) of forage from public land and a season of use between December 1 and December 31; however, based on recent management actions over the last ten years, you have used the allotment with different livestock numbers and seasons compared to the numbers and dates identified in the Mandatory Terms and Conditions, utilizing the flexibility authorized in the permit.

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

### ***Resource Conditions<sup>3</sup>***

The BLM completed a rangeland health assessment, evaluation, and determination for the Gluch FFR Allotments in 2013 by supplementing the assessment completed in 2006. The Evaluation and Determination documents concluded that some of the resources on the Gluch FFR Allotment were not meeting the Idaho S&Gs (Table 2).

---

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.1

Specifically, the BLM determined Standards 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8 of the applicable Standards for Rangeland Health are not being met in the Gluch FFR Allotment. Standards 2, 3, and 5 are not applicable to this allotment. Current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors in not meeting Standards 1, 6, and 8, whereas current livestock management practices are not significant factors toward not meeting Standards 4 and 7. Livestock management practices do not conform with applicable Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 for several Standards.

**Table 2:** Summary of the Standards and associated Guidelines under current BLM grazing management in the Morgan Group allotments

Allotment	Standards met	Standards not met, but making significant progress	Standards not being met	Standards not being met and current livestock grazing is a significant causal factor	Standards not applicable	Not in conformance with associated guidelines
Gluch FFR			4, 7	1, 6, 8	2, 3, 5	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12

*Vegetation - uplands<sup>1</sup>*

*Pasture 1 - Standard 6 (not met due to current livestock management)*

Pasture 1 is not evaluated under Standard 4; it is evaluated under Standard 6 (Exotic Plant Communities Other Than Seedings). Evidence of historic grazing impacts is present throughout the allotment, with the reduced composition of deep-rooted native perennial bunchgrasses (e.g., bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue) from reference site conditions and a greater dominance by increaser species (e.g., Sandberg bluegrass and squirreltail). Current grazing and soil compaction in pasture 1 are causal factors in not meeting Standard 6, as are repeated winter and spring use. This current use as a winter and early spring pasture, where feeding and continuous early use under wet conditions has occurred, has contributed to extensive physical soil impacts, primarily compaction and localized pugging.

Qualitative RHA data indicate that Standard 6 is not being met in pasture 1 due to the departure of functional-structural groups in the RHAs dominated by shallow-rooted bunchgrass and invasive annuals, rather than the ecological reference site conditions dominated by deep-rooted species (bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue). This conclusion is supported by current ecological site descriptions and correlation to vegetation inventories.

The ORMP management objective to improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory vegetation health/condition on all areas is also not met within pasture 1. Vegetation communities dominated by annual invasives and shallow-rooted bunchgrasses in pasture 1, with the expansion of soil compaction, lead to a conclusion that the vegetation management objective is not met. Standard 6 does not apply to pastures 2, 3, 4, and 5.

*Pastures 2, 3, 4 and 5 - Standard 4*

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.1.1

Rangeland Health Standard 4 is not being met in pastures 2 and 3 but is being met in pastures 4 and 5 of the Gluch FFR Allotment. Historic grazing impacts are evident throughout the allotment, with the reduced composition of deep-rooted native perennial bunchgrasses (e.g., bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue) from reference site conditions and a greater dominance by increaser species (e.g., Sandberg bluegrass and squirreltail). Historic grazing and invasive annuals in pastures 2 and 3 are causal factors in not meeting Standard 4.

Qualitative RHA data indicate that Standard 4 is not being met in pasture 2, with departure of functional-structural groups in the RHAs dominated by shallow-rooted bunchgrass and invasive annuals, rather than the ecological reference site conditions with dominance by deep-rooted species (bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue). This conclusion is supported by current ecological site descriptions and correlation to vegetation inventories.

Overall interpretations of trend data in pasture 3 suggest that past and continuing deterioration of biotic conditions due to lack of deep-rooted bunchgrasses and increasing annual invasives on the site have compromised the biotic integrity of the site.

The ORMP management objective to improve unsatisfactory and maintain satisfactory vegetation health/condition on all areas is also not met within pastures 2 and 3. Vegetation communities dominated by shallow-rooted bunchgrasses in pastures 2 and 3, with the expansion of annual invasive grasses, lead to a conclusion that the vegetation management objective is not met.

### *Watersheds<sup>3</sup>*

Current livestock grazing management practices are significant causal factors for not meeting upland watershed Standard 1 in pastures 1 and 2 of the Gluch FFR Allotment; pasture 3 is not meeting the standard due to historic livestock practices while the ORMP watershed health objective is not being met in pasture 5 due to impacts from man-made disturbances at a reservoir. Pasture 4 is meeting the standard.

The reduction in soil and hydrologic function in pastures 1, 2, and 3 is associated with physical soil disturbance and an altered plant community composition and distribution from decreased relative abundance of large, deep-rooted native perennial bunchgrasses. Pasture 1 has been utilized as a winter and early spring pasture where feeding and the continuous early use under wet conditions has contributed to extensive physical soil impacts, primarily compaction and localized pugging. Litter is almost absent.

Indicators of erosion and soil loss and degradation are also present in pasture 2 and are related to mechanical soil disturbance. An increase in invasive species contributes to an ongoing decline in hydrologic function and nutrient availability. Although mats of invasive annuals provide for cover, they result in undesirable soil productivity changes and reflect a departure in reference conditions.

Historic livestock management has impacted pasture 3, although ground cover trend and grass frequency trend show slight improving to static conditions and inconclusive changes in bare

---

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.1.2

ground. The ORMP management objectives are not met in pasture 5, where disturbance from heavy equipment has left localized impacts to soils from dredging at a reservoir.

The decreased ecological function and impaired soils indicate that soil and hydrologic function are compromised from continued winter and spring grazing in the absence of rest. Current and past livestock management is the primary contributing factor for not meeting Standard 1 and the ORMP soil management objectives for the Gluch FFR Allotment.

#### *Water Resources and Riparian/Wetland Areas*<sup>6</sup>

Standards 2 and 3 are not applicable, and Standard 7 is not being met in the Gluch FFR Allotment. Although the NHD identifies short reaches of stream on BLM lands with the allotment, BLM did not identify these reaches for assessment because they are an ephemeral draws that have been mechanically altered, they lack form and function, and they do not support riparian vegetation. DEQ assigns beneficial uses to assessment units that capture 1<sup>st</sup> order streams as well as all 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order tributaries. In the Gluch FFR Allotment, a tributary of Lone Tree Creek is incorporated in the AU and is listed based on habitat bioassessments (*E.Coli*). However, the creek does not support flows or riparian vegetation and therefore is not contributing to *E.Coli* movement. Therefore, it was determined that current livestock are not the causal factor for not meeting Standard 7.

#### *Special Status Plants*

No populations of special status plant species are known to occur in this allotment; this standard is not applicable to the Gluch FFR Allotment.

#### *Wildlife/Wildlife Habitats and Special Status Animals*<sup>7</sup>

##### **Upland Habitat**

Pasture 1 is managed as an exotic plant community and is determined to not be meeting Standard 6. Upland habitats managed under Standard 6 do not meet the requirements of Standard 8. Vegetation composition, structure, and function are lacking or absent in these communities substantially reducing effective nesting, hiding, escape, travel, and foraging cover values for all upland wildlife species.

Under current management, grazing is occurring when soils are wet, and soil compaction and pugging are occurring; these impacts are not congruent with meeting Standard 6. As discussed above in *Watersheds*, pastures 1 and 2 are also not meeting because of current livestock management. Because the allotment is not meeting Standards 1 and 6 due to current livestock management, Standard 8 is also not meeting because of current livestock management. These exotic communities further create large open spaces, diminish habitat connectivity, and increase sagebrush community fragmentation; therefore, this pasture is not meeting Standard 8 due to past and current grazing practices and dominance of exotic vegetation.

Pastures 2 and 3 are managed as native plant communities and have been determined to not be meeting Standard 4 due to past livestock grazing practices and annual invasive species. Currently,

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.1.3

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.1.4

the herbaceous understory component is transitioning from basin big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass reference community to a basin big sagebrush/Sandberg bluegrass-cheatgrass community. The downward trend in the plant community composition is favoring more grazing tolerant, shallow rooted grass species. These species lack the robust growth form and stature of bluebunch wheatgrass and do not provide the plant composition, structure, and function for sagebrush steppe dependent species. Due to the downward trend and transition in the plant community, this pasture is failing to provide adequate upland habitat conditions for sagebrush steppe species, and therefore is not meeting Standard 8 due to past grazing practices and invasive annuals.

Pastures 4 and 5 are managed as native plant communities and are meeting Standard 4. Because there is no wildlife species specific information (e.g., sage-grouse habitat assessments), an assumption is being made that pastures 4 and 5 are at least providing minimum habitat composition and structure for most shrub steppe dependent species because the applicable upland Standards are being met in these pastures.

### **Riparian Habitat**

Standards 2 and 3 are not applicable, and Standard 7 is not being met in the Gluch FFR Allotment. Although there is a short reach of stream on BLM lands within the Gluch FFR Allotment, BLM did not identify the reach for assessment because it is an ephemeral draw that does not support sufficient riparian vegetation for which to apply the PFC protocol; no riparian habitat exists on BLM. Evaluation of Standard 7 found an unnamed creek within the Gluch FFR Allotment that is not meeting Idaho water quality parameters because of elevated *E. coli* levels and is identified as not providing habitat quality for beneficial uses which includes cold-water aquatic species. Therefore, the BLM concluded that Standards 7 and 8 are not being met because IDEQ categorized this drainage as not meeting water quality standards. The conditions of the ephemeral drainage do not sustain sufficient flows to support riparian vegetation and is not contributing to *E. Coli* movement. Therefore, it was determined that current livestock are not the causal factor for not meeting Standard 8.<sup>8</sup>

### **Focal Species**

#### ***Sage-grouse***

The Gluch FFR Allotment lies within modeled PPH for sage-grouse and the allotment provides seasonal breeding, upland summer, riparian, and winter habitat for sage-grouse, although the riparian/wetland habitat is on private land within the allotment and is not discussed in the analysis.

Breeding habitat conditions for sage-grouse in the Gluch FFR Allotment were found to be marginal; no active leks are known to occur within the allotment. The breeding habitat assessments showed that the occurrence of sagebrush is satisfactory, but the overstory structure is taller than desired with a mixed spreading/columnar physical shape. Combined with reduced occurrence of perennial grasses in the understory and the marginal height and shape of the sagebrush, nesting, hiding, and escape cover created by appropriate vegetation composition and

---

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2011-0006-EA Sections 3.1.5, 3.3.11.1.4, and the RHA/Eval/Det.

structure does not adequately occur. Therefore, this allotment is not meeting Standard 8 due to marginal breeding habitat conditions caused by past grazing practices.

Upland summer habitat provides important cover and forage for late brood-rearing sage-grouse as the season becomes drier and birds seek out vegetation communities with an abundance of forbs such as mesic areas and riparian zones. The BLM provides upland habitat near the riparian/wetland area that occurs on private land. Extrapolating from the breeding habitat assessment, except for the forb information, conditions for sage-grouse in pasture 3 are found to be marginal. The assessment showed that sagebrush occurrence is satisfactory but that the height is taller than desired and combined with the less than favorable occurrence of understory perennial grasses; hiding and escape cover are not being adequately provided. Therefore, this pasture is not meeting Standard 8 due to the marginal upland summer habitat conditions caused by past grazing practices.

#### *Columbia Redband Trout and Columbia Spotted Frog*

Habitat for the Columbia redband trout and the Columbia spotted frog are not documented to occur within this allotment.

#### ***Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management***

In addition to a discussion of land health standards, the BLM's 2013 Determination for the Gluch FFR Allotment identified that current grazing management practices do not conform with the applicable Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 for several Standards.

#### **Guidelines Not in Conformance**

1. *Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote significant progress toward adequate amounts of ground cover (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture storage, and stabilize soils.*
3. *Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote soil conditions that support water infiltration, plant vigor, and permeability rates and minimize soil compaction appropriate to site potential.*
4. *Implement grazing management practices that provide periodic rest or deferment during critical growth stages to allow sufficient regrowth to achieve and maintain healthy, properly functioning conditions, including good plant vigor and adequate vegetative cover appropriate to site potential.*
7. *Apply grazing management practices to maintain, promote, or progress toward appropriate stream channel and streambank morphology and functions. Adverse impacts due to livestock grazing will be addressed.*
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.*

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.*
11. *Use grazing management practices developed in recovery plans, conservation agreements, and Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultations to maintain or improve habitat for federally listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and animals.*
12. *Apply grazing management practices and/or facilities that maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions necessary to sustain native plant populations and wildlife habitats in native plant communities.*

### ***Issues<sup>9</sup>***

Throughout the internal and external (public) scoping process and project development period, the BLM interdisciplinary team identified the following issues concerning livestock grazing management in one or more of the Morgan Group allotments:

1. *Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*; from this point on referred to as sage-grouse):* Sage-grouse habitat health is directly related to upland vegetation and watershed conditions. Specific areas of the Morgan Group allotments contain altered sagebrush community composition, structure, and function that are affecting sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitat-dependent species.
2. *Riparian vegetation conditions:* Livestock grazing is affecting riparian condition and aquatic habitat by changing the health and composition of riparian vegetation communities.
3. *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.
4. *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.
5. *Special status plant species:* Livestock grazing is adversely affecting special status plants by altering surrounding upland vegetation, habitat and reproduction of individuals.
6. *Noxious and invasive weeds:* Livestock grazing and trailing has the potential to increase or spread noxious and invasive weeds.
7. *Livestock trailing:* Trailing may adversely affect upland vegetation, soils, weeds and riparian vegetation.
8. *Socioeconomic impacts:* Livestock grazing affects local and regional socioeconomic activities generated by livestock production.

---

<sup>9</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 1.6.3

9. *Wildfire fuels:* Livestock grazing has the potential to change vegetation that may affect wildfire.
10. *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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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.

### *Analysis of Alternative Actions*

Based on the current condition of the Gluch FFR Allotment and the issues identified above, the BLM considered and analyzed a number of alternative livestock management schemes in the EA to ensure that any renewed grazing permit would result in the maintenance or some improved conditions on the allotment. Specifically, the BLM analyzed five alternatives in detail, identified a number of actions common to all alternatives, and considered but did not analyze in detail a number of other possible actions.<sup>10</sup> The BLM considered the following alternatives in detail:

#### **Gluch FFR Allotment Alternatives<sup>11</sup>**

*Alternative 1, Current Condition* – The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit consistent with the summarized actions that have led to the current conditions. The same terms and conditions of the existing permit would be included in the permit offered.

*Alternative 2, Applicant's Proposed Action* – The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit as applied for by Tom Gluch on April 19, 2013. A grazing schedule for pastures of the Gluch FFR Allotment would be authorized; seasons of use would vary as long as total 105 AUMs are not exceeded; cattle number may vary up to maximum 300 head.

*Alternative 3* – The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit with terms and conditions that constrain seasons, intensities, duration, and frequency of grazing use to a degree necessary to make significant progress toward meeting, or maintain meeting all applicable standards and the ORMP objectives within pastures where identified resources are present.

*Alternative 4* – The BLM would renew the livestock grazing permit for use in the Gluch FFR Allotment with terms and conditions that constrain seasons, intensities, duration, and frequency of grazing use to a degree necessary to make significant progress toward meeting, or maintain meeting all applicable standards and the ORMP objectives within pastures where identified resources are present.

*Alternative 5, No Grazing* – Under Alternative 5, no grazing would be authorized on public lands within the Gluch FFR Allotment for a term of 10 years.

---

<sup>10</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 2.3

<sup>11</sup> For more detailed discussion on the Gluch FFR Allotment alternatives, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 2.4.11

The Preliminary EA detailing the above alternatives was made available for public review and comment for a 15-day period ending November 12, 2013. Comments that were received were used to complete the EA and draft a FONSI.

### Proposed Decision

After considering the current grazing practices, the current conditions of the natural resources, and the alternatives and analysis in the EA, comments received from you and other interested publics, as well as other information, it is my proposed decision to renew your grazing permit for 10 years consistent with the terms and conditions under Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment. Implementation of Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment over the next 10 years will allow these allotments to make significant progress toward meeting the Idaho S&Gs, while also moving toward achieving the resource objectives outlined in the ORMP. The terms and conditions of the renewed grazing permits are defined in Tables 1 through 3.

#### *Proposed Decision - Gluch FFR Allotment<sup>12</sup>*

**Table 1.** Mandatory and other terms and conditions of the offered permit to graze livestock within the Gluch FFR Allotment with implementation of the proposed decision.

Operator Name & No.	Livestock Kind & No.	Season of Use	% PL	AUMs		
				Active	Suspended	Permitted
Tom Gluch (1101412)	300 Cattle	1/1-5/30	19	75	0	75
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With approval by the authorized officer, cattle numbers may vary up to maximum 300 head<sup>13</sup> as long as the season of use in accordance with the grazing schedule and 75 active use AUMs are not exceeded annually.</li> <li>2. 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.</li> <li>3. Turn-out is subject to the Boise District range readiness criteria.</li> <li>4. The permittee's certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing the authorized annual grazing use.</li> <li>5. 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.</li> <li>6. Trailing activities must be coordinated with the BLM prior to initiation. A trailing permit or similar authorization may be required prior to crossing public lands.</li> <li>7. 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,</li> </ol>						

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed description of this alternative, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 2.4.11.3

<sup>13</sup> Cattle numbers will be increased from 103 to 300 because of the change in percent public land from 100 to 19 on the permit. This increase in livestock numbers is a function of the change in percent public land on the permit.

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.

8. Livestock exclosures located within the grazing allotment are closed to all domestic grazing use.
9. 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.
10. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with Boise District Policy.
11. 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.
12. Livestock grazing will be in accordance with your allotment grazing schedule(s). Changes in scheduled pasture use dates will require prior authorization.
13. Utilization may not exceed 50 percent of the current year's growth.

### ***Livestock grazing management***

As a result of the above Alternative 3 actions, mandatory and other terms and conditions of the offered permit for grazing use in the Gluch FFR, the allotment schedule is defined as listed in Table 2 and the applicable Boise District terms and conditions and other terms and conditions as follows:

1. With approval by the authorized officer, cattle numbers may vary up to maximum 300 head<sup>14</sup> as long as the season of use in accordance with the grazing schedule and 75 active use AUMs are not exceeded annually.

### ***Grazing Schedule***

As noted in Other Term and Condition #1, the grazing schedule for the Gluch FFR Allotment (identified below) must be followed. The grazing schedule for the Gluch FFR Allotment, identified in Table 2, would be authorized and its implementation is included as a term and condition of the permit offered. Flexibility in dates of moves between pastures would be provided to meet resource management and livestock management objectives provided resource constraints are met.

**Table 2:** Alternative 3 grazing schedule for the Gluch FFR Allotment

<sup>14</sup> Cattle numbers will be increased from 103 to 300 because of the change in percent public land from 100 to 19 on the permit. This increase in livestock numbers is a function of the change in percent public land on the permit.

Pasture	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Pasture 1	1/1-4/1	1/1-4/1	Rest
Pasture 2	Rest	4/2-4/30	4/2-4/30
Pasture 3	5/1-5/30	Rest	5/1-5/30
Pasture 4 (Private)	3/1-2/28	3/1-2/28	3/1-2/28
Pasture 5 (Oregon State Lands)	3/1-2/28	3/1-2/28	3/1-2/28

***Notes on the Terms and Conditions***

You will be offered a grazing permit for a term of 10 years for the Gluch FFR Allotment. Implementation of Alternative 3 will result in a reduction of 30 AUMs from the existing permit of 105 AUMs to 75 AUMs, as summarized in Table 3. The elimination of 30 AUMs of active use would not result in a conversion to suspension AUMs<sup>15</sup>. The difference in AUMs would be the result of a reduction in the number of cattle authorized and restrictions on timing of use based on the schedule present in Table 2.

**Table 3.** Permitted grazing use within the Gluch FFR Allotment with implementation of the proposed decision.

Active Use	Suspension	Permitted Use
75 AUMs	0 AUMs	75 AUMs

**Rationale**

***Record of Performance***

Pursuant to 43 CFR § 4110.1(b)(1), a grazing permit may not be renewed if the permittee seeking renewal has an unsatisfactory record of performance with respect to its last grazing permit. Accordingly, I have reviewed your record as a grazing permit holder for Gluch FFR Allotment, and have determined that you have a satisfactory record of performance and are a qualified applicant for the purposes of a permit renewal.

***Justification for the Proposed Decision***

Based on my review of EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-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 Gluch FFR Allotment. I have made this selection for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because of my understanding that implementation of this decision will fulfill the BLM’s obligation to manage the public lands under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act’s multiple use and sustained yield mandate, and will result in the Gluch FFR Allotment making significant progress towards meeting the resource objectives of the ORMP and the Idaho S&Gs, where it is currently not met due to livestock management practices.

<sup>15</sup> The affected reduction in Active AUMs will not be transferred to suspension, as this is not a temporary reduction (see, e.g., 43 CFR § 4100.0-5, Definitions), but a reduction under 43 CFR § 4110.3-2 (b).

## *Issues Addressed*<sup>6</sup>

Earlier in this decision I outlined the major issues that drove the analysis and decision making process for the Gluch FFR Allotment. I want you to know that I considered each alternative in light of the specific issues raised in conjunction with this allotment before I made my decision. My selection of Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment was in large part because of my understanding that this selection best addressed those issues, given the BLM's legal and land management obligations.<sup>17</sup>

1. *Habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse:* The implementation of Alternative 3 will result in a deferred grazing management strategy that incorporates rest in one of every three years in Pastures 1, 2, and 3 (Table 2).

Pasture 1 is managed as an exotic pasture and will be grazed in the winter (1/1 to 4/1) two out of three years with a year of rest. The exotic communities in this pasture do not support adequate herbaceous distribution, composition and structure to provide effective nesting/early brood-rearing habitat conditions for sage-grouse and increases their vulnerability of detection and predation by terrestrial and avian predators. Because of the dominance of annuals in this pasture and their competitive advantage, improvement is

---

<sup>16</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 1.6.3

<sup>17</sup> As you know, your allotment is part of a group of six allotments forming the Owyhee 68 Allotments, which large group is the subject of a permit renewal process to be completed by December 31, 2013. The NEPA process for the Owyhee 68 consists of 5-plus EAs and an EIS. This multiple-allotment process has required me, as the Field Manager responsible for signing these grazing decisions, to look at these allotments, and the other allotments analyzed in the EAs and the EIS, not just individually but as a members of a group of allotments located in a particular landscape, the BLM Owyhee Field Office. That is, while I am looking at your individual allotment, reviewing its RHA/Evaluation/Determination, and selecting an alternative that will best address the allotment's ecological conditions and BLM's legal responsibilities (for the purposes of this decision), I am also looking at the allotment from a landscape perspective. From this perspective, there are problems common to the Owyhee 68 Allotments. Of the approximately 60 allotments that have riparian areas, at least 47 are not meeting S&Gs for riparian/water issues due to current livestock management; of approximately 73 allotments, 43 are not meeting the Standard for upland vegetation. In many cases, performance under Standard 8 tracks these results. Despite of the efforts of BLM and the ranch operators, resource conditions are not good. Some of these allotments have been used in the spring year after year; some have had summer-long riparian use every year, some are severely impaired from historical use. As Field Manager for the Owyhees, I have a steward's responsibility to further the health and resilience of this landscape. Adding to these considerations, we live in a time of uncertainty. Climate change presents an uncertainty whose impacts we cannot clearly discern. Nonetheless, as stewards of the land, we must factor into our decisions a consideration of how best to promote resiliency on the landscape. Add to this the uncertainty associated with the BLM's organizational capacity to manage this landscape: in a time of budget cutting, staff reductions, and reduced revenues, land management decisions must factor in considerations of the level of on-the-ground management we can reasonably expect to accomplish. These compelling factors create the need to develop grazing management on individual allotments that combines the greatest assurance of ecological resilience with the most likely anticipated organizational ability, and which does so on a landscape level. My challenge is this: looking out at the field office, what intensity of management can I reasonably expect to accomplish, knowing that when BLM selects an alternative that requires intensive management from BLM (i.e.--continuous and intensive monitoring or other workloads that need to occur every year) it also accepts the risk and responsibility of that system's failure which could include a decreasing ecological health for the allotment at issue. My responsibility and challenge here is to make decisions that can be successfully implemented by BLM over the long term and that will lead to success, defined as healthy, sustainable resource conditions and predictability for ranch operators.

expected to be slow and uncertain. However, grazing early in the year and removing livestock prior to the critical growing season (May 1–June 30), along with one in three years of rest, will provide an opportunity for native plants to recover and mature into the summer potentially improving composition and structure. Although the benefits may be limited, the compound opportunity for native remnant plants to annually utilize the critical growth season without livestock pressure will potentially improve habitat cover and forage value for sage-grouse and other sagebrush steppe species.

Pastures 2 and 3 are managed as native plant communities and are not providing adequate upland and sage-grouse habitat conditions because of historical livestock grazing impacts and presence of exotic species. Under Alternative 3, pasture 2 will be rested 1 of 3 years and will be used in April 2 of 3 years (Table 2). Pasture 3 will be rested 1 of 3 years and will be used in May 2 of 3 years. By restricting grazing to these timeframes and by incorporating one year of rest in each of these two pastures, an opportunity for improved plant vigor and health and improved habitat composition and structure will be provided. As upland habitat conditions improve, sage-grouse and other sagebrush steppe species will benefit by the additional security and nesting cover and increased forage. Implementation of this alternative is an improvement from Alternative 1 and will progress these pastures toward meeting Standard 8<sup>18</sup>.

Pasture 4 is mostly private and pasture 5 is mostly State land; both pastures have small amounts of BLM lands. These pastures are managed as native plant communities and were found to be providing minimum upland and sage-grouse habitat conditions. Alternative 3 is proposing to annually graze these pastures year-round. Because these pastures are identified as meeting Standard 8, it can be expected that by implementing Alternative 3, current conditions will be maintained.

Overall, Alternative 3 provides pasture 1 an opportunity for improvement in habitat composition and structure and improved cover and forage elements for sage-grouse, however, progress will be slow and uncertain due to the dominance and competitive advantage of exotic species. Pastures 2 and 3 will show improvement in habitat composition and structure and current conditions in pastures 4 and 5 will, at a minimum, be maintained. Although improvement in pastures 2 and 3 are expected and current conditions in pastures 4 and 5 will be maintained, this allotment will not progress toward meeting Standard 8 and ORMP objectives because of the dominance of exotic species in pasture 1 that will fail to provide adequate cover and forage conditions for sage-grouse and other shrub steppe species.

2. *Riparian vegetation conditions:* Standards 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands) and 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain) do not apply. No riparian vegetation occurs in the Gluch FFR Allotment and therefore this issue does not apply to the allotment.
3. *Fish and amphibian habitat conditions:* Standards 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands) and 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain) do not apply. No riparian vegetation occurs in the Gluch FFR Allotment and therefore this issue does not apply to the allotment.

---

<sup>18</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 3.3.11.2.3.3

4. *Upland vegetation and watershed conditions:* Rangeland Health Standard 4 is not being met in pastures 2 and 3 but is met in pastures 4 and 5 of the Gluch FFR Allotment; pasture 1 is evaluated under Standard 6, which it is failing. Implementation of Alternative 3 will improve current conditions in pastures 2 and 3 of the Gluch FFR Allotment as discussed below. Pasture 1 will make slight progress toward meeting Standard 6 and ORMP objectives. This alternative will maintain or improve pastures 4 and 5, which are already meeting standards and ORMP objectives for vegetation communities.

The permitted use will be reduced from 105 to 75 AUMs, a reduction of 29%. Alternative 3 prescribes April and May grazing in pastures 2 and 3, respectively, and rest one in three years (Table 2); January through April grazing in pasture 1 and rest one in three years; and year-long grazing in pastures 4 and 5 with maximum of 300 head of cattle and 75 AUMs. Increased years of deferment or rest and reduction of 29 percent AUMs in a ten-year permit, as compared to the current condition, will allow opportunity to move toward meeting vegetation standards and ORMP objectives for vegetation health and conditions in pastures 2 and 3. Slight improvement in native vegetation health and vigor to the native plant communities is expected to occur in pasture 1 due to the distribution and competitive advantage of invasive species over native species under Alternative 3. Vegetation resources not meeting ORMP vegetation management objectives would have the opportunity to improve unsatisfactory vegetation or maintain satisfactory vegetation health and condition compared to Alternatives 1 and 2.

Watershed conditions will improve in pastures 1, 2, and 3 because they will be rested one of every three years. Deferment of grazing will occur in pastures 1 and 2 year; grazing in these pastures will not occur during the critical growth period in any year, when soils are moist and most vulnerable to physical impacts. Grazing in pasture 3 will occur in May, when soils are more likely to be moist, although the pasture will now be rested one of three years, allowing recovery. Overall, physical impacts in the allotment during the wettest period will be reduced, providing an opportunity for increased soil stability due to the ability of native plant communities to remain healthy, vigorous, and productive during active growth. Subsequently, the reduced spring and critical-growth-period grazing will result in a reduction of active AUMs that will benefit soils by limiting physical impacts from hoof action. Progress toward maintaining, meeting, and improving soil and hydrologic function proposed with Alternative 3 are therefore expected to be better compared with Alternatives 1 and 2, though not as rapid as Alternatives 4 and 5.

5. *Special status plant species:* No special status plant species occur in the Gluch FFR Allotment and therefore this issue does not apply to the allotment.
6. *Noxious and invasive weeds:* In Idaho, the BLM works closely with the Idaho Department of Agriculture, Tribal governments, and county governments to combat noxious weeds. Cooperative weed management arrangements utilize local, state and Federal resources to inventory and treat weed infestations on both public and private lands. Populations are recorded, treated, monitored, and retreated as their presence is known. Noxious weeds are not known to exist in the Gluch FFR Allotment although undiscovered noxious weeds may exist. Grazing of livestock includes the continued risk of introducing noxious weeds and invasive species to public lands and potential for spread of existing incursions. The presence of cheatgrass, and other invasive species was identified in the rangeland health

assessments, evaluations, and determinations for the Gluch FFR Allotment and portions of the allotment are dominated by invasive annual grasses.

Livestock may spread weeds and invasive species through transport on fur and on hoofs, as well as through ingestion and later defecation of viable seeds. This transport can occur from sources used prior to scheduled use of public land, between sites within the allotment, or to locations outside the allotment at the end of the grazing season. Soil disturbance resulting from livestock concentration adjacent to water sources, salting areas, and routes of travel provides sites for establishment of weeds and invasive species. The level of risk associated with implementation of each of the alternatives considered in the EA is proportional to the number of livestock authorized to graze within the allotment and the concentration of soil disturbance. Risks of weed and invasive species introduction and spread will be greater, with significantly higher cattle numbers as vectors of seed movement and as soil disturbance is increased, while those risks associated with authorized livestock grazing would be eliminated in the no-grazing alternative. Alternative 3 will have fewer livestock numbers than Alternatives 1 and 2 would continue to authorize livestock grazing. As a result, livestock as a vector of seed dissemination and soils disturbance would be minimized as compared to these alternatives.

7. *Livestock trailing:* No new trailing routes were proposed during the scoping process, and therefore this issue does not apply to the allotment.
8. *Socioeconomic impacts:* During the scoping process, concerns were raised about the impacts of modifications or reductions in grazing to regional socio-economic activity. I share this concern, and have taken these concerns into consideration in making my decision; however, my primary obligation is to ensure that the new grazing permit(s) protects resources in a manner consistent with the BLM's obligations under the Idaho S&Gs and the ORMP. I also recognize that alternating rest in pastures 1-3 every 1 in 3 years may require additional labor or feeding costs.

Over the long term, your grazing operation relies upon maintenance of the natural resources, including productive and healthy rangelands capable of supplying a reliable forage base. Selection of an alternative based in unsustainable grazing practices that do not meet rangeland health standards would result in less reliable amounts of forage over the long-term, in addition to reducing economic opportunities from ecosystem services and alternate socio-economic resources, such as recreation, that rely on healthy, functional and aesthetically pleasing open spaces and wildlife habitats.

I have considered the range of issues at the allotment level, including the social and economic impacts that result from modifying grazing authorizations, and have avoided any reduction in grazing use levels in your allotment where current levels are compatible with meeting rangeland health standards and ORMP objectives. It is my proposed decision to implement Alternative 3 and its design to meet resource function and sustainability.

9. *Wildfire fuels:* During the NEPA process, some asked the BLM to consider using grazing to limit wildfire. The BLM has considered the issue and determined that it would be theoretically possible to graze livestock at the landscape scale to reduce fire behavior or use targeted grazing to create fuel breaks on the Morgan Group allotments with the hope that

livestock grazing would help control the spread of large wildfires in the area. However, the resource costs associated with this strategy are such that I have decided against it. Ultimately, implementation of Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment will not significantly alter fire behavior during extreme conditions or the BLM's ability to fight wildfire in the area.

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

While targeted grazing may have potential application to develop and maintain strategic fire breaks, its application needs to be considered in combination with other fuels management tools. In addition, targeted grazing to create fire breaks would alter the role of permit renewal. Grazing authorized by permit renewal would provide authorization to use public land resources, while fuels management changes the objective to manipulate vegetation attributes. Targeted grazing to establish fuel breaks, as well as landscape-scale grazing to reduce fuels, are outside the purpose and need of the EA that analyzes the consequences of implementing livestock management practices identified in the applications and alternatives for grazing permit renewal authorizing cattle grazing to meet rangeland health standards and resource management objectives.<sup>19</sup>

10. *Climate Change:* Climate change is another factor I considered in building my decision around Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment. Climate change does not have a clear cause-and effect-relationship with the applicant's proposed action or alternatives. It is currently beyond the scope of existing science to identify a specific source of greenhouse gas emissions or sequestration and designate it as the cause of specific climate or resource impacts at a specific location. Additionally, the proposed action and alternatives, when implemented, would not have a clear, measurable cause-and-effect relationship to climate change because the available science cannot identify a specific source of greenhouse gas emissions such as those from livestock grazing and tie it to a specific amount or type of changes in climate.

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

---

<sup>19</sup> For more detailed discussion, please refer to EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA Section 2.3.

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. It is clear that the Gluch FFR Allotment is impaired from past use, and while repair and restoration will only occur in the long term, some change can be anticipated from the proposed reductions in AUMs and season of use. The opportunity to provide resistance and resilience within native perennial vegetation communities is within the scope of this decision. The livestock management actions to be taken combine seasons, intensities, and durations of livestock use to promote long-term plant health and vigor. Assuming that climate change affects the arid landscapes in the long-term, the native plant communities on this allotment will be better armed to survive such changes.

### ***Additional Rationale***

A tremendous amount of thought and effort went into developing grazing management responsive to the Gluch FFR Allotment's specific resource needs, geography, and size. These considerations were made to address all concerns and requirements mandated to the BLM. Each allotment of the Morgan Group has different ecology and management capability due to the size and location/topography that result in various issues and priorities. Attempts to coordinate grazing throughout the entire allotment were made by me and my staff with you and the interested public. I recognize the difficulty of not only providing for the needs of the resources, but also the needs and capability that you, the permittee have. I believe I have balanced those needs of the resource and your capabilities with the information I have to the extent possible.

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 these allotments. In selecting Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment, rather than Alternative 5, I especially considered (1) BLM's ability to meet resource objectives using the selected Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment, (2) the impact of implementation of these alternatives on the your operations and on regional economic activity, (3) the allotments' susceptibility to significant improvement under Alternative 5, and (4) your past performance under previous permits. As a reminder, BLM land may not be used for feeding; see 43 C.F.R. §4140.1 (a)(3). By implementing Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment, the resource issues identified will be addressed. Declining to authorize grazing for a ten-year period is not the management decision most appropriate at this time in light of these factors.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

A finding of no significant impact (FONSI) was signed on November 20, 2013 and concluded that the proposed decision to implement Alternative 3 is not a major federal action that will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. That finding was based on the context and intensity of impacts organized around the ten significance criteria described at 40 CFR § 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. A copy of the FONSI for EA number DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2013-0023-EA is available on the web at:

[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa\\_register/owyhee\\_grazing\\_group/grazing\\_permit\\_renewal3.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/owyhee_grazing_group/grazing_permit_renewal3.html)

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is my decision to select Alternative 3 for the Gluch FFR Allotment over other alternatives because livestock management practices under this selection best meets the ORMP objectives allotment-wide and the Idaho S&Gs consistent with the projected ability of BLM to oversee grazing on these allotments over the next ten years.

On the Gluch FFR Allotment, Alternatives 1 and 2 would implement livestock management practices that would result in a continued failure to meet objectives and standards related to Watersheds, Exotic Plant Communities, Other Than Seedings, and Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals. Implementation of Alternative 3 will allow for recovery and attainment where possible of these Standards in the Gluch FFR Allotment.

Alternative 5 would limit the economic activity of your livestock operation in Owyhee County and southwest Idaho, a region where livestock production and agriculture is a large portion of the economy. That, in conjunction with current resource conditions and the improvement anticipated by implementation of the alternatives, as supplemented, lead me to believe elimination of livestock grazing from the Gluch FFR Allotment is unnecessary at this point.

### **Authority**

The authorities under which this decision is being issued include the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as promulgated through Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subpart 4100 Grazing Administration - Exclusive of Alaska (2005). My decision is issued under the following specific regulations:

- 4100.0-8 Land use plans; The ORMP designates the Gluch FFR Allotment as available for livestock grazing;
- 4130.2 Grazing permits or leases. Grazing permits may be issued to qualified applicants on lands designated as available for livestock grazing. Grazing permits shall be issued for a term of 10 years unless the authorized officer determines that a lesser term is in the best interest of sound management;
- 4130.3 Terms and conditions. Grazing permits must specify the terms and conditions that are needed to achieve desired resource conditions, including both mandatory and other terms and conditions; and
- 4180 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. This proposed decision will result in taking appropriate action to modifying existing grazing management in order to make significant progress toward achieving rangeland health.

### **Right of Protest and/or Appeal**

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

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

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

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

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

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in writing 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 persons named in the copies sent to section of this decision in accordance with 43 CFR § 4.421 and on the Office of the Field Solicitor located at the address below in accordance with 43 CFR §§ 4.470(a) and 4.471(b).

Boise Field Solicitor's Office  
University Plaza  
960 Broadway Ave., Suite 400  
Boise, Idaho 83706

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error and otherwise complies with the provisions of 43 CFR § 4.470.

Should you wish to file a petition for a stay, see 43 CFR § 4.471 (a) and (b). In accordance with 43 CFR § 4.471(c), a petition for a stay must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

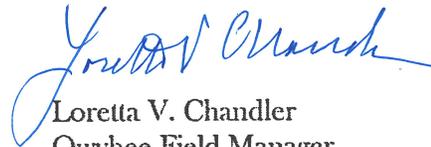
- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer and served in accordance with 43 CFR § 4.471.

Any person named in the decision that receives a copy of a petition for a stay and/or an appeal, see 43 CFR § 4.472(b) for procedures to follow if you wish to respond.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 208-896-5913.

Sincerely,



Loretta V. Chandler  
Owyhee Field Manager

Copies sent to:

- Sec attached Group 5 Mail List

Group 5 Proposed Decision Mail List

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	ZIP	#
Friends of Mustangs	Robert	Amidon	8699 Gantz Ave.	Boise	ID	83709	1
Soil Conservation District	Cindy	Bachman	PO Box 186	Bruneau	ID	83604	2
	Conrad	Bateman	740 Yakima St.	Vale	OR	97918	3
Idaho Dept. of Agriculture	John	Biar	PO Box 790	Boise	ID	83707	4
Boise District Grazing Board	Stan	Boyd	PO Box 2596	Boise	ID	83701	5
	Gene	Bray	5654 W El Gato Ln.	Meridian	ID	83642	6
Colyer Cattle Co.	Ray & Bonnie	Colyer	31001 Colyer Rd.	Bruneau	ID	83604	7
	Senator: Mike	Crapo	251 East Front Street STE 205	Boise	ID	83702	8
Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee	Jim	Desmond	PO Box 38	Murphy	ID	83650	9
Land & Water Fund	William	Eddie	PO Box 1612	Boise	ID	83701	10
Western Watershed Projects	Katie	Fite	PO Box 2863	Boise	ID	83701	11
Gusman Ranch Grazing Association LLC	Forest	Fretwell	27058 Pleasant Valley Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	12
	Chad	Gibson	16770 Agate Ln.	Wilder	ID	83676	131
Resource Advisory Council	Chair: Gene	Gray	2393 Watts Lane	Payette	ID	83661	415
	Russ	Heughins	10370 W Landmark Ct.	Boise	ID	83704	16
Jaca Livestock	Elias	Jaca	817 Blaine Ave.	Nampa	ID	83651	17
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	President: Jim	Jeffress	PO BOX 8224	Boise	ID	82707	18
	Dan	Jordan	30911 Hwy. 78	Oreana	ID	83650	19
	Floyd	Kelly Breach	9674 Hardtrigger Rd.	Given Springs	ID	83641	20
	Kenny	Kershner	PO Box 300	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	21
	Vernon	Kershner	PO Box 38	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	22
	Lloyd	Knight	PO Box 47	Hammett	ID	83627	23
	Congressman: Raul	Labrador	33 E. Broadway Ave STE 251	Meridian	ID	83642	24
The Fund for the Animals, Inc.	Andrea	Lococo	1363 Overbacker	Louisville	KY	40208	25
LU Ranching	Tim	Lowry	PO Box 132	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	26
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation	Herb	Meyr	570 E 16th N.	Mountain Home	ID	83647	27
R&S Enterprise	Ray	Mitchell	265 Millard Rd.	Shoshone	ID	83352	28
	Brett	Nelson	9127 W. Preece St.	Boise	ID	83704	29
	Ramona	Pascoe	PO Box 126	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	30

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	ZIP	#
	Anthony & Brenda	Richards	8935 Whiskey Mtn. Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	31
	Senator: James E.	Risch	350 N 9th Street STE 302	Boise	ID	83702	32
Idaho Conservation League	John	Robison	PO Box 844	Boise	ID	83701	33
	John	Romero	17000 2X Ranch Rd.	Murphy	ID	83650	34
	Bob	Salter	6109 N. River Glenn	Garden City	ID	83714	35
Intermountain Range Consultants	Bob	Schweigert	5700 Dimick Ln.	Winnemucca	NV	89445	36
	Congressman: Mike	Simpson	802 West Bannock STE 600	Boise	ID	83702	37
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	Tribal Chair: Nathan	Small	PO Box 306	Ft. Hall	ID	83203	38
Juniper Mtn. Grazing Association	Michael	Stanford	3581 Cliffs Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	39
	John	Townsend	8306 Road 3.2 NE	Moses Lake	WA	98837	40
Moore Smith Buxton & Turcke	Paul	Turcke	950 W. Bannock, Ste. 520	Boise	ID	83702	41
Natural Resources Defence Council	Johanna	Wald	111 Sutter St., 20 <sup>th</sup> Floor	San Francisco	CA	94104	42
Office of Species Conservation	Cally	Younger	304 N. 8 <sup>th</sup> STE 149	Boise	ID	83702	43
Owyhee County Commissioners			PO Box 128	Murphy	ID	83650	44
Holland & Hart LLP			PO Box 2527	Boise	ID	83701	45
Idaho Cattle Association			PO Box 15397	Boise	ID	83715	46
IDEQ			1410 N. Hilton	Boise	ID	83701	47
Idaho Dept. of Lands			PO Box 83720	Boise	ID	83720	48
Idaho Farm Bureau Fed.			PO Box 167	Boise	ID	83701	49
International Society for the Protection of Horses & Burros	Karen	Sussman	PO Box 55	Lantry	SD	57636	50
Oregon Division State Lands			1645 NE Forbes Rd., Ste. 112	Bend	OR	97701	51
Owyhee Cattlemen's Association			PO Box 400	Marsing	ID	83639	52
Schroeder & Lezamiz Law Offices			PO Box 267	Boise	ID	83701	53
Sierra Club			PO Box 552	Boise	ID	83701	54

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	ZIP	#
State Historic Preservation Office			210 Main St.	Boise	ID	83702	55
State of Nevada Div. of Wildlife			60 Youth Center Rd.	Elko	NV	89801	56
The Nature Conservancy			950 W. Bannock, Ste. 210	Boise	ID	83702	57
The Wilderness Society			950 W. Bannock St., Ste. 605	Boise	ID	83702-5999	58
U.S.F.W.S. Idaho State Office			1387 S. Vinnell Way, Ste. 368	Boise	ID	83709	59
USDA Farm Services			9173 W. Barnes	Boise	ID	83704	60
Western Watershed Projects			PO Box 1770	Hailey	ID	83333	61
Josephine Ranch	Steve	Boren	1050 N. Briar Lane	Bosie	ID	83712	62
Lequerica & Sons Inc.	Tim	Lequerica	PO Box 113	Arock	OR	97902	63
	Robert	Thomas	17947 Shortcut Rd.	Oreana	ID	83650	64
Idaho Fish & Game	Rick	Ward	3101 S. Powerline Rd.	Nampa	ID	83686	65
Ranges West			2410 Little Weiser Rd.	Indian Valley	ID	83632	66
	Craig & Rhonda	Brasher	4401 Edison	Marsin	ID	86369	67
Corral Creek Crazing Assoc.	Tim	Lequerica	P.O. Box 135	Arock	OR	97902	68
LU Ranching	Bill	Lowry	PO Box 132	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	69
	Sandra	Mitchell	PO Box 70001	Boise	ID	83707	70
Paula Ashby	c/o: Scott	Ashby	P.O. Box 247	Bruneau	ID	83604	71
Wintercamp Ranch Trust	Don	Barnhill	P.O. Box 1	Murphy	ID	83650	72
	Dale	Berrett	3540 Hwy 95	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	73
Oregon Natural Desert Association	Brent F	Fenty	50 S. W. Bonds St. #4	Bend	OR	97702	74
	Thomas	Gluch	P.O. Box 257	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	75
Chipmunk Grazing Association	Elias	Jaca	PO Box 175	Marsing	ID	83639	76
	Loetta	Larsen	P.O. Box 156	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	77
Poison Creek Grazing Association LLC	Tim	Mackenzie	PO Box 443	Homedale	ID	83628	78
	Teo & Sarah	Maestresjuan	26613 Pleasvant Valley Rd.	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	79
	WF & Carolyn	Peton	P.O. Box 998	Veneta	OR	97487	80
Morgan Properties	David	Rutan	P.O. Box 277	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	81
06 Livestock	Dennis	Stanford	P.O. Box 167	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	82

Company	Name		Address	City	ST	ZIP	#
South Moutain Grazing Coop	Terry	Warn	P.O. Box 235	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	83
	Phillip & Benjamin	Williams	1807 Danner Loop Rd	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	84
Idaho Dept. of Parks & Recreation	Director		PO Box 83720	Boise	ID	83720	85
Wroten Land & Cattle Co			30314 Juniper Mtn. Rd	Jordan Valley	OR	97910	86
Quintana Ranch LLP	Tim	Quintana	3876 Hwy. 95	Homedale	ID	83628	87