



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Idaho Falls District
Upper Snake Field Office
1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401-2100

In Reply Refer to:
4100

May 13, 2014

PU Ranch LTD.
c/o Chris Lord
2700 N. 3276 W.
Arco, ID 83213

NOTICE OF FIELD MANAGER'S PROPOSED DECISION

Dear Mr. Lord:

Introduction

You were previously notified that we would be initiating an analysis process on an allotment basis to determine the environmental impacts of livestock grazing. An environmental assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act has been completed to determine if reissuance of your grazing permit constitutes a major federal action significantly impacting the human environment. The review of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations has been completed (see attachment). Your allotment was analyzed in DOI-BLM-ID-I010-2014-0017-EA (copy attached). The EA describe a range of alternative actions, the affected environment, and environmental consequences.

Background

Beck Canyon Allotment was evaluated in 2013 to assess whether the allotment was meeting the requirements of the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management (ISRH). In January of 2014, you were sent a copy of the Field Manager's Evaluation of Achieving Standards for Rangeland Health for Beck Canyon Allotment. The Beck Canyon Allotment Evaluation identified that Standards 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 are being met. Standards 3, 5 and 6 are not applicable to the allotment.

Proposed Decision

After careful consideration, it is my Proposed Decision to implement Alternative B of the attached environmental assessment DOI-BLM-ID-I010-2014-0017-EA.

Authorized Use Changes

- 1) Divide the Beck Canyon Allotment into two allotments named Beck Canyon and Lower Beck (see Figure 3 of EA).
- 2) Adjust the Beck Canyon Allotment Boundary in the Lower Pasture to create the Lower Beck Allotment, which will be primarily comprised of private lands. The new Beck Canyon Allotment will then be comprised of the Upper and Middle Pastures.

Authorized Use Changes for Beck Canyon Allotment

- 3) Authorize 140 AUMs of Active Use within the Beck Canyon Allotment.
- 4) BLM Acres in Beck Canyon Allotment will decrease from 1,852 public land acres to 1,418 public land acres.

Authorized Use Changes for Lower Beck Allotment

- 5) Authorize 6 AUMs of Active Use in Lower Beck Allotment.
- 6) Lower Beck Allotment will consist of 434 public land acres and 640 acres of private land.
- 7) Accept 58 AUMs of exchange of use for 640 acres of private land fenced in the allotment.
- 8) The season of use for the Lower Beck Allotment will be 05/01-08/30. A maximum of 60 days will be authorized each year. One year in every three, livestock use will occur after 06/30 to allow for periodic rest for vegetation during the spring growth season.

Projects for Beck Canyon Allotment

- 9) To aid progress toward PFC, four springs (see Figure 4 of EA) will be fenced to restrict livestock access. Each spring is relatively small and enclosure sizes will vary depending on spring size and wildlife needs in the area. Overall the enclosures will enclose approximately 2 - 4 acres. The enclosures will be a four-strand fence consisting of 3 strands of barbed wire spaced at 42 inches, 30 inches and 24 inches from ground level, and 1 smooth wire located 16 inches from ground level. Green metal fence posts will be used between the braces and will be spaced 16.5 feet apart. A wire stay will be placed on the fence wire midway between steel "T" posts. Fence wire will be marked to alert wildlife of the hazard. The springs will be developed and water will be piped to water troughs outside of the enclosure to provide water to livestock and wildlife. Troughs will be floated to allow unused water to remain at the spring source, and each development will be shut off when livestock are not in the allotment to limit impacts to the spring source. Wildlife escape ramps will be

installed and maintained in each trough. Spring sources are located at T 4 N, R 25 E, Sections 29 and 30. Construction activities will be conducted outside of the nesting season (April 1 to June 30) to minimize the potential impacts to migratory birds and/or special status species.

Projects for Lower Beck Allotment

10) To improve livestock distribution in the Lower Beck Allotment the existing spring development will be piped to the northeast, approximately ¾ of a mile. To limit disturbance, the pipeline will be buried within or near the existing road (see Figure 5 of EA). The spring source will be fenced to prevent livestock access to the spring. The enclosure will be approximately 1 acre. In addition, the trough will be floated to allow unused water to remain at the spring source, and the entire system will be shut off when livestock are not in the allotment to limit impacts to the spring source. Wildlife escape ramps will be installed on the trough. The enclosure will be a four-strand fence consisting of 3 strands of barbed wire spaced at 42 inches, 30 inches and 24 inches from ground level, and 1 smooth wire located 16 inches from ground level. Green metal fence posts will be used between the braces and will be spaced 16.5 feet apart. A wire stay will be placed on the fence wire midway between steel “T” posts. Fence wire will be marked to alert wildlife of the hazard.

For all proposed projects; prior to any ground-disturbing activities, the proposed range improvements will be subject to Section 106 review and any effects to historic properties will be avoided or mitigated through consultation with the Idaho SHPO and affected tribes. Construction activities will also be conducted outside of the nesting season (April 1 to June 30) to minimize the potential impacts to migratory birds and/or special status species.

Grazing Plan for Beck Canyon Allotment

11) The basic schedule for pasture rotation will be as outlined in Table 1. Any changes to the basic schedule will be made through application prior to livestock turnout. The basic schedule will rotate every two years throughout the 10 year permit term. Under this alternative the following livestock management plan will be authorized for the Upper and Middle Pastures of Beck Canyon Allotment:

Table 1. Alternative B; Basic schedule for Beck Canyon Allotment.

Allotment	Year	Livestock Number/Kind	Pasture	Period of Use	Total AUMs
Beck Canyon	1	72 Cattle	Upper	05/01-05/30	71
		72 Cattle	Middle	05/31-06/28	69
	2	72 Cattle	Middle	05/01-05/30	69
		72 Cattle	Upper	05/31-06/28	71

Grazing Plan for Lower Beck Allotment

12) The basic schedule for the Lower Beck Allotment will be as outlined in Table 2. Any changes to the basic schedule will be made through application prior to livestock turnout. The basic schedule will rotate every third year throughout the 10 year permit term.

Table 2. Alternative B; Basic schedule for Lower Beck Allotment.

Lower Beck	1	60 Cattle	05/01-05/31	9	6
Lower Beck	2	60 Cattle	05/01-05/31	9	6
Lower Beck	3	60 Cattle	07/01-07/31	9	6

Mandatory Terms and Conditions

Table 3. Alternative B; Beck Canyon Allotment (#11017) Mandatory Terms and Conditions.

36 Cattle	05/01 to 06/28	100	Active
36 Cattle	05/01 to 06/28	100	Active

Table 4. Alternative B; Beck Canyon Allotment Permitted Use Summary.

140	0	140

Table 5. Alternative B; Lower Beck Allotment Mandatory Terms and Conditions.

Livestock number/kind	Season	%PL	Type Use
30 Cattle	05/01 to 08/30*	9	Adaptive

* A maximum of 60 days will be authorized each year. One year in every three, livestock use will occur after 06/30 to allow for periodic rest for vegetation during the spring growth season.

Table 6. Alternative B; Lower Beck Allotment Permitted Use Summary.

Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Permitted Use
6	0	6

Other Terms and Conditions

The following other Terms and Conditions will be included as part of the grazing permit in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2.

The following Terms and Conditions will be included as part of the grazing permit under Alternatives B and C in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2.

1. Grazing use must be made in accordance with the grazing management guidelines set forth in Permit Renewal for Beck Canyon Allotment.
2. Livestock trailing through the Lower Beck Allotment will be authorized for permittees accessing the Beck Canyon Allotment. Livestock will be actively herded and the duration of trailing will be less than one day.
3. Reasonable management access across the Lower Beck Allotment will be provided to the operators of the Beck Canyon Allotment.
4. Riparian and Wetland– Physical alterations within spring complexes will not exceed 20% at the end of the growing season and maintain a minimum of 4” riparian stubble height. Woody browse utilization within spring complexes will not exceed 30% at the end of the growing season.
5. Distribution of livestock salt and mineral supplements shall be at least ¼ mile away from the nearest water source.
6. In connection with allotment operations under this authorization, if any human remains, cultural, archaeological, historical, paleontological or scientific objects and sites are discovered, the permittee shall stop operations in the immediate area of the discovery, protect such resources and immediately notify the BLM Authorized Officer (AO) of the discovery. The immediate area of the discovery must be protected until the operator is notified to resume by the AO.
7. The allotment(s) listed on this grazing permit is subject to requirements 43 CFR subpart 4180 – Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. This permit shall be modified, if necessary, to meet the requirements upon completion of a standards and guidelines assessment and determination as scheduled by the authorized officer.
8. Range improvements must be maintained to BLM standards by the turnout dates for each allotment on this permit. All livestock water troughs must have a functional wildlife escape ramp and be appropriately floated. Installation and maintenance of wildlife escape ramps are the responsibility of the permittee.
9. Upland trend studies will be conducted in the uplands using the step point method in. Long term trend studies will be conducted using the ecological site inventory method.
10. Average livestock utilization will be no more than 50% of the annual growth of available native forage species.
11. The permittee shall provide reasonable administrative access across private land to the BLM for the orderly management and protection of the public lands.
12. A certified actual use report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.

13. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotment are closed to all domestic livestock grazing use.

Rationale

This decision is based on the findings of the interdisciplinary team on the evaluations, EA # DOI-BLM-ID-I010-2014-0017-EA, and monitoring studies. The EA considered a wide range of alternatives.

Alternative A, also known as the no action alternative, would not implement changes in current management. Under Alternative A, the allotment would continue to provide suitable habitats to maintain viable populations of native wildlife species, including special status species. However, some riparian areas would not be expected to make progress toward meeting standards. Additionally under Alternative A, there would be no impact on economic or social values. Alternative B, will adjust the existing permits by increasing total permitted use, divide the allotment and create a new authorization for the new Lower Beck Allotment. Alternative B will continue to meet standards and will allow for certain riparian areas to improve to a greater extent than Alternative A. Some cost associated with maintenance of new and existing projects would be incurred as a result of Alternative B, but these costs would be partially offset by increases in total permitted use. Alternative C would be very similar to Alternative B, except for the proposed allotment boundary fence that would be used to divide the Lower Pasture. Alternative C would provide for improvements in riparian areas and for all other applicable standards to be maintained. The costs associated with building and maintaining the new allotment boundary fence would be greater under Alternative C than costs in Alternative B. Alternative D, which is the no grazing alternative, would remove livestock grazing in Beck Canyon Allotment for the next 10 years. Alternative D would continue to meet standards and would provide the greatest likelihood of maintaining the standards. Economic and social impacts would be the greatest under Alternative D compared to the other alternatives.

Implementation of the annual grazing authorization terms and conditions and the grazing management guidelines outlined in Alternative B will help ensure that rangeland Standards 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 continue to be met in Beck Canyon Allotment and new Lower Beck Allotment. This decision is in conformance with the Big Lost Management Framework Plan (1983).

Alternative B will divide the Beck Canyon Allotment into two allotments; Beck Canyon and Lower Beck. Beck Canyon will be comprised of the Middle and Upper Pastures and Lower Beck will be created from existing fencing currently found in the Lower Pasture. A new authorization will be granted to Camille Babcock, the adjacent landowner to utilize the Lower Beck Allotment. Separation of the Beck Canyon and Lower Beck Canyon Allotments will provide for more orderly administration of public lands within those areas.

Livestock utilization will slightly increase in each pasture under Alternative B. Use in the Upper and Middle Pastures will increase from 128 AUMs to 140 AUMs. The stocking rate will increase from 11 acres/AUM to 10 acres/AUM. Livestock use will increase by 6 BLM AUMs in the Lower Beck Allotment and 58 AUMs for forage produced on private lands. The stocking

rate for public lands within the Lower Beck Allotment will be 73 acres/AUM. Utilization data indicates light use is being made in the Upper and Middle Pastures. The increase of 6 AUMs per pasture will equate to 6 additional cattle making use of the Upper and Middle Pastures each year. Given the light use levels documented the additional use will not exceed utilization objectives and vegetation will continue to meet standards. A conservative stocking rate for public lands in the new Lower Beck Allotment will also ensure that vegetation is vigorous and productive in that area. Previous management plans allotted as many as 23 AUMs for public lands in the new Lower Beck Allotment. Direct removal of vegetation and other impacts associated with livestock grazing will increase throughout the Beck Canyon and Lower Beck Allotments as a result of Alternative B. However, the data available indicates that standards will continue to be met even with the increase.

Alternative B will provide a grazing management plan for the former Lower Pasture (to become the Lower Beck Allotment). Creating the new authorization in the Lower Beck Allotment will improve management in the area. The grazing plan for the adjusted Beck Canyon Allotment will allow for frequent rotation, which will ensure that habitats not used during the same period on a continual basis.

The season of use (5/1-8/30) for the Lower Beck Allotment provides flexibility for management in the area, but limits the number of days to 60 each year. It also requires that livestock use is made after 06/30 once in every three years. This will provide periodic rest for vegetation in the area during the spring growth period allowing vegetation to grow and reproduce without disturbance from livestock.

The five proposed exclosures will benefit riparian habitats, wildlife and livestock management once they are completed. This will allow vegetation to complete growth and reproduction phases without disturbance by grazing livestock. Vegetation may still be susceptible to use by grazing/browsing wildlife, but the extent of this disturbance would be expected to be minimal. The proposed troughs outside of the exclosures will concentrate livestock impacts around the troughs rather than spread out across the expanse of riparian areas. The area of impact around each trough is estimated to be 0.5 acres (less than 1% of the allotment) where vegetation is most highly impacted.

The proposal to pipe water to a new location in the Lower Beck Allotment will move associated impacts to the area of the new trough. Similar to the spring exclosure troughs, impacts to vegetation will be concentrated around the trough (approximately 0.5 acres). The new trough will distribute livestock towards private lands and decrease use of public lands in the area. Vegetation on public lands in the Lower Beck Allotment will benefit from the pipeline and trough, because livestock use will be more concentrated on private lands.

The projects proposed are not required for standards to be met; standards are already met within the allotment. However, native habitats will benefit from the proposals by improvement in livestock distribution and enhancing management ability in the area. Riparian vegetation will greatly benefit from the spring exclosures.

Authority

The authority under which this decision is made is found within the following 43 CFR citations:

- 4110.2-2 - Specifying permitted use
- 4110.3 - Changes in permitted use
- 4130.2 - Grazing permits or leases
- 4130.3 - Terms and conditions
- 4130.3-1 - Mandatory terms and conditions
- 4130.3-2 - Other terms and conditions
- 4130.3-3 - Modification of permits or leases
- 4180 - Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and S&G for Grazing Administration

Appeal Procedures

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other interested public may protest a proposed decision under Sec. 43 CFR 4160.1 and 4160.2, in person or in writing to me at the address shown above within 15 days after receipt of such decision. The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) as to 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 protests 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 accordance with 43 CFR 4.470 and 4160.4. 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. The person/party must also serve a copy of the appeal on the office of the Solicitor, Boise Field Solicitors Office, University Plaza, 960 Broadway Avenue, Suite 400, Boise, ID 83706 and person(s) named [43 CFR 4.421(h)] in the Copies sent to: section of this decision.

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 serviced 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 either Jordan Hennefer or myself at 524-7500.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeremy Casterson

Jeremy Casterson
Field Manager
Upper Snake Field Office

Enclosure: DOI-BLM-ID-I010-2014-0017-EA
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Copies sent to:

Idaho Department of Agriculture, 2270 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, ID 83707
Idaho Department of Fish and Game, 4279 Commerce Circle, Idaho Falls, ID 83401
Northwest Band of the Shoshoni Nation, 505 Pershing Suite 200, Pocatello, ID 83204
Chairman, Land Use, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, P.O. Box 306, Pocatello, ID 83203
Chairman, Tribal Business, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, P.O. Box 306, Pocatello, ID 83203
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Idaho Field Office, 4425 Burley Drive, Suite A
Chubbuck, ID 83202
Western Watersheds Project, P.O. Box 1770, Hailey, ID 83333
Camille C. Babcock, 2771 N 3325 W, Moore, ID 83255
James S. Babcock, Rt. 1, Box 81, Moore, ID 83255
Reuben H. or Marjorie Babcock, Rt. 1, Box 14, Moore, ID 83255
PU Ranch, c/o Chris Lord, 2700 N 3276 W, Arco, ID 83213
David Keele, 4608 Cherry Creek Rd., Moore, ID 83255