

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

Sugarloaf Allotment Season of Use Change

Bureau of Land Management Cottonwood Field Office

DOI-BLM-ID-C020-2015-0007-EA

Introduction

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to change the season of use and renew the lease for a livestock grazing allotment in Idaho County, ID. Federal actions such as this one must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will also use this public participation opportunity under the NEPA to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470(f)) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

Background

The Cottonwood Field Office received a request to change the grazing schedule for the BLM's Sugarloaf Allotment #36244 (Map 1 *Sugarloaf Allotment*) from the livestock grazing lessee. The lessee requested to change the schedule from the current four month summer grazing period to a spring and fall use period totaling two and one-half months with slightly more livestock numbers. The BLM will analyze the environmental effects of these changes in an environmental assessment. In the end, the BLM intends to issue a fully processed ten year grazing lease for the allotment. The Sugarloaf Allotment contains 350 acres of BLM managed land in five scattered parcels grazed in common with the lessee's private lands. The allotment is located in the South Fork Clearwater River Sub-basin east of Grangeville, Idaho, in Section 7, 8, and 18, T. 30 N., R. 4 E., B.M. The allotment was achieving Idaho Standards for

Rangeland Health when assessed in 2001. Data collected during this new analysis will be utilized to update the rangeland health assessment and assure the selected alternative will continue to allow achievement of the rangeland health standards.

Purpose and Need for Action

The BLM is responding to a request by a lessee to change the season of use and livestock numbers for the Sugarloaf Allotment.

The BLM is administering livestock grazing on public lands as described in CFR; Title 43; Part 4100 – Grazing Administration on an allotment identified as available for grazing use in the Cottonwood Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on December 21, 2009.

Authorized grazing must continue to allow achievement of the Idaho Rangeland Health Standards.

Preliminary Issues

- 1) How will the proposed action affect water quality, aquatic habitats, and special status fish?
- 2) How will the proposed action affect wildlife habitats and special status wildlife species?
- 3) Will the proposed action allow healthy native plant communities, including special status plants, to thrive?
- 4) Will the proposed action result in the introduction or spread of invasive species or noxious weeds?

Proposed Action and Preliminary Alternatives

Alternative A (Proposed Action) – Requested season of use: The BLM would renew the grazing lease for 10 years with the following specifications.

Livestock		Period		%PL*	AUM's
Number	Kind	Begin	End		
35	Cattle	05/01	05/15	29	5
40	Cattle	10/01	11/30	29	24

*percent public land – amount of forage estimated to come from public lands in mixed ownership allotments.

Alternative B – No Grazing: The BLM would terminate the current lease and not issue a new one.

Alternative C (No Action) – Continue current grazing authorization: The BLM would renew the current grazing lease for ten years with no changes. The current lease authorizes:

Livestock		Period		%PL	AUM's
Number	Kind	Begin	End		
25	Cattle	04/15	08/15	29	29

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by August 24, 2015 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Comments sent electronically should be sent to blm_id_sugarloaf@blm.gov with the title of this project in the subject line. Written comments may be sent to the primary contact listed below. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for this project is Lynn Danly, Natural Resource Specialist, Cottonwood Field Office, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood, Idaho 83522, Phone (208) 962-3797.

Attachments

Map 1 – Sugarloaf Allotment

