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October 9, 2015

Steven & Kathie Wilkie
1801 Bennett Ave.
Burley, ID 83318

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Station Allotment Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal
Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2015-0027-EA**

Dear Mr. Wilkie:

Introduction

The Station Allotment had field assessments conducted for meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health in 2003. The allotment field assessment was sent to the permit holder, State Agencies having responsibility for managing land or resources, and the interested public on September 16, 2004 requesting comments and any additional information. One public comment was received for the Station Allotment in regards to the Rangeland Health Assessment.

A formal determination by the Shoshone Field Manager has been made in regard to the Station Allotment as to whether the Standards for Rangeland Health are being met. The Evaluation and Determination Report completed for the Station Allotment show that under current livestock grazing management, the allotment is meeting two of the three applicable Standards for Rangeland Health, and livestock grazing practices in the allotment are not in conformance with four Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Standards for Rangeland Health that apply to Station Allotment include Standards 1, 5, and 8. Standards that do not apply to the allotment include Standards 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management that the Station Allotment were determined to be out of conformance with are guidelines 4, 9, 12, and 13. Descriptions of these guidelines are:

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.
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.
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.
13. On areas seeded predominantly with non-native plants, use grazing management practices to maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions to achieve healthy rangelands.

The allotment was determined to be out of conformance with the applicable guidelines largely due to the current practice of grazing the allotment each spring beginning on May 1. Changing to a rotation that defers grazing every other year is expected to bring the allotment into conformance with all of the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Plan Conformance and Consistency

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the 1985 Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the September 2015 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I have reviewed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2, documented in the Station Allotment Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment No. BLM-ID-T030-2015-0027-EA. Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents in the project record for this analysis, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. None of the environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Monument RMP.

Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not needed.

My finding of no significant impact in regard to context and intensity is based on the following:

(a) Context. This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27):

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The planning area is limited in size and the activities limited in potential. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

(b) Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.27):

1. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Impacts associated with the livestock grazing permit renewal are discussed in the environmental impacts section of the EA (Section 4.0).

The proposed action is anticipated to have beneficial impacts to the local economy and local ranchers as well as allow the rangeland within the Station Allotment to continue meeting and making progress toward meeting Standards for Rangeland Health in the future.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The proposed activities will not significantly affect public health or safety. The purpose of the proposed action is to allow for livestock grazing while maintaining or improving conditions to meet Standards for Rangeland Health in the Station Allotment. Similar actions in other grazing allotments have not significantly affected public health or safety.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There are no unique historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wild and scenic rivers, Wilderness Study Areas, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern within the Station Allotment.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

None of the impacts are expected to be highly controversial, since the impacts are predominantly beneficial. The Station Allotment is also meeting two of the three applicable Standards for Rangeland Health. The Station Allotment is not meeting Standard 8, however it has been determined that current livestock grazing is not a significant factor.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determinations of the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, and

professional judgment. Potential impacts, as discussed in Section 4.0, are within acceptable limits and they should not deter the Station Allotment from achieving Rangeland Health Standards in the future. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

Neither the proposed action, nor any of the alternatives sets precedent or represent a decision in principle about a future management consideration. Neighboring grazing allotments have had very similar grazing permits completed and no precedent was established under those actions.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The EA analyzes all connected and cumulative actions within the scope of the analysis. The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are considered and disclosed in the EA, in the Cumulative Effects Analysis (Section 4.5). The cumulative impacts for the Proposed Action are negligible and not significant.

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It also will not cause loss or destruction of significant, cultural, or historical resources.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

Plants: No special status plant species or their habitat have been documented or are known to occur in the allotment.

Animals: The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists two Threatened wildlife species: the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) and Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). Some yellow-billed cuckoo habitat occurs in the Shoshone Field Office boundary and incidental sightings have occurred as well. However, none of the field office is designated as lynx critical habitat. The suspected very low, incidental use level of the project area by the species is expected to result in “No Effect” to the continued existence of the yellow-billed cuckoo and the Canada lynx.

The USFWS recently completed a status review to list the Greater sage-grouse (sage-grouse) as Threatened or Endangered species under the ESA. In 2010 the USFWS determined that listing the sage-grouse was warranted for listing under ESA, but precluded by higher priority

listing actions. This decision classified sage-grouse as a Candidate species under the ESA. In a subsequent settlement agreement, FWS was directed by the court to make a final listing determination by September 30, 2015. In light of the 2010 “warranted but precluded” finding, and USFWS conclusion that BLM and USFS land use plans were lacking in adequate regulatory mechanisms to conserve sage-grouse, the BLM and USFS embarked on an effort to amend land use plans across most of the west to incorporate land use allocations and other measures designed to conserve sage-grouse. A Record of Decision for these amendments was signed on September 21, 2015. After a thorough analysis of the best available scientific information, the FWS on September 22, 2015 determined that the bird does not face the risk of extinction now or in the foreseeable future and therefore does not need protection under the ESA. The sage-grouse will continue to be managed as a BLM Sensitive Species in Idaho.

Sage-grouse are found primarily in habitats dominated by sagebrush, particularly big sagebrush; however they also utilize other sagebrush communities or patches as well, including low sagebrush, black sagebrush, and others for foraging. Sage-grouse require an extensive landscape of sagebrush of varying densities and heights, high levels of adequate perennial grass cover (preferably native) for nesting, and areas rich in forbs and insects during nesting and brood rearing (ISAC 2006). Productive nesting habitat requirements include a sagebrush canopy cover of 15 - 25%, sagebrush heights of 30 - 80 cm, and an average grass and forb cover height of 18 cm (Connelly et al. 2000, p. 977), among other factors. Summer brood rearing habitat includes riparian areas and wet meadows. Sage-grouse depend entirely on sagebrush during the winter for food and cover. The following are the seasonal sage-grouse use periods: (1) breeding season (lekking, nesting, early brood-rearing) [March 1 to June 15]; (2) late brood-rearing season [July to October]; (3) winter season [November to March] (BLM 2015).

The Station Allotment is not classified as sage-grouse habitat, but occurs adjacent to preliminary general habitat and priority habitat. There are four active sage-grouse leks and one historic lek within 10 miles of the allotment (IDFG 2014a). The closest active sage-grouse lek is located approximately seven miles from the allotment (BLM 2003, IDFG 2014a). Sage-grouse inhabiting this portion of the landscape are considered to be part of the “North Side Snake ID” subpopulation, of the “Snake, Salmon, and Beaverhead” population (Connelly et al. 2004). Similar to estimates of population trends for sage-grouse range-wide, the population trend for the “North Side Snake ID” subpopulation is also decreasing (Connelly et al. 2004).

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The actions in this Environmental Assessment do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or any requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

/s/ Codie Martin
Codie Martin, Shoshone Field Manager

10/9/2015
Date