



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Spokane District  
Wenatchee Field Office  
915 Walla Walla Avenue  
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## SCOPING/INFORMATION NOTICE

### Duffy Creek Restoration and Grazing Allotment Management Environmental Assessment

April 28, 2015

Dear Lessee/Interested Public:

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) preliminary proposal to:

Consider revising the existing Duffy Creek allotment management plan (AMP); consider renewing the Duffy Creek allotment grazing authorization (No. 3600779); and consider treatments to maintain and improve upland and riparian land health in the Duffy Creek grazing allotment and adjacent unleased BLM-administered lands to the west (action area), including habitat for sensitive species.

The purpose of this scoping notice is to inform interested and potentially affected parties of the preliminary proposal and to solicit comments. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to determine potential environmental consequences. Comments we receive in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives regarding the proposed action.

#### **Action Area Description**

The action area is located approximately eight miles south of Waterville, Washington in south-central Douglas County. The action area is within the Douglas Creek Watershed (fifth-field hydrological unit) and includes the Duffy Creek allotment and adjacent unleased BLM-administered lands (see attached map). The legal description of the action area is:

Portions of T24N R22E Sections 34 & 36; T24N R23E Section 31; T23N R22E Sections 1-3, 11, 12 & 14; T23N R23E Sections 6-8, 17, 18 & 20.

#### **Background**

The BLM Wenatchee Field Office authorizes livestock grazing as a component of its multiple-use program under the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq.), and to provide for the sustainability of the western livestock industry and communities dependent upon productive, healthy, public rangelands under Federal Grazing Administration regulations (43 CFR 4100). The Spokane District Resource Management Plan (RMP) directs BLM to continue to authorize grazing permits and to maintain or revise management systems on “I (Improve)” category allotments, like the Duffy Creek allotment, to maintain or improve rangeland health.

The BLM currently authorizes 708 animal unit months (AUMs) of grazing on approximately 5,630 acres of public land within the Duffy Creek allotment. The Duffy Creek AMP, signed in 1999, implemented a rotational grazing system and included improvements such as fencing, water developments, and an enclosure around the creek bottom to keep livestock out of the riparian area. The BLM recently received an application to renew the current grazing authorization and to repair or install new water developments in order to improve livestock distribution. The current authorization permits seasonal grazing of 105 cattle rotating through the allotment’s eight pastures from April 15th to November 10th.

The BLM completed a land health evaluation and determination of land health standards for the Douglas Creek Watershed (<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/inventas.php>) in 2014 which included the action area. This evaluation found that BLM-administered lands in the action area were achieving or making significant progress towards achieving all standards. Additionally, during this land health evaluation the BLM identified opportunities to maintain or improve upland and riparian-wetland land health in the action area.

The Record of Decision for the Spokane District BLM’s Resource Management Plan (RMP) directs the BLM to improve habitat conditions in the Douglas Creek Management Area. BLM’s 6840 Manual for Special Status Species directs the BLM to manage sensitive species to promote their conservation and to minimize the likelihood and need for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), a BLM sensitive species, has been identified in the action area.

### **Preliminary Purpose and Need**

One purpose of the action is to address an application to renew the current Duffy Creek allotment grazing authorization. A second purpose of the action is to maintain or improve both upland and riparian health in Duffy Creek allotment and adjacent unleased BLM lands, including habitat for sensitive species.

The need for the action arises from BLM’s requirement to respond to external requests for renewal of grazing authorizations as described in the FLMPA of 1976 (43 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq.), grazing regulations at 43 CFR 4100, and the Taylor Grazing Act (43 U.S.C 315, 1934). Additionally, the Spokane District RMP ROD directs BLM to continue to authorize grazing and to maintain or revise management systems on Improve category allotments (USDI BLM 1987, p. ii).

The need for maintaining or improving upland and riparian health in the action area is to meet federal grazing objectives for promoting healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems (43 CFR 4100.0-2), as outlined in the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180.1) and the Standards for Rangeland Health (BLM 1997). The RMP ROD directs BLM to: a) design vegetation management projects to improve wildlife habitat and to plant shrubs and control noxious weeds in the Douglas Creek Management Area, which includes the action area (USDI BLM 1987, p. 20); and b) preserve, protect, and restore natural functions in riparian and wetland areas (USDI BLM 1987, p. 19).

### **Preliminary Proposed Action**

The BLM is proposing to revise the Duffy Creek AMP and renew the current grazing authorization. Other BLM activities would include shrub-steppe restoration, weed treatments, water developments or improvements, and changes to grazing management to maintain and improve rangeland health including support of shrub-steppe species such as the greater sage grouse.

### **Public Input Needed**

The BLM is seeking input on this proposal. Please submit comments on the preliminary proposed action to the authorized officer, Linda Coates-Markle,

by U.S. Mail at:

Attn: Duffy Creek Restoration and Grazing Allotment Management EA  
915 North Walla Walla Avenue  
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

*OR*

Email at:

BLM\_OR\_WN\_Mail@blm.gov with “Duffy Creek Restoration and Grazing Allotment Management EA” in the subject line.

For all comments submitted, please note whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. If the latter, please identify the organization you are representing.

*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.*

Responses should be postmarked (US Mail) or received (electronic) by **May 28, 2015**.

Comments will be most useful if they provide additional information about the preliminary issues identified above, identify new issues and/or concerns.

This Scoping/Information Notice is also available on the Spokane District BLM's Planning website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/index.php>.

If you have any questions regarding the preliminary proposed action, purpose or need for this project, please contact Chris Sheridan, Restoration Program Coordinator, at 509-665-2118.

/s/ Chris Sheridan (Acting for Linda Coates-Markle)

4/28/2015

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Linda Coates-Markle  
Field Manager

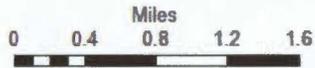
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Enclosures: Action Area Map

**Project Area  
Duffy Creek  
Restoration and Grazing AMP**

**Legend**

- /// Project Area
- Township
- Section
- Bureau of Land Management
- Duffy Creek Allotment
- Duffy Creek



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**Map Area**  
Washington State

