

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Goodrich Management Area Seven Allotments Permit Renewal
Environmental Assessment #DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2011-0057-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) #DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2011-0057-EA (incorporated by reference into this document), would not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA, using the following factors defining significance:

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

The Proposed Action would have beneficial impacts and minimal direct or indirect adverse impacts to watersheds, upland vegetation, wildlife (including sensitive species), water quality, and wetlands and riparian areas over the short and long term. In the long term the proposed action would maintain/improve rangeland health overall within the seven Goodrich allotments (EA sections 3.1-3.3).

The Proposed Action would have beneficial impacts and minimal direct or indirect adverse impacts to grazing management and the overall economy of Adams and Washington Counties, and to the human environment over the short and long term (EA Section 3.4).

The beneficial effects of Proposed Action would be:

1. Present livestock management is meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and for Livestock Grazing Management (Standards) and the proposed changes would ensure Standards would be met over the long term (EA sections 3.1.2.4, 3.2.2.4, and 3.3.2.3).
2. Spring use would be mitigated by accounting for range readiness with a later turnout date and implementing a partial deferment system (two weeks later in the Boyd Individual, Cambridge, Gambрил Individual, Deer Creek, and East Pine Creek allotments and one month later in the West Pine Creek Allotment). Soil moisture would be reduced; therefore, soils would be less susceptible to mechanical damage than under current permitted use (EA Section 3.1.2.4).
3. Periodic deferment in the Boyd Individual (use would occur after the critical growth period in alternate years), Gambрил Individual (use would be deferred by two weeks in alternate years), Deer Creek (spring or fall use would occur, but not both), and East Pine Creek (spring or fall use would occur, but not both) allotments would result in minor long-term increases in perennial grasses and forbs when use occurs primarily outside critical growth periods. Later turnout dates in the Boyd Individual, Cambridge, Deer Creek, and West Pine Creek

- allotments would reduce use during the early portion of the growth period allowing plants to better meet physiological needs (EA Section 3.1.2.4).
4. Low stocking rates and deferred and alternate year grazing would benefit sage-grouse breeding habitat and associated sagebrush steppe special status species by increasing nesting cover and food sources over the long term (EA sections 3.2.2.3 and 3.2.2.4).
 5. Proper functioning riparian conditions in the Armacost Individual Allotment would be maintained because use would occur during periods (e.g., early spring, late fall) when livestock would not be attracted to riparian areas (EA Section 3.3.2.3).

The adverse effects of Proposed Action would be:

1. Temporary minor impacts to soils, vegetation and wildlife due to livestock grazing would occur annually, but allotments would continue to meet Standards.
2. In concentrated use areas, grazing during the late spring nesting period of sage-grouse could reduce cover of perennial grasses (new growth and residual cover) crucial in concealing nests from avian and mammalian predators, subsequently reducing nesting success and fecundity of sage-grouse populations (Gregg et al 1994, DeLong et al. 1995). However, nesting and brood-rearing habitat would be maintained or improved over the long term (EA Section 3.2.2.4).
3. Continued domestic sheep use in the Boyd Individual, Cambridge, and West Pine Creek allotments could adversely affect bighorn sheep population viability in the Potential Population in Hells Canyon PMU. However, the Potential Population scenario assumes the PMU is fully occupied with healthy bighorn sheep. The current PMU population is approximately 10% of carrying capacity, and all animals are considered to carry Animals currently in the PMU are considered to be infected with pneumonia and are not expected to survive or expand. The Lookout Mountain herd, currently considered to be disease free, would be adversely affected by contact with domestic sheep allotments (EA Section 3.2.2.3).

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

No activities authorized under the grazing permit would affect long-term public health or safety.

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

No significant effects on unique geographic characteristics of the area, cultural or historical resources, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas were identified in the EA. With the exception of bighorn sheep (EA sections 3.2.2.3 and 4.2), cultural resources would not be impacted (EA Section 1.6). Wetlands and riparian areas are expected to remain in proper functioning condition (EA Section 3.3). No parklands,

designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, ecologically critical areas or prime farmlands are found with the seven Goodrich Allotments.

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

On May 23, 2011, an EA Scoping Information Package was sent to all affected parties, interested publics, and agencies to inform the public of the proposal and solicit comments regarding the NEPA review of proposed alternatives. Comments received in response to this solicitation were used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action, and to identify alternatives that met the purpose of and need. Two letters were received in response to the scoping package. One response from Idaho Fish and Game expressed concerns about BLM taking the actions necessary to prevent adverse effects from livestock grazing on sensitive wildlife species. The other response was from a permittee that expressed concerns about his proposed alternative to stay with the current livestock grazing management and not convert the type of livestock from sheep to cattle.

A scoping letter was sent to the Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and conservation groups on March 15, 2013 with initial RCT model results corresponding to the Hells Canyon PMU results presented in EA Section 3.2.2.1. The Nez Perce Tribe and conservation groups expressed concern with potential impacts to bighorns sheep herds; however, the IDFG indicated that permitted domestic sheep use was not a significant risk in the near future (1-5 years) to current Idaho bighorn sheep herds.

Domestic sheep grazing near or in bighorn sheep source habitat is highly controversial. “The challenge of balancing species conservation and livestock-based livelihoods is exemplified by the respiratory disease complex affecting North American bighorn sheep. Despite evidence that domestic sheep diseases threaten the persistence of bighorn sheep populations, the economic consequences of restricting domestic sheep grazing have polarized the debate, with some arguing that disease risk posed by domestic sheep has been exaggerated and grazing restrictions should be eased.”¹ There is a “contact hypothesis” that domestic sheep can transmit bacteria to bighorn sheep when they come into contact, which can cause a respiratory disease in bighorn sheep that eventually kills them. Not all scientists believe this hypothesis, but literature strongly supports it and other scientists believe it to be fact (EA Section 3.2.2.1). Impacts to the permittees are undeterminable. These economic impacts, both positive and negative would be negligible as a factor in the Adams and Washington counties economies (EA Section 3.4.2.3).

¹ Clifford, D.L., Schumaker, B.A., Stephenson, T.R., Bleich, V.C., Cahn, M.L., Gonzales, B.J., Boyce, W.M. & Mazet, J.A.K. (2009). “Assessing disease risk at the wildlife-livestock interface: a study of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.” *Biological Conservation* 142: 2559-2568.

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

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Grazing has been the primary use in this area for at least 78 years (Taylor Grazing Act, 1934.) Several published documents (EA Section 5.0) were used to complete the EA and to verify effects from various actions. Different grazing management strategies have been in place throughout the Four Rivers Field Office for decades. This research and decades of grazing management has given the BLM and public good knowledge of anticipated effects from livestock grazing and multiple uses. Therefore the effects of the proposed action on the human environment are not highly uncertain, and do not involve 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.*

The analysis showed how the Cascade Resource Management Plan (CRMP, USDI 1988) would be implemented under the different alternatives (EA sections 2-3.4) and actions proposed are similar to those previously taken in the Four Rivers Field Office. The proposed actions would not establish a precedent for any future actions. Implementation of these decisions would not trigger other actions.

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

The analysis did not identify any known significant cumulative or secondary negative effects (EA sections 3.1.3.4, 3.2.3.4, 3.2.3.5, 3.3.3, and 3.4.3). Outside this project area, additional Rangeland Health Assessments, evaluations, and determinations for Standards have been completed with subsequent grazing decisions implemented or are planned, resulting in changes in livestock management. However, those actions in combination with this decision are not expected to result in cumulatively significant adverse impacts. The proposed actions associated with this EA and with other grazing decisions are expected to maintain/improve current favorable conditions for sensitive wildlife species.

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

The analysis showed that the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to cultural resources that are considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places (EA sections 1.6 and 4.2). The EA noted that cultural resources had been recorded on BLM lands and on private property, but no adverse impacts from grazing actions had been recorded.

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

No threatened or endangered species are known in the seven allotments (EA sections 3.1.1, 3.2.1, and 3.3.1). The BLM manages all Bureau sensitive species to preclude the need for listing with the objective of conservation and, where necessary, mitigation of adverse impacts to species and their habitats (BLM Manual 6840). Greater sage-grouse are considered a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. The EA uses sage-grouse as a representative species for other sensitive upland species (except bighorn sheep). Although minor short-term impacts (reduction in cover, trampling) would occur where grazing use overlaps nesting periods, habitat quality would be maintained at acceptable levels or improve over the long-term because periodic livestock use deferment and low stocking rates would minimize long-term impacts (EA sections 3.2.2.3 and 3.2.2.4). Although BLM Idaho does not consider bighorn sheep a sensitive species, BLM Oregon does. Continued domestic sheep grazing would adversely affect the Potential Population of bighorn sheep (Hells Canyon PMU at carrying capacity), but contact rates (between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep allotments) would not affect long-term viability of Current Herds (EA Section 3.2.2.4). Maintenance of proper functioning stream conditions in the Armacost Individual Allotment would benefit redband trout over the long term (EA Section 3.3.2.3).

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.*

The analysis in the EA shows that the proposed actions are consistent with Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment (EA sections 1.4 and 1.5).

/s/ *Terry A. Humphrey*

1/3/2013

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Date