

**EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION
Achieving the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health
and
Conformance with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**

Field Office: 110-Four Rivers

Determination Date:

Grazing Allotment Name and Number: West Pine Creek Allotment #268

Name of Permittee: Shirts Brothers Sheep #1101262

Introduction

Idaho has eight Standards for Rangeland Health and 20 Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management that are used as management goals for the betterment of the environment, protection of cultural resources, and sustained productivity of the range. These standards and guidelines, which provide the resource measures and guidance needed to ensure healthy, functional rangelands went into effect August 12, 1997 when approved by the Secretary of the Interior. Idaho’s Standards and Guidelines were developed by the 45 members of Idaho’s three Resource Advisory Councils, with the specific intent of providing for the multiple use of public lands. Indicators of rangeland health for the various standards are a list of typical physical and biological factors and processes that can be measured and/or observed. Only indicators appropriate to a particular site are used to provide information necessary to determine the health and condition of public rangelands.

This document is used to determine if rangeland health standards are being achieved and if livestock management is conforming with applicable guidelines. To step through the determination process, this document has been set up to:

- First, discuss activities associated with all the standards such as grazing permit administration, RMP directions, and how the field assessments were conducted.
- Second, evaluate and determine conformance for the applicable standards. This is done through a series of discussion on rangeland health, the changes to rangeland health, livestock management, and rationale statements.
- Third, present the Field Manager rationale statement and conformance determination of the entire allotment to Idaho’s standards for rangeland health.

Permit Administration

Current grazing authorization; expires February 28, 2012:

Permittee	Livestock	Season of Use	Percent Public Land ¹	Grazing Preference		
				Active	Suspended	Total
Shirts Brothers Sheep	4,700 Sheep	04/01 to 06/15	9%	211	0	211

1. Per the grazing regulations, percent public land should be determined by the proportion of livestock forage available on public lands within the allotment compared to the total amount available from both public lands and those land owned or controlled by the permittee. In many cases this percentage was determined on a geographic basis.

The Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) of the RMP indicates there are 1,439 acres of public land within West Pine Creek Allotment. RMP allotment maps show that public land is fenced in with approximately 8,020 acres of private land and 320 acres of lands administered by Idaho Department of Lands. The

permittee has flexibility to manage livestock grazing of the public lands with their private land grazing operation through a term and condition (T&C) of the grazing permit that states “livestock numbers will be coordinated between BLM and the lessee and may vary within the permitted use period, however, AUMs may not be exceeded. Any change to the scheduled use requires prior approval”. Our current data base indicates we have the following range improvement on file:

Range Improvement	Legal Description	Documentation	Maintenance
Weiser Sheep Fence #0858	T14N, R4W, Sec 1, 2, 3	1956 Section 4 Permit	Permittee

West Pine Creek Allotment is in the “custodial” management category with 200 acres of public land in M-2 moderate use goals and guidelines, and the remainder being M-1 moderate use goals and guidelines. Through the RMP, custodial management is defined as management to prevent resource deterioration.

General goals and guidelines for M-1 moderate use areas, as described in the RMP, are to provide production and use of forage, timber, minerals and energy, other consumptive resources and recreation while maintaining or enhancing natural systems. These lands provide wildlife and livestock forage. Management is to maintain or enhance forage production for livestock and wildlife while maintaining site productivity, water quality and stream stability, and providing for other uses.

General goals and guidelines for M-2 moderate use areas, as described in the RMP, indicate that livestock grazing generally will continue where use currently exists. Timber and range management practices will include special measures to protect riparian and other resource values.

The overall RMP objective is to improve soil, vegetation, watershed, wildlife habitat, other resource values and conditions, and to provide vegetation for livestock, wildlife and other consumptive and nonconsumptive uses. Forage production will be balanced with forage consumption to allow scheduled livestock use to occur in a manner that will maintain and/or improve vegetative condition. The range resource management guideline states that grazing preference will be at a level to ensure adequate forage is also available for wildlife and there are sufficient reserves to maintain plant vigor, to stabilize soils, and to provide cover for wildlife and other non-consumptive uses.

Field Assessments

Four rangeland health field assessments were completed July 2, 2002, using the *Interagency Technical Reference 1734-6, Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health*, as the guide. Also used in the rangeland health assessment were the two field assessments completed September 22, 1998 for permit renewal. The Adams and Washington Counties Soil Survey, published by NRCS, was used as a base map from which soil polygons were field checked for correlation to ecological site descriptions. Each ecological site has been combined into broader groupings when discussing applicable rangeland health standards.

Broad Ecological Types

Ecological Type	NRCS Ecological Site		Number of Assessments	Public Lands Assessed	
	New	Old		Percent	Acreage
Loamy 16-22 inch precipitation zone	010XY003I	B10-03 B10-05	4 (one from 1998)	33%	323
Shallow Stony Loam 16-22 inch precipitation zone	010XY026I	B10-26	2 (one from 1998)	19%	189
Forested	Not Applicable		none	48%	482
Totals			6	100%	994

Field mapping showed on-the-ground boundary fences does not match allotment boundaries as described in the RMP. Therefore, assessment data is based on field mapping which showed 994 acres of public land (11 percent), 7,727 acres of private land (86 percent), and 315 acres of lands managed by Idaho Department of Lands (three percent) within the existing fencelines. Since the field assessment was based on existing fencelines, written assessments, evaluations, and determinations reflect what was mapped, not the RMP figures. These percentages indicate composition of public land, and other lands, within the allotment boundary on a geographic basis, which is different from the percent public land term of the grazing permit.

In addition to rangeland health field assessments, the following data was used to evaluate conformance with applicable Standards and Guidelines for this allotment, and can be found in the allotment specific appendix of the April 2005, Goodrich Watershed Assessment (allotments with blocked units of public land):

1. 100-point ground cover transects.
2. Estimated canopy cover of plant groups.
3. Estimated stocking level
4. Actual Grazing Use Report
5. Wildlife habitat field checked during the summer of 2002
6. Coordination with current livestock grazing permittees
7. 1998 field assessments
8. Range Readiness monitoring

Range readiness is an estimation of the appropriate time when livestock grazing may begin without causing permanent damage to soils and vegetation. Range readiness field exams in the general Goodrich area were conducted for three years, following public review of the Goodrich Watershed Assessment. Beginning in 2004, range readiness sites were visited periodically (between mid-March through mid-June) to determine when soils became firm following spring thaw, and when key forage species have reached the stage of growth where livestock grazing would not harm the plant.

Standard 1: Watersheds

Standard doesn't apply

Watersheds provide for the proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, regardless of which box is checked)

To examine watershed indicators, all ecological sites were grouped into a moderately deep to deep soils group and a shallow to very shallow stony soils group. Results from filed assessment are displayed in the following tables, by indicator then by ecological grouping.

Rangeland Health

Moderately Deep to Deep Soils Group

Number of assessments: 4 Represents 33% of public land in the allotment

Indicators	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Rills					4
Water Flow Patterns			1	1	2
Pedestals/Terracettes			2	1	1
Bare Ground			1	1	2
Gullies					4
Wind Erosion					4

Indicators	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion			1	2	1
Soil Surface Loss or Degradation			1	2	1
Compaction Layer				2	2
Plant Community Composition and Distribution Relative to Infiltration and Runoff				1	3
Reproductive Capability of Native Plants				2	2
Total			6	12	26

There are approximate 323 acres of public land within this group. Of the three field assessments taken in 2002, all rangeland health indicators were found to be within the acceptable range of similarity to the reference ecological site description, even with the water flow pattern indicator indicating a moderate departure.

Shallow to Very Shallow Stony Soils Group

Number of assessments: 2 Represents 19% of public land in the allotment

Indicators	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Rills					2
Water Flow Patterns			1		1
Pedestals/Terracettes			1		1
Bare Ground					2
Gullies					2
Wind Erosion					2
Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion				2	
Soil Surface Loss or Degradation				1	1
Compaction Layer					2
Plant Community Composition and Distribution Relative to Infiltration and Runoff				2	
Reproductive Capability of Native Plants					2
Total			2	5	15

There are approximately 189 acres, is in this soils group. The one field assessment taken in 2002 had all indicators within an acceptable range of the potential natural community as described by NRCS.

Timbered Lands

There are approximately 482 acres (48 percent of public lands) of timbered public lands within the allotment boundaries. These lands were not assessed for rangeland health.

Rangeland Health Changes

Field assessments taken in 1998 were completed by following “Version 1” procedures; not all indicators as described in “Version 3” were used. Comments on the field form for the moderately deep to deep soils group described “soil surface movement by water was evident on the fine textured soils”. Comments for the shallow to very shallow stony soils group described “moderate to slight terracing and some short pedestals, along with well defined flow patterns”.

Moderately Deep to Deep Soils Group

Between 1998 and 2002, soil stability has improved.

Shallow to Very Shallow Stony Soils Group

Watershed health improvement has occurred between 1998 and 2002 by documentation of smaller terracettes, fewer pedestals, and reduced flow patterns.

Ground cover was measured through a 100-point transect conducted at the field assessment sites.

Ecological Site	Litter	Standing Dead Vegetation	Bare Ground	Rock/Gravel	Cryptogams	Vascular Plants
Deeper Soils	11%	15%	03%	12%	0	59%
Shallow Soils	05%	36%	02%	32%	05%	20%

“Standing Dead Vegetation” includes both annual and dead perennial plants that have not been broken at the soil surface level. If broken, it becomes a form of litter.

“Cryptogams” are microorganisms (eg., lichens, algae) and non-vascular plants (eg., moss, lichens) that grow on or just below the soil surface.

“Vascular Plants” include canopy cover, as well as basal cover.

Livestock Grazing Management

A description of each Guideline for Livestock Grazing Management is attached to this Evaluation and Determination. Following are guidelines applicable to Standard 1:

Guidelines 1, 3, and 8 (grazing management practices): Livestock grazing of the allotment is authorized for spring use, between the first of April through mid-June, over 1,439 acres of public land for 211 AUMs. Based on ecological site descriptions and estimated suitability, stocking rate is estimated to be 9.81 acres/AUM.

Guidelines 6 and 17 (development of management facilities): At this time there are no known proposals for new range improvements. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed, however at this time these guidelines do not apply to livestock management

Guideline 16 (burned area rehabilitation): If possible, natural regeneration will be allowed following a wildfire. If a seeding would be needed, future wildfire rehabilitation projects will include native seeds, as much as economically possibly and as seed availability permits. Seed mixes will represent the appropriate ecosystem diversity. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed. At this time this guideline does not apply to livestock management.

Conformance Rationale for Standard 1 and applicable Guidelines for Watersheds:

Based on GIS mapping, the 994 acres of public land constitute approximately eleven percent of the allotment. Approximately 482 acres of the public lands are forested. Public lands in both soils groups were found to have a majority of the site health indicators within acceptable range of the ecological site descriptions.

[Check box 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, and either box 6 or 7.]

1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting the Standard	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, cause not determined
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors (list important causal agents)	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
4 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are significant factors (list important causal agents)	7 <input type="checkbox"/> Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (list Guidelines No(s) in non-conformance)

Standard 2: Riparian Areas and Wetlands

Standard doesn't apply
Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning condition appropriate to soil type, climate, geology, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

and

Standard 3: Stream Channel/Floodplain

Standard doesn't apply
Stream channels and floodplains are properly functioning relative to the geomorphology (e.g., gradient, size, shape, roughness, confinement, and sinuosity) and climate to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, regardless of which box is checked):

Based on field assessments, and the use of topographic maps and aerial photos, no riparian areas or wetlands were found on this allotment.

Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities)

Standard doesn't apply
Healthy, productive, and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants are maintained or promoted as appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, regardless of which box is checked)

To examine native plant community indicators, ecological sites were grouped into Loamy, Shallow Stony, Very Shallow, and unclassified (forested areas) sites. The Loamy, Shallow Stony Loam, and Forested ecological sites are found within West Pine Creek Allotment. Information collected from field assessments for the loamy and shallow stony loam sites are displayed in the following tables by ecological grouping. Approximately 48 percent of the public land is forested, therefore approximate 482 acres did not receive a rangeland health field assessment.

Rangeland Health

Loamy Ecological Sites, 16 to 22 inch precipitation zone; new Ecological Site #010XY0031

Number of assessments: 4 Represents 33% of public land in the allotment

Indicators	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion			1	2	1
Soil Surface Loss or Degradation			1	1	2
Compaction Layer				2	2
Functional/Structural Groups				1	3
Plant Mortality/Decadence			1		3
Litter Amount				1	3
Annual Production				1	3
Invasive Plants				3	1
Reproductive Capability of Native Plants				2	2
Total			3	13	20

Next to forested areas, the loamy ecological site is the largest covering approximately 323 acres of public land. Of this approximately, 77 acres are north facing slopes and remaining 246 acres are gentle sloping areas.

North Slopes

North facing slopes are characterized by a moderate canopy cover of shrubs, with xeric big sagebrush being most prominent. Bitterbrush, chokecherry, bitter cherry and serviceberry were also present. The understory is dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass in association with bulbous bluegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, Idaho fescue, lupine, Wyeth's buckwheat and yarrow.

Life Forms	Current Composition (biomass production estimation)	Composition at PNC*
Graminoids (grass and grasslike)	50%	50% to 65%
Forbs	23%	20% to 30%
Shrubs	27%	10% to 20%

* PNC = Potential Natural Community as described in the NRCS ecological site description

Gentle Slopes

Gentle slopes have a mixed canopy cover of snowberry, ceanothus, chokecherry, bitter cherry, xeric big sagebrush and bitterbrush. The understory is a mixture of bluebunch wheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass, annual bromes and Snadberg bluegrass. The forb component includes hawksbeard, penstemon, hairy Albert, gumweed and yarrow. These sites have sparse to moderate shrub canopy cover composed primarily of bitterbrush, snowberry, Oregon grape, choke cherry, and bitter cherry. The understory is dominated by arrowleaf balsamroot, along with wild rye, bulbous bluegrass, and white stoneseed. Invasive plants are intermingled throughout the plant community.

Life Forms	Current Composition (biomass production estimation)	Composition at PNC*
Graminoids (grass and grasslike)	23%	50% to 60%
Forbs	18%	15% to 25%
Shrubs	55%	15% to 25%

* PNC = Potential Natural Community as described in the NRCS ecological site description

Heavy shrub composition is typical for a mountain shrub community type found in higher precipitation zones, as found on this allotment.

*Shallow Stony Loam Ecological Sites, 16 to 22 inch precipitation zone; new Ecological Site #010XY026I
Number of assessments: 2 Represents 19% of public land in the allotment*

Indicators	Extreme	Moderate to Extreme	Moderate	Slight to Moderate	None to Slight
Soil Surface Resistance to Erosion				2	
Soil Surface Loss or Degradation				1	1
Compaction Layer					2
Functional/Structural Groups				1	1
Plant Mortality/Decadence				1	1
Litter Amount					2
Annual Production				1	1
Invasive Plants			1	1	
Reproductive Capability of Native Plants					2
Total			1	7	10

Shallow stony loam ecological site is the smallest within West Pine Creek Allotment, covering approximately 189 acres of public land. The shrub canopy is a mix of xeric big sagebrush, bitterbrush, elderberry and chokecherry. The understory is a diverse mixture of bluebunch wheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass, buckwheat, bighead clover and biscuitroot.

Life Forms	Current Composition (biomass production estimation)	Composition at PNC*
Graminoids (grass and grasslike)	40%	50% to 60%
Forbs	15%	15% to 25%
Shrubs	45%	20% to 30%

* PNC = Potential Natural Community as described in the NRCS ecological site description

Timbered Lands

There are approximately 482 acres (48 percent of public lands) of timbered public lands within the allotment boundaries. These lands were not assessed for rangeland health.

Rangeland Health Change

Loamy Ecological Sites, 16 to 22 inch precipitation zone; Ecological Site #010XY003I

North Slope

Soil was found to be moving off-site due to insufficient organic matter incorporated in the soil surface.

Gentle Slopes

Bitterbrush showed moderate to heavy mortality due to hedging and browsing.

Photo Trend Plots

One photo trend plot was read and diagramed on the gentle slope of the loamy ecological site. Little to no change was noted between the 1991 and 2002 photos.

14N04W02 (located in Section 2, T14N, R4W)

Established June 11, 1991; Photos retaken July 02, 2002

Plot diagramed in 2002

Shallow Stony Loam Ecological Sites, 16 to 22 inch precipitation zone; Ecological Site #010XY026I

The one moderate dissimilarity reading was taken in 1998 due to the presence of invasive plants along the road, as well as being scattered throughout the plant community. In 2002, the presence of bulbous bluegrass was still noted. The photo trend plot show little to no change.

Livestock Grazing Management

A description of each Guideline for Livestock Grazing Management is attached to this Evaluation and Determination. Following are guidelines applicable to Standard 4:

Guidelines 4, 9, 12, and 18 (grazing management practices): Livestock grazing of the allotment is authorized for spring use, between the first of April through mid-June, over 1,439 acres for 211 AUMs. Based on ecological site descriptions and estimated suitability, stocking rate is estimated to be 9.81 acres/AUM.

Guidelines 6, 17, and 20 (development of management facilities): At this time there are no known proposals for new range improvements. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed. At this time these guidelines do not apply to livestock management on this Allotment

Guidelines 14, 15, and 16 (rehabilitation): If possible, natural regeneration will be allowed following a wildfire. If a seeding would be needed, future wildfire rehabilitation projects will include native seeds, as much as economically possibly and as seed availability permits. Seed mixes will represent the appropriate ecosystem diversity. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed. At this time these guidelines do not apply to livestock management on this Allotment.

Conformance Rationale for Standard 4 and applicable Guidelines for Native Plant Communities:

The 994 acres of public land within West Pine Creek Allotment constitute approximately 11 percent of the allotment. Based on the rangeland health assessments, indicators that were moderately dissimilar to the reference ecological site, were from the 1998 field assessment. This information indicates the native plant community is improving.

[Check box 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, and either box 6 or 7.]

1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting the Standard	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, cause not determined
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors (list important causal agents)	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
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Standard 5: Seedings

Standard doesn't apply

Rangelands seeded with mixtures, including predominately non-native plants, are functioning to maintain life form diversity, production, native animal habitat, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, when boxes 1 through 7 are checked)

Based on field assessments, aerial photos, and file information, no seedings were found on this allotment.

Standard 6: Exotic Plant Communities, other than Seedings

Standard doesn't apply

Exotic plant communities, other than seedings, will meet minimum requirements of soil stability and maintenance of existing native and seeded plants.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required regardless of which box is checked):

Since these invasive species did not comprise a community of themselves (they were found throughout the existing native community), their existence was addressed in Standard 4 for Native Plant Communities.

Standard 7: Water Quality

Standard doesn't apply

Surface and ground water on public lands comply with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, regardless of which box is checked)

Based on field assessments, and the use of topographic maps and aerial photos, no riparian areas or wetlands were found, therefore water quality does not apply to public lands within this allotment.

Standard 8: Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals

Standard doesn't apply

Habitats are suitable to maintain viable populations of threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species.

Evaluation and Information Sources (required, regardless of which box is checked):

Plants

There are currently no known populations of threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species in West Pine Creek Allotment.

Wildlife

Wildlife habitat quality was inferred from data collected while examining the allotment for standards 1 and 4. A cursory field visit was conducted by the wildlife biologist and a range management interdisciplinary team member to inventory for special status wildlife species or their habitat. West Pine Creek Allotment is on the edge of sage grouse habitat and is within the historic range of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.

Fisheries

There are no riparian areas or waterway through this allotment, as documented in Standards 2 and 3, therefore condition of special status fish species or their habitat does not apply to West Pine Creek Allotment.

Rangeland Health Change

Wildlife habitat needs of upland dependent special status species are being met. Habitat is at or near its potential for these species.

Livestock Grazing Management

A description of each Guideline for Livestock Grazing Management is attached to this Evaluation and Determination. Following are guidelines applicable to Standard 8:

Guidelines 6, 17, and 20 (development of management facilities): At this time there are no known proposals for new range improvements. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed, however at this time these guidelines do not apply to livestock management.

Guidelines 11, 12, and 18 (grazing management practices): Livestock grazing of the allotment is authorized for Spring use, between the first of April through mid-June, over 1,439 acres of public land for 211 AUMs.

Guidelines 14, 15, and 16 (rehabilitation): If possible, natural regeneration will be allowed following a wildfire. If a seeding would be needed, future wildfire rehabilitation projects will include native seeds, as much as economically possibly and as seed availability permits. Seed mixes will represent the appropriate ecosystem diversity. If projects are proposed in the future, these guidelines will be followed. At this time these guidelines do not apply to livestock management on this allotment.

Conformance Rationale for Standards 8 and applicable Guidelines for Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals

Wildlife

No evidence of special status animal species was detected during a field visit to the allotment; however, suitable habitat is in place for upland dependent special status species.

[Check box 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, and either box 6 or 7.]

1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting the Standard	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, cause not determined
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress towards	
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Meeting the Standard, current livestock grazing management practices are not significant factors (list important causal agents)	6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
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Field Manager's Determination Rationale

Based on information detailed in Appendix B, Assessment 39 of the April 2005, Goodrich Watershed Assessment (allotments with blocked units of public land) and summarized above, I have determined that all applicable Standards for Rangeland Health (1, 4 and 8) and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management are being met.

Rangeland health data was collected through four field assessments in 2002, and two 1998 field assessments. Determinations of rangeland health and conformance with applicable standards and guidelines are made on an allotment as a whole unit. Therefore, West Pine Creek Allotment is meeting standards for watershed health, native plant communities, and habitat for threatened and endangered species.

/s/ *Rosemary Thomas*

9/28/2007

Rosemary Thomas
Four Rivers Field Manager

Date