



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Jarbidge Field Office  
2878 Addison Avenue East  
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301



In Reply Refer To:  
4130

March 25, 2016

Dear Grazing Permittee and Interested Publics,

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is beginning the process of renewing livestock grazing permits in the Jarbidge Field Office in accordance with the 2005 Stipulated Settlement Agreement in the case of Western Watersheds Project v. Ellis et al. (Case No. CV-04-181-S-BLW) (D. Idaho).

The purpose of this letter is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal to renew livestock grazing permits, to solicit comments to assist with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the proposal, and to request any information and data (current or historic) that could aid the BLM in the completion of this project. During this process, the BLM will identify resource and management issues that might be relevant for the renewal of grazing permits associated with allotments. Issues identified during this step of the process will be considered in the development of livestock grazing management alternatives for NEPA documents.

For permit renewal purposes, the Jarbidge Field Office had been grouped into 4 subregions (see enclosed map):

Group 1--Devil Creek Subregion,  
Group 2--Inside Desert/Diamond A Subregion,  
Group 3--Foothills Subregion, and  
Group 4--Saylor Creek/Horse Herd Subregion.

The BLM plans to issue a scoping package for each subregion that would identify preliminary issues associated with the allotments in that subregion. Further, site-specific NEPA analysis will be conducted for each subregion, starting with Group 1.

The Scoping Package for Group 1, Devil Creek Subregion, is enclosed. If you have any questions regarding the Scoping Package or any other issue(s) associated with this letter, please contact Heidi Whitlach, Project Manager, (208) 736-2351 or myself at (208) 736-2380. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

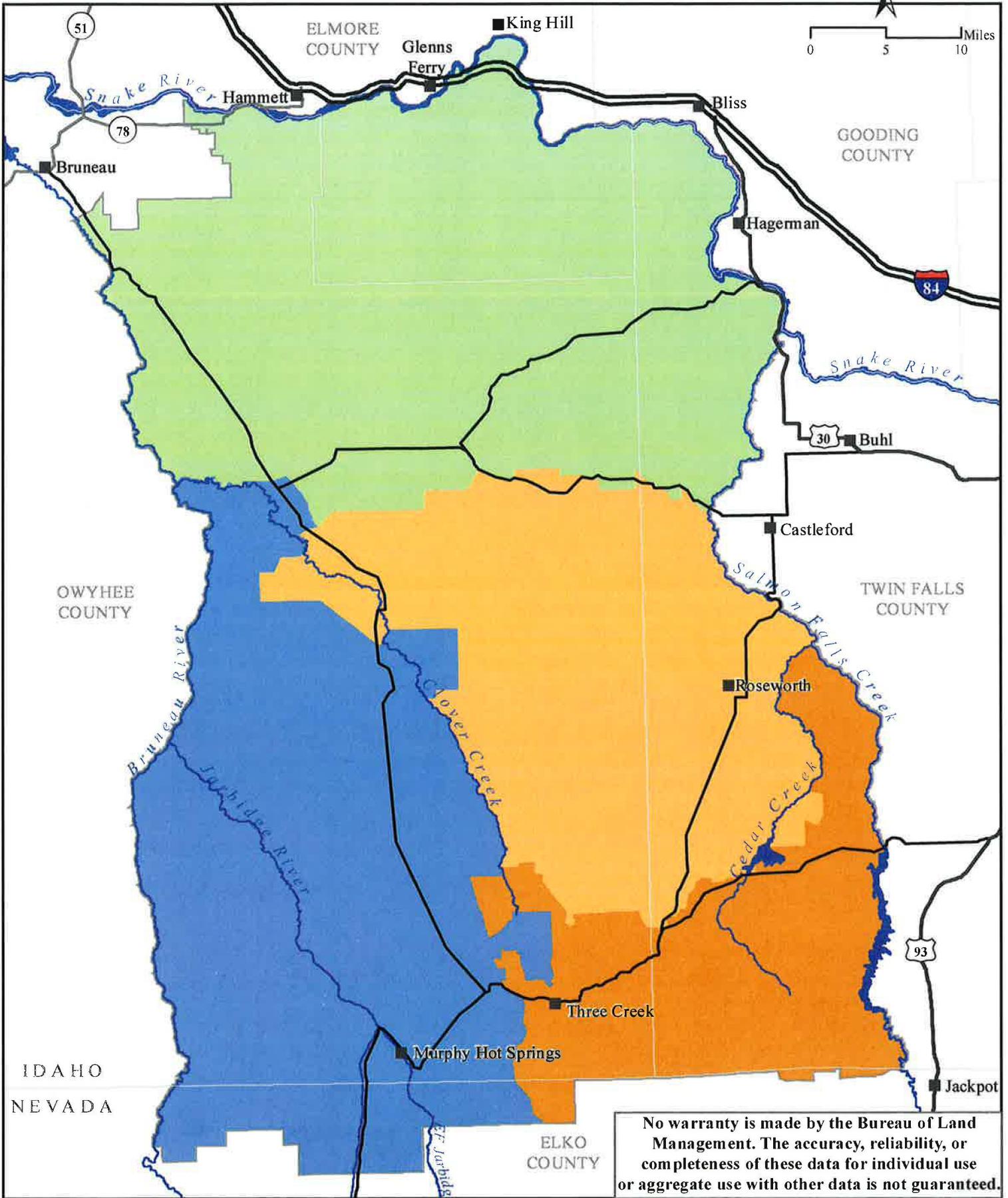


Elliot Traher  
Field Manager, Jarbidge Field Office

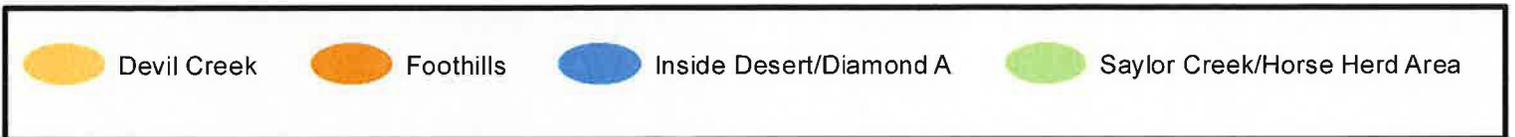
Enclosure 1-- Map of Subregions

Enclosure 2-- Devil Creek Subregion Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Scoping Package

# Jarbidge Field Office Range Subregions



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# **SCOPING PACKAGE**

## **DEVIL CREEK SUBREGION LIVESTOCK GRAZING PERMIT RENEWAL DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2016-0010-EA**

### **JARBIDGE FIELD OFFICE**

#### **Introduction**

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to respond to applications to renew grazing permits in the Devil Creek Subregion of the Jarbidge Field Office that would authorize livestock grazing within 28 allotments for a term of ten years. Renewal of grazing permits would be in conformance with the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM, 2015a) and the Approved RMP Plan Amendments for the Great Basin, including the Greater Sage-Grouse Subregions of Idaho/SW Montana (BLM, 2015b). Renewal of grazing permits would include management to continue meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health (BLM, 1997) or make significant progress toward meeting the standards, and would comply with 43 CFR 4100 – Grazing Administration. Federal actions 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 scoping package 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 will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). If significant environmental effects are expected to occur, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) may be prepared for the project. The estimated completion date is March 2017. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposal and to identify alternatives that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

#### **Purpose and Need for Action**

The purpose of this action is to determine whether the BLM would continue to authorize livestock grazing in 28 allotments in the Jarbidge Field Office and if so, under what terms and conditions. Livestock grazing would be authorized through renewal of 10-year term grazing permits, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, and in a manner that would continue meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health or make significant progress toward meeting the standards.

Livestock grazing is authorized by several federal laws, including the Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Taylor Grazing Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

This action is needed now because:

- The Jarbidge Field Office has received applications to renew grazing permits.
- BLM has agreed to conduct site-specific NEPA reviews and issue new ten-year grazing permit decisions for all Jarbidge allotments as set forth in the September 30, 2005, Stipulated Settlement Agreement (SSA) in the case of Western Watersheds Project v. Ellis et al. (Case No. CV-04-181-S-BLW) (D. Idaho).

## **Existing Condition**

The Devil Creek Subregion is located in the east-central portion of the Jarbidge Field Office, in northeastern Owyhee County and northwestern Twin Falls County. This subregion is approximately 413,000 acres including 359,000 acres of BLM land, 21,000 acres of state land, and 33,000 acres of private land (see Map).

The allotments that constitute the Devil Creek Subregion are:

- Antelope Butte North
- Buck Flat AMP
- Camas Slough
- Cedar Butte Devil Creek
- Cedar Butte Eastside
- Cedar Canyon Field
- Cedar Creek Canyon
- Cedar Crossing
- Clover Crossing
- Conover
- Coonskin
- Devil Creek Balanced Rock
- East Juniper Draw
- East Roseworth Point
- Echo Clover
- Grassy Hills
- Grassy Hills AMP
- Grassy Windmill
- Horse Butte AMP
- Juniper Ranch
- Kinyon
- Pigtail Butte
- Roseworth Point
- Roseworth Tract FFR
- Signal Butte
- South Crow's Nest
- South Roseworth and
- Turner Cedar Butte

The current authorized allocation for this subregion is approximately 45,000 AUMs with an additional 6,000 Temporary Non-Renewable permitted AUMs. The 10-year average actual use for this subregion is approximately 37,000 AUMs (BLM, 2014).

Rangeland Health Assessments (RHAs) have been drafted in accordance with 43 CFR 4180 for the 28 allotments and associated 131 pastures and are available for review at

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage&currentPageId=79677>.

## **Proposed Action**

The BLM proposes to renew 10-year term grazing permits on 28 grazing allotments within the Jarbidge Field Office considering permittee proposals, including proposed range improvement projects and changes in management that would address issues and continue to meet Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health or make significant progress toward meeting the standards.

## **Preliminary Issues**

Preliminary issues identified through internal scoping include:

- What are the impacts of increased AUMs as allowed in the Jarbidge RMP?
- What are the impacts to bighorn sheep from domestic sheep grazing?
- What are the impacts to fish and special status fish from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to wildlife and special status wildlife from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to vegetation and special status plants from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to fire frequency, behavior, and suppression?
- What are the impacts from noxious weeds and invasive plants?

- What are the impacts to visual resources from range improvement projects?
- What are the impacts from range management on recreation users?
- What are the impacts to riparian resources and water quality from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to cultural resources from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to soil resources, including biological soil crusts, from livestock grazing?
- What are the impacts to Salmon Falls Creek ACEC and Lower Salmon Falls Creek WSA?
- How should Reserve Common Allotments be established?

## **Preliminary Alternative Development**

Besides the Proposed Action, preliminary alternatives being considered include 1) Current Grazing Management Alternative; 2) Actual Use Alternative; 3) Reduced Grazing Alternative; and 4) No Grazing Alternative. Issues identified through internal and external scoping will help refine or add alternatives analyzed in the EA.

## **Decision to be Made**

The Jarbidge Field Manager is the authorized officer responsible for the decisions regarding management of public lands within these 28 allotments. Based on the results of the NEPA analysis, the authorized officer will issue a findings document that includes a determination of the significance of the environmental effects and whether an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be required. If the authorized officer determines that it is not necessary to prepare an EIS, the EA will provide information for the authorized officer to make an informed decision whether to renew the applicants' grazing permits and if renewed, which management actions, mitigation measures, and monitoring requirements will be prescribed for each of the 28 allotments to ensure management objectives and Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health are being met or make significant progress toward meeting the standards.

## **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 **April 29, 2016** and are directly relevant to the proposal and Devil Creek Subregion. 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 submitted electronically should be sent to **BLM ID JarbidgePermitRenewal@blm.gov**.

Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal (i.e., livestock management) will not be addressed at this planning level.

Comments submitted in writing should be sent to:

Bureau of Land Management  
 Attn.: Elliot Traher – Jarbidge Field Manager  
 2878 Addison Avenue East  
 Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

Additional data and information to be considered in the RHAs may also be submitted to the above mentioned addresses. If you have any questions regarding the Scoping Package or any other issue(s) associated with this process, please contact Heidi Whitlach, Project Manager, at (208) 736-2351 or by email at [hwhitlach@blm.gov](mailto:hwhitlach@blm.gov); or Elliot Traher, Jarbidge Field Manager, at (208) 736-2380 or by email at [etraher@blm.gov](mailto:etraher@blm.gov).

### **Literature Cited**

BLM. 1997. Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. Boise, ID: USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho State Office.

BLM. 2014. Jarbidge Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Twin Falls, ID: USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Twin Falls District, Jarbidge Field Office.

BLM. 2015a. Jarbidge Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan. Twin Falls, ID: USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Twin Falls District, Jarbidge Field Office.

BLM. 2015b. Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin, Including the Greater-Sage Grouse Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, and Utah.

# Map

