

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Border Field Office  
1103 North Fancher Road  
Spokane, Washington 99212

## SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

### Twin Lakes Lease Renewal Scoping Letter

#### Introduction

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to renew the lease for the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment in Lincoln County, Washington.

The purpose of this information package is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal to renew the grazing lease and to solicit comments to assist with the environmental review of the proposal. The analysis of the proposal is underway and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Public comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that also fulfill the purpose of and need for the project.

#### Project Area Description

The Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment (Allotment Number 00647) is within the BLM Border Field Office. The allotment consists of 15,650 acres of public land, 15,450 acres of upland and 200 acres of riparian, within the Crab Creek-Lake Creek watershed. Public lands in the allotment contain approximately 2.0 miles of streams. The field assessment occurred during the summer 2015.

The legal description of the allotment is: T. 25 N., R. 35 E., and T. 25 N., R.36 E., various sections.

The project area includes diverse habitats such as upland and riparian communities, ponderosa pine forest, and seasonally important wildlife habitat. These habitats support a variety of plant and wildlife species of cultural importance.

Tall sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) / bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoregneria spicata*) is the most common plant community found within the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment. Secondary plant communities include low sagebrush (*Artemisia arbuscula*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) / bluebunch wheatgrass.



Soils within the allotment consist primarily of the Anders Bakeoven Rock Outcrop soil types and are dominated by several native and non-native plant species. Much of the Anders soils (deeper, well drained soils) are dominated by non-native annual species. There are several springs and wet areas throughout the allotment that support a variety of native and non-native vegetation.

## **Background**

The Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment is located in Lincoln County, approximately 10 miles south of Creston, Washington. The allotment was acquired in several land acquisitions between 1992 and 2004. According to a 1994 Bonneville Power Administration report and prior to BLM acquisition in the early 1990's, the lands in the current allotment were grazed at approximately 2 acres per Animal Unit Month (AUM) (Platts and Caywood, 1994). Upon acquisition, the grazing allocation was reduced to 8 acres per AUM. An allotment management plan was completed in 2005 which established the livestock preference at 1,820 AUMs and the implementation of a rotational grazing system.

The public lands in the allotment consist of 21 pastures. Approximately 700 acres of private lands are utilized in conjunction with the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment.

In 2005, the grazing permit for the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment was renewed with no changes to the mandatory terms and conditions or existing grazing management. The livestock numbers have varied throughout the past decade primarily due to temporary closures associated with fires. During the period from 2003-2015 several major wildfires greater than 1,000 acres and two smaller less than 100-acre wildfires affected the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment. Many of these wildfires burned within the same footprint resulting in approximately 2,570 acres burning twice and 770 acres burning three times within 10 years.

## **Proposed Action**

The preliminary proposed action is comprised of the following components:

- Renew the existing authorization for a 10-year period with the following mandatory terms and conditions: 500 head of cattle with a grazing period between May 1 and December 1 and a preference of 3,748 AUMs. The lease would be issued with specific terms and conditions developed as part of this EA planning process.
- Develop grazing management strategies (e.g., control timing of grazing, provide periodic rest or deferment) for the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment to perpetuate key forage species; restore, maintain or enhance habitat populations of the Federally listed plant Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), shrub-steppe wildlife species, and riparian systems.
- Implement adaptive management and make livestock grazing changes based on monitoring and resource objectives (i.e., Standards for Rangeland Health).
- Implement rangeland improvement activities including: improve and maintain existing developed spring sites and solar pumping stations for off-site watering; construct, remove, and relocate fences; and develop and maintain waterholes and reservoirs.

## **Preliminary Purpose and Need**

This action is needed to respond to an application to renew a livestock grazing lease. The need for action is established by the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 and BLM's Grazing Administration regulations (43 CFR Part 4100). The BLM will determine whether to continue to authorize grazing on the Twin Lakes Grazing Allotment and what measures, terms and conditions to include in any authorization.

The purpose of the proposed action is to ensure that livestock grazing on the Twin Lakes Allotment (#00647):

- Achieves or moves toward achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health as described below (BLM 1997),
- Maintains, protects, or enhances natural resource values present within the allotment; and,
- is consistent with other uses present within the allotment.

The Oregon/Washington BLM Standards for Rangeland Health are:

**Standard 1 Watershed Function – Uplands:** Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage and stability that are appropriate to soil, climate and landform.

**Standard 2 Watershed Function – Riparian/Wetland Areas:** Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning physical condition appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

**Standard 3 Ecological Processes:** Healthy, productive and diverse plant and animal populations and communities appropriate to soil, climate and landform are supported by ecological processes of nutrient cycling, energy flow and the hydrologic cycle.

**Standard 4 Water Quality:** Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

**Standard 5 Native, Threatened and Endangered, and Locally Important Species:** Habitats support healthy, productive and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including special status species and species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate and landform.

The BLM is conducting a rangeland health assessment and evaluation to determine whether the allotment is meeting or making progress toward meeting rangeland health standards. The BLM will consider whether existing grazing management or levels of livestock use are causal factors if rangeland health standards are not met.

## **Preliminary Issues**

The BLM has identified preliminary issues that will be used to develop alternatives and to focus the environmental analysis. The BLM will refine or supplement these preliminary issues based on public scoping comments.

Currently, there is no indication of adverse effects to any of the resources present on the allotment. The analysis will address the following preliminary issues:

- the potential for impacts to riparian resources, habitat, and water quality
- the potential for impacts to habitat and known populations of Spalding's catchfly, a Federally threatened species
- the potential for impacts to sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse breeding, brood rearing, and wintering habitat
- the potential for impacts to shrub-steppe habitat and its associated species
- spread and/or establishment of noxious weeds
- the potential for impacts to cultural resources

## **Public Input Needed**

Please submit your comments on the proposed action and preliminary issues to be considered to the address noted below by **April 20, 2016**. Comments will be most useful if they provide additional information about the preliminary issues identified above, identify new issues or concerns, or propose alternative actions to accomplish the purpose and need and/or to resolve issues.

Public comments may be submitted electronically or by U.S. Mail to the addresses noted below.

Please send electronic comments to:

[BLM\\_OR\\_SP\\_MAIL@BLM.GOV](mailto:BLM_OR_SP_MAIL@BLM.GOV) with "**Twin Lakes Application for Lease Renewal**" in the subject line.

Please send U.S. Mail comments to:

BLM–Border Field Office  
Attn: Twin Lakes Application for Lease Renewal  
1103 North Fancher Road  
Spokane Valley, WA 99212

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

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.

If you have questions, please contact Kerrin Doloughan, Rangeland Management Specialist, at (509) 536-1253.

Enclosure  
Project Area Map