Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
Worksheet

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: LLNVB01000

TRACKING NUMBER: DOI-BLM-NV-B010–2016–0014–DNA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Grazing Permit #2703605

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Wild Horse Ranching Company LLC Change in Season of Use

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Fish Creek Ranch Allotment/Township 16N, Range 53E

APPLICANT (if any): Wildhorse Ranching Company LLC, John Fraser

A. Description of Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor (droughtmonitor.unl.edu), as of November 24, 2015, 93.78% of Nevada is experiencing drought classified between moderate to exceptional drought. The US Veg DRI is currently out of season due to the dormant winter months. The Fish Creek Ranch Allotment is identified in the Severe Drought category . The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook for the period of November 18 through February 29, 2016 indicates the drought will persist or intensify.

In 2015 monitoring indicated drought was still present on the allotment. The large winter fat communities dispersed throughout the north and south pastures indicated drought stress with reduced leader growth. Other available forage, such as Indian ricegrass, needle and thread, and bottle brush squirrel tail all exhibit drought stress with reduced shoot and leaf growth and in some instance no seed head developed this year. Through this decision the majority of the AUMs will be used during plant dormancy, leaving reduced AUMs during the growing season. This will allow a greater amount of plants to complete the growth cycles before being grazed. Due to the continued drought conditions within the Fish Creek Ranch Allotment, this drought management action is needed for the protection of the natural resources located within the allotment.

Therefore, a change in the season of use is proposed to the grazing system for the Fish Creek Ranch Allotment for the 2015 grazing year and for the remainder of the drought plus one additional growing season. The temporary modifications are as follows:

Pasture	Livestock Kind	FMUD Season of Use		Proposed Season of Use		AUMs Not to Exceed
		Begin	End	Begin	End	
North Fish Creek	Cattle	4/1	5/15	12/1	5/15	888
South Fish Creek	Cattle	3/1	3/31	12/1	3/31	612
8–Mile Seeding	Cattle	3/1	3/31	5/1	5/15	AUMs are used from South Fish Creek Pasture

1. Actual livestock numbers and AUMs will be discussed and approved by the BLM's authorized officer before turn out dates.

2. The AUMs associated with the pastures will not exceed the permitted AUMs.

3. Trailing through the South Fish Creek Pasture to the 8–Mile Seeding is permitted with an active rider starting 5/1.

4. Implement the following within season of use triggers within the Fish Creek Ranch Allotment and require that livestock be removed within 7 days from areas achieving the triggers:

- Salt Desert Shrub - 25% utilization of key species
- Sagebrush Grassland - 30% utilization of key species
- Pinyon-Juniper Woodland - 30% utilization of key species
- Mountain Shrub - 30% utilization of key species
- Riparian Zones – Four inch stubble height of key riparian species
- If triggers are close to being approached, met or exceeded, livestock will be moved to the next location in the rotation or to private pasture. If livestock are moved to the next use area in the rotation, the remaining scheduled dates will shift forward accordingly.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

LUP Name*		Date Approved:
	• Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment	• September 21, 2015
	• NV- Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment	• October 13, 1987
	• Shoshone-Eureka RMP	• February 26, 1986

**List applicable LUPs (for example, resource management plans; activity, project, management, or program plans; or applicable amendments thereto*

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Shoeshone-Eureka RMP Amendment ROD page 9

- To establish a grazing management program designed to provide key forage plants with adequate rest from grazing during critical growth periods.
- To achieve, through management of livestock and wild horses, utilization levels consistent with those recommended by the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook to allow more plants to complete growth cycles and to increase storage of reserves for future growth.
- In the long-term, improve ecological condition of 585,191 acres to good condition and 25,990 acres to excellent condition.
- In the long-term, stop downward trends on 65,702 acres of big game habitat and manage for upward trends on 144,186 acres.

- In the short-term, improve or maintain in good or better condition, 64 miles of aquatic habitat and 768 acres of riparian habitat associated with the streams and an additional 1,067 acres of other meadows, springs and aspen groves.

Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (GRSG ARMPA)Page 2–1 and 2–23

- Page 2–1 of the GRSG ARMPA states, "In the event there are inconsistencies or discrepancies between previously approved RMPs and this ARMPA, the decisions contained in this ARMPA will be followed, unless there are more restrictive decisions in the existing plans, which will be implemented. The BLM will continue to tier to state wide, national, and programmatic EISs and other NEPA and planning documents. The agency will consider and apply required design features or other management protocols contained in other planning documents after appropriate site-specific analysis."

- **MD LG 1:** When livestock management practices are determined to not be compatible with meeting or making progress towards achievable habitat objectives following appropriate consultation, cooperation and coordination, implement changes in grazing management through grazing authorization modifications, or allotment management plan implementation. Potential modifications include, but are not limited to changes in:
  - Season or timing of use;
  - Numbers of livestock;
  - Distribution of livestock use;
  - Duration and/or level of use;
  - Kind of livestock (e.g., cattle, sheep, horse, or goats);
  - Grazing schedules (including rest or deferment);
  - Class of livestock;
  - Making allotments unavailable to grazing;

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

List by name and date all applicable NEPA documents that cover the proposed action.

Battle Mountain District Drought Management Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-NV-B000–2012–0005–EA dated June 14, 2012 (BMD Drought EA)

List by name and date other documentation relevant to the proposed action (e.g. biological assessment, biological opinion, watershed assessment, allotment evaluation, and monitoring report).

Table 1.

Document Name	Date
Taylor Grazing Act	1934

Federal Land Policy and Management Act	1976
Public Rangelands Improvement Act	1978
NV Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary	1988
Standards and Guidelines for Nevada's Northeastern Great Basin Area	1997
U.S. Drought Monitor	November 24, 2015

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes, the proposed action is an integral feature of the proposed action analyzed in the BMD Drought EA (page 8).

Temporary Change in Season of Use

A change in the season of use could reduce livestock grazing related impacts during drought. The following modifications could be used either separately or in combination: Changing the season of use to a time following the critical growth period (actual dates would vary with vegetation community type) of key forage species. (ESDs correlated to specific locations would be consulted to determine key species. In instances where key species referenced in the ESD are absent, key species would be identified using site-specific and/or past monitoring data).

- This would allow plants to utilize available soil moisture and any additional moisture received during the critical growth period. Plants would be able to complete their life cycle thus allowing for seed dissemination and root growth and replacement. Plants could then be grazed after sufficient growth or dormancy occurs. Repeated grazing during the critical growth period does not allow plants to regrow before soil moisture is depleted; therefore, plants may not have adequate resource reserves to survive winter dormancy.

- Defer livestock grazing in riparian areas during the hot season (approximately July 1 through September 30) to avoid the degradation of riparian areas during drought.

Drought response actions may be implemented separately or in combination with other Drought Response Actions outlined in the Proposed Action and analyzed in the BMD Drought EA.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource value?

Yes, nothing has been raised through this proposal that cannot be addressed by the existing alternatives. The current environmental concerns, interest and resource values are the same as previously analyzed. Since the completion of BMD Drought EA in 2012, the Shoshone-Eureka RMP was amended by the GRSG ARMPA on September 21, 2015. The BMD Drought EA is in conformance with the amended Shoshone-Eureka RMP and GRSG ARMPA and analyzes the management recommendations if GRSG habitat objectives are not being met as required by the GRSG ARMPA . Temporary change in season of use for grazing allotments to allow for resource recovery was analyzed in the BMD Drought EA (page 8) and is a management decision in the GRSG ARMPA (page 2–23).

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessments, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Since the completion of the BMD Drought EA, the GRSG ARMPA ROD was signed on September 21, 2015 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Not Warranted Decision to list the greater sage-grouse based largely on the implementation of the GRSG ARMPA. The BMD Drought EA is in conformance with the GRSG ARMPA.

The existing analysis covers the current drought conditions that have been documented on the Fish Creek Ranch Allotment. Temporarily changing the season of use for grazing allotments is one of the Drought Response Actions described in the proposed action of the Drought Management Plan and analyzed in BMD Drought EA, as well as a GRSG ARMPA management decision, MD LG 1 when GRSG habitat objectives are not being met.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor the drought is forecasted to persist or intensify across Nevada. Given the continuation of the drought, the BLM can reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed action.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes, the direct, indirect and cumulative effects for the current proposed action are identical to those identified in BMD Drought EA. The EA sufficiently analyzed all affected resources related to implementing one or more drought response actions.

5. Are there public involvement and interagency reviews associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes, the public involvement and interagency review associated with BMD Drought EA is adequate for the proposed action. Furthermore, a consultation, cooperation and coordination (CCC) letter was sent October 1, 2015, to allow additional public involvement prior to the issuance of the decision. No comments were received during the CCC comment period from the interested public.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Table 2. List of Preparers

Name/Title	Resource	Signature
Dustin Fowler, Rangeland Management Specialist	Range, Vegetation, Soils, Hydrology and Riparian	Dustin Fowler
Stephaney Cox, Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, Threatened and Endangered Species	Stephaney Cox
Shawna Richardson, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Wild Horses	Shawna Richardson
Michael Vermeys, Assistant Field Manager	Renewable Resources	Michael Vermeys

Note

Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Conclusion

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirement of NEPA.

Dustin Fowler
Signature of Project Lead

Christine Gerhard
Signature of NEPA Coordinator

Michael Vermeys ACTING FIELD MANAGER 12/28/15
Signature of the Responsible Official Date

Note:

The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.