

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
LIVESTOCK GRAZING AUTHORIZATION

EA # CA-180-16-35

Bacchi Valley #04023



Mother Lode Field Office  
July 2016

## INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of re-authorizing a livestock grazing lease as proposed in Alternative 1 on the Bacchi Valley #04023 allotment. The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of one of the alternatives. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in compliance with other laws and policies affecting the alternatives. If the decision maker determines that the proposed action has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a grazing decision will be issued along with a FONSI statement, documenting the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in “significant” environmental impacts.

## Background

Table 1

Name	County	Acres	Type and # of Livestock	Season of Use	AUMs	Current Exp. Date
Bacchi Valley 04023	El Dorado – See Maps 1 and 2 for specific allotment area	Current – 350	Current – 4 cows	Current – 12/1 – 6/30	Current – 28	2/28/17
		Proposed – Same	Proposed – same	Proposed – same	Proposed – same	

## Purpose and Need for the Action

The purpose of the action is to consider whether to authorize grazing on the Bacchi Valley allotment #04023. If authorized, grazing would be in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The purpose of the action is also to ensure that all authorizations implement provisions of, and are in conformance with, the Sierra Resource Management Plan (February 2008), and are in conformance with the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health (2000).

The action is needed to respond to an expired lease and a lease that will expire within the next calendar year.

## Scoping and Issues

The proposed action underwent internal, interdisciplinary scoping. Possible invasive species issues were raised regarding the Bacchi Valley allotment.

## Prevention of Unnecessary or Undue Degradation

In addition to the management prescriptions discussed in this EA, including all terms and conditions, BLM may use its authority to close an area of the allotment to grazing use or take other measures to protect resources at any time, if needed. Therefore, issuance of a grazing lease

with appropriate terms and conditions is consistent with BLM's responsibility to manage the public's use, occupancy, and development of the public lands and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands. (43 USC 1732(b)).

### **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Plans**

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires federal agencies to complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for any action that "may affect" federally listed species or critical habitat. The ESA also requires federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species.

In August 2004, the State Director, California Bureau of Land Management and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) addressed the issue of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance procedures for processing grazing permit lease renewals for livestock as defined in 43 CFR 4100.0-5. The State Director and the SHPO amended the 2004 State Protocol Agreement between California Bureau of Land Management and The California State Historic Preservation Officer with the 2004 Grazing Amendment, Supplemental Procedures for Livestock Grazing Permit/Lease Renewal. This amendment allows for the renewal of existing grazing permits prior to completing all NHPA compliance needs as long as the 2004 State Protocol direction, the BLM 8100 Series Manual Guidelines, and specific amendment direction for planning, inventory methodology, tribal and interested party consultation, evaluation, effect, treatment, and monitoring stipulations are followed. The 2004 Grazing Amendment remains in effect as a part of the 2014 State Protocol Agreement. The Mother Lode Field Office did not need to invoke the amendment to complete its Section 106 obligations to renew the grazing leases under the proposed alternative.

### **Plan Conformance**

Determination:

The proposed action is in conformance with the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved in February, 2008, including the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

Rationale:

The proposed action would occur in areas identified as available for livestock grazing in the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposed action is consistent with the land use decisions and resource management goals and objectives of the plan, as described in the RMP on pages 23-24. The key decisions, goals, and objectives include: manage livestock to achieve the four fundamentals of rangeland health; change authorized grazing preference and/or season of use to meet or make progress toward meeting standards established by the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health approved in July 2000.

## **Rangeland Health**

The Central California Standards for Rangeland Health are as follows:

Soils: Soils exhibit functional biological and physical characteristics that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form.

Species: Viable, healthy, productive, and diverse populations of native species, including special status species (Federal T&E, Federal proposed, Federal candidates, BLM sensitive, or California State T&E) are maintained or enhanced where appropriate.

Riparian/Wetland: Riparian/wetland vegetation, structure and diversity, and stream channels and floodplains are functioning properly, and meeting regional and local management objectives.

Water Quality: Surface and groundwater quality complies with objectives of the Clean Water Act and other applicable water quality requirements, including meeting the California State standards.

The soil, riparian, and water quality standards for rangeland health are determined to be met based on a field assessment conducted on April 20, 2016, and a determination made on June 17, 2016. The species standard was determined not to be met due to invasive weeds. Severe yellow starthistle and medusahead are infesting portions of the allotment area. Cows may have contributed to the initial establishment of weed species, but the infestation has been around for many years. There are large infestations of yellow starthistle and medusahead throughout the general area.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2000. Central California Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health. Central California Resource Advisory Council. Approved July 13, 2000.

## **CHAPTER 2: PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **Alternative 1 – Proposed Action**

This proposed action is to authorize grazing on the Bacchi Valley #04023 allotment with applicable provisions as discussed further in this section. We propose no changes to the season of use and number of livestock on either allotment, and no additional terms and conditions.

#### A. Mandatory Terms and Conditions

**Table 3**

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percent BLM</b>	<b>Number of Livestock</b>	<b>Kind</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>AUMs</b>	<b>Lease Length</b>
Bacchi Valley #04023	350	100	4	Cows	12/1	6/30	28	10 years

## **Alternative 2 - No Grazing**

This alternative would cancel the lease on the Bacchi Valley (04023). As a result, grazing would not be authorized on this allotment. Under this alternative, BLM would initiate the process in accordance with the 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on these allotments and amend the Sierra Resource Management Plan.

## **Current Livestock Management**

Bacchi Valley (04023) – Mr. Bacchi grazes his cattle between his private parcel (440 acres) and the BLM parcels (350 acres) from November 15 to May 15. Approximately 140 acres of the BLM land is considered suitable for grazing. These areas are on the west side of Indian Creek (100 acres), and the small scattered parcels (totaling 40 acres) on the allotment. Mr. Bacchi reports that he grazes approximately 15 head of cattle on the upper area west of Indian Creek and approximately 5 head of cattle on the lower scattered parcels.

## **CHAPTER 3: ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The following supplemental authorities are not relevant to this project because related resources or conditions are not present: environmental justice, essential fish habitat; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); Native American cultural values; solid or hazardous wastes; wild and scenic rivers; wilderness; or wild horse and burro herds.

### **Air Quality**

#### Affected Environment

The project area is in the Mountain Counties Air Basin in an area classified as federal non-attainment for ozone 8-hour standard under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (<http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm>) A state implementation plan (SIP) for California identifies sources of emissions which include motor vehicles, consumer products, and pesticides ([www.arb.ca.gov/planning/sip/94sip/sipvoll.htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/planning/sip/94sip/sipvoll.htm)). The SIP also includes control measures to reduce emissions.

#### Impacts of all Alternatives

The relatively small livestock operation and slight vehicle use would not affect air quality under the current and proposed alternative. Cancellation of this small lease similarly would not affect air quality.

## **Cultural Resources**

### Affected Environment

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Over the years, much of the land that makes up the proposed lease area has been intensively inventoried by BLM archaeologists. Overall, less than 40 percent of the entire allotment has been inventoried, but historic properties potentially affected by grazing are not expected to occur in the un-inventoried portions of the allotment. These areas include steep brush covered eastern slopes that are inaccessible for survey or cattle grazing. In 2016, Alden Neel intensively inventoried 15 acres in the Indian Creek area. A rock wall was found and determined to be a placer tailing. A flat area above the placer tailing and adjacent to Indian Creek was intensively surveyed and no other artifact or features were found. In addition, there is no evidence of cattle grazing along Indian Creek.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

Significant cultural resources within the APE are not being negatively affected by the current level of livestock grazing and site protection measures. This situation would not change under the proposed action. The level of grazing use would not change, and there are no range improvements proposed that would affect cultural resources. Portions of all the allotments where conflicts between grazing and cultural resources are most likely to occur have been inventoried and are being protected. In other words, the areas with the highest sensitivity have been inventoried.

### Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing on this allotment would not affect cultural resources.

### References

Neel, A. 2016. Cultural resource inventory report. Bacchi Grazing Permit Renewal. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California.

Neel, A. 2016. Section 106 compliance for the Bacchi Valley grazing lease renewal, El Dorado County. Memorandum to the Field Manager and Letter to File. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office, El Dorado Hills, California.

### **Invasive, non-native species**

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Private land to the west of the public land in Section 6 is heavily infested with medusahead and yellow starthistle. The savannah portion of the lease area mostly west of Indian Creek is also impacted. Most of the serpentine habitat supports chaparral but in some openings with herbaceous vegetation, yellow starthistle has invaded.

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

Although invasive weed species are present on these allotments, they do not appear to be significantly impacting the abundance or cover of native species. Cattle can spread weed seed through their scat and on their hair. The proposed, low level of grazing that will occur on this allotment would not measurably affect the spread of invasive weeds.

### Impacts of No Grazing

Under the no grazing alternative, the potential for dispersal of seeds through livestock hairs and scat would decrease throughout the allotment. Once weeds are established, moderate grazing during their growth period and when they are palatable can help control some important herbaceous weed species including yellow starthistle and medusahead. Elimination of grazing could exacerbate existing weed problems in some areas. Because current, low levels of grazing do not appear to be significantly affecting weed spread, elimination of grazing would not be expected to noticeably reduce invasive species on the allotment.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Environmental Assessment CA-180-07-64. Livestock grazing authorization for Bacchi V., Dunlap, Dunlap A., and Cuneo (Marz). Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California.

## **Recreation**

### Affected Environment

Very little or no recreation is occurring on the allotment. The Bachhi Valley allotment is only accessible through private land, hindering recreationists from accessing the BLM property for recreational opportunities.

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

The primary impact of grazing on recreation opportunities will be the presence of domestic livestock and the livestock operator in the area during the grazing season. Due to limited access, the proposed action is not impacting recreational opportunities.

### Impacts of No Grazing

Due to limited access, elimination of already low/no impact grazing is not expected to affect recreation in the allotment.

## **Social and Economic Values**

Due to the size and nature of this allotment, it is expected that the lessee employs few individuals in the community. Livestock grazing on the scale of this allotment contribute little economic value to the community. Economic impacts of all of the alternatives are insignificant.

Overall, the central Sierra Nevada district was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> out of 8 districts/regions in terms of cattle production in 2011.

([http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/California/Publications/County\\_Estimates/201105lvscep.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/County_Estimates/201105lvscep.pdf)) It is clear from these statistics that the central Sierra Nevada is not an economically important player in California's cattle industry. However, cattle and calves rank fourth in the top ten most valued agricultural commodities in California with a value of \$3.7 billion in 2014.

(<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/statistics/>). In 2013, El Dorado County reported that livestock and livestock products were the third-highest valued agricultural commodity with a production value of \$9.3 million. [El Dorado 2013 Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report](#) The contribution to local economies includes goods, services, transportation, processing, marketing, employment and other farm-related services. Due to the size of the operation, the lease renewal analyzed in this EA is not economically important at either at local or statewide/regional level.

Because the lease has been in the family for a number of years, livestock grazing has become a way of life and a tradition passed from generation to generation through the years. Social impacts of the lease cancellation would impact the lessee's way of life.

## **Soils**

### Affected Environment

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Soils are mapped: Placer diggings; Perkins gravelly loam, 3% to 30% slopes; Auberry coarse sandy loam, 9% to 15%; Auberry rocky coarse sandy loam, 5% to 15% slopes; Auberry very rocky coarse sandy loam, 15% to 30% slopes; Auburn very rocky silt loam, 2% to 50% slopes; Auburn extremely rocky silt loam, 3% to 70% slopes; and Serpentine rock land. Serpentine rock land and Auburn extremely rocky silt loam, 3 to 70 percent slopes are the predominant soils on the allotment. Placer diggings are prevalent on the smaller parcels within the allotment. (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>). The allotment is currently meeting the soil standard for rangeland health. It has good ground cover with a residual dry matter of 700-1,000 lbs/acre and no evident erosion.

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

There is little evidence of erosion or compaction on the allotment. Therefore, livestock grazing is not impacting soils on these allotments.

### Impacts of the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing will not affect soil productivity or stability.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Environmental Assessment CA-180-07-64. Livestock grazing authorization for Bacchi V., Dunlap, Dunlap A., and Cuneo (Marz). Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California.

## **Water Quality**

### Affected Environment

04023 – Bacchi Valley – The Bacchi allotment is in the Upper American River watershed. Over one mile of Indian Creek, a permanent stream, runs through the allotment. The Upper American is not identified as a State 303d impaired water bodies. Beneficial uses identified in the basin plan for the area within which the Bacchi allotment resides are municipal and domestic supply, agriculture (irrigation), industry (hydropower generation), recreation, freshwater habitat (warm and cold water ecosystems), and wildlife habitat. No water quality monitoring/inventory has taken place on the allotment. There is no evidence of water quality degradation occurring on the allotment.

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

Because the State has not identified these rivers as water quality impaired, further grazing at current levels are not expected to affect water quality or beneficial water uses.

### Impacts from the No Grazing Alternative

Elimination of grazing is not expected to significantly improve water quality on the allotment.

### References

California Regional Water Quality Board, Central Valley Region. Revised 2011. The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) for the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins.

## **Wetlands/Riparian**

Lotic (moving water) riparian areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody debris is present to dissipate stream energy associated with high waterflows, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment, capture bedload, and aid floodplain development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize streambanks against cutting action; develop diverse ponding and channel characteristics to provide the habitat and the water depth, duration, and temperature necessary for fish production, waterfowl breeding, and other uses; and support greater biodiversity. The functioning condition of riparian-wetland areas is a result of interaction among geology, soil, water, and vegetation.

Lentic (still water) wetland areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or debris is present to: dissipate energies associated with wind action, wave action, and overland flow from adjacent sites, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment and aid floodplain development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize islands and shoreline features against cutting action; restrict water percolation; develop diverse ponding characteristics to provide habitat and the water depth,

duration, and temperature necessary for fish production water-bird breeding, and other uses and support greater biodiversity.

### Affected Environment

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Over one mile of Indian, a permanent stream, occurs on the Bacchi allotment. The creek is assessed as in proper functioning condition (10/27/2003), and supports a population of foothill yellow-legged frog. The creek continues to meet this assessment based on a site visit on April 20, 2016.

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

On the allotment, the proposed action will not impact riparian areas.

### Impacts of No Grazing Alternative

The elimination of cattle grazing will not benefit riparian habitat on the allotment.

### References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2016. Grazing Use Management/Rangeland Health Assessment and Determination for the Bacchi allotment. Mother Lode Field Office, Folsom, California. 2 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Environmental Assessment CA-180-07-64. Livestock grazing authorization for Bacchi V., Dunlap, Dunlap A., and Cuneo (Marz). Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California.

### **Wildlife**

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Wildlife habitats present on the allotment include blue oak savannah, mixed oak woodland, riparian, and chamise. Available forage is abundant, with no apparent competition between wildlife and livestock. The allotment is within the yearlong range of the Placerville deer herd. It is not considered a critical area for the herd. Surveys of the allotment indicate a diversity of typical, native wildlife species for the area, such as coyote, mountain lion, deer, and several species of songbirds. The species standard for rangeland health is not being achieved, due to invasive weeds. These weeds may be decreasing foraging opportunities for some wildlife.

### **Special Status Wildlife**

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Over one mile of Indian Creek runs through the allotment. This creek supports an excellent population of foothill yellow-legged frog, a BLM sensitive species.

## Impacts of all Alternatives

Neither the proposed action or elimination of grazing are expected to impact wildlife because grazing does not appear to be affecting special status species known to occur on the allotment, and there is no apparent competition for forage between wildlife and livestock.

### References

Mayer, K.E., and W.F. Laudenslayer, Jr., Editors. 1988. A guide to wildlife habitats of California. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Sacramento, CA. 166 pp.  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1982. Proposed Livestock Grazing Management for the Sierra Planning Area Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Sacramento, California. 145 pp.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

## **Vegetation**

### Affected Environment

04023 – Bacchi Valley – Three primary plant communities are present on the Indian Creek parcel of the lease. On the east facing slope west of Indian Creek, there is blue oak savannah higher on the slope and mixed oak woodland lower down in the canyon. Woody species include blue oak, interior live oak, gray pine, California buckeye, deerbrush, buckbrush, poison oak, and toyon. Deep in the canyon there is some ponderosa pine and black oak. Among the species supported by the riparian area of Indian Creek and a number of springs on the slopes above are California bay, California coffeeberry, California wild grape, red willow, white alder, and Fremont cottonwood. The serpentine slopes east of Indian Creek support chamise as a dominant. Leather oak is an important sub dominant. Other woody species include white leaf Manzanita, toyon, holly-leaf redberry, bush monkeyflower, yerba santa, and redbud. There is a spectacular display of columbine and stream orchid at some of the springs on the slopes east of Indian Creek.

## **Special Status Species**

### Impacts of the Proposed Action

04023 – Bacchi Valley – There are no special status plant species present on the allotment.

Generally, vegetation appears to be diverse and grazing does not appear to be negatively impacting vegetation on either allotment.

Impacts of No Grazing – Elimination of grazing is not expected to impact vegetation.

## References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Environmental Assessment CA-180-04-57. Livestock grazing authorization for 12 allotments. Folsom Field Office, Folsom, California. 37 pp.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

Cumulative impacts are the “incremental impacts of a proposal when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of which agency or person undertakes them” (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.7). Because no site specific adverse impacts are expected for any resources (described above), cumulative impacts at the larger, watershed scale are not anticipated.

## Economic and Social Issues

Lease cancellation could lead to cumulative social impacts. The rural way of life is being impacted in El Dorado County due to expanding development and urbanization. Livestock grazing is a tradition and lifestyle choice for many of the current lessees. Lease cancellation would impact this lifestyle and tradition.

## **CHAPTER 4: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted**

- Bill Bacchi
- Indian tribes

### **Public Participation**

This EA, posted on BLM ePlanning System website ([https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa\\_register.do](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do)) or available upon request, will be available for a 15-day public review period. Comments can be made online at the above eplanning website, or can be sent to the Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillsdale Circle, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 or emailed to [pcransto@blm.gov](mailto:pcransto@blm.gov).

### **List of Preparers and Reviewers**

- Peggy Cranston, Wildlife Biologist and Range Program Lead
- Beth Brenneman, Botanist
- Alden Neel, Archaeologist

**Reviewers:**

*/s/ Peggy Cranston*

*June 30, 2016*

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NEPA Reviewer/Wildlife biologist and Range

*/s/ Alden Neel*

*July 5, 2016*

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Archaeologist

*/s/ Beth Brenneman*

*June 23, 2016*

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Botany

*/s/ Jeff Horn*

*July 5, 2016*

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Recreation