

David Mabe
NOAA Fisheries Service
Habitat Conservation Division
10095 W. Emerald
Boise, ID 83704

Dear David:

Enclosed please find the Biological Assessment (BA) for BLM Actions in the Canyon to Big Timber Watershed Assessment Area. This BA addresses the potential impacts to Snake River Chinook Salmon, Snake River Steelhead, Columbia River Bull Trout, designated critical habitats, Essential Fish Habitat, Canada Lynx, and Gray Wolf on a suite of livestock grazing permits, range improvement projects and vegetative treatment actions on Bureau of Land Management administered land within the Canyon to Big Timber (CBT) assessment area of the Lemhi River Section 7 Watershed. The analysis of the “may affect” livestock grazing allotments has been completed pursuant to the *Interagency Protocol for Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultations for Livestock Grazing in the Salmon and Challis Field Offices (IP)*, dated September 30, 2009, and is batched in one BA for ease of presentation.

On April 23, 2010, we provided your agency summary BAs for a subset of seven of these grazing actions which were previously consulted on, documenting that none of the projects, their effects on the environmental baseline, or the environmental baseline itself, had changed in a manner that would have required us to reinitiate consultation since 1999. On June 10, 2010, we received a letter from you documenting receipt of the summary BAs and requesting additional information presented in the IP format. This BA serves to address your request for the seven of the allotments submitted to you in April 2010 as well as analyze the proposed permits for the remainder of the allotments in the CBT. In addition, several range improvement projects and vegetation treatments currently being proposed for implementation within the CBT are also analyzed in this document. The remainder of the allotments that were evaluated in the April 23, 2010 submission were consulted on in the Lemhi River BA submitted to you in March of this year.

Draft versions of this document have been reviewed multiple times by Level 1 Team representatives, and portions of the document such as the monitoring and adaptive management section have been developed in coordination with your office. We believe that we have sufficiently addressed those comments and at this time we would like to initiate consultation on this BA, and are requesting a Letter of Concurrence from NOAA Fisheries for the effects of these actions on Snake River Chinook Salmon, Snake River Steelhead, their designated critical habitats, and Essential Fish Habitat.

If you have any questions, please contact Jude Trapani at (208) 756-5475 or via email at jtrapani@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Steve Hartmann
Field Manager

Enclosures