



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Salmon Field Office
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Salmon, Idaho 83467

<http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/salmon.html>

In Reply Refer To:
6840 (IDI04000)

FEB 16 2012

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

Dear David:

Enclosed please find an Amendment to the *Biological Assessment (BA) for BLM Actions in the Canyon to Big Timber Watershed Assessment Area*, which was submitted to your office on September 16, 2011. This BA addressed 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.

We have not yet concluded consultation with your office on this BA; we received a draft biological opinion dated December 19, 2011, which addressed all the proposed actions within the BA. Our staff reviewed the draft biological opinion and met with Chad Fealko of your Salmon office to request clarification of several items within the draft Terms and Conditions related to timing and potential disturbance of steelhead trout and their redds by livestock on the Leadville and Jake's Canyon allotments. We understand that revised Terms and Conditions will be incorporated into the final biological opinion based on our discussions. We also met with the ranch manager for the Leadville Allotment permittee who had requested applicant status on January 9, 2012 and provided opportunity for comment on the draft biological opinion; he declined to provide comments with the understanding that the final biological opinion would incorporate the changes noted above. The Jake's Canyon Allotment permittee was notified several times of the opportunity to comment; no response was received.

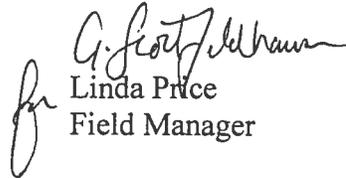
Since submittal of the BA and receipt of the draft biological opinion, as a result of internal guidance and policy changes related to livestock grazing permit renewals and sage grouse habitat

management, and efforts to address the Terms and Conditions of the draft NMFS biological opinions for the Jake's Canyon and Leadville Allotments, we have modified most of the proposed actions analyzed in the BA. The changes to the proposed actions range from purely formatting in how the numbers of animals and date ranges are presented on the permit, to reductions in livestock numbers, to changes in terms and conditions addressing use of riparian areas. We believe the changes result in either no change in effect of the action, or further reduce the potential for effects of the action.

To address the changes in the proposed action as we progress towards finalizing the NEPA for the CBT proposed actions, we developed this Amendment in coordination with Chad Fealko from your office. The amendment presents the information allotment by allotment, identifies the proposed action(s) analyzed in the BA, describes the change (or lack thereof) in the action(s) as currently proposed, and discusses any change in potential effects to the environmental baseline. Each narrative also notes that there are no changes to any of the previously made determinations.

If you have any questions regarding this amendment, please contact Jude Trapani at (208) 756-5475 (jtrapani@blm.gov), or Scott Feldhausen at (208) 756-5478 (afeldhausen@blm.gov).

Sincerely,


Linda Price
Field Manager

Enclosures

Cc: Chad Fealko, Salmon Office