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Rangeland Management & Grazing

The BLM supports working landscapes across the West, and is committed to keeping these public landscapes healthy and productive. Under its multiple-use and sustained yield mandates, the BLM manages 248 million acres of public lands for various uses and values, including livestock grazing, recreational opportunities, healthy watersheds, and wildlife habitat. The agency manages livestock grazing on 155 million acres of those lands, as guided by Federal law. More specifically, the BLM administers nearly 18,000 permits and leases held by ranchers who graze their livestock, mostly cattle and sheep, at least part of the year on more than 21,000 allotments under BLM management. Permits and leases generally cover a 10-year period and are renewable if the BLM determines that the terms and conditions of the expiring permit or lease are being met. The amount of grazing that takes place each year on BLM-managed lands can be affected by such factors as drought, wildfire, and market conditions.

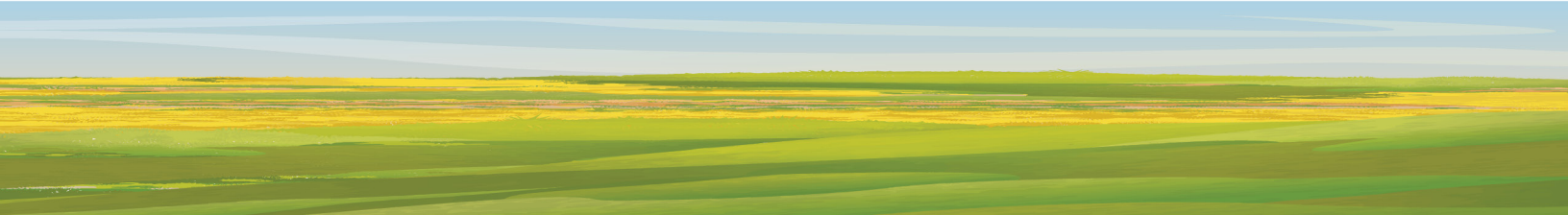
In Fiscal Year 2018, the BLM was allocated $81 million for its rangeland management program and spent $34 million (42 percent) on livestock grazing administration. The other funds covered such activities as weed management, rangeland monitoring, planning, water development, vegetation restoration, and habitat improvement. In 2018, the BLM collected $17.3 million in grazing fees which are shared with state and local governments in accordance with legislative requirements.

The Federal grazing fee, which applies to public land ranchers using BLM- or U.S. Forest Service-managed land, is calculated annually by using a formula set by Congress in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. Under this formula, as modified and extended by a presidential Executive Order issued in 1986, the grazing fee cannot fall below $1.35 per animal unit month (AUM); also, any fee increase or decrease cannot exceed 25 percent of the previous year's level. (An AUM is the amount of forage needed to sustain one cow and her calf, one horse, or five sheep or goats for a month.) The grazing fee for 2019 is $1.35 per AUM, as compared to the 2018 fee of $1.41.

The Federal grazing fee is computed by using a 1966 base value of $1.23 per AUM for livestock grazing on public lands in Western states. The figure is then adjusted each year according to three factors – current private grazing land lease rates, beef cattle prices, and the cost of livestock production. In effect, the fee rises, falls, or stays the same based on market conditions, with livestock operators paying more when conditions are better and less when conditions have declined. Thus, the grazing fee is not a cost-recovery fee, but a market-driven fee.

In Fiscal Year 2017, BLM introduced Outcome-Based Grazing Authorizations, an initiative designed to offer greater flexibility to adjust grazing management under changing conditions to livestock owners who operate on BLM-managed lands.

While livestock grazing can result in impacts on public land resources, well-managed grazing provides numerous environmental benefits. For example, well-managed grazing can control some invasive plant species or reduce the fuels that contribute to severe wildfires. Besides providing such traditional products as meat and fiber, public rangelands and private ranch lands support healthy watersheds, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. In addition, livestock grazing on public lands helps maintain the viability of adjacent or nearby private ranches that, in turn, preserve open spaces. These open spaces are central to the West's history and will continue to shape the region's character in the years to come.



History of Livestock Grazing Regulations

Uncontrolled grazing and competition among livestock owners during the late 1800s left much of the rangelands depleted. The public lands were administered by the General Land Office, which later became the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and went unregulated until the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) in 1934. The TGA was passed to regulate livestock grazing on public lands and was the start of the Federal government's involvement in rangeland management.

On March 2, 1936, the Rules for Administration of Grazing Districts were approved. It was not until March 16, 1938 that the Federal Range Code was published in the Federal Register [CFR Part 501 – The Federal Range Code (Chapter III – Division of Grazing, Department of the Interior)].

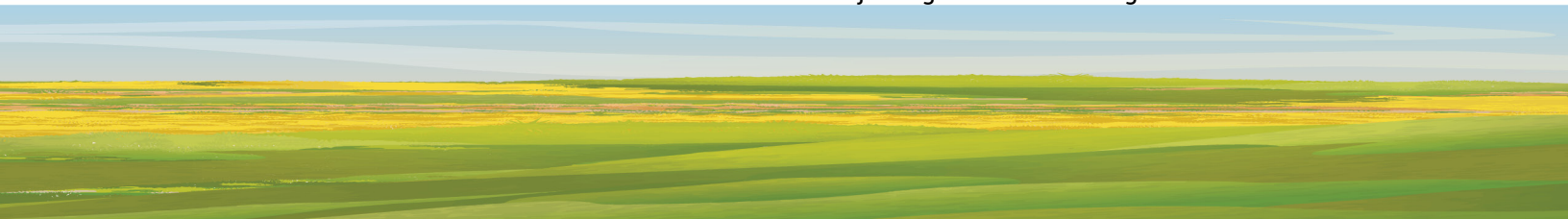
In September 1968, the Federal Range Code became the Grazing Regulations (Grazing Regulations for the Public Lands - Circular No. 2246). This publication represented many modifications of the original regulations and was a consolidation of the primary regulations used in the management of the public lands administered pursuant to the TGA (both inside and outside of the grazing districts).

On October 21, 1976, with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), Congress recognized that the public lands were a national resource that were capable of providing for a variety of uses and, thus, should be retained in public ownership. FLPMA provided broad policy on how public lands would be managed and introduced the multiple use concept. With the passage of FLPMA and the changing and increased land use demands, a new rulemaking was approved (effective August 4, 1978) to update the grazing regulations to allow for management flexibility to achieve multiple use, sustained yield, environmental, economic, and other objectives. The 1978 grazing regulations tied grazing permit renewals to land use plans and gave the BLM the authority to cancel, suspend, or modify permits due to increases or decreases in forage or acres available to grazing per the land use plans.

Later in 1978, Congress acknowledged that there were still problems with the management of the rangelands. Through the passage of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA) in 1978 (October 25, 1978), Congress noted that rangelands were still producing below potential and conditions would remain or decline without more funding and management. These unsatisfactory conditions represented a high risk for further degradation of soil and vegetation resources that could threaten local economies. One of the purposes of PRIA was to reaffirm a national policy and commitment to manage, maintain, and improve the condition of the public rangelands so that they become as productive as feasible for all rangeland values.

Many amendments to the grazing regulations followed the 1978 rulemaking and in 1994, the U.S. Department of Interior (USDI) BLM and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) U.S. Forest Service (USFS) embarked on a national effort to change policies and regulations within both federal agencies that were intended to improve and restore a significant portion of rangeland ecosystems and to improve and maintain biodiversity, while providing for sustainable development on the lands administered by the two agencies. Known as the 1995 Grazing Rule, the rulemaking was published in the Federal Register on February 22, 1995 and became effective August 21, 1995.

In 2006, the BLM promulgated amendments to the livestock grazing regulations that changed or reverted some of the 1995 revisions to the grazing regulations. In 2007, the U.S. District Court in Idaho permanently enjoined implementation of the 2006 final rule and regulatory changes in all respects. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the permanent injunction enjoining the 2006 Grazing Rule.



The BLM has managed public land livestock grazing activities in conformance with the regulations that were in effect immediately before the 2006 Rule was adopted (October 1, 2005 edition of 43 CFR Part 4100) except for the conservation use permit provision previously struck down by the Tenth Circuit in (1998). The 1995 regulations, without the provision for conservation use permits, have never been published in the CFR.

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Permit Processing

Currently, it takes BLM approximately 5 to 7 years to fully process a grazing permit, from the time it is initiated until the permit is issued.

Project Initiation through Land Health Evaluation

How long this takes is dependent on scale, public involvement, size of area, number of allotments, etc.

1. Application or BLM initiation
   - Triggers: Permit expiration, application for management change, transfer, unmet Land Health Standards with livestock causal factor, watershed evaluation schedule, etc.
2. Initial Scoping
   - Outreach Needs: Part of Communication, Coordination, Consultation (CCC) with affected permittees or lessees, the state having lands or responsible for managing resources within the area, and the interested public
   - Outreach Mechanisms: Usually a letter, phone calls, and/or press release notifying parties of BLM intent and schedule for evaluation
3. Monitoring
   - Collection of data
   - Analysis of data
4. Evaluate Land Health
   - Interdisciplinary Team field work
   - Determine Causal Factor – overlap with NEPA timeline

NEPA through Permit issuance

Of the 5-7 year approximate timeframe for fully processing permits or leases, it takes nearly 2 years (657 days in 2017 and 2018 from starting the NEPA process until permit issuance. This duration depends on the size of the assessed area, the number of allotments, the number of permittees, and the number and extent of issues to address, etc.

5. NEPA
   - Scoping – opportunity for internal and external parties to identify issues to address in analysis (CCC)
   - Alternative Development to address issues
   - Consultation, as needed
   - Finding of No Significant Impact
   - Comment period on Environmental Analysis (CCC), as needed
6. Proposed Decision to implement an alternative
   - 15 day Protest Period
   - Protest response
7. Final Decision
   - 30 day Appeal Period
   - Appeal Processing – Office of Appeals and Hearings-Administrative Law Judge
   - Respond to Litigation – summary judgements, hearings etc.
8. Issue Permit

Talking Points

BLM invites comment on the following or other potential opportunities to address needs through regulatory change. The over-arching needs are to help with streamlining fully processing permits and leases and to increase management flexibility to promote land health. Streamlining permitting and improving flexibility will enable BLM to be more responsive to both livestock and resource management needs.

Streamlining Opportunities:

Bills

Need: Currently there are 23,472 Authorization/Allotment combinations. Of these, 7,058 Authorization/Allotment combinations authorize 1-50 AUMs (30%). There are 10,257 Authorization/Allotment combinations with 1-100 AUMs (44% of the total). Each bill including tracking, late fees etc., represents similar workload regardless of size.

Opportunity: Consider different billing schedules for different AUM authorizations

Permit and Lease Renewals

Need: Some renewals are categorically excluded from NEPA under certain conditions but issuance still requires a Proposed Decision and protest period prior to a Final Decision, adding time to the decision making process.

Opportunity: Take advantage of existing coordination requirements to reduce decision issuance time (eliminate protest period)

Permit and Lease Transfers

Need: Some transfers are categorically excluded from NEPA under certain conditions, however issuance of a transferred permit or lease also requires a Proposed Decision like permit renewals, adding administrative time. In addition, transferred permits can be for 3 years, which means they are processed 3 times during a 10 year cycle, adding significant time.

Opportunity: The opportunity is to reduce permit renewal processing workload and time by issuing permits or leases without decision when the only change is the name on the permit. Another opportunity would be to require 10 year instead of 3 year minimum term on the permit.

Crossing Authorizations

Need: Crossing authorizations are used to facilitate timely livestock movement to and from grazing allotments, however they currently require the same processing workload as typical 10-year grazing permits or leases. This hinders the ability of the BLM and permittee to be responsive to changes in management needs. These authorizations are currently categorically excluded from NEPA under certain conditions and most are administrative in nature, however, they require a Proposed Decision and protest period like renewals.

Opportunity: The opportunity is to reduce permit renewal processing workload and time by issuing decisions immediately effective.

Non Renewable Permits and Leases

Need: Nonrenewable authorizations can be used to address resource concerns, treatments, etc. These also require Proposed Decision and protest period like renewals.

Opportunity: The opportunity is to reduce permit renewal processing workload and time by issuing decisions immediately effective.

Targeted Grazing

Need: Targeted Grazing authorizations can facilitate site specific treating vegetation composition and structure to create fuel breaks or other vegetation management objectives.

Opportunity: The opportunity is to increase the use of targeted grazing authorizations for vegetation management.

Management Flexibility Opportunities:

Crossing Authorizations

Need: There is a need to facilitate timely livestock movement to and from grazing allotments

Opportunity: Issue authorizations without additional analysis and decision time to address permittee needs for livestock movement.

Non Renewable Permits and Leases

Need: There is a need to provide additional options to address resource concerns, vegetation treatments, fire recovery etc.

Opportunity: Issue permits without additional analysis and decision time to assist permittees in managing livestock in concert with changing environmental conditions.

Permit and Lease Flexibility

Need: There is a need to provide timely response to resource or management needs within limits

Opportunity: There is an opportunity to provide limited flexibility in season of use for permittees to manage livestock in concert with climatic fluctuations or other management needs.

Unauthorized Use

Need: There is a need to improve the way we document and move on from incidental occurrence

Opportunity: There is the opportunity for a consistent approach to documentation, billing and settlement, especially of incidental, non-willful occurrences.

Please provide comment:

On the ePlanning site: https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb

Or: Mail your comments to:

Bureau of Land Management
ATTN: Seth Flanigan
3948 S. Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83705

https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb
https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/rangelands-and-grazing/pgrr

Permitting Efficiency

Background

The BLM is required to fully process grazing permits and leases that authorize grazing of allotments. This means all grazing allotments must be assessed and determined to meet or make progress toward meeting Land Health Standards (See Station 4) or changes must be made to initiate progress prior to the next grazing year. NEPA analysis is also required as part of the process to compare effects of different management, and subsequent decisions are commonly challenged.

An Animal Unit Month (AUM) is defined as the amount of forage necessary for the sustenance of one cow or its equivalent for a period of 1 month. AUMs are listed on grazing permits and leases to describe amount of authorized use. Although AUMs authorized by BLM have remained mostly steady in recent years, BLM has been unsuccessful fully processing all expiring permits each year. In addition, BLM issues annual bills for the nearly 18,000 grazing permits and leases, adding to the administrative workload.

In addition, rapidly changing environmental conditions have highlighted the need for more permitting options and built-in flexibility to make timely adjustments to maintain rangeland health and address other threats such as wildfire spread.

These circumstances are prompting BLM to explore opportunities to both streamline permit/lease administration and increase management flexibility while revising the grazing regulations.

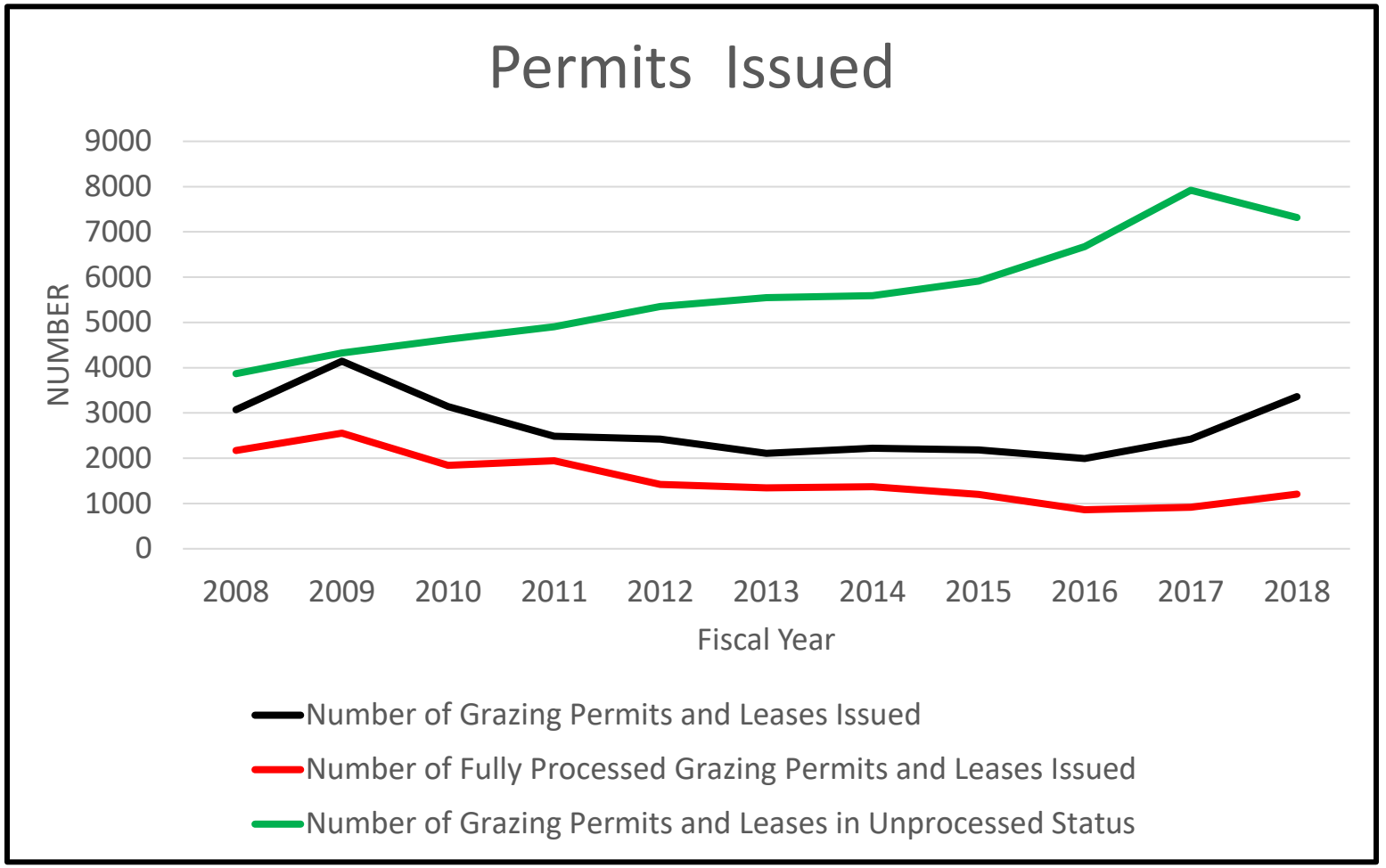
Permit Statistics

The chart below shows the number of allotments, permits and leases, permits and leases issued, fully processed permits and leases, and unprocessed permits and leases for the period 2008-2018. Note the declining fully processed and increasing unprocessed columns. For brevity, the term permit or permits refers to both permit and lease types of grazing authorizations.

Grazing Information for Fiscal Years 2008-2018					
Fiscal Year	Number of Allotments	Number of Grazing Permits and Leases	Number of Grazing Permits and Leases Issued	Number of Fully Processed Grazing Permits and Leases Issued	Number of Grazing Permits and Leases in Unprocessed Status
2008	21,396	17,812	3071	2168	3868
2009	21,379	17,887	4144	2554	4326
2010	21,372	17,220	3143	1843	4626
2011	21,330	17,756	2483	1945	4905
2012	21,346	17,723	2424	1423	5350
2013	21,357	17,798	2111	1344	5547
2014	21,241	17,792	2221	1374	5594
2015	21,241	17,799	2181	1203	5910
2016	21,298	17,943	1994	862	6676
2017	21,318	17,885	2421	917	7920
2018	21,209	17,782	3362	1205	7316

Permits Issued

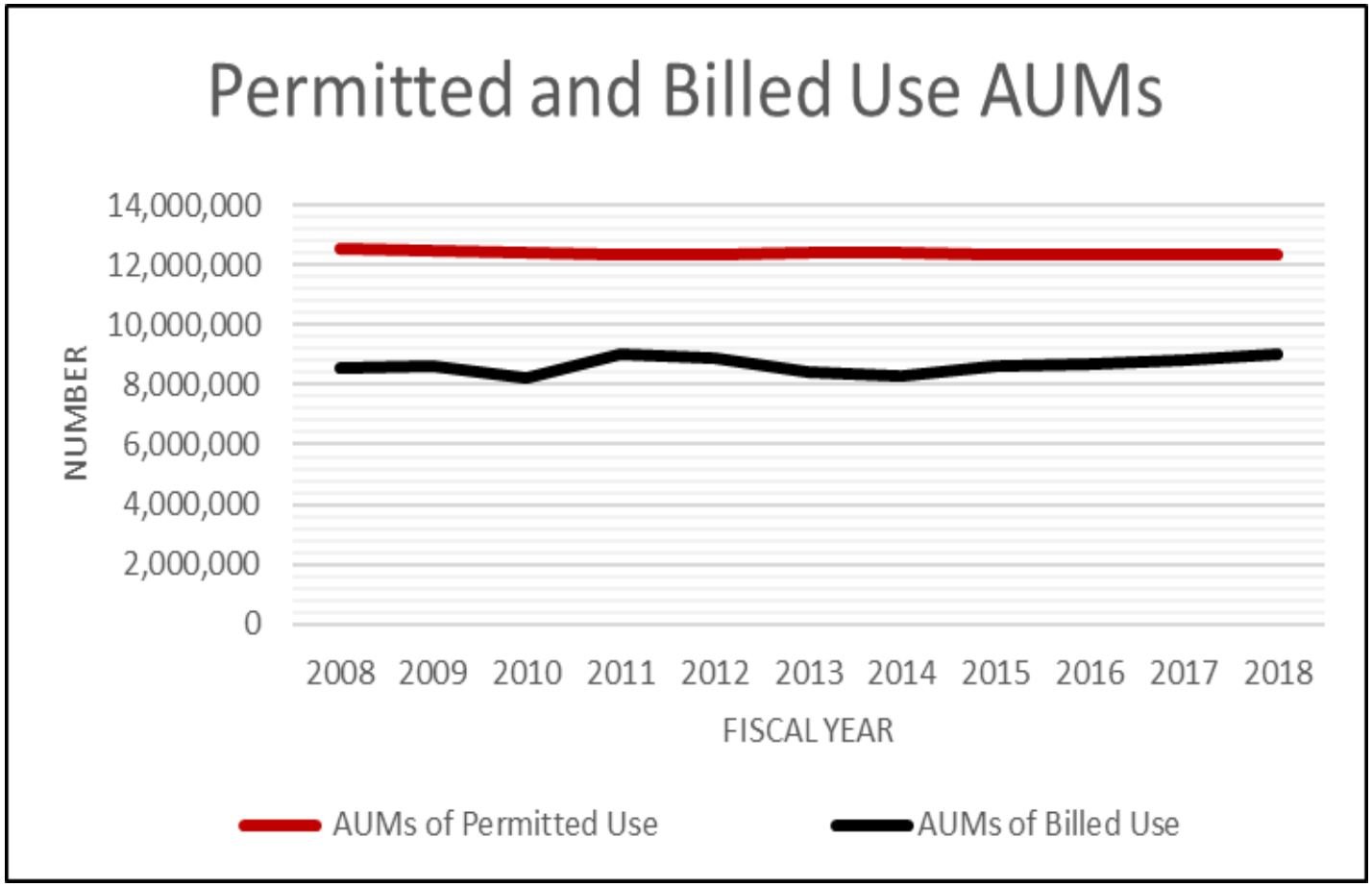
This graph shows the declining number of permits and leases issued as fully processed.



Authorized and billed AUMs

This chart and graph show the relatively steady numbers of authorized and billed AUMs.

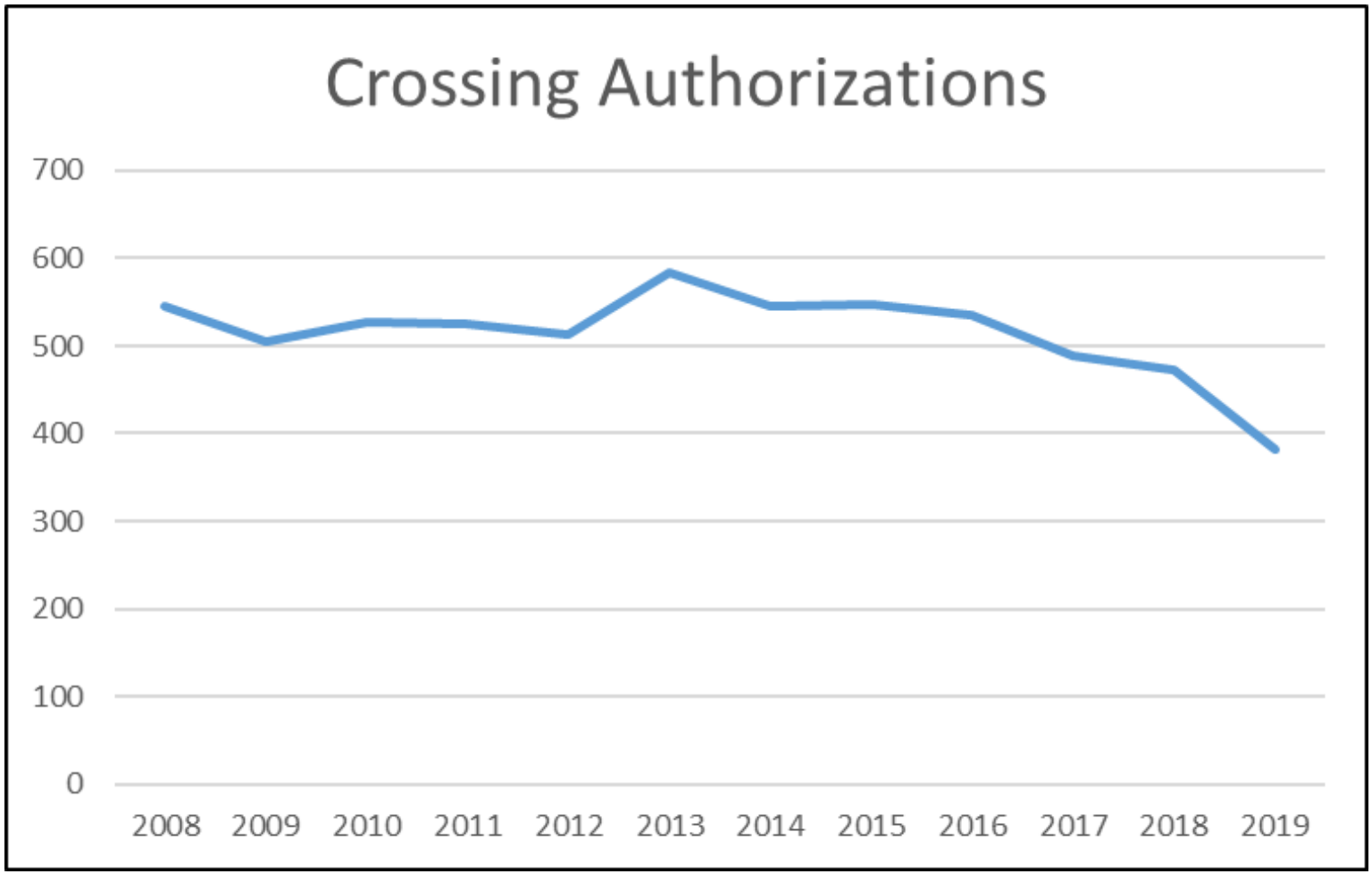
Fiscal Year	AUMs of Authorized Use	AUMs of Billed Use
2008	12,526,006	8,547,014
2009	12,462,897	8,611,899
2010	12,409,761	8,238,753
2011	12,333,598	9,058,802
2012	12,377,338	8,924,011
2013	12,414,179	8,428,929
2014	12,400,988	8,285,880
2015	12,365,877	8,626,462
2016	12,347,968	8,722,209
2017	12,333,568	8,820,671
2018	12,343,410	9,053,253



Crossing Authorizations

This chart and graph show the numbers of authorizations to trail livestock across BLM grazing allotments.

Fiscal Year	Crossing Authorizations
2008	545
2009	504
2010	528
2011	526
2012	514
2013	583
2014	545
2015	547
2016	536
2017	489
2018	472
2019	382



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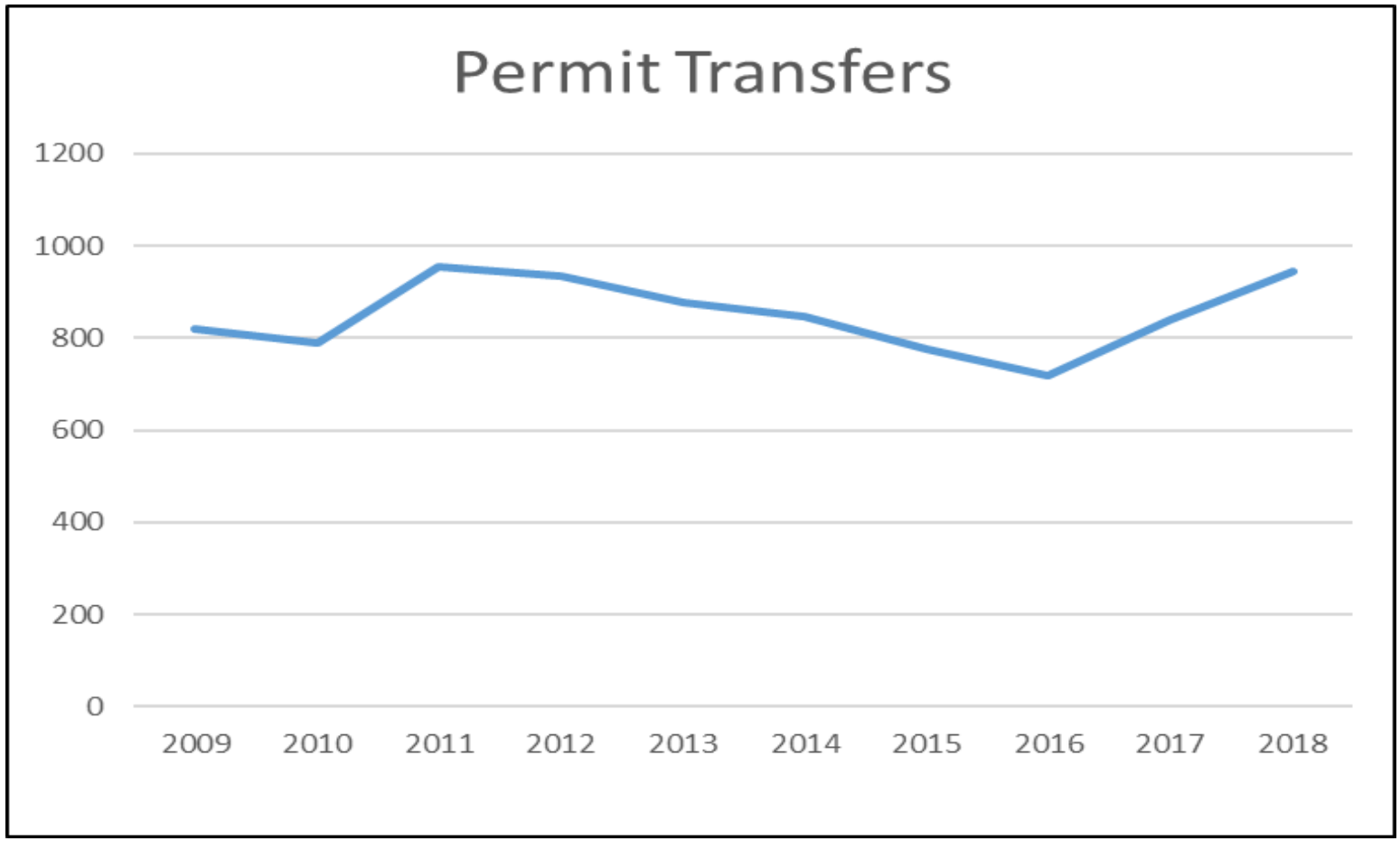
Permit Transfers

This chart and graph show the number of permit or lease transfers requiring the same process as permit renewals.

Fiscal Year	Permit Transfers
2009	820
2010	790
2011	953
2012	933
2013	877
2014	846
2015	776
2016	718
2017	841
2018	943



Outcome Based Grazing

In August, 2017, the BLM began a new initiative for Outcome Based Grazing Authorizations (OBGA). Under this initiative, BLM will work with livestock operators to develop OBGA that provide greater flexibility for adjusting grazing use due to changing conditions in order to achieve specific vegetative, habitat, and livestock operation sustainability objectives. The BLM selected 11 demonstration projects that will use grazing authorizations as a framework for livestock operators to demonstrate their ability to achieve habitat and vegetation objectives by providing them flexibility to exercise their knowledge, experience and stewardship. For example, rather than specifying dates for moving between pastures or having strict on/off dates, management will focus on achieving end results using indicators like grazing utilization patterns (using utilization studies) and seasonal use/rest balance for the goal of balancing forage and habitat resources for the greatest mutual gain.

As the demonstration projects progress, they will give BLM and its partners information and experience for developing consistent national policy to implement outcome based grazing as a standard practice. Local knowledge and experience will provide the foundation for broader implementation, providing BLM with a consistent approach to working with permittees to provide authorizations that meet conservation and restoration needs on public lands while meeting economic and social needs simultaneously.

Individual Project Updates

Lakeview Oregon, Fitzgerald Ranch - The project is focused on improving riparian areas and grazing cheatgrass strategically and purposefully based on phenology. The project is complete and the field office is working with the permittees to implement and conduct field monitoring.

Burns Oregon, Roaring Springs Ranch - The project is focused on the reduction of cheatgrass to improve ecological processes and reduce fire risk, improving riparian conditions, addressing juniper expansion, and coordinating grazing between livestock and wild horses. The field office is in the process of completing the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation (expected by early 2020), which will be followed by completing the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.

Craig Colorado, Little Snake L.& L. - The project focuses on providing opportunities to manage across habitat needs and landscapes to balance the cross-ownership management and provide flexibility to respond to habitat and ecological needs annually. The field office is in the process of completing the NEPA analysis.

Rawlins Wyoming, P.H. Livestock - The project is focused on providing flexibility that will allow all six allotments to be managed together in order to balance uses and needs. The field office is in the process of completing the NEPA analysis.

Lewistown Montana, Elk Creek - The project is temporarily on hold due to a vacant staff position. The field office hopes to complete the Land Health Assessment/Evaluation and environmental assessment by the end of 2019 (dependent on staffing).

Twin Falls Idaho, Deep Creek Ranch LLC - This project focuses on being able to maintain and improve wildlife habitat through vegetation treatments in crested wheatgrass seedings while maintaining the integrity and functionality of the livestock operation.

The permittee is implementing the flexibility in the new permit and 2019 is the first year of implementing the monitoring plan.

Carson City Nevada, Smith Creek Ranch - This project focuses on improving riparian and upland habitat for the variety of conditions and resources present. The project area provides habitat for sage grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout, as well as other wildlife and

associated habitat. Management will focus on cheatgrass control, Pinyon and juniper management, as well as monitoring and potentially helping manage wild horse over-populations. The field office is in the process of completing the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation (expected by early 2020), which will be followed by completing the appropriate NEPA analysis.

Battle Mountain Nevada, Willow Ranch - The project will focus on maintaining or increasing deep-rooted natives, maintaining or attaining proper functioning condition of riparian areas, and maintain seeding health. In addition, this project has a goal of integrating Private land, BLM managed land and Forest Service managed land into a comprehensive management plan. The field office is in the process of completing the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation, which will be followed by completing the appropriate NEPA analysis.

Ely Nevada, Uhalde Ranch - The focus of this project includes improving or maintaining ecological conditions while providing the flexibility to respond to weather, and other changes in conditions, and changes in livestock kind. This project also has wild horse over-populations on the north of the project area, and finding a balance between appropriate livestock grazing and managed wild horse populations is a main goal of this project. The field office is in the process of completing the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation, which will be followed by completing the appropriate NEPA analysis.

Elko Nevada, Horseshoe - This project focuses on managing and improving cheatgrass dominated landscapes through the implementation of strategic timing of grazing. This project strives to address a cheatgrass dominated landscape with minimal intermixed native perennials in order to stop the conversion to a cheatgrass monoculture while simultaneously decreasing any fire size, intensity and behavior. The project is temporarily on hold due to a vacant staff position. The field office is in the process of updating the project timeline.

Elko Nevada, Winecup-Gamble - This project focuses on increasing resiliency to fire, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat and riparian resources, and improving the condition of the land for all uses. The development of objectives ensuring the social, cultural and economic viability and enhancement is also central to this project. The project will integrate new monitoring techniques which could prove to be affordable and functional for informing management. The field office is in the process of completing the Land Health Assessment and Evaluation, which will be followed by completing the appropriate NEPA analysis.

Targeted Grazing for Fuel Reduction

What is it?

Targeted grazing is using livestock as a tool to accomplish specific vegetation management objectives; primarily site and timing specific fuel break creation and maintenance. Targeted grazing can also be used for other control or reclamation efforts commonly referred to as prescribed grazing, but this handout focuses on targeted grazing for fuel reduction.

What's the primary goal?

To reduce fine fuel height and loading in the fuel-break strip and maintain fine fuels (grasses and forbs) reduction up to the start of the wildfire season.

Why is it important?

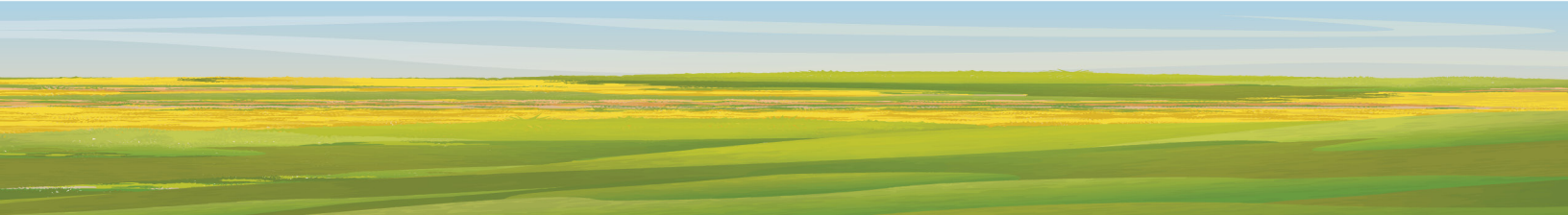
- Wildfire size is increasing in the west (e.g., "mega-fires" of recent years) so, fuels management projects need to be commensurate with the increased size of the wildfires.
- Livestock grazing provides a unique opportunity to manage fine fuels with a range management tool that is already in place on all lands regardless of ownership.
- Benefits include:
  - Reduced wildfire size
  - Minimized threat to life, property, and disruption of rangeland livestock operations
  - Avoided losses of forage and short- and long-term grazing opportunities
  - Decreased wildfire suppression and rehabilitation costs
  - Conserved important wildlife habitat and resource health

What are the key elements?

- Strategic application - landscape-specific approaches
  - Specific kind of livestock – take advantage of animal behavior and forage preference
  - Determined season of use – graze during the plant growth stage that will meet fuel reduction objectives, typically until the start of the wildfire season
  - Defined duration – choose the length of grazing period
  - Specific intensity – graze the amount that will have the desired effect
  - Adaptable – adjust the above to improve effectiveness
- Surgical placement - where needed, in strips or bands
- Not limited - by pasture fence lines and other administrative boundaries – in concert with BLM permittees, state land agencies, private landowners, other partners
- Flexible - to adjust to the variable timing of annual grass palatability, changes in yearly biomass production, and in scale to meet landscape scale needs

Where has it been used?

Soda Fire Targeted Grazing Demonstration Area. The BLM Boise and Vale Districts implemented a 35-mile targeted grazing project along the base of the Owyhee mountains in the spring of 2018. It crossed 13 pastures authorized for grazing by five grazing permittees. The BLM Vale District also had two operators graze two of the pastures. The objective of the Soda targeted grazing fuel breaks is to have a stubble height of 2 inches or less 200 feet each side of designated road.



Elko District Targeted Grazing Demonstration Area. Implementation of this demonstration area utilized portions of four allotments (2.5 percent of total acreage) in different areas totaling 40 miles of strategically grazed fuel breaks (8,800 acres). Width of the fuels breaks ranged from 300 ft. to one half mile in width. The objective of the Elko District area was an average stubble height of 2-3 inches on cheatgrass.

Boulder Creek Wildfire/Demonstration Area One portion of the Elko District project experienced a wildfire and demonstrated positive effects of targeted grazing by reducing the need for additional suppression efforts where targeted grazing had occurred. The targeted grazing along the water haul road assisted in the containment of the fire and helped to keep the fire from burning into sage-grouse habitat in the nearby mountains.

Lakeview District Targeted Grazing Demonstration Area. A third targeted grazing demonstration study site is now underway near Lakeview, Oregon. A linear pipeline with water tanks aligned along the fuel break site will be used to maintain cattle grazing within the targeted area.

Where can you get more Information?

Great Basin Fire Science Exchange website - A web page dedicated to both the strategic targeted grazing program and the dormant season grazing of invasive annual grasses is found on the Great Basin Fire Science Exchange website (www.greatbasinfirescience.org). Currently, the website contains relevant scientific publications on managing fine fuels with targeted grazing and will include results from the above Soda Fire and Elko District projects. There are plans to expand the website to include policies; planning and environmental assessment information; targeted grazing demonstration area information and reports; lessons learned; and targeted grazing workshop schedules.

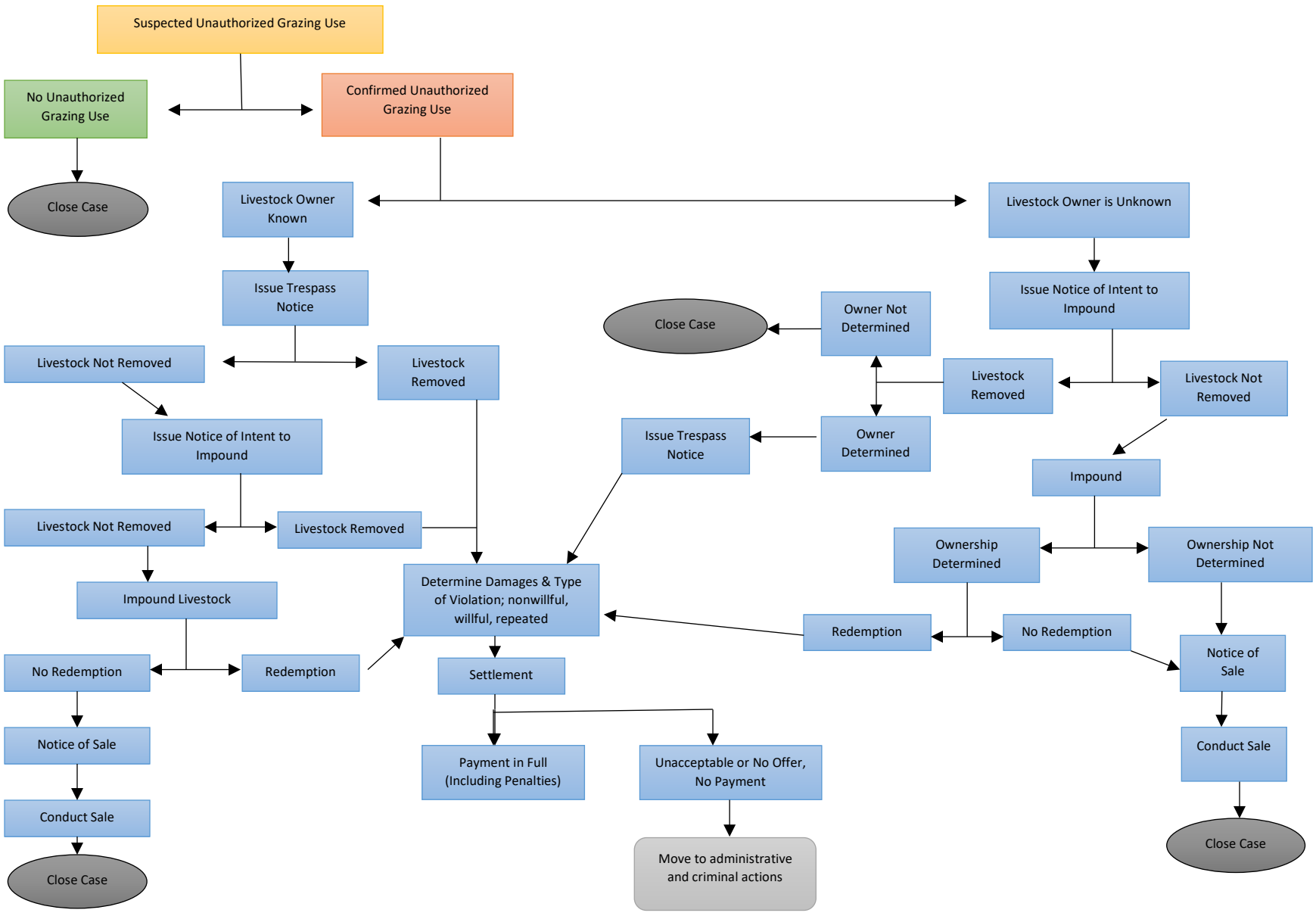
Contact of the Boulder Creek wildfire with targeted grazing along a rural road near Elko, Nevada. No further fire suppression was needed here.

Targeted grazing reduces fine fuels (cheatgrass, Japanese brome and bulbous bluegrass) in southern Idaho.

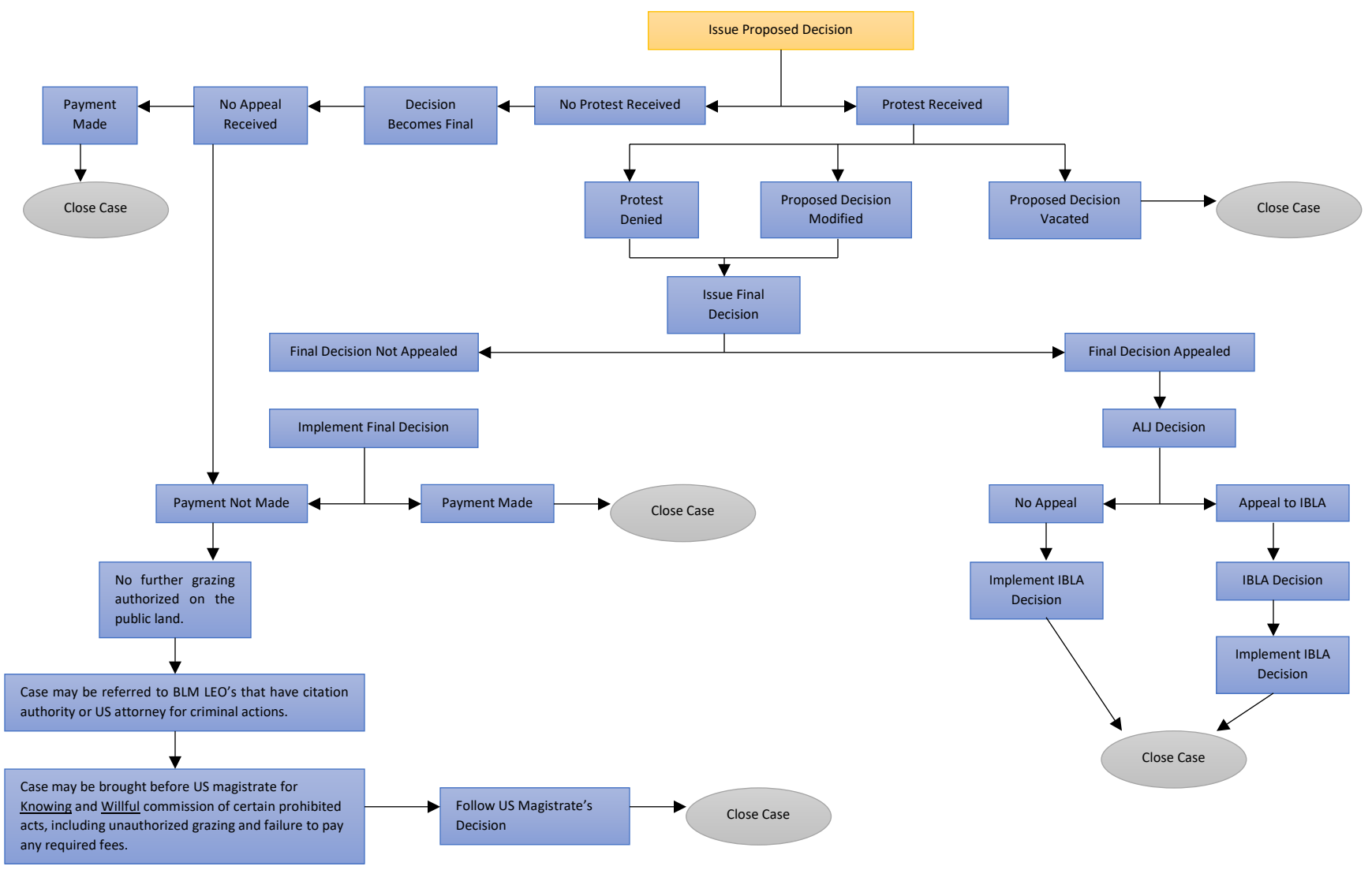
How can you get involved?

- Provide comment on the proposed regulations to integrate flexibility in grazing schedules and stocking rates to deal with variable timing and productivity of grass fuels.
- Provide comment on the ePlanning site: https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb.
- Fill out comment card at the comment station.
- Mail your comments to: Bureau of Land Management, ATTN: Seth Flanigan, 3948 S. Development Ave., Boise, ID 83705.

Unauthorized Grazing Use Flowchart*



Potential Administrative and Criminal Actions



Note: Proposed Decision includes: (1) type of violation, (2) demand for payment, (3) proposed penalties, and (4) no grazing use on public lands until amount due is paid.

*Disclaimer: This chart has been provided by BLM for representational purposes only. BLM makes no warranties, express or implied, as to its

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https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/rangelands-and-grazing/pgrr

Land Health - An Overview and How to Participate

What is Land Health?

To achieve desired conditions on public lands, the BLM grazing administration regulations have focused on three requirements:

- The **Fundamentals** of Rangeland Health include provisions for properly functioning watersheds, ecological process maintenance, water quality, and wildlife habitat restoration.
- Land health **Standards** describe conditions needed for public land health, such as the presence of streambank vegetation, adequate plant canopy, or ground cover to maintain soil health
- Rangeland Health **Guidelines** are the management techniques used to achieve or maintain healthy public rangelands and may include dormant season grazing, or rest rotation grazing in riparian areas

The BLM first included the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health in the 1995 grazing regulations and developed a “fallback” set of standards and guidelines for livestock grazing. Through the late 1990’s each state developed its own Land Health Standards and Guidelines, with input from citizen-based Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) across the West.

What is the primary goal?

The goal of the BLM's rangeland management has been to ensure the health and productivity of public rangelands for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations while providing for historic uses with local communities. State Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) developed Land Health Standards and Guidelines and designated the requirements to apply to all public lands uses and resources.

Why is Land Health important?

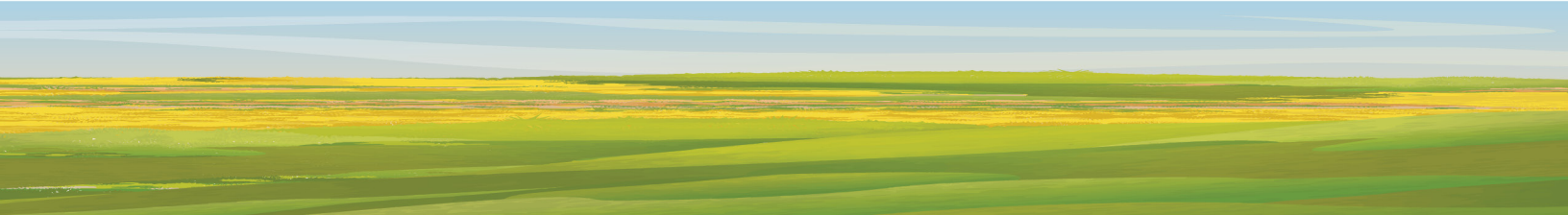
- Traditionally the most common reasons for loss of land health were overgrazing by domestic and wild animals, and change in the historical patterns of fire.
- Today, there are many additional uses, resources and processes that simultaneously influence land health.
- The grazing regulations, however, are still the only set of program regulations that define and regulate compliance with and achievement of land health.

The BLM evaluates land health standards using an interdisciplinary team that evaluates 17 indicators that simultaneously influence land health such as fire return intervals that are longer or shorter than what occurred naturally; recreational activities that disturb soil or vegetation (off-road vehicle use, recreational trails, etc.); introduction or spread of invasive plants; livestock use; land treatments (seeding, herbicide application, tree thinning, etc.); roads, energy infrastructure, and urban/suburban development; wildlife; and wild horse and burro use.

Can I get a little history and background?

The ecological theories of succession and retrogression were developed into a method of rangeland condition assessment in the 1940's when Grazing Boards still were an important source of input to the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Interior. Rangelands were described as being in "excellent," "good," "fair," or "poor" condition, depending on how closely the current vegetation on a site resembled the climax vegetation defined for a site. This worked well on grasslands but did not work as well for livestock grazing in other parts of the United States.

The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 and its later amendments, phased out Grazing Boards in favor of interdisciplinary committees referred to as RACs. The RACs advise the BLM on historical uses and



on more current topics such as wildlife and water quality that focused more broadly on multiple uses.

A rangeland health model was developed by the National Research Council (NRC) Committee on Rangeland Classification, which was established to evaluate the methods used by Federal agencies to classify, inventory, and monitor rangelands. Rangeland health was recommended by the NRC as a minimum ecological standard in 1994, shortly before the BLM revised and added rangeland health to grazing regulation in 1995. The RAC's began to develop individual state Land Health Standards and Guidelines in the late 1990's. Once completed, these were approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

How should the BLM update Land Health regulations?

You tell us, we want your input!

- Could the BLM use existing permits to address areas not achieving land health in grazing allotments?
- How can the BLM continue to look to watershed or landscape evaluation of land health to achieve coordinated management across allotment boundaries?
- In what ways can livestock grazing be used to reduce wildfire risk and improve rangeland health?
- Should other uses contribute to the achievement of land health?

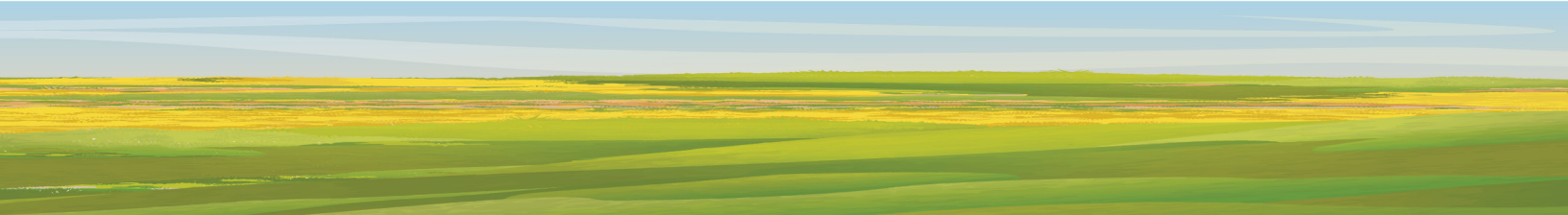
How can you be involved?

- Provide comment on the proposed regulations to integrate **flexibility** in grazing schedules and stocking rates to deal with variable timing and productivity of grass fuels.
- Provide comment on the ePlanning site: https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb.
- Fill out comment card at the comment station.
- Mail your comments to: Bureau of Land Management, ATTN: Seth Flanigan, 3948 S. Development Ave., Boise, ID 83705.

Where can I get more Information?

Please contact your local BLM office and check the following website:

https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/rangelands-and-grazing/rangeland-health



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb
https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/rangelands-and-grazing/pgrr

Scoping Guide

What is Scoping and Why is it important?

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of the issues to be addressed in a NEPA analysis. Scoping is an opportunity for you to provide input to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) decision-making process. Citizens, stakeholders and interest groups often have valuable information about potential effects that proposed federal actions may have on places and resources they consider important. The BLM is responsible for managing public lands in the public interest, and scoping is your opportunity to work with us so we can take your information into account when developing issues and alternatives.

The formal purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues (and alternatives) that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis and guide the process for developing the environmental document (EA or EIS). The scoping period is the best time to identify all the issues and resources that the agency must consider when preparing an EA or EIS, as well as the potential impacts the proposed action may have on those resources.

Scoping comments that point out cause and effect relationships that could be triggered from a proposed action are most useful. The BLM reviews all scoping comments and uses them to identify significant issues.

A *Quality* scoping comment:

- Identifies specific elements of the environment that might be affected if the proposal is carried out.
- Pinpoints cause-and-effect relationships that could result from the proposed action.
- Brings to mind aspects of a proposal the BLM may not have considered.

Example of Helpful scoping comment:

"Removing the requirement that base property be capable of producing forage or crops and instead have facilities to support livestock, will provide me greater flexibility in how I manage my land, without fear of inadvertently affecting my grazing permit."

Example of an Unhelpful scoping comment:

"Stop closing our roads."

Tips for providing quality scoping comments:

Avoid vague statements or concerns. These don't give the BLM something on which to act. Be as specific as you can.

Use clear, direct language to state your concerns. Use of scientific data and argumentation is not necessary in the scoping phase.

Scoping comments are not votes for or against a proposal. BLM relies on factual information gathered during scoping, not the number of comments received.

Offer an alternative solution to your points of contention. Share your ideas with the BLM.

Provide Your Comments by:

Go online at https://go.usa.gov/xyMqb and submit your written comments to the BLM National NEPA Register Website.

Attend a Public Open House, fill out a Comment Card and give it to the Open House staff.

Mail your written comments to:

Bureau of Land Management,
ATTN: Seth Flanigan
3948 S. Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83705

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware 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 your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.