United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Instruction Memorandum **No. 97-169**
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To: All State Directors (except AK and ES)

From: Director

Subject: Alternative to Fencing Riparian Zones within Wilderness Areas

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify and affirm the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policy regarding construction of range projects within Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

BLM managers must be mindful of their responsibility to maintain existing wilderness characteristics of WSAs pending formal designation as wilderness or non-wilderness. Of particular importance is the selection of projects and the application of construction techniques to avoid impairing WSAs and minimizing impacts on wilderness values. BLM Handbook H-8550-1 Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review governs activities and developments within WSAs and contains additional guidance on avoiding impairing actions.

A recurring concern is the number of fences being proposed or constructed within WSAs to protect riparian areas. Fencing riparian areas is often not the most desired option for managing grazing within WSAs. Some of the more acceptable alternatives to fencing that should also be considered include: livestock herding, changes in season or duration of use, change of class of livestock where permittee is amenable, pasture management, and alternative water developments outside WSAs.

Under the language of the Wilderness Act, exclusion of livestock cannot be considered for the preservation of wilderness character. However, that option is allowed where necessary for the protection of other rangeland resources. As in all properly managed grazing pastures, staying within proper stocking levels is of paramount importance within WSAs.

Field personnel should consult (BLM) Technical Reference 1737-6, "Management Techniques in Riparian Areas," and Technical Reference 1737-4, "Grazing Management in Riparian Areas," for examples of management actions which may work well in these most important zones. Technical Reference 1737-6, and other related publications, can be obtained from the National Applied Resource Sciences Center (RS-130). (Use BLM Form 1556-1, "Printed Materials Distribution Section Publication Form" January 1993)

Managers may also want to consult with the National Riparian Service Team, led by Wayne Elmore [see below], concerning specific solutions for especially difficult or unique riparian management situations.

In final emphasis, the BLM manager must assure review of all realistic management options and selection of the option or combination of options that will meet riparian area livestock management requirements while maintaining the wilderness character of WSAs.

For additional information on grazing and riparian management within WSAs please contact George Ramey (202) 452-7742, Eric Luse (202) 452-7743, Jeff Jarvis (202) 452-5189, or Wayne Elmore (503) 447-8756.

Signed by:
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Directive forwarded to SD, CA-930, DMs and NORCAL from State Office on 9/12/97