



An Invitation to Comment...

Grazing Lease Authorizations for the Allotments within the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument

Ashland Resource Area Medford District Office Bureau of Land Management

The Ashland Resource Area welcomes your comments on the grazing lease authorizations that are partially or completely within the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (CSNM) which include: Soda Mountain, Keene Creek, Jenny Creek, Box R, and Deadwood Allotments administered by the Ashland Resource Area of the Medford District; and the portions of the Dixie and Buck Mountain Allotments within the CSNM boundary administered by the Klamath Falls Resource Area of the Lakeview District. Based on the environmental analysis and public review, proposed (and subsequent final) decisions will be issued to lease holders, which maintain, modify, or cancel (retire according to the CSNM proclamation) the existing grazing lease authorizations pursuant to the processes of applicable law.

These seven allotments are located south of the Dead Indian Memorial Highway, north the California border, and east of Interstate 5.

Background

The CSNM was reserved in June 2000 by presidential proclamation in recognition of its remarkable ecology and to protect a diverse range of biological, geological, aquatic, archeological, and historic objects.

The CSNM proclamation directed the Secretary of the Interior to "...study the impacts of livestock grazing on the objects of biological interest in the monument with specific attention to sustaining the natural ecosystem dynamics."

In January 2008, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the results of the Livestock Impacts Studies. The results of the Livestock Impacts Studies were used to 1) make an overall assessment of the monument's livestock allotments and evaluate whether or not the allotments are meeting the Oregon Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health (Rangeland Health Assessments (RHAs) and RHA determinations) and 2) determine whether or not current livestock grazing is "incompatible with protecting the objects of biological interest" as required by the monument proclamation.

Rangeland Health Assessments and Determinations

The Rangeland Health Assessments (RHAs) and RHA determinations for the allotments administered by the Klamath Falls Resource Area were completed in 2000 and 2001 and are available on the web at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/plans/inventas.php>. The RHAs and RHA determinations for the allotments administered by the Medford District were completed in June 2008 and are available on the web at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/index.php>.

- For allotments administered by the Medford District, one allotment (Soda Mountain) is not meeting all five standards as a result of livestock grazing and two allotments (Keene Creek and Deadwood) are not meeting four out of the five standards as a result of livestock grazing. Another allotment (Jenny Creek) is meeting two standards and not meeting the other three standards, but making significant progress. One allotment (Box R) is meeting three standards, and not meeting two standards, but current livestock grazing is not a significant factor. The primary factors for allotments not meeting standards are: noxious weed invasion in areas of moderate to severe utilization, heavy livestock use of riparian vegetation, and concentrated livestock use at seeps, springs, wet meadows, and along streams.
- For the two allotments administered by the Klamath Falls Resource Area, one allotment (Dixie) was not meeting all five standards as a result of livestock grazing, and one allotment (Buck Mountain) was meeting one standard and not meeting four standards due to causes other than livestock grazing. Management changes were implemented on the Dixie Allotment.

Determinations of Current Livestock Grazing Compatibility with Objects of Biological Interest in the CSNM

There are locations within the CSNM where current livestock grazing practices are not compatible with protecting the objects of biological interest as directed by the presidential proclamation. This initial determination on current livestock grazing practices is available on the web at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/index.php>. A final compatibility determination will be made for all of the alternatives evaluated in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and the selected alternative will be compatible with protecting the objects of biological interest.

Possible Range of Actions

The Medford District Office of the BLM will be analyzing a range of alternatives to evaluate the existing grazing leases on the CSNM allotments administered by the Ashland Resource Area and the portions of allotments administered by the Klamath Falls Resource Area that fall within the CSNM boundary.

For the allotments administered by the Ashland Resource Area, the environmental analysis process will include looking at potential alternatives that may meet both objectives: 1) compatibility with protecting the objects of biological interest as directed by the CSNM proclamation and 2) Oregon Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

For the allotments within the CSNM administered by the Klamath Falls Resource Area, the environmental process will only be evaluating alternatives that meet compatibility with protecting the objects of biological interest for those portions of the allotments that fall within the CSNM boundary.

Possible actions that may be considered include, but are not limited to, the following: cancelling one or more grazing leases; changing the season-of-use; fencing springs and riparian areas; changing grazing practices through the use of rest-rotation grazing systems, resting pastures or allotments, herding, weed eradication, or restoration projects followed by a period of rest from grazing.

Why is the Review of the Grazing Authorizations being Proposed?

The BLM issues grazing leases for a term not-to-exceed 10 years. The expiration date for the allotments administered by the Ashland Resource Area was February 2006. Under existing law (Public Law 108-108, Section 325), grazing leases that expire, are transferred or waived during fiscal year 2004-2008 prior to the completion of the lease authorization

process would be temporarily renewed with existing terms and conditions. There is a need to conduct the required environmental analysis to evaluate authorization of these leases and meet the intent of the monument proclamation.

The lease authorization or lease cancellation (retirement) process for the CSNM allotments is expected to be completed by the end of this coming winter (Winter 2008/2009).

How Can You Participate?

We are now in the scoping phase of the environmental analysis under NEPA. This means that any comments you have and choose to submit will be used to develop issues, mitigation measures, and alternatives.

We welcome ideas on potential methods for achieving compatibility with the CSNM proclamation and the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines. Comments that clearly articulate site-specific suggestions, issues, or concerns are the most useful.

Comments, including names, street addresses, and other contact information of respondents, will be available for public review at the Medford District Office of the BLM. Before including your address, telephone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you are advised 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 from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Although you will be provided with an additional opportunity to make further comments upon completion of the environmental assessment, we are contacting you now so that your input can be considered early in the planning process.

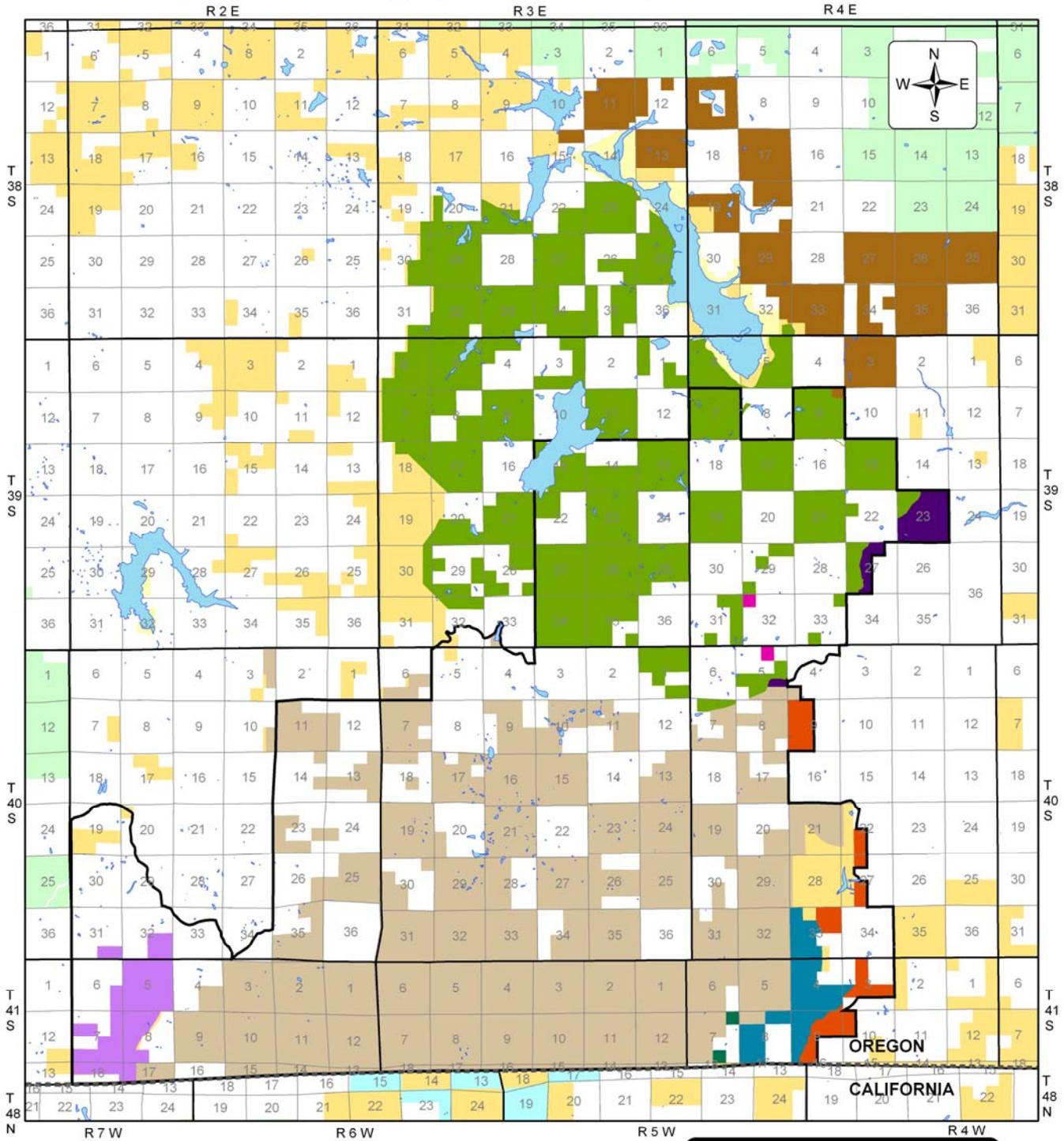
Please submit your comments by Friday, August 15, 2008. Your comments should be mailed to John Gerritsma at the following address.

Bureau of Land Management
Medford District Office
Ashland Resource Area
3040 Biddle Road Medford, OR 97504
Attention: John Gerritsma

Who Should You Contact for Technical Information on this Project?

Kimberly Hackett is the Interdisciplinary Team Leader for this project. Please feel free to contact her if you need clarification or additional information. Her phone number is (541) 618-2309.

Grazing Allotments Overlapping the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument



United States Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 Medford District Office
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 Medford, Oregon 97504



Legend

- Agate
- Box R
- Buck Mountain
- Deadwood
- Dixie
- Jenny Creek
- Keene Creek
- Siskiyou
- Soda Mountain
- Greater Monument Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- National Park Service
- State of Oregon
- U.S. Forest Service

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