

## **2006 Evaluation of Bowman Flat Allotment (#1022) Relative to Rangeland Health Standards**

Assessment Participants (Name & Discipline or Interest):

_____ Jackie Dougan	Fisheries Biologist
_____ Melissa Yzquierdo	Wildlife Biologist/Botanist
_____ Craig Martell	Range Management Specialist
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### **I. Area Evaluated**

The Bowman Flat Allotment (#1021) is located west of Rye Valley, Oregon (see Appendix 1: Map), and it is within the Pedro Mountain Geographic Unit as described in the Baker Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision dated July 1989. It is a small allotment consisting of one pasture of 386 acres. The active use allowable under the ten-year permit is 65 AUMs on public land plus 18 AUMs on private land, for a total of 83 AUMs (78% public land), within the dates of May 10 to July 9.

### **II. Data and Information Used in the Evaluation**

#### **A. Trend Plots**

Data from the trend plot is summarized in Appendix 2: Trend Data. Indicators used are ground cover (compared to bare ground), and plant species frequency as measured in frequency transects.

#### **B. Rangeland Health Assessments**

Appendix 3 summarizes the results of the rangeland health assessment completed in 2006. A multidisciplinary team viewed a representative site on the allotment, assessing 17 rangeland health indicators in accordance with Technical Reference 1734-6, Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health, 2000 (Version 4).

#### **C. Proper Functioning Condition Assessments**

There is one perennial creek in this allotment, known as Poor's Creek, and PFC assessments of 17 riparian zone indicators were completed in 2006, in accordance with Technical Reference 1737-15, A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition, 1998.

#### **D. Native, T & E, and Locally Important Species Habitat Ratings**

These are habitat ratings for Standard 5 that were done with each rangeland health assessment. Indicators used were:

1. Presence or absence of T & E species or species of concern
2. Native Plant Communities
  - a. Age classes



What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Rangeland health assessments, using the attribute of Biotic Integrity, plus plant species changes determined from trend plots.

**Determination for Standard 3:**

Standard Met \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Not Met X Standard Not Present \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock not a significant factor \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock a significant factor X

The rangeland health assessment rated out as a slight-to-moderate departure from expected biotic integrity. However, the trend plot showed there was a decrease in frequency of bluebunch wheatgrass. The history of grazing this allotment during the critical growing season, and bluebunch wheatgrass's vulnerability to grazing during the late boot stage, together point to livestock grazing as the significant factor.

**D. Standard 4 - Water Quality**

Surface water and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Water quality data from BLM hydrologist, plus professional judgment based mainly on the observations from the proper functioning condition assessments.

**Determination for Standard 4:**

Standard Met X Standard Not Met \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Not Present \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock not a significant factor \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock a significant factor \_\_\_\_\_

The PFC assessment did not point out any obvious water quality issues, most of the stream was well-shaded, and there is no other water quality data for this drainage.

**Standard 5 – Native, T & E, and Locally Important Species**

Habitats support healthy, productive, and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including special status species and species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate, and landform.

What Was Used to Evaluate the Status of this Standard: Native, T & E and locally important species habitat ratings done with each rangeland health assessment, plus sagebrush canopy cover estimates.

**Determination for Standard 5:**

Standard Met X Standard Not Met \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Not Present \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock not a significant factor \_\_\_\_\_  
Livestock a significant factor \_\_\_\_\_

No species of T&E importance were identified, except there might be some sage grouse use in the bottoms. Native species habitat appeared adequate, but there was juniper encroachment and Scotch thistle invasions in both the uplands and the riparian zone along Poor's Creek.

### **Conformance with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management**

The dates of the grazing period printed on the current grazing permit are May 10 to July 9. This period corresponds to the critical growing period for bluebunch wheatgrass, the key species. Guideline 6 under Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines says, "Provide periodic rest from grazing for rangeland vegetation during critical growth periods to promote plant vigor, reproduction and productivity". Therefore, current management is not in conformance.

### **Recommendations**

1. Change the season of use on the ten-year permit so as to allow flexibility to graze outside the critical growing season, and schedule future use to avoid critical growing season use at least one year out of every two. Instead of 5/1 to 7/9, change to 5/1 to 10/19 to cover alternating spring and fall use.
2. Rest the allotment in 2007 to allow riparian and range recovery, and graze in late summer or fall in 2008 to give two full growing seasons without grazing during the growing season.
3. Continue Scotch thistle spraying.
4. Cut juniper along Poor's Creek to benefit aspen.