

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE**

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Project Name: Little Basin Allotment Livestock Grazing Authorization

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-CA-370-2009-0002

Project Description: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to re-issue the existing livestock grazing permit on the Little Basin Allotment for a 10 year period.

Project Location: The Little Basin Allotment is located at T43N, R20E in northwestern Washoe County, Nevada. The allotment is situated on the eastern edge of an interior basin known as Long Valley and consists of 28,776 acres of public, which includes 12,927 acres of the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area, 2,753 acres of the Massacre Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and 140 acres of private land.

The public was notified of the project in January 2008, and a scoping letter was sent to 66 interested publics of record on January 17, 2008. Western Watersheds Project and Nevada Department of Wildlife contributed comments that were carefully considered.

Project Purpose and Need:

The purpose of the action is to authorize livestock grazing use on the Little Basin Allotment. All grazing would be in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act. In addition, the action will ensure that all authorizations implement provisions of, and are in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision of April 2008, and the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada, Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management 2000.

The Surprise Field Office RMP applicable goals and objectives of livestock grazing, as noted on page 2-34 and 2-35 include the following: 1) Sustainable, ecologically sound, and economically viable livestock grazing opportunities would be provided, where suitable, in the Surprise Field Office management area, 2) Adequate forage would be produced to support sustainable levels of livestock grazing where compatible with objectives for other resources and resource users, 3) Continue to modify and adjust grazing management within individual grazing allotments to ensure that a vigorous plant community is sustained in combination with livestock grazing.

Washington Office policy, through Instruction Memorandum No.2003-071, calls for all grazing permits to be fully processed by the end of FY 2009, including evaluations of grazing and appropriate NEPA documentation. In accordance with that policy, the Surprise Field Office proposes to issue a fully processed livestock grazing permit to Will and Debra Cockrell for the Little Basin Allotment in 2008.

A copy of the land health standards determination for the Little Basin Allotment can be found at the Surprise Field Office, and is posted on the Surprise Field Office web page at http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing_permit_renewals.html. The determination concludes that all of the applicable land health standards are being met or, if standards are not being met, it is due to factors not attributable to existing livestock grazing.

The grazing permit or authorization (including crossing or trailing permits) will include the type and level of use authorized, including the kind and number of livestock, the period of use, and the amount of active and suspended use in animal unit months (AUMs), and terms and conditions for grazing use.

Attachment 1 provides this information including terms and conditions common to all the permits to be issued, as well as terms and conditions specific to the Little Basin Allotment. The Surprise Field Office is not proposing any changes to the existing grazing permit for the Little Basin Allotment.

The term permit and any future crossing/trailing permits would be implemented through Proposed and Final Grazing Decisions, with provisions for protest, appeal, and petition for stay, accordance with 43 CFR 4100, and would be sent to the permittee(s) and interested publics of record.

Plan Conformance

- ❑ The proposed action is in conformance with the Proposed Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan and final environmental impact statement issued in May 2007 as adopted by the Record of Decision approved in April 2008.
- ❑ The proposed action is in conformance with the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada, Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management 2000.

The action described above meets the specific criteria for the use of a Categorical Exclusion, as referenced in 516 DM 11.9(D) 11. This reference states the following as a Categorical Exclusion (CX):

Livestock grazing permits/leases where:

- a. *The new grazing permit/lease is consistent with the use specified on the previous permit/lease, such that*
 1. *the same kind of livestock is grazed*
 2. *the active use previously authorized is not exceeded, and*

3. *grazing does not occur more than 14 days earlier or later than as specified on the previous permit/lease, and*
- b. *The grazing allotment(s) has been assessed and evaluated and the Responsible Official has documented in a determination that the allotment(s) is*
 1. *meeting land health standards, or*
 2. *not meeting land health standards due to factors that do not include existing livestock grazing.*

Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances: The following exceptions (extraordinary circumstances) apply to individual actions within the CX, as listed in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2. The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the below listed exceptions to categorical exclusion documentation apply.

<i>Exceptions</i>	Yes	No	Specialist Initials
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X	SM
Rationale: The Little Basin Allotment is located in a remote portion of northwestern Nevada. The proposed action will have no significant impacts on public health or safety near public areas. There are no known circumstances in which public health or safety would be impacted or jeopardized.			
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X	PB/AU/LP

<p>Rationale: There are no known unique natural resources or geographic characteristics contained within the Little Basin allotment. However, 8,350 acres have been inventoried on this allotment for cultural resources. As a result, 29 archaeological sites were recorded. One site at the time of recordation in 1982 noted severe cattle impacts. This site was revisited in 2008. No new or ongoing cattle impacts were noted.</p> <p>Approximately 12,927 acres of the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area are included within the allotment boundary. The proposed grazing use for this permit renewal would be considered a ‘grandfathered use’ as the class, number and kind of livestock along with the season of use authorized are the same or less than the 1976 grazing fee year, including areas that were in the rest cycle of the grazing system.</p> <p>Approximately 2,753 acres of the Massacre ACEC are included within the allotment boundary. As stated in the Proposed Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan and final environmental impact statement issued in May 2007 as adopted by the Record of Decision approved in April 2008, livestock grazing will continue within all ACEC’s, based on current permit stipulations and approved allotment management plans.</p> <p>The Little Basin Allotment has no prime farmlands and no drinking water aquifer is associated with the allotment. Floodplains are associated with 3 - 4 ephemeral drainages that would not be significantly impacted by the issuances of the 10 year grazing permit for this allotment. Furthermore, the ID team concluded that migratory birds would not be affected by the proposed action.</p>			
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].		X	SM
<p>Rationale: Continuing grazing as it has been on the allotment will not have any highly controversial environmental effects. There are no known conflicting interests on the allotment.</p>			
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X	SM
<p>Rationale: Grazing the allotment in the same manner as previously permitted will have no uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects.</p>			
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X	SM

Rationale: The proposed grazing authorization is based on review of site specific monitoring information and guidance from the applicable Land Use Plans. Decisions regarding livestock use on this allotment are not related to site specific decisions regarding uses in other allotments; therefore, there is no possibility for the proposed action to be considered as a precedent or to influence future actions in other areas.			
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X	SM
Rationale: No new grazing related actions are proposed for this allotment, and the lack of any other actions occurring in this local geographic area makes the risk of cumulative effects negligible.			
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as determined by either the bureau or office.		X	PB
Rationale: None of the 29 known sites have been formally evaluated for NRHP eligibility. However, the BLM Surprise Field Office assumes that the 29 sites are NRHP eligible until a formal evaluation is made. At this time there are no known effects to the currently known sites from cattle on the Little Basin allotment. This allotment is scheduled for Cultural Resource Assessments in 2014 as per the Supplemental Procedures for Livestock Grazing Permit/Lease Renewals, A Cultural Resources Amendment to the State Protocol Agreement Between the California BLM and the California State Historic Preservation Officer. Because the permit renewals will not include any changes in terms and conditions, no new impacts to any cultural resources are expected.			
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X	EFJ
Rationale: Review of T&E records indicate that habitat conditions for Carson wandering skipper was the only listed or proposed species that could be present on the allotment. While <i>Distichlis</i> sp. communities exist in the Little Basin Allotment, based on current literature and a field review of occupied Carson wandering skipper habitats outside the field office boundaries. It has been determined that the Little Basin Allotment does not likely have suitable habitat for Carson wandering skipper.			
		X	PB

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.			
Rationale: This project would not violate any State, local, tribal or federal laws.			
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898, 'Environmental Justice').		X	SM
Rationale: This project would not negatively effect low income or minority populations.			
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X	PB
Rationale: There would be no limited access to any public lands resulting from this project. Native American consultation has taken place for this permit renewal. There were no concerns expressed by the tribes regarding the permit renewal.			
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X	AU
Rationale: This project would have a low probability of contributing to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. Inventory for noxious weeds was completed for the Little Basin Allotment and no noxious weeds are known to exist on the allotment.			

Land Use Plan conformance and Categorical Exclusion review confirmation:

Lead Preparer: Steven Martens Date: Dec. 2, 2008

NEPA/ Environmental Coordinator: Steve Linn Date: Dec. 2, 2008

Approval and Decision

Based on a review of the project described above and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the project is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the action as proposed, with the following stipulations (if applicable):

Field Office Manager: Shane DeForest Date: 12-2-08

Little Basin Allotment Terms and Conditions

Permitted Use Summary

Allotment	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total Permitted Use
Little Basin (01004)	1,857	465	2,322

Existing Grazing Permit Schedule

Allotment	Authorization Number	Livestock kind	Livestock number	Season	Public AUMs	% Public Land
Little Basin	0402600	cattle	200	04/16 – 4/30	99	100%
			400	05/01 – 08/15	1,407	
			345	08/16 – 09/15	352	

This permit will be subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Grazing use offered or authorized by BLM is subject to all provisions of the grazing regulations (43 CFR Parts 4100) and other applicable law and regulation. Grazing use authorization may be modified in accordance with regulation to attain progress towards achieving rangeland health standards (subpart 4180.1 and 4180.2 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration). Any changes to the permit would occur after consultation, cooperation and coordination with the grazing permittee and other interested parties).
2. Grazing use on the Little Basin Allotment will be in accordance with this Proposed/Final Grazing Decision and other provisions of the Little Basin Allotment Management Plan. Any livestock use found outside the limits of flexibility of the AMP, without prior authorization, will be subject to unauthorized use actions.
3. Billing will be based on your actual use reports which are to be submitted within 15 days of your last authorized take off date for each allotment. If actual use reports are not submitted within 30 days, the permittee will be billed and liable for their full active preference. Repeated delays in submitting actual use reports and/or paying grazing billings will revoke actual use billing privileges.
4. Salt and/or mineral supplements will be placed no closer than ¼ mile from any public water source.
5. All range improvements must be maintained to BLM standards prior to livestock turnout. All assigned fence maintenance must be completed annually, even if your permit is not activated. Failure to complete assigned fence maintenance may result in suspension of your grazing authorization.
6. The livestock operators are responsible for moving livestock in a timely manner before allowable use levels are exceeded.

Little Basin Allotment Map

