

**Finding of No Significant Impact
East Castle Creek Allotment
Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal
Environmental Assessment ID-120-2008-EA45**

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in EA #ID-120-2008-EA45 would not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA, using the following factors defining significance:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Proposed Action will have beneficial impacts and minimal direct or indirect adverse impacts to soils and watersheds, upland vegetation, sensitive plant populations, wildlife (including sensitive species), water quality, and wetlands and riparian areas over the short and long term. In the long-term the proposed action will improve rangeland health overall within the East Castle Creek allotment (Sections 3.1 through 3.7 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45).

The Proposed Action will have beneficial impacts and minimal direct or indirect adverse impacts to grazing management, cultural resources, the overall economy of Owyhee County, and to the human environment over the short and long term (Sections 3.8 through 3.11 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45). While all projects listed above have been reviewed for impacts to cultural resources, most, but not all have site specific clearance review on them. Site specific review will be completed and project design shall incorporate avoidance or mitigation prior to any surface disturbing activities. Where cultural resources are a probability, an archaeologist will be onsite during construction. Other resources will be enhanced, such as visual quality, naturalness in the Little Jacks Creek WSA and scenic values along the Backcountry Byway by better livestock management practices and improvement of vegetation condition.

The proposed action includes some projects within the area proposed as having wilderness characteristics by the Sierra Club in 2004. The projects proposed are spring fenced enclosures that are designed to protect wetland areas to improve the vegetation condition. Some of these fenced enclosures include spring developments that include installation of a water trough for livestock use. The design criteria for range improvements described above would minimize the disturbance and effect in the proposed area and avoid irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

No major effects to public health and safety were identified in the EA.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No significant effects on unique geographic characteristics of the area, cultural or historical resources, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas were identified in the EA ID-120-2008-EA45). Cultural resources would not be significantly impacted (Section 3.8 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45). Improvement to wetlands and riparian areas is expected through the implementation of the grazing practices and the listed range improvement projects and monitoring of annual indicator criteria described above and in Section 2.7, EA ID-120-2008-EA45. The grazing prescription and West Fork Shoofly Creek Fence Realignment would enhance naturalness and primitive recreational opportunities in the Little Jacks Creek WSA. No parklands, designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, ecologically critical areas, or prime farmlands are found in the project area.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

Public comments have been received that expressed concerns about the effects of management actions and projects on various resource values. The effects have been analyzed and discussed in the EA (Sections 3.1 through 3.13 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45). The analysis did not identify any effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Livestock grazing has been a primary use in this area for over 70 years. Grazing management and project developments similar to those proposed by this decision have been completed in this allotment as well as other parts of the Bruneau Field Office and southwestern Idaho. The effects of the proposed action on the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The analysis showed how the Bruneau Management Framework Plan (Bruneau MFP, USDI 1983) would be implemented under the different alternatives (Sections 1.5, 1.2, and 1.6 and 3.1 through 3.13, EA ID-120-2008-EA45) and actions proposed are similar to those previously taken in the Bruneau Field Office. The proposed actions would not establish precedent for any future actions. Implementation of this decision would not trigger other actions.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The analysis did not identify any known significant cumulative or secondary negative effects (Section 3.13, EA ID-120-2008-EA45). Outside this project area, additional Standards and Guidelines assessments, determinations, and subsequent decisions have been implemented or are planned, resulting in changes in livestock management (Section 3.13, EA ID-120-2008-EA45). However, those actions in combination with this decision are not expected to result in cumulatively significant negative impacts. The proposed actions associated with this EA and with other grazing decisions are expected to improve

habitats for native fish and wildlife species. In addition to implementation of grazing decisions, wildfire suppression, juniper control measures, ongoing noxious weed control programs, the permitting process for OHV races, the closure and rehabilitation of some OHV routes, and other ongoing control or mitigation measures would continue in the East Castle Creek Allotment and in adjoining allotments. These actions would maintain current favorable conditions and improve unfavorable ones. The management of livestock in the proposed action in East Castle Creek Allotment will have a negligible effect on atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and climate change in general.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The analysis showed that the alternatives would not result in adverse effects to cultural resources that are considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places (Section 3.8 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45) because there are no known sites that are eligible in the East Castle Creek allotment

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect threatened or endangered species or its habitat that has determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

No threatened or endangered species are known in this allotment (Sections 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45). Impacts to BLM sensitive species and candidate species for federal listing as endangered or threatened are discussed in Sections 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.13 (EA ID-120-2008-EA45), and are neutral or beneficial.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.*

The analysis in the EA shows that the proposed action is consistent with Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment (Sections 1.6 and 3.1 through 3.13 of EA ID-120-2008-EA45).

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Date