



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Burley Field Office
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In Reply Refer To:
4100 (IDT020)

December 16, 2011

CERTIFIED MAIL—RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Scoping Information Package
Burley Field Office Crossing Permit Authorization

Dear Interested Stakeholder:

This information package summarizes Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Burley Field Office (BFO) proposal to authorize the trailing of livestock across BLM BFO administered lands for multiple grazing years, beginning March 2012. The proposals are in accordance with the 1982 Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1985 Cassia Resource Management Plan (RMP) and 43 CFR 4130.6-3. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this scoping package is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposals and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposals. Analysis of the proposals are ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date in January 2012. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposals and to identify alternatives to the proposals that meet the purpose and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the action is to respond to applications for Crossing Permits by identifying areas and terms and conditions for authorizing trailing of livestock across BLM BFO administered lands. BLM is required, under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Taylor Grazing Act to respond to requests for livestock trailing/crossing across BLM administered lands. In many instances, livestock producers must move their livestock across BLM administered lands to facilitate proper grazing management of BLM grazing allotments; as well as to facilitate movements of livestock to and from private, state, or other federally administered

lands. Issuance of Crossing Permits authorizing trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands would be in accordance with 43 CFR 4130 and 4160, and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Existing Condition

The Burley Field Office is divided into 200 grazing allotments on approximately 854,330 acres of BLM administered lands. Livestock grazing use occurs within the Burley Field Office year round. Generally, the lower elevation rangeland is grazed in the fall, winter, and spring. The higher elevation is generally grazed in the spring, summer, and fall. Trailing of livestock occurs at different times throughout the year to facilitate these general seasons of grazing use. Furthermore, timing of trailing events may vary annually based on factors such as forage production, drought, resource conditions, weather, wildfire, court decisions, and individual livestock operations. Trailing events across BLM administered lands within the Burley Field Office range in distance from less than 1 mile to approximately 10 miles, and in duration from less than 1 hour up to 10 days.

Grazing permittees or other livestock producers needing to trail livestock across BLM administered lands submit their requests prior to the proposed trailing event. The Crossing Permit outlines the allotment(s) to be trailed across, the period of use (dates), and the number and kind of livestock. In addition, the Crossing Permit describes terms and conditions specific to the trailing event, including but not limited to, the trail route, distance of travel per day, and over-night areas. Further, the Crossing Permit may also include avoidance areas (special status species habitat, recently burned areas, vegetation projects, live streams, etc.), when appropriate, based on resource concerns.

Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to issue Crossing Permits to qualified applicants authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Burley Field Office for multiple grazing years beginning in March 2012. Grazing permittees or other livestock producers needing to trail livestock across BLM administered lands would be required to submit an application prior to trailing. For the 2012 grazing season, the Burley Field Office has received 10 applications to date. The Field Manager will consider each application, and proposes to authorize the trailing of livestock incorporating considerations for season of use, resource conditions, special status species and their habitat, weather, wildfire, and drought. Map 1 displays the typical trailing routes with up to a two mile corridor that would be used for the movement of livestock based on the applications received to date; however, other trailing routes may be authorized in response to individual applications for Crossing Permits. A two mile corridor provides the livestock operator flexibility to trail near an identified route and to avoid potential resource concerns.

Any Crossing Permit that is issued would be in compliance with the applicable land use plans – the 1982 Twin Falls Management Framework Plan and/or the 1985 Cassia Resource Management Plan; and would be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Preliminary Issues

The Burley Field Office Interdisciplinary Team has identified the following issues through internal scoping:

- Sage-grouse – Potential impacts to sage-grouse during breeding and nesting periods.
- Migratory Birds – Potential impacts to migratory birds during nesting periods.
- Bighorn Sheep – Potential interaction with domestic sheep during trailing through Bighorn sheep habitat.
- Soils – Potential impacts to soil.
- Riparian areas and Wetlands – Potential impacts to riparian areas and wetlands, including fisheries.
- Vegetation – Potential impacts to vegetation and special status plant species, i.e. Davis playa mustard (*Lepidium davisii*).
- Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants – Potential spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants.
- Cultural Resources – Potential impacts to historic trails and archaeological sites.
- Livestock Grazing – Potential impacts to permitted grazing.

Preliminary Alternative Development

No Action

Crossing Permits would not be issued and the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Burley Field Office would not be authorized.

Alternative 2

The BLM would establish additional trailing routes, with up to a two mile wide corridor, across the Burley Field Office in conjunction with routes and corridors identified within the Proposed Action (see Map 2). A two mile corridor provides the livestock operator flexibility to trail near an identified route and to avoid potential resource concerns. The BLM would issue Crossing Permits to qualified applicants authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the established corridors beginning in March 2012. Grazing permittees or other livestock producers needing to trail livestock across BLM BFO administered lands would be required to submit an application prior to trailing. The Field Manager would consider each application and may issue Crossing Permits incorporating considerations for season of use, resource conditions, special status species and their habitat, weather, wildfire, and drought. Each Crossing Permit would outline the allotment(s) to be trailed across, the period of use (dates), and the number and kind of livestock. Furthermore, terms and conditions specific to each trailing event would be identified, including the trailing corridor to be used, minimum distance of travel per day, and over-night areas.

Any Crossing Permit that is issued would be in compliance with the 1982 Twin Falls Management Framework Plan, 1985 Cassia Resource Management Plan, and would be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Decision to be Made

The Burley Field Manager will decide whether to issue Crossing Permits authorizing the trailing of livestock across BLM administered lands within the Burley Field Office, and if so, determine whether those Crossing Permits will occur within typical trailing corridors identified in the Proposed Action or within trailing corridors identified in Alternative 2. If Crossing Permits are issued, the Burley Field Manager will also decide whether to include specific terms and conditions as part of the authorization.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, preliminary alternatives, trailing corridors identified for the Proposed Action (see Map 1), and trailing corridors identified for Alternative 2 (see Map 2). Comments would be most helpful if they are received on or before December 30, 2011 and are directly relevant to the proposals and project area. Clarifications to existing requests or additional requests received during this scoping period will also be considered during the preparation of this livestock trailing EA. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA.

Written comments must be submitted to Michael Courtney, Field Manager, 15 East 200 South, Burley ID, 83318. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to id_burley_fo@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be 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.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Jason Theodozio, Rangeland Management Specialist, 15 East 200 South, Burley, ID, 83318, or (208) 677-6621.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Courtney
Burley Field Manager

2 Enclosures:

- 1 - Map 1. Burley Field Office Proposed Action - Typical Trailing Corridors (1 p)
- 2 - Map 2. Burley Field Office Alternative 2 – Typical and Other Trailing Corridors (1 p)