

Appendix A7 Horse Flat Allotment #95

1.0 Introduction

According to the RMP, Horse Flat Allotment #95 consists of approximately 4,147 acres of public land, 1,245 acres of private land and 640 acres of state land. This is a block of public land on which there is limited public access.

Through the Evaluation and Determination, it was determined that:

- Livestock management is in conformance with the Water Quality (#7) standard;
- Livestock management is not a factor in the non-conformance with Watershed (#1), Riparian Areas (#2), and Stream Channels and Flood Plains (#3);
- Livestock management is contributing to the non-conformance to the Native Plant Communities (#4) and Threatened and Endangered Species (#8) standards;
- Compliance with all applicable Livestock Management Guidelines) is not being achieved (numbers 4, 9, 11, 12, and 18).

2.0 Description of the Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action /Continue Current Management

Current season-long grazing would continue, and existing grazing permits would expire on February 28 in the following years: 2009 (Edwards), 2013 (Edwards), 2017 (Ford), and 2018 (Noah). Livestock grazing is authorized as follows:

| Grazing Permittees | Livestock | Season of Use | Percent Public Land | Grazing Preference | | |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------|
| | | | | Active | Suspended | Total |
| Charles Edwards | 70 cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | 100% | 142 | 0 | 142 |
| | 14 Cattle | 11/01 to 11/09 | 100% | | | |
| | 21 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | EOU | 42 | | 42 |
| Charles Edwards | 20 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | 100% | 39 | 0 | 39 |
| | 30 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | EOU | 59 | | 59 |
| | 34 Cattle | 11/01 to 11/09 | EOU | 10 | | 10 |
| Ford Ranch | 40 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | 100% | 93 | 0 | 93 |
| | 47 Cattle | 11/20 to 11/28 | 100% | | | |
| | 41 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | EOU | 81 | | 81 |
| | 80 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 | EOU | 158 | | 158 |
| Randy Noah | 113 Cattle | 04/20 to 05/11 | 100% | 82 | 0 | 83 |

Exchange-of-use agreements (EOU) were approved in 1999, as a part of the grazing permit renewal process. AUMs allowed in the exchange of use agreements were based on information supplied by the permittee's consultant for the amount of land owned or leased by the permittee within the allotment boundary. One exchange-of-use agreement, for 77 AUMs, was canceled in 2006, after the private lease agreement was canceled due to a private land sale.

Following are allotment specific terms and conditions to the grazing permit for Charles R. Edwards:

1. Until the completion of the Goodrich Watershed assessment of the standard and guidelines, and adjustments made if needed, alternate turn-out sites will be used to mitigate the trampling and pedestalling that is occurring on the southern portion of the allotment.
2. Turn-out will be on the northeastern portion of the allotment
3. Additional riding will be needed by all permittees to ensure the livestock keep off the bottoms during the wet period.
4. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian areas, other than the streambanks, will not be grazed more than 50% during the growing season, or 60% during the dormant season.
5. Turn-out is subject to range readiness criteria. Seven days flexibility may be approved upon submission of the completed range readiness forms.
6. The allotment(s) listed on this grazing permit is subject to the requirement of 43 CFR 4180 – Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. This permit shall be modified (if necessary) to meet these requirements upon completion of a standard and guidelines assessment and determination as scheduled by the Authorized Officer.
7. Turn-out is subject to range readiness criteria.
8. Your certified Actual Use Report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
9. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter (¼) mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas or water developments.
10. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
11. Trailing activities must be coordinated with the BLM prior to initiation. A trailing permit or similar authorization may be required prior to crossing public lands.
12. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotment(s) are closed to all domestic grazing use.
13. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvements permits in which you are a signator or assignee. Allotment boundary fences must be functioning prior to allowing livestock onto the allotment.
14. All appropriate documentation regarding base property leases, lands offered for exchange-of-use, and livestock control agreements must be approved prior to turn-out. Leases of land and/or livestock must be notarized prior to submission and be in compliance with the Lower Snake River District District Policy
15. Failure to pay the grazing bill within 15 days of the due date specified shall result in a late fee assessment of \$25.00 or 10 percent of the grazing bill, whichever is greater, not to exceed 250.00 payment.

Allotment specific terms and conditions for the grazing permit for Charles R. Edwards, based on his base property lease agreement are the same as the above 15, plus the following:

1. Your base property lease for the Horse Flat Allotment #95 will expire February 28, 2013. You must notify the BLM in writing prior to that date if you are planning on renewing your lease with Melvin Dotson. If your lease agreement is not renewed, your grazing permit will be canceled.

Following are allotment specific terms and conditions to the grazing permit for Ford Ranch, Inc:

1. Livestock grazing for Horse Flat Allotment #95 will comply with Field Manager's proposed decision dated August 30, 2006. Horse Flat Allotment will be addressed in Environmental Assessment ID-110-2005-EA-011.

2. Authorized AUMs will not be exceeded on public lands.
3. Scheduled use changes require prior approval on an annual basis. From information provided in the annual application, a grazing bill will be prepared indicating authorized use for that year.
4. The Annual Actual Use Report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
5. Annual maintenance of range improvements will be completed prior to livestock entry of the allotment.
6. Turn-out date will be subject to range readiness. Range readiness occurs once the soils have firmed after the spring thaw, and the physiological requirement of the plants have been met.
7. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(b), the permittee must notify the BLM Field Manager, by telephone or with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on Federal Land. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c), the permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with the discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect the discovered remain or object.
8. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter (¼) mile of springs, streams, meadows, riparian habitats, or aspen stands.
9. For Beaver Creek Allotment only – livestock numbers and season of use as shown above indicate maximum that will be allowed under this permit. Permittee has discretion to manage within these numbers provided overuse does not occur on public lands

Term and condition numbers 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, identified above for Ford Ranch, are the same for Randy Noah, in addition to:

1. Alternate turn-out sites will be used to mitigate the trampling and pedestalling that is occurring on the southern portion of the allotment.
2. Turn-out will be on the western portion of the allotment along the powerline ridge. Livestock found on the bottoms will be herded back up country.
3. Additional riding will be needed by all permittees to ensure the livestock keep off the bottoms during the wet period.
4. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian areas, other than the streambanks, will not be grazed more than 50% during the growing season, or 60% during the dormant season.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Based on field mapping of existing fences and information provided by the permittee, the acreage for Horse Flat Allotment has been recalculated. There are 56 more acres of public land, 192 fewer acres of private land, and 4 fewer acres of state land in the allotment boundary than are shown in the RMP. The allotment now contains approximately 5,892 acres, including 4,203 acres of public land (71 percent), 1,053 acres of private land (18 percent), and 636 acres of state land (11 percent). These revised acres reflect the most accurate and up-to-date information, and would be used for the new term permit.

To incorporate updated allotment information and current grazing management guidance, it is proposed to:

1. Modify the allotment boundary to correspond to existing fencelines;

2. Replace the exchange of use agreements with the use of percent public land term and condition of the grazing permit;
3. Renew the grazing permit showing maximum authorizations for livestock numbers, season-of-use, and AUMs (each of these columns would be stand-alone sections of the permit therefore standard method for calculating AUMs would not apply). Annual flexibility of livestock numbers and/or season-of-use would be allowed based on seasonal circumstances (example - range readiness; variations in permittee's management; but not limited to these situations). Management flexibility would be allowed provided livestock use remains within the sideboards of maximum livestock numbers and season-of-use, and without exceeding authorized AUMs;
4. Use Annual Indicators to insure progress towards meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management;
5. The stock driveway withdrawal expired several years ago, and will not be renewed. However, authorized trailing will occur in spring and fall, with sheep, cattle, and horses moving to and from neighboring allotments.

Based on the proposed action, livestock grazing would be authorized for a combined maximum of 357 AUMs (total authorization for both spring and fall use). The spring season of use would extend from mid-April through the end of June, at which time the cattle would be moved north to Forest Service or private land. In November, at the end of the Forest Service use, livestock would drift home through Horse Flat Allotment.

Terms and conditions necessary to regulate grazing activities on public land would be added to the grazing permit. Annual Indicators would be used to describe utilization criteria. Terms of the renewed grazing permits would be for ten years, from March 01, 2009 to February 28, 2019, as follows:

| Permittee | Livestock (maximum) | Season of Use (maximum) | Percent Public Land | Grazing Preference | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | | Active | Suspended | Total |
| Charles R. Edwards | 95 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/30 11/01 to 11/09 | 92% | 142 | 0 | 142 |
| Charles R. Edwards (L) | 50 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/30 11/01 to 11/09 | 97% | 39 | 0 | 39 |
| Ford Ranch, Inc. | 160 Cattle | 04/17 to 06/15 11/20 to 11/28 | 77% | 93 | 0 | 93 |
| Randy Noah | 113 Cattle | 04/20 to 05/11 | 100% | 83 | 0 | 83 |
| Totals | | | | 357 | 0 | 357 |

Following are specific Terms and Conditions to be attached to the grazing permits for Horse Flat Allotment. Those permittees who hold authorizations to graze other allotments would have those allotment specific terms and conditions added to the following:

1. Livestock grazing for Horse Flat Allotment will comply with Field Manager's Decision that became final on (intentionally left blank at this time, date to be inserted when the decision becomes final).
2. Authorized AUMs would not be exceeded on public land. Livestock numbers and season of use, as shown above, indicate maximums that would be allowed under this permit. Permittee

has discretion to manage within these numbers, provided overuse does not occur on public land.

3. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval, on an annual basis.
4. The Annual Grazing Use Report (BLM Form 4130-5) must be properly completed, signed, dated and submitted within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
5. Annual maintenance of range improvements would be completed prior to livestock entry of the allotment.
6. Livestock turn-out is subject to Boise District range readiness criteria. Range readiness occurs once soils have firmed after the spring thaw, and physiological requirements of the plants have been met.
7. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(b), permittee must notify the BLM Field Manager, by telephone followed with written confirmation, immediately upon discovery of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony (as defined in 43 CFR 10.2) on federal land. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c), permittee must immediately stop any ongoing activities connected with the discovery and make a reasonable effort to protect discovered remains or object.
8. Salt and/or mineral blocks shall not be placed on public lands within one quarter (¼) mile of springs, streams, meadows, riparian habitats or aspen stands.

Flexibility

Scheduled turn out dates by pasture may be adjusted based on Range Readiness and Annual Indicators. Grazing schedule adjustments require prior approval from the Authorized Officer.

Based on the results of monitoring associated with Annual Grazing Use Indicators, periodic modifications to authorized grazing management may be imposed. Monitoring data collected would be used to ensure adherence with Annual Indicators, listed below. Modifications may include, but are not limited to: duration of grazing use and/or reducing livestock numbers. These modifications would be coordinated annually with the permittees and incorporated into the annual authorization.

Annual Indicators

Adherence to the Annual Indicators listed below, and the prescribed grazing management program are expected to make progress towards meeting, and maintaining achievement of the Standards for Rangeland Health and land use plan objectives. Periodic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of monitoring data would provide an indication of the potential success of the grazing management prescription.

1. Average utilization by livestock on key bunchgrass species would not exceed 40 percent during the period of critical growth (May 1 through June 30), and 50 percent outside the critical growth period.
2. Utilization on all shrubs would not exceed 30 percent of current year's production as determined by Browse Removal Method, or other approved methods.

Long Term Indicator Criteria for Riparian Areas

1. Increase riparian plant cover, particularly late seral sedges, rushes, and willows on stream banks as measured on riparian trend (Greenline) transects;

2. Increase bank stability to 85 percent or more, as measured on riparian trend (Greenline) transects;
3. Decrease in greenline to greenline channel width (width/depth ratio).

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Affected environment is discussed in the main body of this EA, with additional information provided below.

3.1 Vegetation

3.1.1 Affected Environment – Vegetation

The Idaho rangeland health standard for native plant communities is not being met on this allotment due to historical uses, trailing and unauthorized uses. Dead and decadent shrubs were observed in the west-central portion of this allotment, as well as a reduction in the amount of perennial grasses. This area received heavy historical use as a stock driveway, and current trailing use. Due to losses of major functional and structural groups, the native plant communities in this location are unable to properly cycle nutrients and energy. Otherwise, the plant communities across the majority of the allotment are functioning properly to maintain or promote healthy productive and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform to provide proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling and energy flow.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Vegetation

3.1.2.1 Alternative A

Livestock grazing management under this alternative is meeting the standard for native plant communities in most of the allotment. The majority of the allotment contains vigorous and diverse vegetation, therefore, current authorized livestock grazing management practices are maintaining or promoting healthy productive and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform to provide proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling and energy flow. However, the addition of trailing activities is resulting in areas of concentrated heavy use and will be addressed through changes in trailing routes.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B

Minor changes to livestock grazing management practices are proposed under this alternative. Therefore environmental consequences for livestock grazing under this alternative would be the same as those described for alternative A.

3.2 Soils

3.2.1 Affected Environment – Soils

Overall, the allotment is meeting the standard for watershed health, with the exception of the stock driveway and trailing area. This area has a concentration of watershed resource issues that can be addressed through altering the trailing routes.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences – Soils

3.2.2.1 Alternative A

Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to meet the standard for soil stability and hydrologic function in areas currently meeting the standard. The area not meeting the standard due to soil trampling and hoof shearing is a historical stock driveway and currently cattle and sheep are trailed through a portion of this area, which is not promoting recovery and causing resource issues. Although these trailing activities are not part of the permits for this allotment, changes to the trailing routes will be made to provide adequate recovery from use to these areas.

3.2.2.2 Alternative B

Minor changes to livestock grazing management practices are proposed under this alternative. Therefore environmental consequences for livestock grazing under this alternative would be the same as those described for alternative A.

3.3 Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

3.3.1 Affected Environment – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

The majority of Horse Flat Allotment is within designated “key” sage grouse range; meaning the area contains intact sagebrush steppe habitat to support sage grouse through all or part of their annual life-cycle. A majority of the allotment is potential sage grouse nesting habitat. Columbian sharp-tailed grouse may use the allotment, particularly at higher elevations, but have not been documented in recent years. Shrub-steppe nesting passerine birds, on the BLM sensitive species list; such as Brewer’s sparrow, sage sparrow, and loggerhead shrike are highly likely to use the allotment during the breeding season.

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

3.3.2.1 Alternative A

The Idaho rangeland health standard for special status animal species is not being met on this allotment; current livestock grazing practices were not listed as a causal factor. Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to not meet the standard by not maintaining or promoting healthy productive and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform.

3.3.2.2 Alternative B

Livestock grazing management changes proposed under this alternative are expected to make few if any improvements to the vegetation over the long-term. Analysis for this alternative is the same as Alternative A. Weeds are a major factor in hindering this allotments progress.

3.4 Riparian Areas, Water Quality, and Fisheries

3.4.1 Affected Environment – Riparian Areas, Water Quality, and Fisheries

Two streams are found on this allotment, totaling 3.1 miles crossing public land. Both streams displayed varied age classes, as well as structural and species diversity. Camp Creek and the upper segment of Spring Creek (SPRIN-003.7) had healthy assemblages of arroyo willow, black hawthorn, currant, serviceberry, and other shrub species. The lower segments of Camp Creek (CAMP-004.0) and Spring Creek (SPRIN-002.6) often had dense infestations of Russian knapweed, leafy spurge and Scotch thistle on the floodplain, but did this not affect overall functioning condition. A one-mile-long segment of Camp Creek (CAMP-005.1) had no obligate riparian plant species present, and was not rated for functionality.

CAMP-004.0: marginally seasonal/intermittent stream flows and was rated for functioning condition based on limited occurrences of hydric vegetation. Each segment was rated in proper functioning condition for Standard 2 and Standard 3.

SPRIN-003.7: This segment is spring fed in most years, and is probably marginally perennial in this segment. Stream channel stability was good as the B4 stream types are well armored with rock and vegetation. This segment was rated in Proper Functioning Condition

SPRIN-002.6: a seasonal flow regime and predictably did not exhibit the densities or species richness of riparian vegetation as SPRIN-003.7. Invasion of leafy spurge was moderate to heavy in this segment and was one reason this segment was rated functional-at-risk with static trend. Livestock trampling and trailing was common on the lower portions of this segment, and has caused some increased bank erosion. But overall, the early spring use is appropriate, and is maintaining this stream. The major components leading to an at-risk rating were persistent drought, and noxious weeds.

3.4.2 Environmental Consequences – Riparian Areas and Fisheries

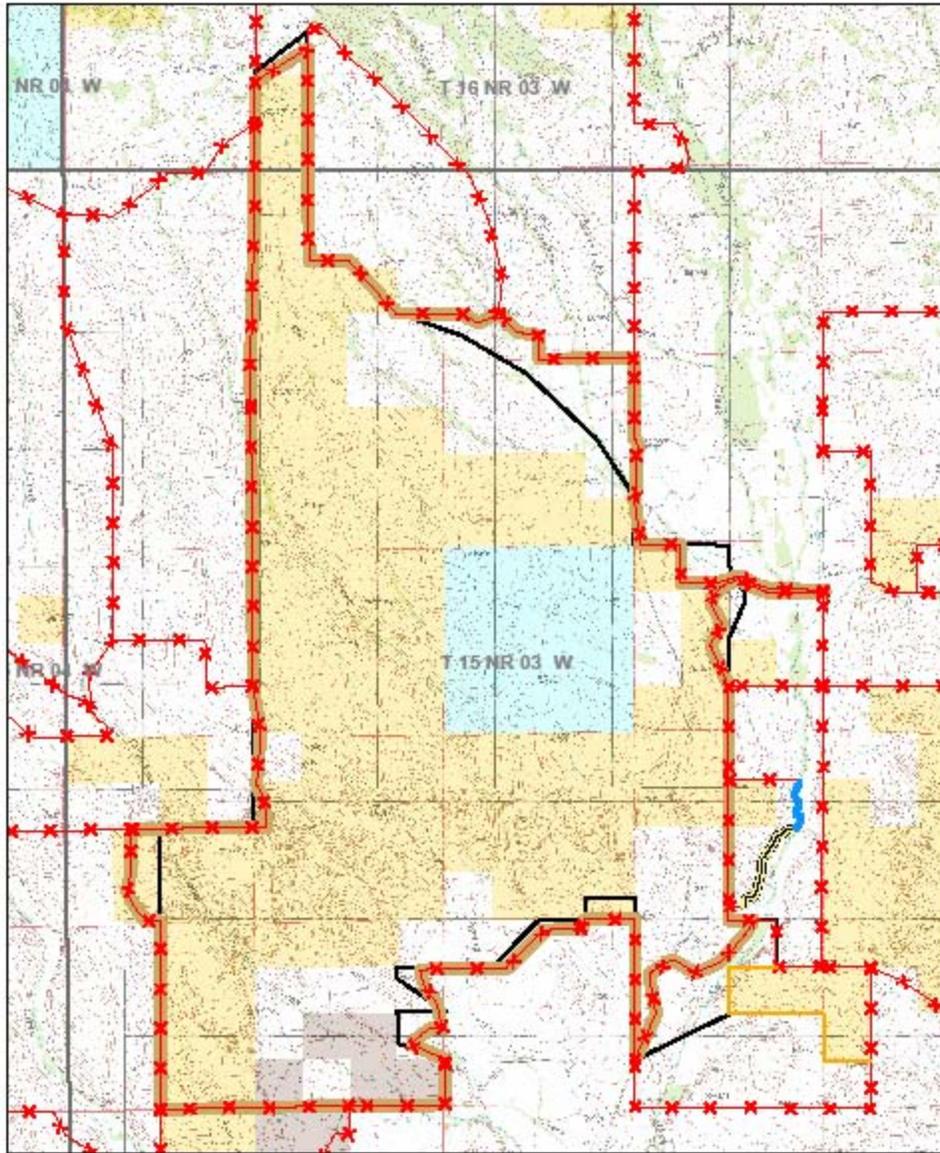
3.4.2.1 Alternative A

There would be no change to the functioning condition of streams in this allotment over the short through long terms. Noxious weeds would likely continue to infest the lower segments of Camp and Spring Creeks over the long term.

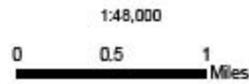
3.4.2.2 Alternative B

There would be no change to the functioning condition of streams in this allotment over the short through long terms. Noxious weeds would likely continue to infest the lower segments of Camp and Spring Creeks over the long term.

Horse Flat Allotment #95



| Map Legend | |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| | Fence |
| | Proposed Allotment Boundary |
| | 1988 Management Plan |
| | BLM |
| | Bureau of Reclamation |
| | State |
| | Private |



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