

Appendix A22 Middle Fork Allotment #236

1.0 Introduction

Middle Fork Allotment #236 consists of approximately 480 acres of public lands, 580 acres of private land, and 320 acres of state land, per the RMP. Public land is surrounded by private land, the Payette National Forest, and state land; public access is limited.

The current permit was issued in error, and shows authorized grazing by percent public land, as well as through Exchange of Use. As such, historically, this allotment was authorized a total of approximately 500 AUMs of grazing on public and private lands, which is much higher than can be supported by the vegetation. As such, we are proposing to correct the grazing permit to show only percent public land, while also transferring approximately 289 acres of public land from the Frasier Individual Allotment #110 into the Middle Fork Allotment #236 to help offset the overgrazing that has historically occurred.

Through the Evaluation and Determination, it was determined that

- Livestock management is in conformance with the Riparian Areas (#2), Stream Channels and Flood Plains (#3), Native Plant Communities (#4), Water Quality (#7), and Threatened and Endangered Species (#8) standards;
- Livestock management is a factor of non-conformance with the Watershed (#1) standard;
- Compliance with all applicable guidelines for livestock grazing management is not being achieved (numbers 1, 3).

2.0 Description of the Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action /Continue Current Management

Livestock grazing authorization would continue, in a season-long manner, with the current grazing permit expiring February 28, 2009. Mandatory terms and conditions of the grazing permit are:

Permittee	Livestock	Season of Use	Percent Public Land	Grazing Preference		
				Active	Suspended	Total
Ellis Pearson	50 Cattle	05/01 to 09/01	20%	41	49	90
	75 Cattle	05/01 to 09/01	EOU ¹	302	0	302

1. EOU = Exchange of use agreement. An exchange-of-use grazing agreement may be issued to an applicant who owns or controls lands that are unfenced and intermingled with public lands in the same allotment when use under such an agreement will be in harmony with the management objectives for the allotment and will be compatible with the existing livestock operations. (43 CFR 4130.6-1(a)) Exchange-of-use grazing agreements have no priority for renewal and cannot be transferred or assigned. (43 CFR 4130.6)

Following are allotment specific terms and conditions that would be attached to the grazing permit:

1. 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.

2. Turn-out is subject to Boise District range readiness criteria.
3. Your certified Actual Use Report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.
4. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter (¼) mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas or water developments.
5. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
6. 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.
7. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotment(s) are closed to all domestic grazing use.
8. Range improvements must be maintained in accordance with the cooperative agreements and range improvements permits in which you are a signator or assignee. All maintenance of range improvements within a Wilderness Study Area requires prior consultation with the Authorized Officer.
9. 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 Boise District Policy.
10. 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.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Based on field mapping of existing fences and information provided by the permittee, the acreage of the Middle Fork Allotment #236 has been recalculated. There are 23 fewer acres of public land, 88 fewer acres of private land, and 23 fewer acres of state land within the allotment boundary than are shown in the RMP. The allotment now contains approximately 1,246 acres, including 457 acres of public land (37 percent), 492 acres of private land (39 percent), and 297 acres of state land (24 percent). These revised acres reflect the most accurate and up-to-date information, and will be used for the new term permit.

Under this alternative:

1. Approximately 289 acres of public land would be transferred to the Middle Fork Allotment #236 from the Frasier Individual Allotment #110. These lands lie north of the Middle Fork Allotment boundary line in Section 5, T15N, R1E. Also transferred into the Middle Fork Allotment would be the state lands located in Sections 6 and 7, T15N, R1E. With this consolidation, the Middle Fork Allotment would now contain:

Public Land:	747 acres	(46 percent)
Private Land:	422 acres	(26 percent)
State Land:	461 acres	(28 percent)
2. Modify the percent public land term of the grazing permit to 46 percent, which would include the State lands; therefore, an exchange-of-use agreement would not be needed;
3. Active preference would be increased from 41 to 80 AUMs, and suspended preference would decrease from 49 to 10 AUMs. If future monitoring indicates that the allotment can support additional grazing, a portion or all of the suspended AUMs could be activated.
4. Grazing on Middle Fork Allotment would occur from April 25 through June 15.

5. If determined to be feasible, the BLM would authorize a pond, to be called Barber Gulch Pond, to be constructed in the SW1/4 of Section 5, T15N, R1E, pending favorable clearances for cultural resources, and special status plants and animals.
6. 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.
7. Use Annual Indicators to insure progress is being made towards meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Based on the proposed action, a maximum of 80 active AUMs and 10 suspended AUMs would be authorized between April 25 and June 15. Terms and conditions necessary to regulate grazing activities on public land would be added to the grazing permit. Annual Indicators would be used to monitor progress towards conforming to the appropriate Rangeland Health Standards. The grazing permit would be renewed for a term of 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
Ellis Pearson	120 Cattle	04/25 to 06/15	46%	80	10	90

Following are allotment specific Terms and Conditions to be attached to the grazing permit:

1. Livestock grazing for Middle Fork 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 lands. 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.
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 (1/4) 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 permittee 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 shrubs would not exceed 30 percent of current year's production.

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 being met on this allotment. The occurrence of invasive exotic plant species was observed throughout the allotment; however the ability of the native plant community to cycle nutrients, energy and water sufficiently to maintain health and diversity has not been compromised. Overall, the native plant community is vigorous and diverse.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Vegetation

3.1.2.1 Alternative A

Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to meet the standard by 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.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B

Livestock grazing management changes proposed under this alternative are expected to continue to meet the standard. The proposed increase in overall acreage in the allotment is accompanied by an increase in active preference. This change coupled with the clarification of the exchange of use would result in more accurate management potential for the allotment, which will lead to continuation of the rangeland health standard for native plant communities to be achieved. The proposed pond will result in short-term disturbance during construction, and long-term localized changes at the pond site. However, the benefits of the improvement to livestock distribution would be expected to outweigh the localized impacts.

3.2 Soils

3.2.1 Affected Environment – Soils

The Idaho rangeland health standard for watersheds, based on soil site stability and hydrologic function, is not being met on this allotment. Soil stability issues, at localized sites within the allotment, were identified. Soil disturbance and invasive species were observed, as well as water flow patterns, plant pedestalling, and bare ground. Soil instability, evidence of soil loss, and the reduced ability of the plant community to adequately retain moisture and control runoff were also identified in the assessment as being beyond the normal range of variability.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences – Soils

3.2.2.1 Alternative A

Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to not meet the standard by not promoting proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform to provides proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling and energy flow.

3.2.2.2 Alternative B

Livestock grazing management changes proposed under this alternative are expected to continue to meet the standard. The proposed increase in overall acreage in the allotment is accompanied by an increase in active preference. This change coupled with the clarification of the exchange of use would result in more accurate management potential for the allotment, which will lead to improvement to the soil resource. Additionally, the proposed pond would be expected to improve distribution, which would alleviate current areas of concentrated use, but could lead to concentrated use near the pond. The modification to the season of use would eliminate hot season grazing on the allotment, which would further alleviate areas of concentrated use.

3.3 Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

3.3.1 Affected Environment – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

In addition to shrub-steppe nesting special status species birds; Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, flammulated owls, Northern pygmy-owls, Northern goshawk, black-backed woodpeckers, and white-headed woodpeckers are all known from adjacent areas and may either nest or forage on the allotment.

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 being met on this allotment. Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to meet the standard by 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

The Idaho rangeland health standard for special status animal species is being met on this allotment. Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to continue to meet the standard by maintaining or promoting healthy productive and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate and landform. By limiting the season of use to spring/early summer, the amount of hedging on bitterbrush should be reduced.

3.4 Riparian Areas, Water Quality, and Fisheries

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

Middle Fork of Weiser River displayed a healthy and vigorous plant community representing a diverse species composition that is appropriate for the site. Dominant plant community types were cottonwood/redosier dogwood and mountain alder/willow, conifers were also present. The stream segment provides excellent aquatic habitat conditions for support of a quality salmonid fishery.

IDEQ water quality standards were met for cold water biota, salmonid spawning, and primary and secondary contact recreation.

The segment supports a healthy and viable population of redband trout.

3.4.2 Environmental Consequences – Riparian Areas, Water Quality, and Fisheries

3.4.2.1 Alternative A

Middle Fork of Weiser River would remain in proper functioning condition for Standard 2 (vegetation) and Standard 3 (hydrology). IDEQ water quality standards would continue to be met. Excellent aquatic habitat conditions for a support of a quality salmonid fishery would remain unchanged over the long term.

3.4.2.2 Alternative B

The environmental consequence from implementing the proposed action would be identical to alternative A.

3.5 Cultural Resources

3.5.1 Affected Environment – Cultural Resources

Cultural resource records in the Four Rivers Field Office indicate that some sites have been recorded within the Goodrich watershed on private and public lands. The cultural site records do not indicate that grazing activities are presently causing any adverse impacts to the recorded cultural resources, therefore, the grazing permits should be renewed based on cultural resource management issues.

3.5.2 Environmental Consequences – Cultural Resources

Livestock grazing has the potential to directly impact the cultural resources that may be found in the allotment pastures. Livestock trampling and trailing could adversely impact cultural resource sites. Range improvements such as fences, ponds, spring developments and troughs could impact cultural resources when they are constructed and maintained. Also access roads, portable water troughs and salting locations could impact cultural resource sites.

Livestock grazing also may cause indirect impacts to cultural resources. Indirect impacts may be consuming and trampling vegetation that in turn exposes cultural resource sites to increased erosion and makes the sites more vulnerable to vandalism and unauthorized excavating and unauthorized artifact collecting.

3.5.2.1 Alternative A

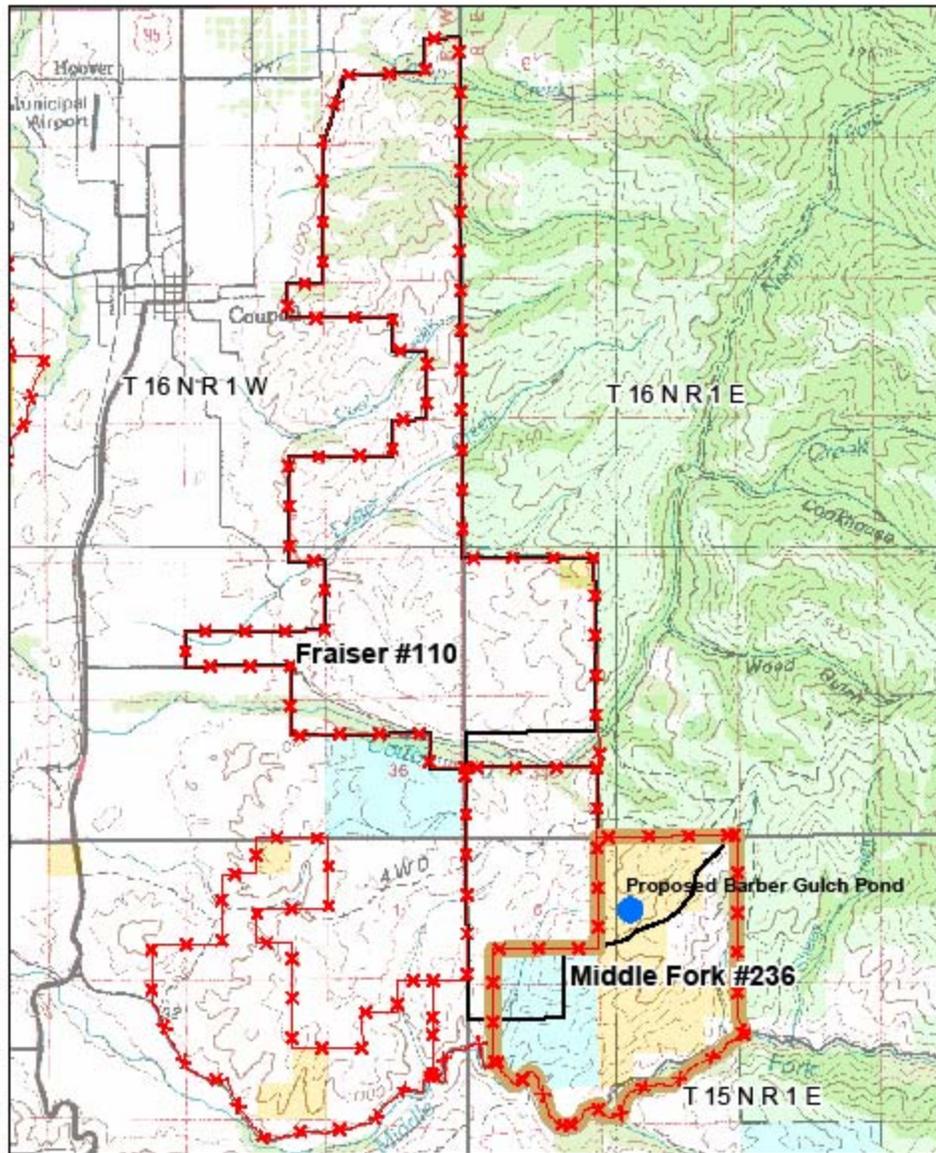
Under Alternative A, existing cultural resources would remain under present cultural resource management guidelines. The BLM would continue to protect and preserve cultural resources on public lands or mitigate adverse impacts to those cultural resources with input and coordination with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Additional new sites may be recorded and existing sites may be monitored for impacts as staff levels and budgets allow.

3.5.2.2 Alternative B

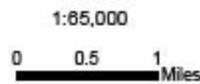
Under Alternative B, existing cultural resources would remain under present cultural resource management guidelines. The BLM would continue to protect and preserve cultural resources on public lands or mitigate adverse impacts to those cultural resources with input and coordination with SHPO. Additional new sites may be recorded and existing sites may be monitored for impacts as staff levels and budgets allow.

It is proposed to construct one pond, known as Barber Gulch Pond, on public lands within the Middle Fork Allotment #154, if it is determined the proposed site is feasible. The Archaeologist would conduct a Class III Cultural Resource Survey prior to any ground disturbing activities.

Middle Fork Allotment #236



Map Legend	
	Fence
	Proposed Allotment Boundary
	1988 Management Plan
	BLM
	USFS
	State
	Private



7/15/2008, 7/15/08, MiddleFork236.mxd
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