

Appendix A12 Higgins Individual Allotment #144

1.0 Introduction

The Higgins Individual Allotment consists of approximately 280 acres of public land that is fenced in with approximately 540 acres of private land. There is no public access to the public land.

Through the Evaluation and Determination, it was determined that:

- Current livestock management practices are not a factor in the allotment's non-conformance with the Watershed (#1), Native Plant Communities (#4), and Threatened and Endangered Species (#8) standards;
- Compliance with all applicable guidelines for livestock grazing management is being achieved.

2.0 Description of the Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action /Continue Current Management

Livestock grazing authorization would continue, on a season-long basis, 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
Arthur N. Lacey	40 Cattle	05/15 to 06/15	100%	40	0	40

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

1. The allotment 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 enclosures 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 payment.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Based on field mapping of existing fencelines and information provided by the permittee, the acreage for Higgins Individual Allotment has been recalculated. There are 386 fewer acres of private land within the proposed allotment boundary than are shown in the RMP. The allotment now contains approximately 434 total acres; of which 280 acres are public (65 percent) and 154 acres are private (35 percent). These revised acreages 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. Modify the percent public land of the grazing permit to 65 percent;
3. Change the allotment name from Higgins Individual #144 to Lacey #144;
4. 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.
 - a. Implement a grazing rotation schedule between the two pastures
 - b. Rotational grazing would be conducted in such a manner that periodic rest or deferment during the critical growth stages would be provided (Guideline #4). To provide rest or deferment, public lands would not be grazed during the critical growth period, of May 01 through June 30, in consecutive years. This could mean using only one pasture during a grazing year. Modifications to the season-of-use would be determined annually, based on monitoring.
5. Use Annual Indicators as a tool to provide progress towards conformance with applicable Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Based on the proposed action, livestock grazing would be authorized for a maximum of 40 AUMs between the sideboards of mid-April through mid-June. 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. Term of the renewed grazing permit 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
Arthur N. Lacey	50 Cattle	04/15 to 06/15	79%	40	0	40

Terms and Conditions to the grazing permit:

1. Livestock grazing for Lacey 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 by pasture, and/or reducing livestock numbers by pasture. 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 as determined by Browse Removal Method, or other approved methods.

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 past livestock grazing management practices. As a result of this past use, which was changed in 1999, the native bunchgrasses no longer occupy the understory of the plant community and bulbous bluegrass has filled the niche that larger native perennial grasses would have occupied. Additionally, shrub density is reduced, which further compromises the ability of the plant community to cycle nutrients, energy adequately to maintain a diverse perennial plant community.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Vegetation

3.1.2.1 Alternative A

Although historical livestock grazing management resulted in failure to meet the standard for native plant communities; livestock grazing under this alternative is expected to continue to not allow the standard to be met.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B

Changes in livestock grazing management proposed under this alternative would authorize livestock to enter the allotment one month earlier than the previous permit. The earlier on date would not be expected to impact the native plant community, due to the large percentage of bulbous bluegrass. The mid-April date would increase the potential for soil compaction and damage during wet springs, or heavy winters, which in turn could lead to downward trend in the plant community as a result of soil compaction and damage. Insufficient information is presented in the proposed alternative to adequately analyze the effects of implementing a pasture rotation schedule; therefore the impacts of this proposal are not analyzed.

3.2 Soils

3.2.1 Affected Environment – Soils

Livestock grazing management changes were implemented in 1999. Prior to this, the allotment received both early spring and late fall use. The use period was changed to allow soils time to dry in the spring before livestock were turned-out and fall use was eliminated to allow for plant regrowth and seed set.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences – Soils

3.2.2.1 Alternative A

Livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to not affect whether the standard is being met by 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

Changes in livestock grazing management proposed under this alternative would authorize livestock to enter the allotment one month earlier than the current permit. The current permit was changed to improve the soil damage that was occurring from early livestock use. Therefore it would be expected that the mid-April date would directly result in soil damage during wet springs or heavy winters. Insufficient information is presented in the proposed alternative to adequately analyze the effects of implementing a pasture rotation schedule; therefore the impacts of this proposal are not analyzed.

3.3 Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

3.3.1 Affected Environment – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

There are no known populations of threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species existing in Higgins Individual Allotment at the present time. If recovered, the allotment could be suitable Columbian sharp-tailed grouse habitat as mountain shrub patches currently exist and the site is in a relatively high precipitation zone (12 to 22 inches). An active sharp-tail lek exists within five (5) miles of the allotment. Greater sage-grouse would have historically used the area, but are not known to currently use the allotment.

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

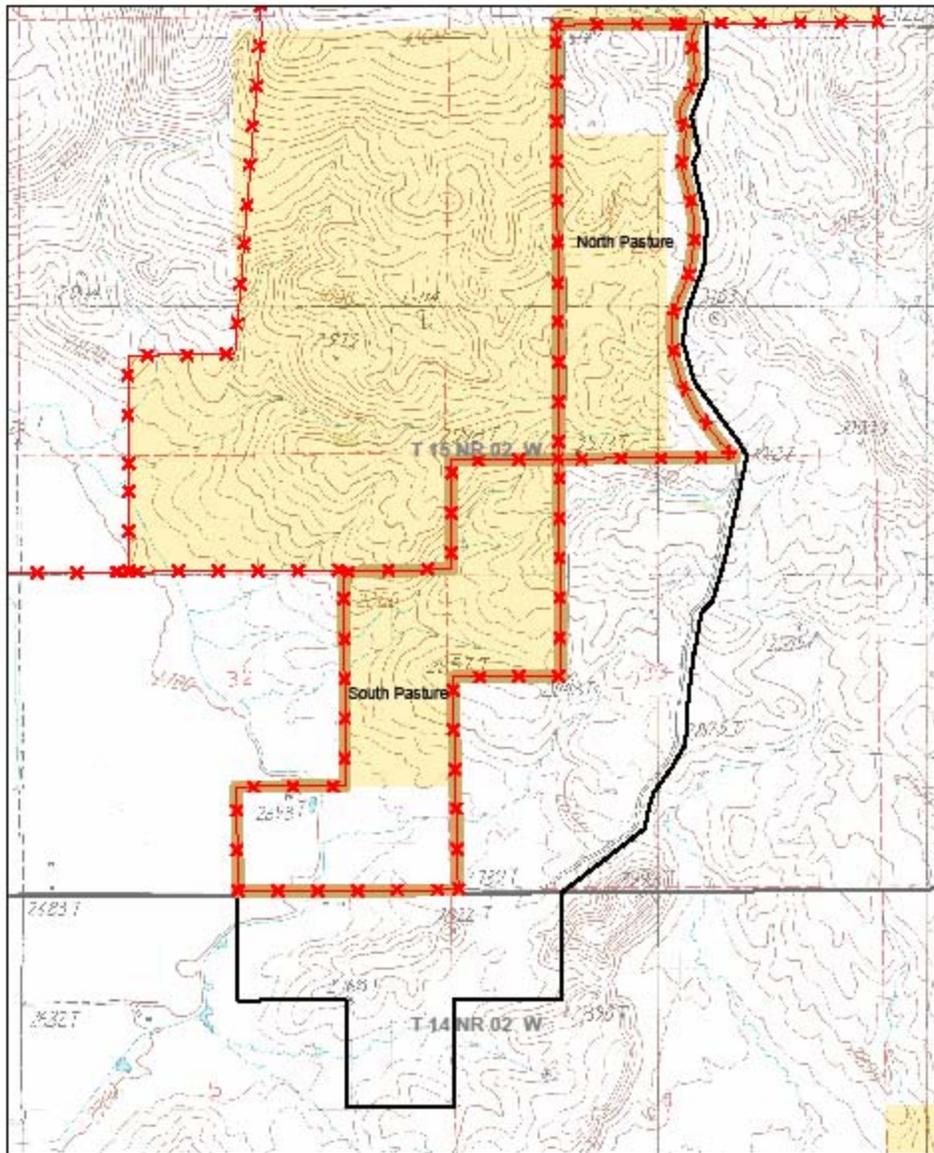
3.3.2.1 Alternative A

The Idaho rangeland health standard for special status animal species is not being met on this allotment due to causes other than current livestock grazing management practices. Therefore, livestock grazing management under this alternative is expected to not affect whether the standard is being met 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

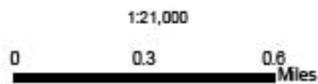
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Lacey Allotment #144



Map Legend

- Fence
- Proposed Allotment Boundary
- 1988 Management Plan
- SLM
- Private



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