

Appendix A3 Cow Creek Allotment #46

1.0 Introduction

According to the RMP, Cow Creek #46 Allotment contains approximately 465 acres of public land, 1,260 acres of private land, and 400 acres of State land. Public land is scattered throughout the allotment in several, small isolated parcels that are surrounded by private land. There is no public access to the public land parcels.

Through the Evaluation and Determination, it was determined that

- Livestock management is contributing to the 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 not being achieved (numbers 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 18).

2.0 Description of the Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A – No Action /Continue Current Management

Under the current livestock grazing authorization, season-long grazing would continue, with the current grazing permit expiring February 28, 2013. Mandatory terms and conditions of the grazing permit are:

Permittee	Livestock	Season of Use	Percent Public Land	Grazing Preference		
				Active	Suspended	Total
CHE Enterprise Inc	268 Cattle	04/01 to 06/15	22%	147	0	207
	268 Cattle	11/01 to 11/30	22%	58		

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

1. Grazing on public land riparian areas will be managed to attain and maintain proper functioning condition. This management will include leaving adequate perennial herbaceous and woody vegetation by the end growing season to protect riparian areas from erosion, maintain streambank integrity, provide for sediment catchment and allow for diversity in vegetation structure and age class.
2. Key riparian browse vegetation will not be used more than 50% of the current annual twig growth that is within reach of the animals.
3. Key herbaceous riparian vegetation on riparian area, other than 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.
4. Turn-out is subject to Boise District range readiness criteria.
5. Your certified Actual Use Report is due within 15 days of completing your authorized annual grazing use.

6. Salt and/or supplement shall not be placed within one-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) mile of springs, streams, meadows, aspen stands, playas or water developments.
7. Changes to the scheduled use require prior approval.
8. 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.
9. Livestock exclosures located within your grazing allotment(s) are closed to all domestic grazing use.
10. 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.
11. 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 Policy.

2.2 Alternative B – Proposed Action

Based on field mapping of existing fencelines and information provided by the permittee, the Cow Creek Allotment acreage has been recalculated. There are 5 acres more of public land, 374 acres more of private land, and 17 fewer acres of State land within the allotment than are shown in the RMP. The allotment now contains approximately 2,487 acres, including 470 acres of public land (19 percent), 1,634 acres of private land (66 percent), and 383 acres of State land (15 percent). These revised acres reflect the most accurate and up-to-date information, and will be used for the new term permit.

The following proposed actions apply to the Cow Creek Allotment.

1. Modify the allotment boundary to correspond to existing fencelines, and adjust the acreage and percent public land accordingly;
2. Livestock would be rotated between the two pastures that contain public land, with each pasture being grazed for approximately 2½ months. The remaining time, livestock would be rotated through private pastures;
3. Reduce the current grazing preference from 205 active AUMs to 105 active AUMs and 102 suspended AUMs. Suspended AUMs are unavailable for use by the permittee until they are re-activated by the authorized officer. If subsequent monitoring reveals that the allotment can withstand additional grazing, a portion or all of the suspended AUMs may be re-activated. This reduction is a cooperative voluntary action by the permittee to help improve allotment conditions;
4. A spring (Cow Creek Spring; project number 3484) would be developed in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17, T. 15 N., R. 2 W. BLM resource specialists have reviewed the proposed project and have determined that the proposal will not adversely affect cultural resources, or special status plants or animals;
5. Convert from a cattle only allotment to a mixed use allotment for cattle and/or sheep.
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 that the allotment is making progress towards meeting Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Under the proposed action, a maximum of 105 AUMs of active preference would be authorized from April 15 to October 30. 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. 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
CHE Enterprise, Inc	222 Cattle or 1,000 Sheep	04/15 to 10/30	19%	105	102	207

Terms and Conditions of the grazing permit for the Cow Creek Allotment:

1. Livestock grazing for Cow Creek 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 will 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 will 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 in this allotment. The vegetation in Cow Creek allotment has been altered by wildfire, annual use during the critical growth period of perennial grasses, and livestock use during the fall following spring use. Spring use coincides with the critical growth period for perennial grasses, which results in depleted vigor and reduced health. Spring use, coupled with fall use during the same year does not provide perennial grasses the opportunity to set seed or re-grow before grazing resumes the following spring.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences – Vegetation

3.1.2.1 Alternative A

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 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; a two-week delay in spring for livestock turn-out, the incorporation of sheep grazing with a herder, and a 49% decrease in active AUMs. These changes are expected to make improvements to the vegetation and progress towards meeting 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. The proposed spring development will result in short-term, localized impacts during construction, but will improve livestock distribution.

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. Mechanical damage to the soil surface and/or structure has been observed in this allotment. Annual use during the critical growth period coupled with fall use during the same year is not allowing ground cover to accumulate or rest for existing perennial grasses.

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 a two-week delay in spring turn-out, the incorporation of sheep grazing with a herder, and a 49% decrease in active AUMs. These proposed changes are expected to improve soil site stability and/or hydrologic function and make progress toward meeting the standard by promoting increases in ground cover, from both residual plant material and number of plants. The reduction in active AUMs will provide lighter use on plants; the two week delay in spring turnout will provide more time for soils to dry out from spring thaw and runoff; and sheep herding will allow more control on distribution and use. The spring development will result in short-term disturbance to soils during construction, but will improve livestock distribution and alleviate areas of heavy use in the long-term.

3.3 Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

3.3.1 Affected Environment – Wildlife – Including Special Status Animal Species

Special status animal species such as Brewer’s sparrows occur in shrub-steppe habitat on Cow Creek Allotment. The allotment lies within potential sage-grouse habitat and could provide habitat for Columbian sharp-tailed grouse on loamy sites.

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. 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 progress over the long-term towards meeting Standard 8. Grazing will nearly be cut in half, reducing impact to native plants within the allotment. A mixture of cattle and sheep grazing the allotment could lead to improvement since the two classes of livestock primarily select for different plants; cattle - grasses and sheep - forbs. Beyond this analysis, it is difficult to predict future outcomes without knowing which class of livestock will be grazed.

3.4 Cultural Resources

3.4.1 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.

3.4.2 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.

3.4.2.1 Alternative A

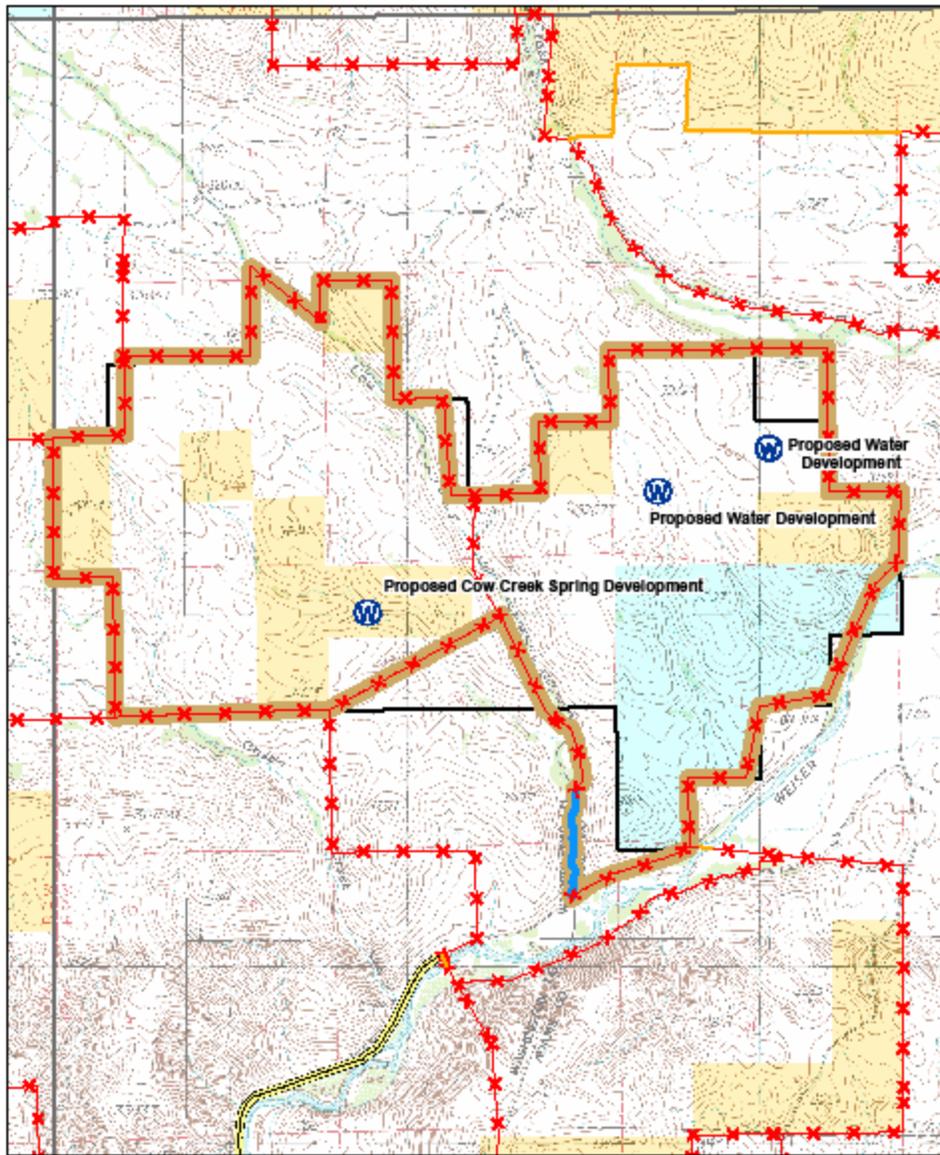
Under Alternative A, existing cultural resources would remain under present cultural resource management guidelines. The BLM would continue to protect and preserve cultural resources on public lands or mitigate adverse impacts to those cultural resources with input and coordination with the Idaho State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

3.4.2.2 Alternative B

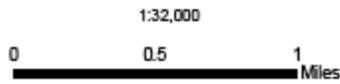
Under Alternative B, existing cultural resources would remain under present cultural resource management guidelines. The BLM would continue to protect and preserve cultural resources on public lands or mitigate adverse impacts to those cultural resources with input and coordination with SHPO. Additional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

One spring development is proposed on public lands in the Cow Creek Allotment #46. The proposed project is known as Cow Creek Spring Development (project number 3484), for which a Class III Cultural Resource Survey was conducted in 2006. The Four Rivers Archaeologist has recommended the project proceed as planned because no cultural resources were discovered in the proposed construction area.

Cow Creek Allotment #46 T 15N R 2W



Map Legend	
	Fence
	Water Boundary
	Road
	Closure Line
	Proposed Allotment Boundary
	1988 Management Plan
	BLM
	State
	Private



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