

Boise District RAC Talking Points

Bighorn Sheep

- Boise District has 19 permitted Domestic Sheep grazing allotments utilized by 11 permittees.
 - FRFO – 14 Allotments, 9 permittees, Rocky Mtn. Bighorn in the North and West, California Bighorn in the South.
 - OFO – 5 Allotments, 2 permittees (one primary contact), California Bighorns only.

- On July 28th, 2010, the Payette National Forest announced the decision on the Supplemental EIS and determined that 69% of the Forest was unsuitable for domestic sheep and goat grazing in order to maintain separation between bighorn and domestic sheep. Some of the areas designated as unsuitable are near or adjacent to BLM allotments within the Four Rivers Field Office that are permitted for domestic sheep grazing.
 - Approximately 54,000 bighorn sheep location points were utilized in the analysis of habitat use, forays and contact risk, and a disease model. The location points gathered represented about 400 individual bighorn sheep.
 - Within the analysis area that overlaps BLM domestic sheep allotments, even with the FS unsuitability determination, the population retains a rate of DS to BHS contact of 0.03 per year, and a corresponding probability of extirpation of approximately 22% within 100 years (assuming a disease outbreak occurs in only 1 of 4 DS to BHS contacts, or approximately every 46 years, FSEIS/ROD, July, 2010).

- The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies released their “Recommendations for Domestic Sheep and Goat Management in Wild Sheep Habitat” on July 21, 2010. Highlight recommendations include:
 - Complete Risk Assessments (ex. – PNF FSEIS)
 - Agency Coordination on management of Domestic Sheep in wild sheep ranges.
 - Manage domestic sheep and goat grazing to achieve effective separation.
 - Manage wild sheep habitat to promote healthy populations in areas away from where domestic sheep or goats are permitted.
 - Require the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce straying by domestic sheep or goats.

- Boise District is currently evaluating the analysis from the PNF FSEIS to determine the risks to wild sheep from BLM-permitted actions and options to minimize those risks.
 - Agreements to implement BMPs are currently in place for a number of domestic sheep permits across the state between the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the permittees.
 - BLM is developing “Separation Response Plans” to minimize the risk of contact between wild and domestic sheep in cooperation with IDFG.

Slickspot Peppergrass

- The Candidate Conservation Agreement for Slickspot Peppergrass was completed and authorized in December of 2003. To meet the terms of the agreement, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was developed to incorporate conservation measures specific to Management Areas known to contain occupied habitat (Environmental Assessment ID-110-2004-EA-078). The conservation measures were applied as terms and conditions for livestock grazing permits in occupied LEPA (*Lepidium papilliferum*) habitat. Terms and conditions related to slickspot peppergrass were specific to element occurrences and LEPA Management Areas.
- As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was conducting a court-ordered reconsideration of the species for listing, the BLM initiated the development of a Biological Assessment (BA) for Land Use Plans (LUP) and ongoing authorizations within known occupied slickspot peppergrass habitat (grazing permits, mineral material authorizations, and ROWs, Sept., 2009). Potential habitat was not included in the consultation at that time. The LUP direction was given a Letter of Concurrence from the USFWS in October 2009 following the Federal Register Notice that identified the listing of the species as “Threatened” across its range effective December 7, 2009. Ongoing grazing authorizations within occupied habitat received a “No Jeopardy” determination from the USFWS in January, 2010.
- BLM is currently evaluating the need to initiate Section 7 consultation on potential un-inventoried habitat and inventoried (current occupancy is unknown) slickspot habitat for ongoing actions. The current Consultation Agreement with the USFWS may be amended to clarify the timing and need for consultations on actions authorized or carried out by the BLM within potential and slickspot habitat.
- BLM is also considering amendment of the 2009 Conservation Agreement to provide flexibility in accomplishment of inventory efforts in light of potential reductions in budget allocations.