

DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SHEEP COMPLEX, BIG SPRINGS AND OWYHEE GRAZING ALLOTMENTS
SENSITIVE BIRD SPECIES

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko Field Office

Cooperating Agency: Nevada Department of Wildlife

Project Location: Elko County, Nevada

**Comments on this EIS
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ABSTRACT

On April 14, 2003, three multiple use decisions made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Elko Field Office for the Sheep Allotment Complex, Big Springs and Owyhee allotments were challenged in the United States District Court. On August 18, 2004, the U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM was directed to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine impacts of livestock grazing with respect to the following sensitive birds:

- Sheep Allotment Complex: Western burrowing owls, raptors and sage-grouse;
- Owyhee Allotment: Western burrowing owls, raptors and sage-grouse; and
- Big Springs Allotment: sage-grouse.

The Elko district is located in northeastern Nevada. The Sheep Allotment Complex and Big Springs Allotment are in the southeast corner and the Owyhee Allotment is in the northwest corner of the district.

This Draft EIS analyzes the effects of four alternative grazing systems and proposed range improvements to the species and their habitat, including uplands, springs and riparian areas. The no action alternative is to re-issue the grazing permits that were in place prior to issuance of the multiple use decisions. The proposed action would implement each of the multiple use decisions, which includes changes to the permitted grazing system and range improvement projects. It and the two alternatives analyzed were developed with the goal of making significant progress in meeting rangeland health standards and multiple use objectives for the allotments. The two alternatives involve making adjustments to the permitted grazing systems without some or all of the projects. BLM's preferred alternative is to implement the multiple use decisions.

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