

# **Buck Point Allotment Grazing Lease Renewal Categorical Exclusion Documentation**

**(DOI-BLM-OR-M060-2009-0007-CX)**

## **A. Background**

BLM Office: Medford District Office

Allotment Name and Number: Buck Point #10114

Proposed Action Title: Buck Point Grazing Lease Renewal

Location of Proposed Action: The Buck Point Allotment is located North of the Greensprings Highway and East of Emigrant Lake in T. 39 S., R. 2 E., Sections 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36 and T. 39 S., R., 3E., Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 30 and 31. The public lands within the allotment, approximately 3,845 acres.

Description of Proposed Action: The proposed action is to renew the Buck Point Allotment's 10 year grazing lease using the same grazing preference and Terms and Conditions as the prior lease. The Buck Point Allotment permits 10 cows from May 1–June 15 and October 1–October 30, and 123 cows from May 16–June 15 for a total of 150 Animal Unit Months.

## **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

The grazing program is implemented through provisions in the Medford Grazing Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (April 1984) and the Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) Record of Decision (September 1984). Since 1984, additional RPS updates have been published (October 1987, October 1990, October 2001).

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan (LUP) because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision: USDI Bureau of Land Management. 2008. Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan. Medford, OR.

## **C: Land Health Assessment**

The allotment is meeting standards and conforming to guidelines (43 CFR 4180.2, *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management for Public Lands in Oregon and Washington* (1997)). The following standards are being met:

- Standard 1) Watershed Function- Uplands
- Standard 2) Watershed Function- Riparian
- Standard 4) Water Quality

The allotment is not meeting standards and conforming to guidelines with regard to:

Standard 3: Ecological Processes, and

Standard 5: Native, Threatened or Endangered (T&E) and locally important species

Although these Standards are not being met, livestock grazing has been determined not to be causal factors. Standard 3 is not being met because of the introduction and establishment of exotic annual grasses, however the conversion likely occurred prior to the last two decades and current livestock grazing is not intense enough to contribute to additional conversion of native plant communities to exotic annual grasslands. Standard 5 is not being met because distributions

of native, T&E and locally important species have been displaced by medusahead, annual oatgrass and other aggressive exotic annual grasses and forbs such as yellow starthistle and Canada thistle. Although these influences include grazing, the slight to light levels of livestock use are not a significant factor in the non-achievement of this standard.

**D: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, as published in the Notice of Final Action to Adopt Revisions to the Bureau of Land Management's Procedures for Managing the NEPA Process, Chapter 11 of the Department of the Interior's Manual Part 516. Federal Register: Volume 72, Number 156 -August 14, 2007, pages 45503-45542. *“Issuance of livestock grazing permits/leases where (a) The new grazing permit/lease is consistent with the use specified on the previous permit/lease, such that (1) the same kind of livestock is grazed, (2) the active use previously authorized is not exceeded, and (3) grazing does not occur more than 14 days earlier or later than as specified on the previous permit/lease, and (b) The grazing allotment(s) has been assessed and evaluated and the Responsible Official has documented in a determination that the allotment(s) is (1) meeting land health standards, or (2) not meeting land health standards due to factors that do not include existing livestock grazing.”*

This categorical exclusion review has been conducted by an interdisciplinary team (IDT), which utilized all available allotment information to make a recommendation.

An interdisciplinary team conducted an evaluation of the Standards for Rangeland Health for this Allotment. Additionally, a Determination was made and signed on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 by the Authorized Officer, which finds that three Standards for Rangeland Health (Watershed Function-Uplands, Watershed Function-Riparian, and Water Quality) are being met and two standards (Ecological Processes and Native, Threatened or Endangered (T&E) and locally important species) are not being met (livestock grazing is not a causal factor).

This categorical exclusion is appropriate because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply.

<b>CX EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION</b> The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		✓
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. <b>Rationale:</b> BLM has issued interim guidance for meeting BLM’s responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186. Both the Act and the EO promote the conservation of migratory bird populations. The interim		✓

guidance was transmitted through Instruction Memorandum (I.M.) No. 2008-050. The I.M. relies on two lists prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in determining which species are to receive special attention in land management activities; the lists are *Bird Species of Conservation Concern* (BCC) found in various Bird Conservation Regions and *Game Birds Below Desired Condition* (GBBDC). The table below displays those species that are known or likely to be present on the allotment.

Species	Status
Flammulated owl ( <i>Otus flammeolus</i> )	BCC
Golden eagle ( <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> )	BCC
Lewis' woodpecker ( <i>Melanerpes lewis</i> )	BCC
Olive-sided flycatcher ( <i>Contopus cooperi</i> )	BCC
Rufous hummingbird ( <i>Selasphorus rufus</i> )	BCC
Mourning Dove ( <i>Zenaida macroura</i> )	GBBDC

Except for Rufous Hummingbird and Mourning Dove, grazing has little impact, if any on the other species because it does not physically reduce their numbers nor does it reduce feeding, breeding, and sheltering opportunities. Rufous Hummingbird and Mourning Dove can be affected by reduced foraging opportunity, but because the grazing intensity is less than authorized, the grazing operation does not significantly impact these species.

2.3	Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		✓
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		✓
2.5	Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		✓
2.6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		✓
2.7	Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		✓
2.8	Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		✓
<p><b>Rationale:</b> At this time special status species are not likely to be adversely affected by grazing use. Current conditions suggest this action is a No Effects for SONC coho salmon or Coho Critical Habitat (CCH) because livestock use is 4.0 miles below CCH. Sediments generated by stream bank degradation are not of the magnitude to influence CCH.</p> <p>The allotment is within the range of <i>Fritillaria gentneri</i> but no occurrences of the plant or any other federally listed plants are known within the allotment as defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, 2003).</p> <p>Current use levels on the allotment are slight-light therefore, regardless of use level northern spotted owls are not likely to be adversely affected by current levels of grazing.</p>			
2.9	Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		✓
2.10	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or		✓

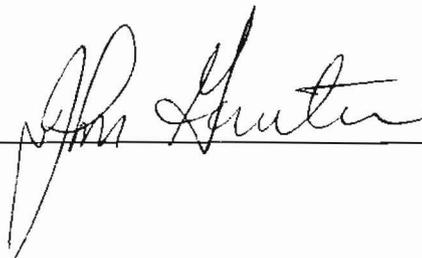
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		✓
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		✓
<p>Rationale: Field surveys have located a number of noxious weed species within the allotment, including yellow starthistle (<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>) and Canada thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>). The populations of yellow starthistle occur in section 24, 25, 26, 27, and 35, with large populations (over 2,000 plants) in sections 27 and 35. The small population of Canada thistle occurs along a road in section 18. In the non-conifer habitats preferred by livestock, medusahead (<i>Taeniatherum caput-medusae</i>), annual oatgrass (<i>Avena fatua</i>) and other exotic annual grasses are present in most meadows, and dominant in some areas. In the same non-conifer habitats, the areas most likely to experience conversion from native perennial grasslands to exotic annual grasslands have already undergone conversion. Current stocking rates are unlikely to convert additional areas of native grassland.</p>		

**E: Other Considerations**

It is recognized that the level of livestock grazing use on this allotment has been below authorized levels for over a decade and that current use levels are consistent with allowable levels of impact in the Rangeland Health Assessment (RHA) and this Categorical Exclusion (CX). Also, that current use levels are expected to remain the same without expectation that a full use request will be made in the future.

Should annual use be increased to the full authorization level, monitoring will be increased to determine if the change in use causes significant impacts that exceed allowable levels for any or all of the Standards evaluated in the RHA or CX. If increased levels of impact are found where livestock use is considered to be the causal factor, a new RHA and appropriate level of NEPA will be done to determine compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

**F: Signature**

Authorizing Official:  Date: 2/10/09

Name: John Gerritsma  
 Title: Field Manager

## G. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Stephen J. Slavik, Rangeland Management Specialist, Ashland Resource Area, (541) 618-2471.

Stephen Slavik 12/11/08  
Steve Slavik: Rangeland Management Specialist

Kimberly Hackett 12/11/08  
Kimberly Hackett: Rangeland Management Specialist

Ted Hass 1-5-09  
Ted Hass: Soils

George Arnold 11 Dec 08  
George Arnold: Wildlife, T&E Animals

Dulcey Schuster 12/11/08  
Dulcey Schuster: Botany, T&E Plants

Jennifer Smith 12.15.08  
Jennifer Smith: Aquatic, Fisheries

Timothy C. Montfort 12/11/08  
Timothy Montfort: Hydrology, Riparian, Wetlands

Kathleen P. Minor  
Kathy Minor: Hydrology, Riparian, Wetlands

David Knutson 12/12/08  
David Knutson: Cultural Resources