

# BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF PRE-SCOPING EIS ALTERNATIVES FEBRUARY 2010 SCOPING MEETINGS

*Grazing allotments potentially affected include: Fifteen Mile Community (01201), McCormick (01202), McDermitt Creek (01205), Zimmerman (01203), Whitehorse Butte (01206), Campbell (11306), Albisu-Alcorta (01304), Tenmile (01308), and Barren Valley (10801).*

The summaries below provide readers a quick overview of guiding principles associated with (a) no action and (b) four “action” alternatives including the BLM proposed action. The action alternatives were developed by a BLM interdisciplinary staff in light of: (1) previously gathered Environmental Assessment scoping responses from permittees and other interested publics (2) previous and ongoing litigation and (3) other considerations. Depending upon the nature of the comments received during this EIS scoping exercise, the action alternatives listed below may be adjusted.

## ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION

- Alternative 1, the No Action alternative required for all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses, is the baseline setting used to compare how grazing permits and natural resource conditions may change under action alternatives 2, 3a, 3b, or 4. In this case, no action considers impacts that would occur if BLM were to reissue grazing permits with no adjustment<sup>1</sup> and under authority of the Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary and Record of Decision, or RPS ROD, (USDI BLM 1984). The No Action alternative would not stop BLM from authorizing grazing use and neither would it require BLM to terminate all existing grazing permits.

For analysis purposes, the No Action alternative does not consider the impacts of recent voluntary grazing adjustments taken by permittees. This is done deliberately to allow for a clear distinction between grazing use and impacts prior to the evaluation and those expected under the action alternatives. The BLM has not taken this analytical tact to ignore or discredit the voluntary conservation efforts of permittees.

Finally, for all other multiple use management objectives unrelated to grazing use, such as cultural resources, recreation, wildlife, fisheries and so on, BLM provides impact analyses with reference to the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and ROD (USDI BLM 2002). This comparative analysis is done because in contrast to grazing use, all other September 2002 ROD objectives were adopted the date the document was signed.

## THE ACTION ALTERNATIVES

In contrast to Alternative 1, action alternatives 2, 3a, 3b, and 4 below would each potentially result in grazing permit adjustments and grazing decisions in accordance with the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and ROD (USDI BLM 2002). Although the action alternatives share some common threads, they are each discrete actions wholly independent of one another.

- **ALTERNATIVE 2**  
Alternative 2 analyzes impacts resulting from approval of all livestock permittee proposed grazing systems and rangeland developments. Permittees were asked by BLM to provide good faith proposals they believed would (1) meet the S&Gs and their livestock operations and (2) require limited structural development and

---

<sup>1</sup> Until a grazing evaluation and rangeland health assessment is completed, livestock grazing use for Jordan Resource Area allotments proceeds under authority of the Vale BLM Management Framework Plan (MFP), the Final Southern Malheur Grazing Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (USDI BLM 1983), and the Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary, or RPS (USDI BLM 1984).

land treatment. Because BLM has not yet fully analyzed the potential impacts of permittee proposals, part of those permittee proposals may not meet the S&Gs or other requirements of the ROD. Therefore, adjustment to original permittee suggestions may be needed. Alternative 2 would not maximize potential for livestock production. However, among the alternatives considered it would result in the highest number of active AUMs and the most extensive footprint (cumulative impact) from rangeland development actions.

- **ALTERNATIVE 3A**

Alternative 3A analyzes relatively conservative livestock grazing use practices and temporary grazing rest periods as a way to meet the S&Gs and land use objectives. New rangeland developments above 5,000 feet elevation would be foregone in order to protect natural values. Under Alternative 3a, new grazing systems would be applied to pastures that did not meet standards due to livestock use after a mandatory 5-year<sup>2</sup> rest period. Subsequent to mandatory rest, each pasture that did not meet standards due to grazing use would be rested every other year. Alternative 3a would not maximize protection of natural values.

- **ALTERNATIVE 3B**

Alternative 3B analyzes a partial “no grazing” option considered in light of FLPMA<sup>3</sup> and the ROD. BLM informed the public that current grazing use authorizations would be maintained until after rangeland health evaluations were completed (ROD:11 and 46). Because a rangeland health evaluation has now been completed for this analysis area, the time is ripe for BLM to decide if and where grazing use should continue.

This alternative would result in removal of grazing use in (1) all pastures that did not meet standards where livestock grazing use was considered a significant causal factor and (2) selected pastures supporting high quality natural values<sup>4</sup>. In total, 31 grazing allotment pastures and about 238,300 acres of land (including private in-holdings) would be affected. Alternative 3b would greatly enhance protection of natural values in key areas but it would not maximize natural value protection throughout the analysis area as a whole. Of all the alternatives considered, 3B would result in the most substantial adverse socio-economic impacts to grazing permittees.

- **ALTERNATIVE 4 – BLM PROPOSED ACTION**

Alternative 4 analyzes adoption of successful no action elements (e.g. actions that meet the S&Gs) and a combination of remedies taken from the action alternatives. Selected rangeland development projects would potentially be allowed. The BLM proposed action for grazing use, structural development and land treatment was crafted with the intent to (1) conform with the grazing regulations (2) balance multiple uses and demands consistent with the FLPMA and (3) meet ROD objectives. The BLM proposed action would be expected to provide a reasonable mix of management actions consistent with the ROD:ν theme of allowing for “a high level of natural resource protection and improvement in ecological conditions while providing for commodity production”.

---

<sup>2</sup> The 5-year rest period for Alternative 3A was not chosen arbitrarily by BLM. It is based on documented upland recovery and riparian habitat recovery in LCT habitat following a 5-year rest period in selected pastures of Fifteen Mile Community and Whitehorse Butte Allotments. Shorter or longer time frames could have been chosen for this analysis which would also meet management objectives. However, local experience in Jordan Resource Area has shown a 5-year rest period in upper elevation rangeland has been successful in improving upland and riparian habitat conditions. Thus it is reasonable for BLM to take this course of action as a viable alternative.

<sup>3</sup> Complete elimination of grazing use is an alternative considered but not analyzed in detail because it was already analyzed under the FEIS.

<sup>4</sup> As stated in the TCGMA Evaluation, the term “natural values” refers to a combination of factors including but not limited to (1) intact, resilient native plant communities (2) special status plants and animals (3) productive wildlife habitat (4) riparian areas (5) aspen communities (6) fisheries (7) visual resources (8) recreational opportunities and (9) wilderness characteristics found inside or outside of designated BLM Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).