LIVESTOCK GRAZING WORKING GROUP
OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON PROVINCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SCIENCE PANEL & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING
September 24, 2004

Science Panel:	John Alexander, Klamath Bird Observatory Brian Barr, World Wildlife Fund Paul Hosten, Bureau of Land Management John Menke, UC Davis, retired Dave Pyke, US Geological Survey, Oregon State University
PAC Working Group:	Gene Bowling, Rose Marie Davis, Cate Hartzell, Robert Horton, Ed Kupillas, John Roth, Anita Ward (Alternate)
Members Absent:	Romain Cooper, Mark Grenbemer
BLM Staff Present:	Tim Reuwsaat, Howard Hunter, Kimberly Hackett
Public Present:	Bob & Pat Miller, Bruce Buckmaster, Anita Ward, Hans Stroo, Jerry Lehman, Jennifer Menke, Susan Kendle, Dave Willis, Mike Dauenhaer, Lee Bradshaw, Jennifer Walt, Katheerine Vantuyl
Facilitators:	Jon Lange & Terry Morton

Objectives

- ***Public awareness of the studies***
- ***PAC Working Group understanding of the issues***
- ***Scientific discussion of the issues and recommendations to the Working Group***
- ***Public input to help shape Working Group recommendations***

Paul Hosten gave a summary of the BLM Studies that include historic information, existing studies, and the new studies. Some of the existing studies include trend plot data, photo monitoring, utilization mapping shrub utilization, fecal analysis, and plant phenology. Some of the newer studies include the exclosure study, repeat photos, historic vegetation plots, LIDAR, landscape surveys, rare plant surveys, proximity mapping, and weed mapping.

Questions and Comment from scientists:

- Are there other BLM studies done to this degree. Not aware of any.
- What about effects of municipal water "mismanagement" at Jenny Creek (spill-over), in addition to "over-utilization" by ranchers, which have had compounding effects?
    - Dave Squires would be able to provide information about water management
    - Important to separate out factors other than livestock

- What about elements of confoundments? There is contextual data-landscape context.
- Need plant community classification under acceptable standards – "natural community of associated species"
    - Different techniques/frameworks are valid (SVIM, SCS, point data collection).

BLM will continue these studies for the long-term.

Public Input

- Need a definition of "adverse impacts"
    - NEPA will identify "adverse"
- Studies should consider *any* impacts (positive as well as negative)
- Proclamation mandates "protect the objects of biological interest"
- Must consider all changes (apart from cattle) (e.g., fire, logging, drought)
- Plots may be incorrectly placed
- Historical studies may be inaccurate
- What's the baseline? What are optimum conditions? What are the management objectives? These things need to be determined.

John Alexander presented the KBO studies. KBO is a non advocacy science-based group that integrates conservation and land management plans. KBO is studying the distribution of landbirds. They are using a null hypothesis, large numbers of samples, and rigorous utilization methods (BLM methods). The study sites are located across habitat types and utilization areas but are focused in mixed-conifer and oak woodland. They have identified habitat types by ground-truthing BLM GIS habitat data.

- Scientific comment
    - Mixed conifer & oak woodland classifications exclude the highest impact areas, should benefit ranchers.
    - Riparian areas are included in both.
    - Adequate sampling of low-usage lands? Yes, with point sampling.
    - Two typical methods:
        - Exclosures
        - Utilization gradient (low/medium/high)
            - In addition to habitat
    - Would larger exclosures help?
        - 10 years ago they would have
        - landscape-scale studies help compensate
- PAC comment/questions
    - The "pure science" in this study does not necessarily point to particular management goals for leaseholders (Bob Horton)
    - What is the "accepted" peer review process? How closely will studies adhere to that? The answers:
        - Adequacy of journals
        - Different journals accept different types of articles

        - Peer review not the Holy Grail; it's imperfect. But it's the best that humans have for determining adequacy of studies.
        - Perhaps there could be [another?] oversight committee (including scientists) consulting to PAC. They could prepare:
            - Study plan
            - Report
            - Recommendations/Applications
    - BLM must study animals & water quality
- Public comment
    - We must consider the cost to people of management decisions
    - Larger enclosures & three-way enclosures ok with ranchers
    - Ranchers wanted Bill Krueger on Peer Review committee, & propose him for peer review of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) studies

Brian Barr presented the studies being conducted by the WWF. The studies include small mammals, birds, butterflies, lily, springsnails, and stream and riparian habitat.

Questions/Comments:

One member of the public noted that he has not seen any WWF studies indicating positive impacts of grazing studies from the WWF. How can BLM use this as credible information?

Can WWF differentiate utilization between wildlife versus livestock?

Another member from the public stated that the WWF studies are biased (presented document representing grant request signed by Robert Anthony).

Someone asked if there is coordination with BLM? The answer was yes, but in a restricted and therefore strained way.

Dave Pyke presented a summary of the most recent OSU peer review of the Livestock Impact Study (BLM) including the major strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. The strength of the document is the many types of studies that are being conducted. The weakness is that while the studies concentrate on the vegetation component, it is missing the wildlife component. The OSU panel recommended that any future study plans as well as publications be peer reviewed. The OSU panel opted not to evaluate the additional studies since the level of detail for the additional studies varied.

Some Questions/Comments:

Peer review is not the Holy Grail. It doesn't guarantee anything, though it is the best available way to judge science.

There was discussion of what is a blind review.

The OSU peer review process validated the need for studying animals.

A member of the public offered agreement with the threeway exclosures, peer review process, but feels the most recent Peer Review panel is biased.

John Menke provided his comments in a written document (which will be sent separately). Some of his comments are included here:

- Serves as a volunteer, not paid by ranching community, involved with BLM in the past
- He seconds and agrees fully with the Peer Review, noting it was an excellent effort.
- There is under-representation of exclosures in oak woodlands, bitterbrush & bottom lands of Box O.
- There could be severe fire danger – livestock turn over flashy fuels.
- Need three-way exclosures to separate out the impacts of deer, elk & rabbits
    - Fencing enhances growth & obscures the effects of grazing
    - Point sampling can miss rarer species
        - Need plots/quadrants
        - Voucher collections can help
        - Need inventory of plant community classification
- Must have high standards when livelihoods are involved
- Suggests that there be an assessment of fuel hazards on the Box O. Grazing is a big positive impact
- Hard to separate the effects of fire suppression from those of removing grazing
- Little impact by wild horses
- Are any plant communities fire-dependent? Yes, particularly chaparral plant community—fire served as a regulatory mechanism; bitterbrush are out of place
- The effects of fire suppression must be considered.

Science Panel Discussion (Brian Barr had to leave prior to this point, however, Dominick Della Salla, also of the World Wildlife Fund, offered his comments to the questions in writing; they are included here.)

If you could start over, what would you like to have done differently?

- Plant community classification→habitat typing (John Menke)
- Start this process earlier→more collaboration (John Alexander, Paul Hosten, Dave Pyke)
- Facilitated group to locate exclosures/study sites (PH)
- Larger exclosures (DP)
- Include animal studies from the beginning (DP)
- Nested design of studies (different spatial scales) (Dominick Dellasala)
- Restoration studies, as part of weed control (DD)

If you had additional funds, what would you do with them?

- Expand exclosures into other areas of the Monument (DP)
- Study livestock influence on herbaceous structure & insects (PH)
- Collate ranchers' historical knowledge of management practices, fire suppression, various changes (PH)

- Larger landscape-level exclosures (JA)
- Demographic layer on bird studies (JA)
- Divide CSNM into 4 fenced pastures, rotate stocking rates, use real-time response as a management tool (JM)
- Telemetry to track livestock movement (DD)
- Include zoological studies (DD)
- Include Riparian studies (DD)
- Include stream water quality (DD)

Where do you see the controversy?

- Lack of public involvement early on (DP)
- Future studies (DP)
- Now need opportunities for feedback on studies (DP)
- Needed facilitated meetings to start off with—because we didn't, the controversy continues now (PH)
- Most of the problems with the current studies are of perception (PH)
- Present controversy is purely political; we should stick with the science (JA)
- Location—we are too far from research universities where research faculty & graduate students would be a better resource than advocacy groups (JM)

If you could make one recommendation to the Working Group, what would it be?

- Oversight Committee involved with Peer Review Committee (DP)
- Panel of scientists to work together on studies—open communication, collaboration (PH)
- Creation of a safe, litigation-free environment (PH)
- Keep the politics (social and economic considerations) separate from the science (JA)
- Go to a higher level in the BLM—or to Congressman—This is a model effort in the country, call for a review & necessary funding (JM)
- Peer review of all studies (DD)

Public Comment

If you could make one recommendation to the Working Group, what would it be?

- Should have started this process earlier
- Ranchers are an affected party, & have been kept out of the loop—this makes them suspicious
- Ranchers want true, honest facts—pure science
- If we're creating a problem, let us fix it.
- The World Wildlife Fund money is tainted; people are biased.
- We want a balanced assessment—fair, even-handed
- Would anyone want the decisions to go to a higher authority if J. Kerry wins?
- Proclamation is simply the result of a lobbying effort
- Ranchers have been excluded from the process
- With 100 years of grazing, we have great diversity of species on the Monument.
- Taking this issue "upstairs" would make it more political.
- Cattlemen representation on Studies.

- They'll trust only if their input is listened to & acted on.
- Start studies over from scratch.
- Our livelihood could be hanging in the balance for 10-15 more years.
- Field trip was biased in taking the Working Group only to the areas of higher impacts—there should be another field trip to see the better areas on the Monument.
- When & how will we know whether we have a viable business? We're in limbo.
- Funds should come from above this District
    - Money should be no object—this is a serious precedent

Working Group Comment

- The field trip & this meeting are the most valuable things we've done
- What questions do we need to know about, to direct the BLM & the studies?
- We cannot separate out the politics
- How can we answer
    - What percentage or level of effects from grazing is acceptable?
    - What is the time element consideration?
- Monitoring is needed long-term
- There is NEVER enough time, money or data
    - The PAC will do the best it can, as will the District Manager
    - The PAC's job is to advocate for ***balanced*** studies
- This is not an all-or-nothing situation
    - Livestock management options with intermediate levels of intensity may be an answer

District Manager Comment (Tim Reuwsaat)

- It's not easy to focus on the science, given the social, economic and political influences; that's why he so appreciates this Working Group & these scientists

The next meeting date is Wednesday, October 20, 9-12am.
This will be the opportunity for the Working Group to take all the information & suggestions they have received, and begin drafting their recommendations to the PAC and BLM. The public is welcome to observe, although comment will be limited to 3 minutes per person (half an hour maximum). If needed, we will create other opportunities for public input.

IMPORTANT: Submit recommendations to the Working Group by Tuesday, October 12 [even though we originally said Saturday, October 8]. Send them in writing to Bob Horton, Chair, at hortonrlh@msn.com (preferred), or if need be, mail them to him at 148 San Marcos Drive, Medford, OR 97504.

Background information is available at www.or.blm.gov/medford