



Q&As: Grazing Leases & Permits

1,596 permits and leases administered by the BLM and held by ranchers who graze their livestock on public lands in Oregon and Washington.

2,003 allotments administered by the BLM for livestock grazing on public lands in Oregon and Washington.

\$1.41 per AUM is the annual grazing fee for public lands administered by the BLM in 2018, as determined by a congressional formula.

What's the BLM connection to grazing and rangeland management?

In Oregon and Washington, the BLM is responsible for administering nearly 14 million acres of rangelands.

The BLM is committed to strong relationships with the ranching communities in both states, and works closely with permittees to ensure public rangelands remain healthy, productive working landscapes. This translates to over \$151 million in economic contribution throughout Oregon and Washington.

How many grazing leases and permits does the BLM administer in Oregon and Washington?

Much of BLM-administered rangeland is grazed by livestock under a system of permits and leases in which ranchers pay grazing fees for the use of public land.

In Oregon and Washington, the BLM administers 1,596 ten-year permits and leases held by ranchers who graze their livestock (mostly cattle and sheep) on 2,003 allotments. The BLM Vale District is the largest grazing district and has the greatest number of allotments.

It is a BLM priority to renew expiring grazing permits/leases, as they help promote job creation and support working landscapes in Oregon and Washington.

What is the federal grazing fee? How is it established?

As announced on Jan. 30, 2018, the federal grazing fee for 2018 is \$1.41 per AUM (animal unit month) for public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. This grazing fee was determined by a congressional formula and took effect March 1, 2018. It applies to nearly 18,000 grazing permits and leases administered by the BLM nationwide. The 2017 public land grazing fee was \$1.87.

The formula used for calculating the grazing fee was established by Congress in the 1978 Public Rangelands Improvement Act and has remained in use under a 1986 presidential Executive Order. Under that order, the grazing fee cannot fall below \$1.35 per AUM, and any increase or decrease cannot exceed 25 percent of the previous year's level.



What is an AUM?

The term AUM stands for animal unit month. It is the amount of forage necessary for the sustenance of one cow or its equivalent for a period of one month.

The BLM does not make an annual count of the livestock that graze on BLM-managed lands because the actual number of livestock grazing on public lands on any single day varies throughout the year and livestock are often moved from one grazing allotment to another. So, an aggregate head count would provide very little information on overall livestock use. Instead, the BLM compiles information on the number of AUMs used each year. This takes into account both the number of livestock and the amount of time they spend on public lands.

How are grazing fees distributed?

Fifty percent of the collected grazing fees deposited into the U.S. Treasury are returned to the Range Betterment Fund for on-the-ground range improvement projects.

Depending on whether the collected fees are from permits or leases, portions are also returned to the states or counties where the fees were generated. For leases, 50% of collected fees goes to the Range Betterment Fund and the other 50% goes back to the county where the fees were generated. For permits, 50% of fees goes to the Range Betterment Fund, 12.5% goes to the state or counties where the fees were generated, and 37.5% goes to the U.S. Treasury.

What are range improvements?

Range improvements are authorized modifications or treatments designed to improve production of forage, change vegetation composition, control patterns of use, provide water, stabilize soil and water conditions, or restore, protect, and improve the condition of rangeland ecosystems to benefit livestock, wild horses and burros, and fish and wildlife. Examples of range improvements include fences, cattle guards, troughs, seeding projects, and spring development.

How does the BLM maintain rangeland health?

To achieve desired conditions on the public lands, the BLM uses monitoring data to evaluate the rangeland health standards and guidelines. There are many different treatments used to assist in maintaining rangeland health, including prescribed burns, rehabilitation of burned lands, fencing, water developments, weed control, and juniper management.

Rangeland Health Assessments on these lands are used to determine watershed functions, ecological processes, water quality and habitat for all species -- including native, threatened and endangered species.

The goal of the BLM's rangeland management program is to ensure the health and productivity of public rangelands for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.