

Request for Motorized Use in Wilderness – Big Springs Allotment

Owyhee River and Pole Creek Wilderness Areas

The Bruneau Field Office, BLM received a verbal request from Chris Black on March 4th, 2016, for motorized access to accomplish herding, fence maintenance, monitoring water levels in reservoirs, and salt placement within the Owyhee and Pole Creek wilderness areas. Further consultation with the applicant subsequently clarified the request on March 9th, 2016 and his request is detailed below:

In order to adequately distribute livestock in the wilderness portions (Owyhee and Pole Creek) of the Big Springs allotment, the applicant proposes to use a motorcycle or ATV (only for scouting from administrative routes) 3 - 4 times per week during the active grazing season. This is estimated to be April 1 - May 30th in the Owyhee wilderness and August 1 - September 30th in the Pole Creek wilderness. The applicant also proposes an estimated one incursion per week when cattle are not in the wilderness, but during the permitted season of use from April 1 to October 31 to account for fence maintenance, reservoir checks, salt placement, and gathering individual animals.

The rationale for this request as provided by the applicant follows:

“The rationale for this request is due to the distance from Cow Camp to canyon rim (within wilderness) estimated at 12 miles. There are between 7 to 8 miles within wilderness. These distances are not conducive to moving livestock with enough frequency to protect natural resources without motorized methods.

My operation has used motorized herding and motorized scouting (salt distribution, fence checking, scouting) since the early 1960's. Initially, our operation used motorized vehicles for scouting, and very soon after, as an aid to manage livestock in an area with unique challenges for management.

The practice of motorized herding was accepted by me and BLM in areas that were Wilderness Study, as a management tool that was integral to stewardship. In fact the Stewardship award I received from BLM in 2008 was a reflection of my management using the tool of motorized herding. I cannot achieve that level of stewardship in what is a fence free area without motorized herding to control timing and duration of grazing in the respective areas. Without motorized herding we will need to consider fencing areas to control timing and duration of grazing to ~~at~~ that level of stewardship.

The modern motorcycles and ATV's that I use have quiet mufflers that also have spark arresters. The tires I use on all machines are chosen to leave very little trace of passage.”