

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
LIVESTOCK GRAZING AUTHORIZATION**

**EA Number      CA 170-07-13**

**Allotment Number and Name(s)**

**6056   West Reservoir  
6078   Walters Ranch**

**BLM Bishop Field Office  
Prepared  
April 2007**

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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

### A. Summary

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared to analyze and disclose the environmental consequences of re-authorizing livestock grazing permits for 10-years as proposed on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments. The EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result from the implementation of the proposed action or one of the alternatives. The EA assists the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in project planning and in ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws and policies affecting the proposed action and alternatives. If the authorized officer determines that this action has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be prepared for the action. If not, a Grazing Decision will be issued along with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) statement, documenting the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in “significant” environmental impacts.

### B. Background

The two allotments analyzed in this EA are located in the Bridgeport Valley Management Area of the Bishop Field Office. Their elevation range is between 6,450 and 7,000 feet. Vegetation communities are a mix of Great Basin Big Sagebrush and Bitterbrush on both allotments. Livestock kind, season of use, allocated animal unit months (AUMs), and use type for each allotment as prescribed in the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) are:

Allotment	Kind	From	To	AUMs	Use
West Reservoir	Cattle	6/16	9/30	70	Perennial
Walters Ranch	Sheep	5/1	6/30	54	Perennial

The approximate public, state, and private land acreages (See Map 1) within each allotment are:

Allotment Name	Public Land	State Land	Private Land
West Reservoir	744	0	28
Walters Ranch	519	0	0

There is no designated critical habitat for any federally listed species in these two allotments and no federally listed species are known to occupy these allotments.

The two fully processed 10-year grazing permits for these two allotments have expired. In the interim, two grazing permits which authorize use on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments were issued in accordance with Section 328 of Public Law 107-67. Both permits will expire in 2013. Renewing permits under the appropriation act authorized existing grazing use to

continue, while allowing BLM time to complete rangeland health allotment assessments and to meet applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to analyze the environmental consequences of issuing 10-year grazing permits.

### **C. Purpose and Need for the Action**

The purpose of the action is to consider whether to authorize grazing for 10-years on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments. If authorized, grazing would be in accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4100 and consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act (1934), as amended, the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (1978), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. The purpose of the action is also to ensure that grazing authorizations implement provisions of, and are in conformance with, the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Secretary of the Interior approved Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (July 2000).

The action is needed to respond to the expired 10-year grazing permits and to replace the appropriation act permits with fully processed 10-year grazing permits.

### **D. Scoping and Issues**

#### ***Public Scoping***

On January 23, 2006, the Bishop Field Manager sent a letter to the two permittees who graze these two allotments informing them of the status of the 10-year grazing permits and included a proposed schedule for environmental assessment and permit completion.

On November 20, 2006, the Bishop Field Manager sent a second letter to the two permittees who graze these two allotments informing them how the environmental assessments would be prepared and the status of the 10-year grazing permits. Included with the letter was a proposed schedule for environmental assessment completion.

On December 28, 2006, a Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) was sent to the two permittees who graze these two allotments and to interested publics including the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP) mailing list. The NOPA contained the Need for the Proposed Action, Plan Conformance, the Proposed Action and Alternatives, a schedule for EA completion, and area maps. The NOPA was also posted on the BLM internet site for public review at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/bishop>. The NOPA provided a 30 day comment period on the proposed action and alternatives.

On April 11, 2007, a draft EA was posted for two weeks on the BLM internet site for public review at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/bishop>. The draft EA was developed using the BLM, California State Office Revised Environmental Assessment Template for Consideration of Livestock Grazing Authorizations (Instruction Memorandum No. CA-2007-014). The two

permittees and Center for Biological Diversity were notified that the EA had been posted on the BLM internet site.

### ***Issues and Alternatives***

No additional issues or alternatives were identified as a result of public scoping or draft EA review effort.

### **E. Tiering to Existing Land Use Plan(s)/Environmental Impact Statement(s)**

The Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) provides a comprehensive framework for managing land use authorizations, including grazing permits, for public lands administered by the Bishop Field Office. The Bishop Resource Management Plan replaced the Benton-Owens Valley (BLM 1982) and the Bodie-Colville (BLM 1983) Management Framework Plans. Grazing decisions and changes in grazing decisions from the Benton-Owens Valley and the Bodie-Coleville Management Framework Plans are summarized in Appendix 4 of the Bishop Resource Management Plan (pages A4-1 through A4-11).

This EA is tiered to the Final Bishop Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 1991). Tiering helps focus this EA more sharply on the significant issues related to grazing on the allotments while relying on the Final Bishop Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the overall analysis of grazing actions throughout the Field Office. Livestock grazing was analyzed in Chapter 4, Impacts, of the Final Bishop Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (pages 4-20 through 4-26).

Impacts associated with adoption of the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (July 2000) were analyzed in Chapter 4 of the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for California and Northwestern Nevada Final Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 1998). The analysis contained in this EA also tiers to that analysis.

### **F. Prevention of Unnecessary or Undue Degradation**

In addition to management prescriptions analyzed in this EA, including all terms and conditions, BLM may use its authority to close any area of an allotment to grazing use or take other measures to protect resources at any time, if needed. Therefore, issuance of a grazing permit with appropriate terms and conditions is consistent with BLM's responsibility to manage public use, occupancy, and development of the public lands and to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of those lands (43 USC 1732(b)).

### **G. Relationship to other Statutes, Regulations, and Plans**

The following Statutes, Regulations, and Plans provide additional legal framework for grazing on public lands.

## *Air Quality*

Section 176 (c) of the Clean Air Act (CAA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.), and regulations under 40 CFR part 93 subpart W, with respect to the conformity of general Federal actions to the applicable State Implementation Plan apply to projects within any Federal Air Quality Non-Attainment/Maintenance Areas. Under those authorities, "no department, agency or instrumentality of the Federal Government shall engage in, support in any way or provide financial assistance for, license or permit, or approve any activity which does not conform to an applicable implementation plan." Under CAA 176 (c) and 40 CFR part 93 subpart W, a Federal agency must make a determination that a Federal action conforms to the applicable implementation plan before the action is taken.

### 40 CFR Part 93.153 Applicability.

(c) The requirements of this subpart shall not apply to the following Federal actions:

(ii) Continuing and recurring activities such as permit renewals where activities will be similar in scope and operation to activities currently being conducted.

Where livestock grazing occurs within an area classified as a Federal Air Quality Non-Attainment/Maintenance Area, BLM will make a determination whether the action is in conformance with the applicable State Implementation Plan requirement. The Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD) has state air quality jurisdiction over parts of Inyo and Mono County.

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments occur outside of any Federal Air Quality Non-Attainment/Maintenance Area

## *Cultural Resources*

California BLM has the responsibility to manage cultural resources on public lands pursuant to the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, the 1980 Rangeland Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Places (WO IM 80-369), the 1997 Programmatic Agreement Among the Bureau of Land Management, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers Regarding the Manner in Which BLM Will Meet Its Responsibilities Under the National Historic Preservation Act, the State Protocol Agreement Between the California State Director of the Bureau of Land Management and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (2004) and other internal policies.

### ***Special Status Plant Species***

Special Status Plant Species are those species that have been listed by the California Native Plant Society as List 1B species, which includes plants that are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. All of the plants constituting List 1B meet the definition of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection Act), or Secs. 2062 and 2067 (California Endangered Species Act) of the California Department of Fish and Game Code, and are eligible for state listing. The Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993, p. 17) stipulates year-long protection of sensitive plants (Special Status Plants) and their associated habitats.

One population of Special Status Plant Species (*Cusickiella quadricostata*) occurs on the West Reservoir allotment (detail of the species is discussed in Chapter 3 of this document). No Special Status Plant Species populations are present on the Walters Ranch allotment based on historical records and/or field monitoring.

### ***Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E)***

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is required on all allotments for which livestock grazing may affect listed species. The stipulations of any grazing permit may be modified to conform to the terms and conditions specified in a FWS biological opinion. In addition, the terms and conditions of any grazing permit may also need to be modified through subsequent land use plan amendments or revisions to conform to decisions made to achieve recovery plan objectives. In August 2003, the Bishop Field Office submitted a Biological Evaluation and requested formal consultation on the Bishop Resource Management Plan under Section 7(a) (2) of the Endangered Species Act to the FWS. The Biological Evaluation analyzed potential effects of six listed species that occur within the Bishop Field Office's jurisdiction. A subsequent request for action on the formal consultation was made to the FWS in September 2005. To date, no action has been taken by the FWS.

No Threatened or Endangered Species are present or likely to occur, based on historical records, field monitoring, and/or habitat suitability in the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments.

### ***Water Quality***

All allotments are within watersheds governed by basin plans subject to California's Clean Water Act. Nationally, Executive Order # 12088 directs federal agencies to comply with state administrative procedures. Recently, Standards and Guidelines reiterated the intent of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and States' water quality plans. An MOU (BLM Manual Supplement 6521.11) with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) describes how BLM and CDFG will coordinate when activities could affect aquatic or riparian habitat. The Unified Federal Policy to Insure a Watershed Approach in Federal Land and Resource Management (UFP) requires 1) all plans and activity management be conducted on a watershed basis, 2) that all land owners/managers within a watershed be solicited for participation in the

planning and management of the watershed, 3) that citizens and officials are better informed of planning and management, and 4) that best science is used. The EA should analyze grazing within the Watershed Concept described in the UFP. Where there is a threat to water quality or where water quality violates state standards, coordination must occur with the regional water quality control board(s) and where aquatic or riparian habitat may be impacted CDFG coordination must occur as well. All allotments that contain any water bodies (streams, lakes, springs, etc.) must have adopted Best Management Practices (BMP) for all associated livestock management activities that could affect water quality. Pursuant to the decisions affecting water quality in the Bishop Resource Management Plan, BMPs for the Field Office area have been submitted to meet the requirements under the CWA.

### ***Wilderness Study Areas***

Livestock grazing on public lands within Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) must comply with and be managed consistent with BLM's Interim Management Policy Handbook (H-8550-1) For Lands Under Wilderness Review. The law provides for, and the BLM's policy is to allow, continued grazing uses on lands under wilderness review in the manner and degree in which these uses were being conducted on public land when the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLMPA) was signed (October 21, 1976). Grazing within WSAs is subject to reasonable regulations, policies, and practices.

Wilderness values are described in the 1979 Final Wilderness Intensive Inventory Report while the WSA's existing range and other improvements are identified in the 1990 California Statewide Wilderness Study Report (WSR). The Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP) provides direction for grazing management in WSAs until the WSA is designated wilderness or released from the wilderness review process.

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments do not occur within a congressionally designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area.

## **H. Plan Conformance**

### ***Determination***

The proposed action is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved on March 23, 1993, as amended by the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (Central California S&Gs) approved on July, 13, 2000.

### ***Rationale***

The proposed action would occur in areas identified as available for livestock grazing in the Bishop RMP (BLM 1993). The proposed action is consistent with the General Policies, Area Manager's Guidelines, Valid Existing Management, Standard Operating Procedures, Decisions,

and Support Needs prescribed in the RMP. A summary of key RMP prescriptions specific to the proposed action include: 1) Livestock management decisions from the Benton-Owens Valley and the Bodie-Coleville Grazing Environmental Impacts Statements (EISs) provide the basis for grazing management throughout the Bishop Field Office (RMP, Valid Existing Management, page 10 and Area-Wide Decisions, page 22). Those livestock grazing decision carried forward are summarized in Appendix 4 (RMP, pages A4-1 through A4-11); 2) Standard Operating Procedures specific to grazing systems, grazing management, and range improvement project development throughout the Bishop Field Office (RMP, pages 10 through 12); and 3) Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000) that amended the Bishop RMP (Central California S&Gs, pages 3 through 12).

**I. Rangeland Health**

Rangeland health assessments have been completed on these grazing allotments in conformance with the Record of Decision, Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (Decision, pg 12). Qualitative rangeland health field assessments were completed for each allotment on the following dates:

West Reservoir	May 2002
Walters Ranch	May 2002

Geographical Information System (GIS) database information was used to stratify the number of areas (ecological sites) to sample. Field assessments consisted of following protocol established in BLM Technical Reference 1734-6, Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health Version 3 (2000). A preponderance of the evidence is the criterion for determining if rangeland health standards are being met at each sample site. Rangeland Health Assessment Determinations, following the Central California Resource Advisory Council assessment protocol, were completed for the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments. Areas of the allotment does (does not) meet the Secretary of the Interior Approved Rangeland Health Standards as follows:

Rangeland Health Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Livestock are a causal factor for not meeting Yes or No	Remarks (locations, etc.)
West Reservoir	X			
Walters Ranch	X			

**Chapter 2:  
PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

An environmental assessment (EA) for a livestock grazing permit must consider a reasonable range of alternatives (WO IM No. 2000-022) including 1) issuing a new permit based on the application (the proposed action), 2) issuing a new permit with the same terms and conditions as the expiring permit (no action), and 3) a no grazing alternative. If the application for a permit is the same as the expiring permit (no changes in the terms and conditions), then the proposed action and the no action alternative are the same. In addition, other alternatives may be needed to resolve conflicts or address new conditions or new information. If other alternatives are identified during scoping but are determined by BLM not to reasonably address the purpose and need for action, they may be dismissed from further analyses.

No additional alternatives were identified as a result of livestock operator consultation, cooperation, and coordination or public scoping efforts. The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives are described in detail below.

**A. Alternative 1 - Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to authorize grazing for 10-years on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments with applicable terms and conditions and other provisions as described in this section. The proposed action differs from current management (the no action alternative) in that the terms and conditions from both the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000) are applied specifically for each allotment, with defined implementation guidelines, and tailored to specific vegetation communities and other resources present on these two allotments.

Terms and conditions, and provisions related to range improvements and monitoring requirements included in the proposed action are:

**A. Mandatory Terms and Conditions**

Mandatory terms and conditions including livestock number, livestock kind, livestock class, season of use, and allocated animal unit months (AUMs) are required for each allotment in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-1. The proposed mandatory terms and conditions as prescribed in the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) for each allotment are:

Allotment	Number	Kind	Class	From	To	AUMs
West Reservoir	100	Cattle	Cow-calf	6/16	9/30	70
Walters Ranch	452	Sheep	Ewes	5/1	6/30	54

## B. Terms and Conditions - Bishop Resource Management Plan

### *All Allotments*

No trailing through a neighboring allotment is allowed without prior authorization by the BLM. Prior to trailing through a neighboring allotment, the trailing permittee would notify the BLM and all identified interested parties.

### *West Reservoir (6056) Allotment*

No salt or other nutrient supplement is allowed within 1/4 mile of meadows or special status plant populations.

## C. Terms and Conditions - Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing

### *All Allotments*

The goal of these terms and conditions is to provide the permittee the opportunity to realize the highest, long-term, agricultural, economic return with the least risk to rangeland health. Livestock would be managed to progress toward maintaining or promoting adequate vegetative ground cover, and maintaining soil moisture storage and soil stability appropriate for the ecological sites within the management units. Maintaining adequate ground cover should allow soil organisms, plants, and animals to support the hydrologic, nutrient, and energy cycles.

Sagebrush Grassland and Pinyon woodland: Livestock grazing operations would be conducted so that forage utilization on key perennial species does not exceed 40 percent on the average. Key areas would be selected and utilization on key species would be estimated in accordance with the current BLM technical reference. Utilization monitoring would be conducted by a BLM employee, permittee, and/or trained range consultant. Then, all key area allotment data would be averaged and verified by a BLM employee to determine if the terms and conditions are being met. If utilization guidelines on the average of the upland key areas across the allotment are exceeded for 2 consecutive years or in any 2 years out of every 5 years, BLM would consult with the permittee to address the situation, potentially implementing a management change (e.g. change in livestock distribution). Because of the potential long-term damage to perennial grass species associated with severe grazing, when grazing utilization exceeds 70% in any upland key area for more than 2 consecutive years, management action would be taken to remedy the problem in the area of the allotment that key upland area represents.

#### D. Other Terms and Conditions

##### *All Allotments*

No supplemental feeding (i.e. hay, pellets/cubes, or other forages) is allowed at any time on public lands without the BLM's authorization. If authorization is granted, the permittee would be required to obtain “certified weed-free” feed for supplemental feeding of livestock.

Range improvements in each pasture/allotment would need to be functioning properly prior to livestock turnout.

Periodically check livestock for weed seed to minimize or stop the spread of weeds such as perennial pepperweed from private land or other areas where known weed infestations exist. A guide on preventing the spread of weeds along with specific species of concern is described in the Eastern Sierra Weed Management Area Noxious Weed Identification Handbook.

Notify BLM of noxious weed locations when encountered on allotments.

#### E. Range Improvements

There are no existing range improvement projects on these two allotments. No new range improvements need to be constructed to achieve or maintain rangeland health on these two allotments. Therefore, no new range improvements are planned to be constructed as part of the proposed action. If, through monitoring, the Bishop Field Office identifies a need to construct a new range improvement to achieve or maintain rangeland health or to address a site-specific resource concern, a subsequent site-specific project level environmental assessment would be completed at that time.

#### F. Monitoring

In general, rangeland allotment monitoring (both upland and riparian) would continue to be conducted annually and/or periodically under three applicable oversight categories. These categories include 1) short term monitoring, 2) long term trend monitoring, and 3) compliance assurance. All monitoring would continue to be performed according to BLM policy and following protocols from BLM approved manuals and technical references. Monitoring would be conducted on an annual schedule for Selective Management Category to Improve (I) allotments and periodically on Selective Management Category to Maintain (M) and Custodial (C) allotments.

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments are designated as Category C allotments in the Bishop Resource Management Plan (Appendix 4, pages A4-5 through A4-7). Consistent with BLM policy, monitoring on these two allotments would be conducted periodically.

### *Short Term Monitoring*

Short term monitoring is a tool to gauge the cause and effect of the current grazing management on resource conditions on the allotments. This monitoring consists of information addressing current climatic conditions and the collection of utilization data (including stubble height, if appropriate). Monitoring would consist of documenting utilization levels to ensure that forage utilization on key perennial species does not exceed 40 percent on the average. Key areas would be selected and utilization on key species would be estimated in accordance with the current BLM technical reference. This would assure compliance with permit terms and conditions for the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments.

### *Long-Term Trend Monitoring*

Trend refers to the direction of change. Rangeland data are collected at different points in time on the same site in accordance with the BLM technical reference and the results are then compared to detect change. Trend data are important in determining the effectiveness of on-the-ground management actions. The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments do not have established long-term trend plots. There is no plan at this time to establish long-term trend plots in these two allotments given current management priorities.

### *Compliance Assurance*

Allotment compliance would be conducted on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments on an annual schedule to assure adherence to permit terms and conditions. Compliance involves assuring that livestock are on/off the allotment according to annual application dates, counting livestock numbers, identifying their location, checking brands, and assuring range improvements function properly.

## **B. Alternative 2 - Current Management (No Action)**

This alternative involves issuing new 10-year permits with the same terms and conditions as under the existing authorizations. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that under current management the terms and conditions from both the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000) are applied broadly to these allotments, without defined implementation guidelines, and have not been tailored to specific vegetation communities and resources on the allotments.

### **A. Mandatory Terms and Conditions**

Mandatory terms and conditions would be the same as described in the proposed action alternative.

## B. Terms and Conditions - Bishop Resource Management Plan

No salt or other nutrient supplement or sheep bedding is allowed within 1/4 mile of creeks, aspen groves, meadows, sage grouse strutting grounds or special status plant habitat.

No trailing through a neighboring allotment without prior authorization by the BLM.

Burned areas will be rested for a minimum of 3 growing seasons before grazing, to achieve proper functioning condition, recovery of vegetation or desired plant community.

The Bishop RMP Decision for the Desired Plant Community for riparian vegetation along streams is: “riparian vegetation growth is vigorous for woody plants and at least 4-6 inches of residual herbaceous plant height will remain at the end of the growing season or at the time of livestock turnoff, whichever is later.”

## C. Terms and Conditions - Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing

Comply with the Central California Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

The maximum forage utilization limit for key perennial species is not to exceed 40% on sagebrush grassland, semi-desert grassland, semi-desert grass and shrubland or pinyon-juniper woodland rangelands. On salt desert shrubland ranges, the maximum utilization limit for key perennial species is not to exceed 35%.

The maximum forage utilization limit in riparian areas and wetlands is not to exceed 45% for herbaceous species of 20% for shrubs and trees.

The maximum utilization limit for bitterbrush in mule deer concentration areas (i.e. migration corridors or winter ranges) is not to exceed 20% of annual growth before October 1.

## D. Other Terms and Conditions

No supplemental feeding (i.e. hay, pellets/cubes, or other forages) is allowed at any time on public lands without the BLM's authorization.

Ensure that livestock are not infested with or cannot transport weed seed, or other weed plant material from such species as ‘perennial pepperweed,’ coming from private land or other areas where known weed infestations exist. Specific species of concern are those described in the Eastern Sierra Weed Management Area Noxious Weed Identification Handbook.

E. Range Improvements

Range improvements would be the same as described in the proposed action alternative.

F. Monitoring

Monitoring would be the same as described in the proposed action alternative.

C. **Alternative 3 - No Grazing**

This alternative would cancel the permit for the West Reservoir allotment and the permit for the Walters Ranch allotment. As a result, grazing would not be authorized on these allotments. Under this alternative, BLM would initiate the process in accordance with 43 CFR parts 4100 and 1600 to eliminate grazing on these allotments and amend the Bishop Resource Management Plan.

D. **Other Alternatives**

No other alternatives were identified or developed as a result of livestock operator consultation, cooperation, and coordination or public scoping efforts.

**Chapter 3:  
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

**A. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT**

**1. Affected Environment**

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments are located within the Bridgeport Valley Management Area as defined in the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP) (See Map 1). Livestock kind, permitted season of use, allocated animal unit months (AUMs), and use type for these allotments as prescribed in the Bishop RMP (BLM 1993) are:

Allotment	Kind	From	To	AUMs	Use
West Reservoir	Cattle	6/16	9/30	70	Perennial
Walters Ranch	Sheep	5/1	6/30	54	Perennial

The West Reservoir allotment has one livestock operator. The allotment is an on/off allotment with the permittee's adjacent Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Mt. Jackson allotment which makes up the northern border. Livestock grazing is permitted between mid-June to September, although, the allotment is most often used from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to approximately August 15<sup>th</sup>, depending on forage condition. The operator will generally run 75 head of cattle, starting at the southern end of the BLM and Forest Service allotments. Livestock will move north toward the Bridgeport Reservoir dam with active herding as the season continues. Livestock are able to drift between BLM and Forest Service land, and water at the Bridgeport Reservoir.

The Walters Ranch allotment has one sheep operator. Livestock grazing is permitted between May to June, although, the allotment is most often used the latter half of June for approximately 15 to 20 days with a small band of sheep. The allotment is more or less used one year out of every two years because of the operators grazing strategy. Sheep are trailed from private land through the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to the allotment. Sheep are actively herded the entire time on the allotment and bed at night on private land. Livestock can use the Bridgeport Reservoir to water, but more often water on a private meadow adjacent to the allotment.

**2. Environmental Consequences**

a. Impacts of Proposed Action

Authorizing grazing with revised, allotment specific terms and conditions would not create negative impacts to livestock operations. Because livestock grazing practices would follow the Bishop RMP guidelines as amended by the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000) and the revised terms and conditions, permittees would have to manage their livestock (e.g. strategic salt placement or adjustment in livestock distribution) so forage utilization on key perennial species do not exceed utilization

levels, as defined in the proposed terms and conditions above. Furthermore, these terms and conditions are designed to help maintain, protect, or improve rangeland health, increasing the probability of long term economic viability for the permittees.

b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

c. Impacts of No Grazing

The cancellation of grazing on these two allotments would require the operators to look for alternative forage and may increase the cost of their ranching operations.

### **3. Maps**

Overview of Allotments (Map 1)

## **B. AIR QUALITY**

### **1. Affected Environment**

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments are not within any federal non-attainment/maintenance area under jurisdiction of the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District's (GBUAPCD). Federal actions are not subject to conformity determinations under 40 CFR 93.

### **2. Environmental Consequences**

a. Impacts of Proposed Action

Fugitive dust emissions could occur due to the soil disturbance as a result of the trampling action of livestock when soil moisture levels are low. Ruminant animals emit methane gas which is a precursor emission for ozone. The support vehicles emit various precursor emissions for ozone. Actual emission amounts from this grazing activity are negligible.

b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

c. Impacts of No Grazing

There would be no fugitive dust emissions from livestock trampling or precursor emissions for ozone.

**C. AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC)**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on designated ACECs because they do not occur within the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

**D. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**1. Affected Environment**

Located on the western fringe of the Great Basin physiographic province the Owens Valley region, incorporated within the Bishop Field Office, contains the highest archaeological site densities within the Great Basin (Basgall and McGuire 1988; Bettinger 1975, 1982). In 1981 and 1982 the BLM completed two Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) addressing grazing on public lands within the Bishop Field Office; “Proposed Livestock Grazing Management for the Benton-Owens Valley Planning Unit”, 1981 and “Proposed Livestock Grazing Management for the Bodie-Coleville Planning Units”, 1982. In both EIS’s cultural resource reviews are limited to Class I literature searches of existing data.

Using existing survey data (BLM 1978; Busby et al. 1979; Hall 1980; Kobori et al. 1980), site densities were predicted to range from 9 sites per square mile (m<sup>2</sup>) in the Benton Planning Unit to 4 sites/m<sup>2</sup> in the Owens Valley Planning Unit, with an average of 9.54 sites/m<sup>2</sup> in the Bodie/Coleville Planning units.

To evaluate each allotment for cultural resource values a Class I records search was conducted and a GIS utilized to determine previously surveyed acres and sites recorded on each allotment. Range improvements where cattle congregate (troughs, salt licks, reservoirs, etc.) were mapped.

Following the Bishop Field Office research design for grazing allotment assessments (Halford 1999), all areas with a high probability for the congregation of cattle and for the occurrence of significant cultural resources were field evaluated. These allotments were field checked to determine if congregation areas occur. Inventory was focused on known or suspected areas of historic ground disturbing activities associated with livestock grazing such as water sources, corrals, supplemental feeding areas, bedding areas, and salt block stations. The results of the analyses are used to modify grazing permits to protect or mitigate impacts to cultural resources. If significant cultural resources are identified, the stipulations of the grazing permit may be modified to reflect the presence and protection of significant cultural resources.

The following table shows the results of the cultural resource analyses.

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Previously Surveyed (% of allotment)</b>	<b>Newly Surveyed</b>	<b>Previously Recorded Sites</b>
West Reservoir	0	0	0
Walters Ranch	0	0	0

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments serve as fringe allotments to U.S. Forest Service and private property where water and better forage occurs. As a result, cattle and sheep use on the subject allotments is intermittent and generally highly dispersed with light use. As there are no water improvements resulting in heavy congregation areas, impacts to cultural properties are predicted to be minimal as a result of the proposed action. While the allotments do border Bridgeport Reservoir on the eastern edges, during prehistory the East Walker River ran over 1/2 mile to the east of the allotments. No previous cultural resource inventories or sites have been recorded within the allotments, and during rangeland health field assessments no sites were noted. New range improvements, the creation of sheep bedding areas, or increased AUMs would require further evaluation.

### **b. Impacts of No Action**

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

### **c. Impacts of No Grazing**

This alternative would eliminate all livestock threats of damage to cultural properties.

### 3. Maps

None, due to the proprietary nature of the cultural resource information.

### 4. References

ASPPN. 1990. Impacts Of Domestic Livestock Grazing On Archaeological Resources  
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Kobori, Larry S., Colin I. Busby, James C. Bard, and John M. Findlay. 1980. A Class II Cultural Resources Inventory Of The Bureau Of Land Management's Bodie And Colville Planning Units, California. Basin Research Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Bakersfield District Office.

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Roney, John. 1977. Livestock And Lithics: The Effects Of Trampling. On file at the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Winnemucca District Office. Winnemucca, NV.

## **E. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

### **1. Affected Environment**

There are no low-income or minority populations living on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

There are 11 Native American communities who reside in close proximity to these two allotments. Members of these communities do some hunting and subsistence collecting of materials from public lands on various allotments throughout the Bishop Field Office such as, pinyon nuts, basket weaving materials, medicinal plants, etc. Some work in nearby local communities or are employed on their respective reservations.

There may be low-income minorities working for the livestock operators on these allotments.

### **2. Environmental Consequences**

#### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

Continued livestock grazing on these two allotments would have no effect upon any low-income or minority populations. If any changes in grazing management are required, there may be a loss of a job to a member of a low-income or minority population. There may also be new jobs created and sustained as a result of the long-term livestock grazing sustainability from rangeland health standards implementation. Any such impacts would be limited to a single job here or

there. There would not be a disproportionate impact, either negative or positive, to any low-income minority.

b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

c. No Grazing

If there were no grazing allowed on these allotments, there may be a loss of some jobs to members of a low-income or minority population. Any such impacts would be limited to a single job here or there. There would not be a disproportionate impact to any low-income minority.

There might be a slight positive impact to some groups (e.g. Native American) through increased availability of some vegetative resources that are collected on public lands. This would however vary by area and type of resource, and would probably be minimal on these allotments.

**F. ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on essential fish habitat because there are no anadromous fish species or habitats on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

**G. FARMLANDS, PRIME OR UNIQUE**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on farmlands, prime or unique, because none are present on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

**H. FLOOD PLAINS**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on flood plains because none are present on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

## **I. INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES**

### **1. Affected Environment**

The following table represents invasive weed species that occur in the identified allotments:

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Invasive Weed Species</b>	<b>Estimated % Cover (Rangeland Health Assessments 2002)</b>
West Reservoir	Cheat grass ( <i>Bromus tectorum</i> )	20-25%
Walters Ranch	Cheat grass ( <i>Bromus tectorum</i> )	20-25%

Rangeland health assessment determinations found that the density of invasive, non-native plant species within these allotments was moderate. The key ecological effect of the current cheat grass cover is the risk of increased fire frequency (Ziska et. al 2005). Periodic monitoring (1-3 years) of the allotments would facilitate documenting changes in the current cover of cheat grass and any commensurate effects on native species recovery and composition.

### **2. Environmental Consequences**

#### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

The proposed action would benefit site conditions and native vegetation because the proposed terms and conditions are designed to help reduce the spread of weeds and maintain or improve rangeland health. Provisions for grazing before seed set of these species has been included in allotment grazing stipulations. Early season grazing, normally before seed set, of these annual grasses may help reduce the spread of these invasives (Olson 1999) by reducing inputs into the seed bank of particular sites. Currently, the cover value for these species is moderate, and in conjunction with grazing timing stipulations, spread of these invasive species would be reduced.

#### **b. Impacts of No Action**

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

### c. No Grazing

Under the no grazing alternative, impacts from invasive weed species on native plant communities may initially be slightly greater than the proposed action. There would no longer be herbivory of invasive weed species prior to seed dissemination which could potentially increase seed bank densities. However, the no grazing alternative would reduce the chances that residual weed seed from sites such as watering and mineral block areas be spread to new areas.

### 3. References

Olson, B.E. 1999. Grazing and weeds. Pages 85-97 in R.L. Sheley and J.K. Petroff, editors. Biology and management of noxious rangeland weeds. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon.

Ziska, L.H., Reeves, J.B. III, Blank B. 2005. The impact of recent increases in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> on biomass production and vegetative retention of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*): Implications for fire disturbance. Global Change Biology, Vol. II, 1325-1332.

## J. NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL VALUES

### 1. Affected Environment

There are 11 Native American communities who reside in or in close proximity to the eastern Sierra region administered by the Bishop Field Office. None of these communities are living on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments. There are no treaty rights (hunting, fishing, etc.) associated with any of the communities or any of these allotments.

Some members of these communities hunt and some do subsistence collecting of materials from public lands such as, basket weaving materials, medicinal plants, etc. However, this is general use and there were no specific "traditional use areas" identified at this time by any of the Tribes on any of these allotments. Any other traditional uses or use areas have not been divulged to this office.

Some general concerns associated with Native American cultural values identified by the Tribes during consultation are:

- They have general concerns with overgrazing and want BLM to control overgrazing to protect the ecosystem and ensure that it is functioning properly.
- They have concerns that water (or other) developments not impact cultural sites and that they not affect deer habitat (through de-watering streams / springs, or trampling of habitat around new troughs, etc.).

- They do not want cattle grazing on top of individual burials or grave sites or within known Native American cemeteries.
- They do not want sheep bedding on top of cultural sites.
- They do not want BLM to use herbicides on plants that they might collect.
- They do not want BLM to cut / remove pinyon for grazing habitat improvement.

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### a. Impacts of Proposed Action

The proposed action is not expected to have any impacts to Native American concerns described above. The rangeland health assessment showed these allotments currently meet rangeland health standards. The proposed terms and conditions are designed to help protect and sustain rangeland health, keep the ecosystem functioning properly, and thereby maintain or improve the natural environment that Native American cultural values depend on. Monitoring would continue and any impacts that affect Native American sites from high congregation and concentration of livestock use would be corrected.

### b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

### c. No Grazing

Removing grazing would generally result in fewer impacts to the natural environment, thus alleviating Native American concerns with overgrazing, water project development, and grazing impacts to cultural resources/burial sites, etc.

## **K. RECREATION**

### **1. Affected Environment**

Recreation activities and facilities in these allotments are limited. Road access onto the West Reservoir allotment requires crossing the Bridgeport Reservoir Dam for which prior authorization is required due to a locked gate. Access consists of approximately 4 miles of primitive 4 wheel drive motorized vehicle travel. Road access to the Walters Ranch allotment

requires crossing private land for which prior authorization is also needed. This limited access, coupled with no developed recreational facilities currently precludes intensive recreation activity. Activities that take place consist of hiking, fishing, and infrequent motorized touring. Encounters with livestock occur infrequently.

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on recreation because proposed facilities or management practices that could potentially alter existing recreation uses or use patterns do not exist in these allotments. Recreationists would continue to encounter livestock infrequently under the proposed action and no action alternative.

## **L. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUES**

### **1. Affected Environment**

Regionally, livestock operations in the Bridgeport Valley Management Area involve use of BLM and Forest Service (USFS) lands. The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments have two permittees. There is a careful balance of livestock numbers and season of use for grazing these allotments, such that any substantial change of use, would negatively affect their overall operation by reducing available forage and management flexibility required for a profitable operation.

The local economy is benefited by these grazing operations from monies spent to establish and maintain a ranching operation and contributions to the labor force. This is true of any privately owned business. In Mono County for 2005, agriculture was the second largest industry and is an integral part of the county's economy (Counties of Inyo and Mono Agriculture Department 2005). Beef and alfalfa production was the primary production crops. Of a 100% total in agricultural values, livestock production accounted for 64% in Mono County. This amounted to \$17,115,500 or 64% of the total \$26,973,450 agricultural production.

Additionally, the allotments lie in a broad region and valley that is largely undeveloped and rural in nature. Tourism is a primary industry of the area, attracting millions of annual visitors who enjoy the rural, isolated nature of Bridgeport Valley. Livestock grazing, for some people, complements the frontier setting they seek in their visits to the area.

### **2. Environmental Consequences**

#### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

These grazing operations benefit the local economy from monies spent to establish and maintain a ranching operation and contributions to the labor force. Sustaining these operations, from continued use of these allotments, would have a positive economic effect on the stability of their

overall livestock operation. The social value of retaining a rural, agricultural lifestyle would be preserved and would keep with the public's perception of the Owens Valley's western culture. The proposed action would not adversely impact the social and economic stability of these ranching operations.

b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

c. No Grazing Alternative

If grazing were terminated on these two allotments, there would be adverse impacts to both operators. The grazing capacity of their other federal permits or private leases may not accommodate the increased use or meet land management requirements. The permittees may be forced to operate with fewer livestock. There would be unauthorized grazing use onto BLM lands, since their private and permitted Forest Service lands are unfenced. Livestock trespass or drift onto BLM land would result in administrative costs to the agency. The BLM may also receive criticism of this decision from its local constituency because of potential agricultural economic losses.

### **3. References**

Counties of Inyo and Mono Agriculture Department. 2005. Annual Crop and Livestock Report. (Prepared June 8, 2006).

## **M. SOILS**

### **1. Affected Environment**

The soil information for the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments was gathered from the Order 3 Soil Survey of the Bodie-Coleville Planning Units. These soils were grouped into four major areas, however, two major areas apply. The first soil type is dominated by nearly level to gently sloping cool soils in closed basins that are undrained to well-drained. The second type is dominantly moderately to steeply sloping cold soils on Sierra Foothill-slopes and glacial deposits; mostly very gravelly. In further detail, both allotments contain loamy skeletal, mixed, frigid Typic Argixerolls - loamy skeletal, mixed, frigid Argixerolls - Rock Outcrop complex, 30

to 55 percent slope; and fine loamy, mixed, mesic Xeralfic Haplargids complex, 2 to 8 percent slope. There are no identified erosional problems for these two allotments.

BLM assessed these allotments in 2002 to determine if the rangeland health standards were being met. Specific soils standards relate to permeability and infiltration. All sites examined were found to meet the standards for soils.

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

The proposed action would create no new impacts because the proposed terms and conditions are designed to help maintain, protect, or sustain rangeland health including soils, and to keep the ecosystem functioning properly. For example, improvements in ecological attributes would be a result of less intensive forage utilization levels which would lead to increases in plant biomass production resulting in adequate soil protection (e.g. wind erosion).

### **b. Impacts of No Action**

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

### **c. No Grazing**

The no grazing alternative would have little to no impact on soils since few impacts currently occur.

## **3. References**

Bodie-Coleville Planning Unit, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, June 1982.

## **N. VEGETATION/THREATENED AND ENDANGERED**

### ***Plant Communities***

#### **1. Affected Environment**

A baseline range inventory for these allotments was completed in 1984 using the BLM Site Inventory Method (SVIM). These allotments occur in the Great Basin Floristic Province. The dominant plant communities are sagebrush/bitterbrush with scattered pinyon.

Sagebrush/bitterbrush communities are dominated by sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana*, *A. tridentata* ssp. *tridentata*, *A. tridentata*, ssp. *wyomingensis*, and *A. arbuscula*, Grasses such as Great Basin wild rye (*Leymus cinereus*), Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), needle and thread (*Hespirostipa comota*), western needlegrass (*Achnatherum occidentale*), and Thurber's needlegrass (*Achnatherum thurberianum*) make up 5-10% of the canopy cover (BLM Rangeland Health Assessments 2002). Additional species include, but are not limited to; horsebrush (*Tetradymia canescens*), Nevada and green ephedra (*E. viridis*), and yellow and curly-leaved rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus* and *C. viscidiflorus*). Perennial and annual forbs are abundant and include, but are not limited to, species from the following genera: Astragalus, Arabis, Cryptantha, Eriogonum, Gilia, Phacelia, Phlox and genera in the Asteraceae Family.

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

The plant communities within the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments have not been negatively impacted by livestock grazing because of the infrequent use and the low number of animals that use these allotments. Current stocking rates are low and do not greatly impair the large-scale ecological function of these plant communities. Generally, utilization of key forage species, e.g. perennial bunchgrass species is slight to moderate and occurs in the summer. Continued grazing at current levels would not contribute to reductions in overall plant community ecological function as long as current proposed terms and conditions are adhered to, e.g. 40% utilization.

Under the proposed action, grazing impacts such as weed presence and localized soil disturbance would affect very small portions (< 1-2 acres in size) of these allotments and would most likely be associated with mineral blocks. These impacts would not contribute to a large-scale reduction in ecological function of the plant communities that occur within these allotments, but would require periodic (2-5 years) monitoring to determine impact thresholds.

The terms and conditions outlined in the proposed action would sustain and improve the following key floristic and ecological attributes within the allotments (BLM 1998);

- Increased cover of perennial grasses
- Better root distribution
- Increased species diversity
- Increased photosynthetic period
- Increased vegetation structure
- Increase in episodic recruitment of shrubs, grasses, and forbs

Such improvements in floristic and ecological attributes would be a result of less intensive forage utilization levels which would lead to commensurate increases in annual below and above ground grass and forb biomass production. The implementation of the terms and conditions on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments would enhance and sustain the large-scale ecological function of these plant communities during non-drought years (BLM 2002) and when stocking rates are low.

b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

c. No Grazing

Under this alternative, livestock grazing on these allotments would cease. Individual plant populations within the communities that are commonly grazed would have an opportunity to complete all phenological stages. Slight increases in weed densities could occur due to a reduction of early season grazing on these target species. Impacts to the ecological function of these plant communities would be confined to natural disturbances, e.g. fire, insect damage, drought, and other non-anthropogenic induced effects.

### **3. Maps**

Allotment Assessment Maps, CNDDDB GIS coverage (not included in EA).

### **4. References**

Clary, W.B. and R.C. Holmgren 1987. Difficulties in interpretation of long-term vegetation trends. IN: Proceedings of the Symposium on Plant-Herbivore Interactions. General

Technical Report INT-222. U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, Ogden, Utah.

Department of the Interior, BLM. 1998. Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for California and Northwestern Nevada. BLM/CA/ES-98/005+4100.

Department of the Interior, BLM. 2002. Rangeland Health Assessments. Technical Reference

1734-6, 2000, Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (Version 3).

### ***Threatened and Endangered Plant Species***

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on threatened or endangered vegetation species because no federally listed threatened or endangered species are present on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments based on historical records, field monitoring, and/or habitat suitability.

### ***Special Status Plant Species***

#### **1. Affected Environment**

One population of Special Status Plant Species, the Bodie Hills draba (*Cusickiella quadricostata*) occurs on the West Reservoir allotment. This species commonly occupies rocky sites on the allotment that livestock tend to avoid. No additional Special Status Plant Species are known to occur within the West Reservoir or the Walters Ranch allotments (CNDDDB 2006, BLM 2002).

#### **2. Environmental Consequences**

##### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

Impacts of the proposed action would likely not change the status of this population due to the current number and movement of livestock on these allotments and because of the rocky sites this species occupies which are avoided by cattle. With implementation of the proposed terms and conditions, which are designed to help protect and sustain rangeland health, this would have a commensurate benefit to the surrounding plant community in relation to potential pollinator species and microsite characteristics important for seed germination.

##### **b. Impacts of No Action**

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

##### **c. No Grazing**

Impacts of the no grazing alternative would not be different from the proposed action due to the

highly infrequent movement of livestock in the vicinity of the population.

### **3. Maps**

CNDDDB and BLM Special Status Plant Species GIS coverage (not included in EA).

### **4. References**

Department of the Interior, BLM. 2002. Rangeland Health Assessments. Technical Reference 1734-6, 2000, Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (Version 3).

## **O. WASTE, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would not generate hazardous or solid waste on the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments.

## **P. WATER QUALITY, DRINKING-GROUND**

### **1. Affected Environment**

The West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments border the western periphery of the Bridgeport Reservoir. The water elevation in the Bridgeport Reservoir fluctuates dramatically in a calendar year and livestock may or may not have immediate access to the water due to extensive mud flats extending down to the waters edge at low reservoir level. Water is available on a private meadow adjacent to the Walters Ranch allotment which is utilized by the livestock operator. Bridgeport Reservoir is listed on the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board 2006 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of water quality limited segments. Identified pollutants/stressors that cause impairment of water quality are nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment/siltation. Algae blooms and other nuisance conditions occur in the reservoir and appear to result from excessive nutrient loading. These conditions adversely affect beneficial uses of the reservoir like a healthy fishery, recreational uses and aesthetic enjoyment. High phosphorus and nitrogen levels enter the reservoir from tributaries with internal nitrogen loading occurring from sediment. Land uses (e.g. on-site septic system discharge, landfill disposal, irrigated pasture fertilizer application, and road maintenance activities) within the Bridgeport Reservoir watershed contribute excess nutrients or silt/sediment to the system and may increase the nutrient loads and algae growth in the reservoir.

There are no other surface waters on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments. There are no known ground water wells used for livestock purposes.

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### a. Impacts of Proposed Action

Water quality within the reservoir will likely not be affected by implementing the grazing standards as proposed. The attenuated time of actual grazing each season and the very low number of livestock result in no significant contribution of nutrients or cause any apparent downhill movement of sediment/silt to the reservoir waters. The Bridgeport Reservoir watershed covers an area of approximately 370 mi<sup>2</sup> (236,688 acres) and contains a multitude of human uses and natural watershed dynamics that are contributing to the impaired condition of the reservoir.

### b. Impacts of No Action

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed Action.

### c. No Grazing

With no grazing the opportunity for livestock on these two allotments to contribute nutrients or silt/sediment transport would be eliminated. Therefore, water quality conditions in the reservoir would be expected to remain at or near the current constituent concentrations barring other anthropogenic or natural changes to the landscape in the surrounding watershed.

## **3. References**

Problem Statement, Bridgeport Reservoir Nutrient TMDL. 2003. Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 6. 3pp.

## **Q. WETLANDS/RIPARIAN ZONES**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on designated wetlands or riparian zones because none are present on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

## **R. WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on wild and scenic rivers because there are no designated wild and scenic rivers or eligible river components on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

## **S. WILDERNESS**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on wilderness because there are no congressionally designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas within the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

## **T. WILDLIFE/THREATENED AND ENDANGERED**

### *Wildlife*

#### **1. Affected Environment**

The dominant plant communities (habitat types) of sagebrush/bitterbrush and pinyon woodland with a sagebrush/bitterbrush understory and their composition are described under the vegetation section. An inventory of non-game wildlife species represented within major, important habitat types was undertaken in 1977-1979 to document the relative importance of each vegetation association to small mammals, breeding songbirds, reptiles, and amphibians. Within the described habitats, above, non-game wildlife species inventories resulted in the following:

#### Pinyon woodland/sagebrush-bitterbrush understory

The Walters Ranch allotment contains the only pinyon woodland/sagebrush-bitterbrush habitat type. The high degree of structural complexity within this vegetation type contributes to the greater diversity of wildlife species. Twelve species of small mammals have been recorded in this habitat with the deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) being present in very high number. The Sciuridae (ground squirrels) represent the majority of species in this habitat. Inventory of the mixed pinyon/sagebrush-bitterbrush type in a separate location from the Walters Ranch allotment recorded the highest diversity of reptile species among 10 distinct habitats inventoried. A total of 18 species of reptiles were recorded among the different habitat types, with 9 species occurring in this habitat. The numbers of snake species were more numerous than lizards which may be due to the available food source reflected in the high number of small mammals found in this complex environment.

Of all shrub type habitats inventoried, this habitat is the most important for passerine birds in

relation to supporting high species richness and bird densities. Generally, this habitat provides for 2 times the number of bird species (14 spp.) and up to 134 individual birds per 100 acres. The primary reason for such high numbers of species is due to foliage height diversity. This is a multi-tiered structurally complex community offering a potential for habitat partitioning which is found in lesser amounts in simpler vegetative communities.

#### Great Basin Big Sagebrush-Bitterbrush

This is the predominant habitat type within both allotments. Small mammal species diversity is the highest in this vegetation type, likely due to the complexity of smaller habitats (rock outcrops, ecotones, and differing levels of successional vegetation from natural or anthropogenic events) within the larger community. Fourteen species of rodents are known to occur within this habitat type with 2 species of rabbit, and 2 species of hare with predators like the coyote, gray fox, and bobcat comprising the remainder of the small mammal fauna. Amphibian and reptile species occurrence in this community is substantially less than most other habitats surveyed. Pit vipers and non venomous snake species (at least 4 spp.) are the largest reptile group represented in this habitat.

This community supports from 6-7 species of passerine birds with a density from 114 to 130 birds per 100 acres. This habitat accounts for the second highest number of bird species of all the shrub types, with the highest being in the mixed pinyon woodland. On a total biomass scale, this habitat type accounts for the highest number of acres and supports, by far, the largest number (population) of birds.

#### Additional Species and Habitats

Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) use both allotments as a migration route to and from the Sierra Nevada for summer and winter habitat. The allotments are used to a lesser extent as a holding area in spring as deer wait for snow depths to decrease permitting access to the Sierra Nevada mountains. Mule deer using these allotments are a population component of the East Walker deer herd. Overall, sagebrush/bitterbrush and the small remaining mixed pinyon woodland areas within these allotments provide important forage along with thermal and hiding cover for mule deer as they move to and from the Sierra Nevada. Ensuring sufficient annual leader growth is maintained on bitterbrush after livestock grazing is essential for maintaining good habitat quality for migrating and resident mule deer.

Sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), a California BLM Sensitive Species, may occur in suitable sagebrush habitat of both allotments. The species is dependent on specific sagebrush community physical attributes being present to ensure adequate cover and forage availability to complete the breeding, foraging, nesting, and brood rearing components of their life cycle (Connelly, et.al. 2000). As an example, sage grouse nests are placed under shrubs having larger canopies and more ground and lateral cover as well as in stands with more shrub canopy cover than at random sites. No strutting grounds have been identified on either allotment. Identification of winter habitat for this species is important to ensure livestock grazing or other

possible anthropogenic impacts do not degrade the quality or extent of winter habitat. Winter range has not been identified for sage grouse on either allotment. Both allotments are located in the southwest portion of the Desert Creek/Fales Population Management Unit of the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for Nevada and Eastern California (June 2004).

## **2. Environmental Consequences**

### **a. Impacts of Proposed Action**

The overall habitat quality of these allotments would be maintained or slightly improved with implementation of the proposed terms and conditions because they are designed to help protect and sustain rangeland health which includes wildlife habitat, and to keep the ecosystem functioning properly. Livestock grazing affects wildlife species and their habitat through the removal of vegetative growth and trampling of soils. Wildlife habitat is also affected by grazing timing, intensity and stocking rate within the allotment. The affects of grazing are greatest at locations where domestic sheep and cattle concentrate their activity. For domestic sheep, these affects are pronounced at bedding areas, and for cattle, at localized areas where they find preferred forage like native bunch grasses and bitterbrush. Grazing at an average utilization level of 40% of current year vegetative growth will not greatly impair the large-scale ecological function of the plant communities. The overall wildlife habitat quality reflected in the physical condition and biomass of vegetation will be improved from current conditions with implementation of the 40% utilization standard. Species guilds within the rodent and songbird groups will gain some improvement in the availability of food and cover. Where sheep and cattle graze, there will be direct impacts to various species of birds, reptiles, and rodents through trampling of burrows and disturbance or destruction of nests. The amount of species diversity and density of individual species populations will not be negatively impacted from those levels initially recorded, barring a catastrophic change (e.g. wildland fire) to habitat conditions. Habitat conditions providing for thermal and hiding cover and available forage for mule deer would be improved due to the increased amount of current year growth remaining on bitterbrush from implementation of the proposed action. Sage grouse habitat would undergo a lower level of physical disturbance from the 40% utilization standard in the sagebrush community and, likely, a higher retention of perennial herbaceous (grass) species biomass would occur. The physical structure of the habitat would change toward an increase in the lateral and overhead cover in the sagebrush community and an improved residual height to herbaceous vegetation.

### **b. Impacts of No Action**

Impacts of the no action alternative would be the same as the proposed action because both alternatives are very similar. The only difference between this alternative and the proposed action alternative is that terms and conditions developed from the Bishop Resource Management Plan (BLM 1993) and the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2000), under current management, are applied broadly and uniformly across the allotments. No defined implementation guidelines exist nor are they tailored to address specific vegetation communities and/or resources on the allotments, as in the Proposed

Action.

c. No Grazing

Overall, wildlife habitat conditions would be improved, particularly in the immediate effect to species guilds within the rodent and songbird groups. Many rodent species would benefit over a relatively short period of time due to an increased food base, particularly from graminoid plant species. Increased populations of rodents should benefit predatory species groups like canids and raptors. Habitat conditions for all species would eventually attain their potential level of productivity as a food resource and for life cycle requirements.

**3. References**

Bishop Field Office, Unit Resource Analysis, Step III, 1978.

Connelly, J.W., M.A. Schroeder, A.R. Sands and C.E. Braun. 2000. Guidelines to manage sage grouse populations and their habitats. Wildlife Society Bulletin 28 (4): 967-985.

***Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species***

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on threatened or endangered species because no federally listed threatened or endangered wildlife species are present on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments based on historical records and/or field monitoring

**U. WILD HORSE AND BURROS**

The proposed action, no action, and no grazing alternatives would have no effect on wild horses and burros as there are no wild horse and burro populations or designated wild horse herd management areas occurring on the West Reservoir or Walters Ranch allotments.

**V. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

***Introduction***

Current conditions in the project area result from a multitude of natural events and human actions that have taken place over many decades. Cumulative effects are defined as the “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions” (40 CFR § 1508.7). A description of current conditions inherently includes the effects of past actions and serves as a more accurate and useful starting point for a cumulative effects analysis than by “adding up” the effects of individual past actions. “Generally, agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects

analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions.” (CEQ Memorandum ‘Guidance on the Consideration of Past Actions in Cumulative Effects Analysis’ June 24, 2005.) By comparing the “no action” alternative (current condition) to the action alternatives, we can discern the “cumulative impact” resulting from adding the “incremental impact” of the proposed action to the current environmental conditions and trends. The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis for this environmental assessment encompasses the public lands administered by the Bishop Field Office. This geographic scope was chosen because of the unique ecotone of public lands composing two distinct habitat types of Great Basin and Mojave Desert rangelands along the eastern Sierra front range. It is expected that the geographic scope of impacts would be confined to this region.

### ***Past and Present Grazing Actions/Impacts***

Prior to 1859, the Owens Valley had minimal if any domestic livestock grazing. L. R. Ketcham of Visalia, California in 1859 was documented as the first cattleman to drive cattle into the Owens Valley (Jeff Putman and Genny Smith (editor) 1995). By 1910 the Farm Census had reported 43,000 sheep and 20,000 cows and cattle in the Owens Valley. In 1946 the General Land Office and Grazing Service merged to create the Bureau of Land Management.

After the enactment of the Taylor Grazing Act in the 1934, BLM began taking an active role in managing public lands in the Owens Valley, creating allotment boundaries and developing grazing management systems.

Over the last twenty years, grazing on public lands in the eastern Sierra region has generally consisted of optimizing stocking rates when vegetation capacity could support high densities of livestock and utilization, generally throughout various habitat types. Areas with habitats, vegetative/wildlife species, other resource values, etc. protected under federal law, regulation, policy, etc. were generally adhered to. Although, some utilization issues in aspen groves, etc. surfaced in locations such as the Bodie Hills allotments located in the northern reaches of the field office. On occasion, livestock exceeded their authorized time on allotments or drifted onto unauthorized allotments. These minor issues were often resolved immediately by BLM.

Presently, the Bishop Field Office administers 58 allotments with 25 permittees spanning a geographic distance from Olancho to Topaz, California, a 750,000 acre linear and narrow configuration of public land straddling the edge of the eastern Sierra and Great Basin. The physical environment ranges from Great Basin habitat in the north to Mojave Desert in the south. Subsequently, forage capability is often limited by precipitation and elevation which tends to be more favorable in the northern portion of the field office area.

The BLM is currently preparing new clarified terms and conditions for all 25 of its grazing permits on all public lands administered by the Bishop Field Office. As with the allotments addressed in this EA, the overall goal of the newly proposed grazing terms and conditions is to improve or maintain rangeland health standards on all Bishop administered land as per the

standards and guidelines developed by the Central California Resource Advisory Committee process in the late 1990's. The BLM is scheduled to complete all authorizations and associated environmental assessments by 2009.

### ***Regional Impacts***

At a regional level, numerous resource disturbing activities in the Owens Valley and throughout the Bishop Field Office area have created impacts similar to or greater than livestock grazing. These activities include paved and unpaved road development, Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) activities, residential and commercial development, and fire.

The development of roads and trails throughout the region originates from the area's historic settlement at the turn of the twentieth century when access was needed to develop the area's resources and transport goods/services. Settlers, miners, ranchers, merchants, etc. developed a region of small communities and road networks to meet daily sustenance needs. Throughout the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century, the region evolved from an agrarian economy to its present day tourism. This altered traditional access use from survival and necessity to one that became recreation based, mostly motorized, although mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding may use similar routes. The thousands of miles of paved and unpaved roads in the region tend to be permanent conversions of sites and constitute a total loss of the site productivity. Associated infrastructure needs i.e. powerlines, rest areas, etc. expand the permanency and loss of rangeland habitat. Recreation use, such as OHV activities can be short duration, but are generally repeated throughout the year reflecting the tourist value access continues to provide. Sometimes unauthorized routes are created near the rural communities by horses and/or vehicles.

The BLM and the Inyo National Forest have embarked on motorized access efforts throughout the 1990s to implement route designations to manage for environmental issues and recreation needs. These efforts have led to localized rehabilitation projects improving various habitats and scenic vistas, mostly on BLM land. Additionally, BLM works with the counties to reduce and control private subdivision proliferation and trespass onto adjoining public lands.

The dozen or so communities that occupy the Bishop Field Office area have generally been stable and small, although the Mammoth Lakes community has built high end homes and increased their housing density in the last decade. Obviously, these permanent alterations have irreversibly committed land to housing development, fragmenting plant/animal habitat, altering scenic vistas, etc. Overall, the greatest potential development impact to habitat would occur from housing development on remaining scattered private land tracts throughout the region. Property values, a desire for trophy homes, and a housing shortage have created a strong real estate market in the eastern Sierra. This has prompted landowners to pursue subdivision development, reducing small acreages of habitat in several locations.

Construction activities, road maintenance, vehicle transport, and livestock use operations are common vectors or site modifications that can move invasive/non-native species. Potential long-term cumulative impacts of the proposed action if weed densities increase, include a reduction in

native plant cover and vigor (below and above ground production), increased erosion leading to increased germination of invasive weed seed (Evans and Young 1972), a reduction in mychorrhizal populations, and increased fire frequency. Eastern Sierra plant communities have experienced increased weed invasions in the past five years due to increased precipitation levels and likely increases in atmospheric nitrogen deposition (Dukes and Mooney, 1999). If this trend continues without commensurate control methods including using early season grazing (pre-seed set), weed proliferation could be exacerbated.

There are no identified long-term cumulative impacts to livestock grazing from the implementation of the proposed action. Increases in weed species (e.g. cheatgrass) on allotments have the potential to out-compete native plant species which may affect the forage base for livestock.

The past, present and in the reasonably foreseeable future cattle grazing operations would continue to have a localized, cumulative impact on soils in congregation areas such as water sources and corrals. Other land uses also contribute to compaction and accelerated erosion but on a broader scale. These cumulative impacts to soils are similar to those for vegetation. The proposed terms and conditions are designed to help maintain, protect, or sustain rangeland health which includes soils, and to keep the ecosystem functioning properly.

There would not be substantive cumulative impacts to the local or regional economy of Inyo or Mono County from the implementation of the proposed action. Cumulative impacts to low income or minority populations from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable public or private actions including any actions on non federal lands would be extremely low and would not have disproportionate impacts on other segments of the population under.

Unpredicted wild or arson fire can have large-scale impacts to the environment, wildlife, and to persons that use public land. These impacts include permanent changes to vegetation communities due to slow fire recovery, increasing non-native invasive populations, and loss of wildlife habitat. Fire that occurs in grazing allotments has the potential to devastate the vegetation and forage base for livestock. Therefore, BLM may temporarily close the allotment until determined appropriate for livestock grazing. If this were the case, livestock operators may be forced to find alternative forage, affecting their economic operations adversely depending on local circumstances.

The addition of the Proposed Action to existing and future regional activities and impacts would not add to or cross a threshold of impact that would result in a significant impact on the human environment.

### ***Site Specific Impacts***

For the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch allotments in this assessment, grazing issues and impacts have been minimal due to low livestock use and few facilities to attract and concentrate livestock use. The low occurrence of sensitive resources such as threatened and endangered plant/animal species, cultural resources, etc., reduces the likelihood of future adverse impacts as

well.

The physical structure and ecological function of plant communities on the allotments are expected to maintain or improve resulting from the lower vegetation utilization standards on key forage species. Improved condition of native bunch grasses and forbs would provide an increased forage base for rodents and passerine birds across all allotments. Populations of these smaller animals should increase in average to above average precipitation years which provide an improved food base for predators. Habitat conditions, both forage quality/quantity and plant physical structure for mule deer and other large mammals, would be improved from the current situation.

Since no congregation zones occur on the subject allotments, no significant cumulative effects to cultural resources are predicted to occur from the proposed action.

Within the allotments, wild land fires and other natural events changing landscape conditions are expected to continue. Grazing permits would be adjusted to maintain minimal rangeland health standards when fire, drought, and other uncontrollable natural events require it.

### ***Conclusion***

The addition of the Proposed Action to the existing environment at the site specific allotment locations addressed in this EA and within the eastern Sierra region as a whole would not contribute to significant impacts on the human environment. The cumulative impacts of conducting allotment assessments and issuing grazing permits for this EA's allotments with the proposed terms and conditions would help to maintain or improve rangeland health conditions incrementally and positively. In effect, the addition of the Proposed Action would beneficially improve rangeland health conditions at a local level and further BLM's objective to complete its rangeland condition improvement strategy for the remainder of public lands as well. As a result, improvements in plants and animal habitat, water quality, cultural resources, etc. would occur at local and regional levels creating overall positive cumulative impacts.

### **1. References**

- Evans, R.D. and J.A. Young. 1972. Microsite requirements for establishment of annual rangeland weeds. *Weed Science*. 18:154-161
- Dukes, J.S. and Mooney, H.A. 1999. Does global change increase the success of biological invaders? *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*. 14:4:135-139.
- Jeff Putman and Genny Smith (editor). 1995. *Deepest Valley: Guide to Owens Valley, Its Roadsides and Mountain Trails* (2nd Edition). University of Nevada Press, Reno, NV. pp. 231-268.



## **Chapter 4: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### ***Livestock Operator Consultation, Cooperation, and Coordination***

The following timeline summarizes actions BLM has taken to consult, cooperate, and coordinate with affected livestock operators on the Standards and Guidelines:

On January 27, 1997, the Bishop Field Manager sent a letter to the two permittees that graze these two allotments. The letter stated, “as a requirement of implementing the Bureau’s Healthy Rangeland Standards, regulations require that mandatory terms and conditions and other terms and conditions (43 CFR Subpart 4100, Section 4130.3-1 and Section 4230.3-2 respectively) are to be included in all permits.” The letter also stated, “Another requirement of the regulations are Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs). As of this date, the BLM in California has not completed development of statewide S&Gs and has requested that the Secretary of the Interior grant a 6 month extension to allow their completion and adoption. Therefore the Fallback Standards and Guidelines, as stated in the regulations, will not go into effect on February 12, 1997 if the extension is granted.”

On January 14, 1998, the Bishop Field Manager sent a letter to the two permittees who graze these two allotments. It stated, “enclosed is a copy of the National Fallback Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs). These S&Gs will remain in effect until the California BLM Healthy Rangelands Environmental Impact Statement is completed in 1998.” Enclosures with the letter included Background, Fundamentals of Rangeland Health, S&Gs Basic Concepts, and Fallback S&Gs.

On December 15, 1998, the Bishop Field Manager sent a letter to the two permittees who graze these two allotments which explained the rangeland health allotment assessment requirements.

On December 11, 2000, the Bishop Field Manager sent a letter to the two permittees who graze these two allotments and included a copy of the Central California Standards and Guidelines. The letter invited the permittees to two scheduled meetings to ask any questions or present concerns they may have had with the Central California Standards and Guidelines.

### ***Personal Communication***

Belenky, Lisa. 2007. Center for Biological Diversity. Lisa requested to be added to the notice list for grazing permit renewal draft EAs for the Bishop Field Office.

Burke, Thomas D. 1998. Owner and principal investigator of Archaeological Research Services, Inc. BLM and Thomas discussed grazing impacts to archaeological resources. Refer to Chapter 3, Cultural Resources for further information and results.

California Native Plant Society, Bristlecone Chapter. 1999. BLM invited the Bristlecone Chapter to the Rangeland Health Assessments that began in 1999. Members from the Chapter participated at different times between 1999 through 2003. BLM and Bristlecone Chapter also discussed livestock grazing and invasive, non-native species.

Chichester, Dwight. 2007. Livestock Operator. BLM and Dwight discussed livestock grazing on the West Reservoir allotment. Dwight explained the livestock management for the allotment.

Fell, Chuck. 1995. Bodie State Historical Park. BLM and Chuck discussed grazing impacts to historic buildings and resources. Refer to Chapter 3, Cultural Resources for further information and results.

Iturriria, Paco. 2007. Livestock Operator. BLM and Paco discussed livestock grazing on the Walters Ranch allotment. Paco explained the livestock management for the allotment.

Milovich, George. 1999 through 2007. Agricultural Commissioner Inyo-Mono Counties. BLM and George discussed the process for issuing the full processed 10-year grazing permits. Also, BLM explained the general changes in terms and conditions to the expiring grazing permits due the incorporation of the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing (USDI 2000). Annual Crop and Livestock Reports were obtained annually by visiting the Counties of Inyo and Mono Agriculture Department located in downtown Bishop.

Parker, Jim and Slates, Mike. 2000 and 2007. Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD). BLM and Jim discussed the environmental assessment (EA) livestock grazing authorizations to be conducted in the future. BLM received language from the GBUACD to be included within the EA's along with maps of the federal non-attainment/maintenance areas. BLM received an updated federal non-attainment/maintenance area map from Mike in 2007.

### ***Native American Communities***

There are 11 Native American communities in the Eastern Sierra region, eight of whom are federally recognized, which reside near or inhabited aboriginal homelands within one or more of the allotments.

During the initialization of the allotment assessment process in FY 1999, seven Native American communities residing within the area administered by the Bishop Field Office– Bridgeport, Mono Lake, Benton, Bishop, Big Pine, Ft. Independence, and Lone Pine – were contacted by letter (January 11, 1999), with a follow-up phone call, to determine if there were any Native American concerns with the grazing program and if they would like to participate in the allotment assessment process. The communities either said that there were no impacts or decided not to comment/participate. None indicated a desire or need to participate in the

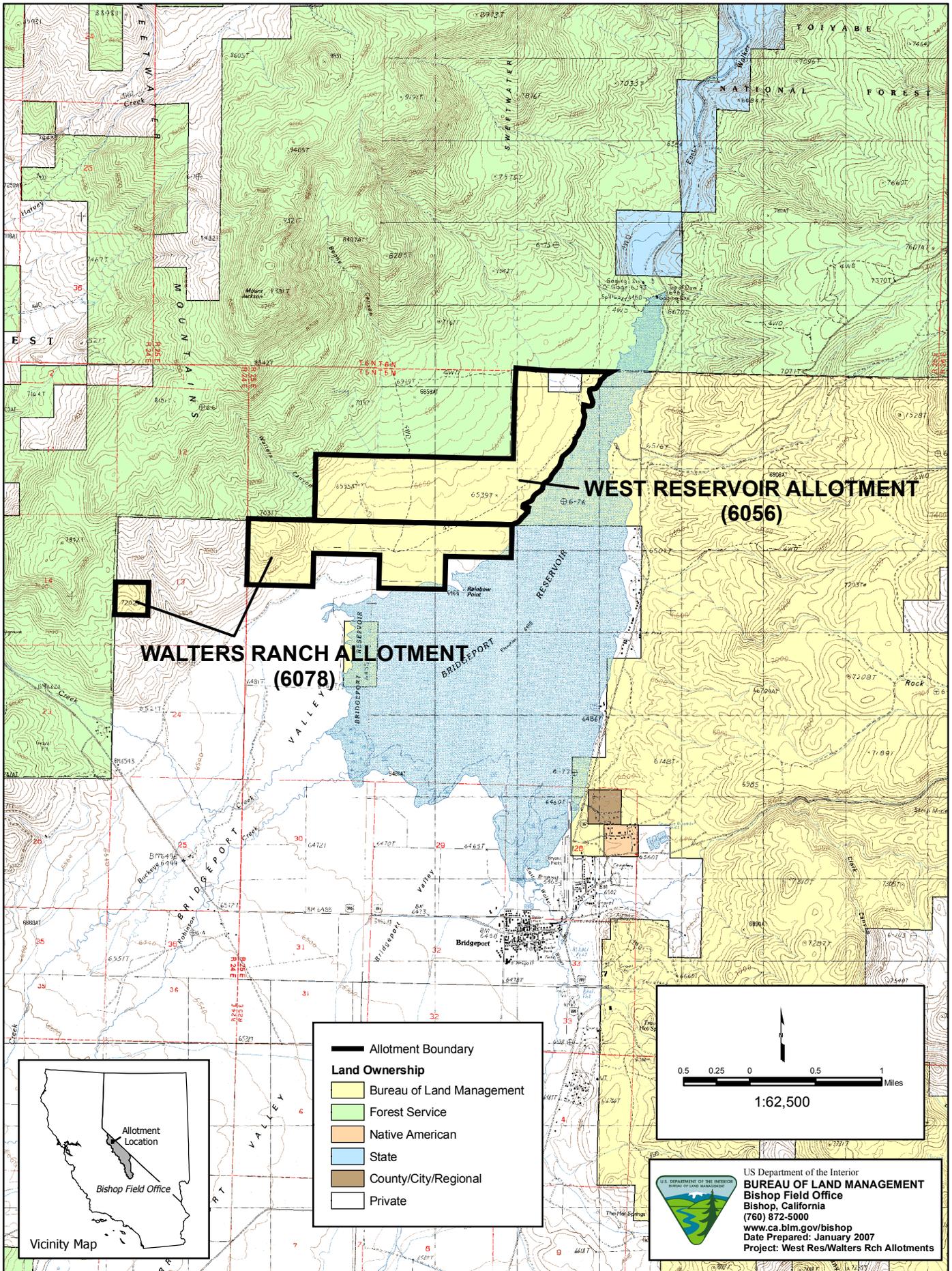
assessment process. (Consultation log available for FY 1999)

Each of the local tribal offices was contacted again by phone on 11/30/00 and the letter of January 1999 was sent to them again (fax). Several phone calls were made to each Tribe to follow up after they received the letter. Various individuals stated some general concerns which are addressed in Chapter 3, Native American Cultural Values; but again, they stated that there are no direct specific impacts to their communities or to their community members by the grazing program. (Consultation log available for FY2001)

***Environmental Assessment Preparers***

Jeff Starosta	Rangeland Management Specialist
Anne Halford	Botanist
Steve Nelson	Wildlife Biologist/GIS Coordinator
Diana Pietrasanta	Recreation/Wilderness
Kirk Halford	Archeologist
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Joe Pollini	Assistant Field Manager

**Chapter 5:  
APPENDICES**



Map 1. Overview of the West Reservoir and Walters Ranch Allotments, Mono County, California. Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office, Bridgeport Valley Management Area.