



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Bishop Field Office  
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100  
Bishop, CA 93514  
Phone: 760 872-5000 Fax: 760 872-5050  
www.ca.blm.gov/bishop

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (FONSI)**

for

**EA CA 170-07-18**

**10 Year Grazing Authorization on the Bodie Mountain (6071), Mono Sand Flat (6072),  
Potato Peak (6073), and Aurora Canyon (6083) allotments**

#### **Introduction:**

One of the primary purposes for conducting an environmental assessment is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore will require the preparation of an EIS. As defined in 40 CFR 1508.13, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why an action will not have significant effect on the human environment. The regulations further define the term “significantly” in 40 CFR 1508.27 and require that the context and intensity of impacts be considered in analyzing significance. Context means “that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality.” 40 CFR 1508.26(a) Intensity “refers to the severity of the impact.” 40 CFR 1508.26(b) The analysis to make a determination whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is based on the following criteria.

#### **Rationale for Finding of No Significant Impact:**

I have reviewed the environmental assessment (EA) CA 170-07-18 regarding the Bodie Mountain (6071), Mono Sand Flat (6072), Potato Peak (6073), and Aurora Canyon (6083) allotments, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. The EA details the effects of the project and provides the basis for the conclusions in this FONSI. None of the effects identified including direct, indirect, and cumulative effects, are considered significant based on seasonal use of the allotments, and minimal impacts to the native vegetative community. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

*Intensity:* This issue is addressed through the ten “significance” criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27, and discussed below:

*1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Rangeland Health Assessments conducted on the Bodie Mountain, Mono Sand Flat, Potato Peak, and Aurora Canyon allotments, indicate that there are no significant environmental impacts from current use and the allotments all meet Rangeland Health Standards. Authorizing grazing with revised, allotment specific terms and conditions would not create negative impacts to livestock

operations. The terms and conditions are designed to help protect and sustain rangeland health and to keep the ecosystem functioning properly.

*2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

Public health and safety was not identified as an issue.

*3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

Based on the EA, the Bodie Bowl ACEC totals 7,280 acres and includes public land, Bodie State Historic Park, and private lands. The ACEC occupies portions of the Bodie Mountain and Potato Peak allotments. Approximately, 6,844 acres of the ACEC lies in the Bodie Mountain allotment while approximately 256 acres lie in the Potato Peak allotment. The Bodie Bowl ACEC Management Plan (1995) directs the BLM and signatory agencies to manage the area for its physical and ambient historic values, preserving “the Bodie experience” for existing and future visitors to enjoy. The plan identifies that “grazing on federal land within the ACEC will be guided by the Bishop Resource Management Plan and the Coordinated Resource Management Plans. Livestock grazing in the two allotments that overlap with the ACEC is compatible with maintaining the area’s historic values as directed in the plan, causing no negative impact to those features the plan was designed to protect. No grazing occurs in Bodie State Park which forms the center of the ACEC. In addition, a substantial portion of public land within the ACEC is fenced to exclude livestock grazing. A portion of the ACEC is also part of the Bodie National Historic Landmark as designated by the National Park Service. Most of the Historic Landmark overlaps the State Park and the public lands where grazing is excluded. Historic structures on public land in the ACEC where grazing is allowed, are not affected by livestock because of a State Park fence, which incorporated public land and the facilities.

The Bodie Mountain, Aurora Canyon, Potato Peak, and Mono Sand Flat allotments contain no designated wilderness. However, based on the EA, the Bodie Mountain, Aurora Canyon, Potato Peak, and Mono Sand Flat allotments occupy portions of five WSAs located throughout the environmental assessment area of study. Approximately, 96% (6,360 acres) of the Masonic Mountain WSA (CA-010-102) lies in the Aurora Canyon allotment. The 25,294 acre Bodie Mountains WSA (CA-010-099) lies predominantly in the Aurora Canyon and Potato Peak allotments. Approximately 23% (5,699 acres) lies in Aurora Canyon, while 39% (9,864 acres) lies in the Potato Peak allotment. The Bodie WSA (CA-010-100 – 56,423 acres) lies completely within the Bodie Mountain allotment. The Excelsior (CA-010-088 – 9,420 acres) and Walford Springs (CA-010-092 – 12,952 acres) WSAs both lie completely within the Mono Sand Flat allotment. Finally, approximately 10,983 acres or 20% of the Granite Mountain WSA (CA-010-090) lies in the Mono Sand Flat allotment.

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 it is

designated wilderness or released from the wilderness review process. Grazing existed on the Bodie Mountain, Aurora Canyon, Potato Peak, and Mono Sand Flat allotments at the time the WSAs were designated by BLM in 1979-1980 and are a use grandfathered by Section 603(c) of FLPMA. Grazing may continue to the same manner and degree as took place in 1976. The IMP provides specific guidance for implementation of grazing systems. The proposed action would have positive benefits to wilderness values of naturalness because overall allotment habitat quality would be maintained or slightly improved as implementation of the proposed terms and conditions occur. The proposed terms and conditions are designed to protect and sustain rangeland health and would maintain or improve existing wildlife habitat and facilitate long term naturalness in the WSAs.

Rough Creek and Atastra Creek, identified as eligible for wild and scenic river study, are located in the Bodie Mountain allotment. The Rough Creek segment totals 2.1 miles on public land and Atastra Creek totals 1.75 miles on public land. Rough Creek is potentially classified as wild while Atastra is potentially classified as scenic/recreational. The acreage of Rough Creek and its riparian/upland corridor totals about 672 acres, while Atastra Creek totals about 560 acres. The proposed action would maintain or improve riparian values on both eligible study river segments. The terms and conditions including the lower level of utilization of key upland forage species and riparian standards under the proposed action would result in slight to moderate improvement in riparian and wetland conditions over the long-term.

Lastly, there are no park lands, or prime farmlands within these four allotments.

*4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

No effects that may occur as a result of the approval of this proposed action were identified in the EA that are likely to be controversial.

*5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The proposed action is not unique or unusual. The environmental effects to the human environment were analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. There are no predicted effects on the human environment, which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

*6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The proposed action does not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed action continues a traditional use of public lands with consideration for sensitive species and the native plant communities. Any future grazing permit renewals will be evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act process, consistent with current laws and regulations.

*7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The proposed action was evaluated in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. These cumulative effects are identified in the EA. Significant cumulative effects were not identified from the proposed action, based on grazing permit issuance that would occur as a result of the decision herein.

*8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

Based on the EA, the proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Livestock use on the allotments is generally dispersed though congregation does occur near springs and other water sources where National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible cultural resources are known to occur. However, proposed mitigation measures were incorporated into the proposed action;

- a) Conduct cultural resource evaluations at trough locations that have been decommissioned or that are no longer in use prior to re-commissioning.
- b) BLM will require permittees to provide a map of proposed salt block locations on public lands. These locations will be assessed for cultural resources prior to salt block placement. Salt blocks will be located to avoid impacts to cultural properties.
- c) Reservoirs impacting NRHP eligible cultural sites will be decommissioned, or water re-conveyed from the reservoir to a trough removed from the site location.
- d) Troughs and other water improvements impacting NRHP eligible cultural sites will be moved or decommissioned.

Furthermore, BLM will continue to work with the permittees to identify, reduce, and mitigate impacts to cultural resources through trough, salt block placement, reservoir decommissioning, and strategic range improvements and practices which disperse livestock from culturally sensitive areas.

*9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

No threatened or endangered species are present based on historical records, field monitoring, and/or habitat suitability in the Bodie Mountain, Mono Sand Flat, Potato Peak, and Aurora Canyon allotments. Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis californiana*), a federally listed endangered species, inhabit parts of the Sierra Nevada range several miles to the west; however, there is no suitable habitat on or adjacent to these allotments. Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki henshawi*), a federally listed threatened fish species, is not currently found on any of these allotments but there is potential reintroduction habitat on the Bodie Mountain and Aurora Canyon allotments.

*10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The approved action does not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The EA contains discussion pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). State, local, and tribal interests were consulted during the environmental analysis process. No violations or inconsistencies of these interests were noted or left unresolved. Furthermore, the approved proposed action is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

**Finding of No Significant Impact:**

I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan approved on March 23, 1993, as amended by the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing approved on July, 13, 2000. This plan has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I find that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and an environmental impact statement is not needed. Therefore, it is my decision to implement the proposed action from EA CA 170-08-18 for the Bodie Mountain (6071), Mono Sand Flat (6072), Potato Peak (6073), and Aurora Canyon (6083) allotments and authorize livestock grazing for 10-years with revised, allotment specific terms and conditions to the grazing operators.

**Authorized Official:**

/s/ Bill Dunkelberger

---

Field Manager, Bishop Field Office

Date: /s/ September 30, 2008