

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
<http://www.blm.gov/>

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Instruction Memorandum No. 2007-053
Expires: 09/30/2008

To: All State Directors except Eastern States and Alaska

From: Director

Subject: Strategy for Managing the Backlog of Unprocessed Grazing Permits

Program Area: Rangeland Management and Grazing Administration

Purpose: The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum is to re-affirm the high priority of renewing livestock grazing permits and leases and to clarify direction for reducing the backlog of unprocessed permits and leases. In this memorandum, references to permits also include leases.

Policy/Action: Each State has prepared a strategy to eliminate the backlog of grazing permits that have expired since Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 but have not yet been fully processed as defined in Washington Office (WO), IM 2003-071. The state strategies included identification of barriers, suggestions for resolution, and identification of work that may be foregone in order to meet the commitment to eliminate the backlog. The majority of strategies set priorities and identify other work to de-emphasize in order to continue the progress being made on reducing the grazing permit renewal backlog. States also identified some work that would not be accomplished. Some of these suggestions are not appropriate and are identified in italics in the last column of Attachment 1.

States should follow these guidelines to process grazing permits:

1. Review definitions and process flow chart in H-4180-1, Rangeland Health Standards.
2. Use Public Law 108-108 (2004 Department of the Interior and related Agencies Appropriations Act) authority to issue permits that result from transfers of grazing preference.

3. Permits issued under the authority of the Public Law 108-108 must be issued for ten years unless meeting one of the four conditions in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4130.2(d). However, the environmental analysis for these permits, and any necessary changes that may be warranted, shall be completed as soon as possible.
4. Land health evaluations are not required to fully process a grazing permit. In many cases, the information gained from a Land Health Standards evaluation is useful for creating or modifying permit or lease terms and conditions to ensure conformance with subpart 4180. However, expired permits, in some cases, can be fully processed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) using existing information. If a land health evaluation that is completed after processing a permit, reveals that current livestock grazing management is found to be a significant factor in not achieving standards, then appropriate action must be taken in accordance with 43 CFR 4180.
5. The assessment and evaluation of Land Health Standards remains a high priority for all programs. The findings are used to report condition of rangelands, to determine the need to adjust management of various activities, and to qualify for the use of the proposed categorical exclusions. Consequently, these assessments and evaluations are appropriately funded by a variety of subactivities.
6. Ensure that the quality of our NEPA documentation is maintained.
7. It is recommended that monitoring information be collected and if necessary prioritized. Monitoring information is useful for permit renewals, or where existing livestock grazing is a significant causal factor for not achieving standards. This includes allotments where appropriate action has already been taken and the data is needed to determine if the action is effective.
8. New range improvement projects should be installed or conducted on high priority areas to achieve or make significant progress toward achieving land health standards.
9. Contact Division of Rangeland Resources (WO-220) if your State determines it will not meet the FY 2007 permit renewal Annual Work Plan (AWP) targets.
10. Fill vacant range positions or initiate conversations with WO-220 about constraints that are preventing these positions from being filled.

WO responses to individual State solutions are found in Attachment 1.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Background: In FY 1999 and 2000, almost 7,200 of the 18,000 grazing permits administered by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) expired. This coincided with a change in policy regarding NEPA analysis to document site specific grazing effects and initiating evaluation of the status of land health. As a result of the convergence of these major workloads, many grazing permits were not processed and issued in a timely manner. Congress provided administrative relief through annual appropriations language for several years. In 2000 and 2001, the BLM developed a strategy to link these major tasks to provide more current information for the NEPA documents associated with issuing grazing permits and to more effectively analyze cumulative impacts. Congress

then enacted language to provide relief through FY2009. Since FY1999, the BLM has provided Congress and Office of Management and Budget (OMB), annual progress reports on eliminating the backlog of expired but unprocessed grazing permits. While the BLM has made significant progress, the backlog has increased in the last 3 years.

The WO has used the recently completed program reviews in six states to assess the current processes, interpretation of policy, and concerns. During these reviews, state and field offices identified some obstacles that need to be addressed in order to maintain the emphasis on permit renewal at the field level. The findings of these reviews were presented and briefly discussed at the Range Lead Workshop held in January 2006. State and field offices were asked to provide a strategy for meeting the commitment by identifying barriers, actions to overcome the barriers, and work that would not be accomplished in order to meet the target date.

Budget Impact: Use and distribution of available funds may be affected to various degrees from FY 2007 through FY 2009.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None.

Coordination: State Rangeland Management Specialists.

Contact: Bob Bolton, Senior Rangeland Management Specialist, Division of Rangeland Resources (WO 220) at (202) 452-7792; Dick Mayberry, Rangeland Management Specialist, WO 220, at (202) 452-7750; or Rob Roudabush, Acting Division Chief, Rangeland Resources, WO-220, at (202) 785-6569.

Signed by:
Henri R. Bisson
Acting, Director

Authenticated by:
Robert M. Williams
Division of IRM Governance,WO-560

1 Attachment

[1 - Responses to State strategies for eliminating the backlog of unprocessed processing grazing permits \(13 pp\)](#)