

# Green Mountain Common Allotment Proposed Grazing Management WY-050-EA11-5

Lander Field Office, Wind River/Bighorn Basin District, Wyoming

February 2011



The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

**BLM/WY/PL-11/018+1020**

**DOI-BLM-WY050-EA11-5**

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# Chapter 1

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*Purpose and Need*

# Green Mountain Common Allotment Environmental Assessment

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## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

### Introduction:

The GMCA is a common-use livestock grazing allotment encompassing approximately 522,000<sup>1</sup> total acres in southern Fremont County and portions of Sweetwater County (see Map 1.) Bureau of Land Management-administered public lands in the GMCA have historically been used primarily for livestock grazing, wild horses, wildlife habitat, mineral exploration and production, and recreation. Other uses include rights-of-way for transportation, communication, and utility systems, and timber production on Green Mountain.

In the past, 16 operations have shared livestock grazing use on 19 grazing permits. Prior to 1999, no formal livestock management system was in place throughout the allotment's previous 100 years of livestock grazing use.

In 1996, the BLM initiated a large-scale planning effort involving the general public, local government, special interest groups, and permittees to address the varied and sometimes conflicting uses of the GMCA. This planning effort considered requests to convert the remaining sheep grazing use to cattle grazing and was intended to mitigate the known resource conflicts within the allotment. The planning effort identified a number of management issues and developed a list of goals to resolve the issues. The goals covered in that earlier analysis (as reflected in the BLM 1999 decision in EA WY-050-EA9-039) established the following goals many of which overlap with the Wyoming Standards of Healthy Rangelands (SHR). The full listing of the goals and objectives is found in Appendix 19.

1. Improve or maintain riparian areas.
2. Maintain wild horses within appropriate management levels.
3. Maintain the open spaces and natural character of the allotment and the uses that are dependent on these values.
4. Maintain public access and dispersed recreational opportunities while respecting private property in the allotment.
5. Maintain big game populations near objective levels established by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.
6. Maintain or improve habitat quality for plant and animal populations and communities.
7. Provide adequate forage and water on a sustained-yield basis to satisfy the present management levels of livestock, wild horses and big game animals.
8. Maintain and improve soil productivity and minimize soil erosion.
9. Improve or maintain upland plant communities so that they are diverse and able to recover from disturbance.
10. Manage the public lands in a manner that will protect and improve the quality of the water resources.

In 2010, the BLM updated its assessment and determined that the SHR Standards 1 (soil), 2 (riparian and wetland vegetation), 3 (upland vegetation in the transition zones), and 4 (wildlife and plants) were not being met in some areas; these findings are discussed in Chapter Three, Affected Environment. Standards 5 and 6 were determined to be unknown.

The purpose of the present action is to determine if livestock grazing should be authorized in the GMCA on 18 of 19

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<sup>1</sup> Livestock grazing is authorized on 512,000 acres; the 522,000 acre figure includes lands that are located within the GMCA boundaries but which are not part of the allotment.

# Green Mountain Common Allotment Environmental Assessment

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permits (see below under Considered but Not Further Analyzed) and, if livestock grazing is to be authorized, the appropriate terms and conditions necessary to achieve land use plan objectives including the SRH. The need for the action is that fundamentals of rangeland health are not being met based on the 2010 update.

Decision to be made: The BLM will decide whether or not to issue grazing permits and, if permits are to be issued, what the terms and conditions of the permits would be.

## **CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN AND AUTHORITIES**

The management actions in the alternatives that are analyzed in detail are in conformance with the Lander Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision including the SHR. BLM is guided by the Taylor Grazing Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Public Rangelands Improvement Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and the Wyoming State Protocol and the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails Management Plan along with other laws and regulations.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION**

The BLM decision-making process relies on internal and external scoping to identify issues associated with the proposed action. The BLM conducted extensive scoping prior to issuing the 2008 EA and Record of Decision (WY050-EA07-153). More than several dozen comments on the 2008 decision were received. This decision was later appealed by two parties with extensive appeal points identified. Subsequently, the decision was withdrawn by the BLM and a new EA prepared. The BLM has met with Interested Parties, permittees, government agencies including the Fremont County Commissioners and others. Field and office consultations with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department were conducted. See Appendix 8.

These outreach efforts, coupled with the 2010 field updates, and recent court decisions, have fully identified the issues for analysis and helped to form the range of alternatives.