

Environmental Assessment

BLM

Little Lost Creek Allotment #00103 Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal

DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0041-EA

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



MAY 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.

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Environmental Assessment
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of renewing the grazing permit, authorization number 4901052, on the Little Lost Creek Allotment. This allotment is under the management status "M" (Maintain) and its land status is 5 percent P.L. Of the 1,096 total acres in the allotment only 116 acres is public land. The map located at the end of this worksheet shows the allotment location, boundary, and public/private land status.

If approved, a new grazing permit would be issued to the permittee/operator for a term of ten years, or for the duration of a valid base property lease, if applicable. The permit will authorize the same level of livestock grazing use as the previous grazing permits, with no changes in livestock kind, number or permitted use period.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

NEED: The need for the action is to renew the existing grazing permit on the Little Lost Creek Allotment which is due to expire, or has already expired.

PURPOSE: This action focuses on the environmental issues specific to livestock grazing management on the allotment, and the renewal of the term grazing permits associated with the allotment. The purpose of this action is to continue, modify, or cancel the current grazing management to promote healthy, sustainable rangeland ecosystems and to meet/continue to meet rangeland health standards.

The Little Lost Creek grazing permit is due to expire in the near future. This EA will address all current and future permitted livestock grazing on the allotments.

Grazing permits are subject to renewal in accordance with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, Administrative Procedures Act, Washakie Resource Management Plan, and the grazing regulations at 43 CFR Part 4100.

In order for livestock grazing to occur on public land, the livestock permittee must hold a valid grazing permit. The Code of Federal Regulations, 43 CFR 4130.2(a), states that "Grazing permits or leases shall be issued to qualified applicants to authorize use on the public lands and other lands under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management that are designated as available for livestock grazing through land use plans." The Washakie RMP has designated the Little Lost Creek Allotment as available for livestock grazing. The permit applicants control base property associated with a grazing preference on the allotment and have been determined to be qualified applicants.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

This action is subject to the following land use plan:

NAME OF PLAN: Washakie Area Resource Management Plan (RMP/ROD)

DATE APPROVED: September, 1988

REMARKS: This proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved RMP for the Washakie Resource Area dated 1988, which is currently under revision and consolidation into the Bighorn Basin RMP. The decisions in the Washakie Resource Management Plan provide general management direction and allocation of uses

and resources on the public lands in that area. The proposed action does not conflict with the preferred alternative of the Draft Bighorn Basin RMP revision.

The Washakie RMP/ROD established the following Management Objective for Livestock Grazing Management:

“To provide forage for livestock grazing, to reduce conflicts between livestock grazing and other resource uses, and to improve ecological range condition.” [Page 17]

The RMP/ROD also specified the following Management Actions necessary to achieve the above objective:

“Management actions will be implemented to accomplish the long term objectives of good or better range condition on an estimated 960,000 acres of public land.” [Page 17]

“Livestock grazing will continue as currently authorized on all 307 allotments administered by the Washakie Resource Area, unless adequate data are available to support adjustments. Season of use, distribution, and kind, class and number of livestock will be adjusted on a case-by-case basis or as AMPs/management agreements are developed on the allotments. These adjustments will be implemented to improve vegetative and wildlife resources and to protect areas unsuitable for livestock grazing. Any adjustments in livestock grazing use will be made as a result of monitoring and in consultation with grazing permittees and other affected interests.” [Page 20]

“Adjustments in grazing use may include one or more of the following:

- Changes in season of use
- Changes in class, kind, and number of livestock
- Changes in grazing management
- Changes in current use levels
- Changes in active grazing preference.” [Page 20]

“As a goal, use of key species on selected key area would be limited to a level that would meet the objective of allotment management, normally a maximum of 50 percent utilization by wildlife and livestock if the current year’s production.” [Page 43]

The RMP/ROD has been reviewed and it is determined that the Alternatives conform to the land use plan Management Objectives and Actions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

This and other grazing related Environmental Assessments are being prepared in accordance with Washington Office (WO) Instruction Memoranda WO-IM-99-039 and 2000-022 as well as WY-IM-2000-20, which instruct all Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Offices to conduct National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review on grazing permit renewals. The primary regulations governing the analysis are 40 CFR 1500 (RE: The President’s Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations for procedural provisions of NEPA). The principal Bureau permitting regulations for livestock grazing are found in 43 CFR 4100. The principal statutes governing livestock grazing on public land are the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978.

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE 1 – RENEW GRAZING PERMITS

Under Alternative 1, the grazing permit would be issued for a term of ten years. The grazing permit would authorize the same level of livestock grazing use as the previous grazing permits. The AUMs, season of use, and management would remain the same. The grazing permit would authorize the following livestock grazing use:

60 Cattle 7/1-10/31 5% P.L 12 AUMs

ALTERNATIVE 2 – DO NOT RENEW GRAZING PERMITS / ELIMINATE LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Under Alternative 2, the current livestock grazing permit on the Little Lost Creek Allotment would not be renewed. The grazing preference for the allotment would then be removed from the Washakie RMP grazing base.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

GENERAL SETTING

The Little Lost Creek Allotment is located approximately 50 miles south of Ten Sleep, WY. The Allotment encompasses approximately 1,096 total acres with only 116 (5%) public acres. The allotment is surrounded by private lands with no public access. The terrain of the Allotment is classified as foothills and mountains therefore has varied topography of mostly steeper gradual slopes with elevation ranging from 7,400 feet, to 8,600 feet. Annual precipitation ranges from 15 to 19 inches per year.

Livestock Grazing:

For management priorities the allotment was classified as “M” (Maintain) category. The BLM’s rationale for this classification is that there are no identified resource problems, and the size and continuity of the public land is not conducive to more intensive management. The allotment has a low potential for yielding a positive return on public investment in management or rangeland project development. The allotment is managed as one pasture in which public land parcels are grazed in conjunction with deeded lands. There are 12 AUMs associated with federal lands in the allotment which sets the stocking rate at a very conservative .01 AUMs/Acre or 9.7 Acres/AUM.

Soils:

The soils within the allotment reflect the higher level elevation environment in which they formed. Soil depth ranges from 20 inches to over 60 inches and surface textures are mainly loamy. Most of the allotment has slopes ranging from 10 to 30 percent with a few areas over 40 percent. In the 15 to 19 inch precipitation zone, standing vegetation and litter provide good soil cover, protecting the soil from the erosive forces of rain drop impact and overland flow. Stones and cobbles on the surface further protect the soil surface.

The three soils series typify the allotment are Burnette loam, Lucky Star very stony loam, and Wallrock sandy loam. The Burnette soil is deep and well drained with a thick, dark surface layer (Pachic epipedon) and a well developed argillic horizon. The Lucky Star soil is sandier reflecting the sandstone parent materials from which it formed; it too deep and well drained and has a well developed argillic horizon, however, the surface layer is thick and dark but not to the extent of the Burnette series. The Wallrock soil is deep and somewhat poorly drained; it also has a deep and dark surface layer and argillic horizon but is distinguished from the surrounding soils by supporting more wetland-specific species.

The major ecological sites found in the allotment are listed below.

Loamy	15-19 in. pz.	R043BY322WY
Subirrigated	15-19 in. pz.	R043BY374WY

Hydrology/Riparian:

The allotment is entirely located in the Deep Creek-Nowood River watershed, Hydrologic Unit # 100800080103. The elevations in the allotment are within the 15-19 inch precipitation zone and experience larger amounts of snowfall and rain than most other allotments within the area. The Allotment is situated in the far upper reaches of two drainages, Lost Creek and Little Lost Creek which are tributaries of Deep Creek. Both Creeks have riparian segments present, however none have been inventoried or analyzed since none of the segments are on Public Lands.

There are two known areas within the Allotment that have active springs; both areas are undeveloped and located on private lands.

Upland Vegetation:

Vegetative communities within the allotments mainly consist of Loamy, Shallow Loamy, and Subirrigated range sites; with Loamy being the most frequent site. The Allotment has a small percent of very shallow and rocky outcrops on the tops of the steeper ridges which are commonly surrounded by Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) and Limber pine (*Pinus flexus*). The Idaho Fescue/Big Sagebrush Plant Community is the predominant state associated within the above mentioned sites. This site is scattered by Wyoming Big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) as overstory with an understory of cool season mid-grasses such as Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), Columbia needlegrass (*Achnatherum nelsonii*), Spike fescue (*Leucopoa kingii*). Secondary grasses such as, Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), Bluegrasses (*Poa spp.*), Prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), and can be found mixed with Seges (*Carex spp.*) and various forbs; Larkspure (*Delphinium spp.*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum spp.*), Balsamorhiza (*Balsamorhiza sagittata Nutt.*), Phlox (*Phlox spp.*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium L.*). No known threatened or endangered plant species have been documented in the allotment.

Very little historical vegetation monitoring data other than an Ecological Site Inventory in 1985 has been collected on the Little Lost Creek Allotment. The Ecological Site Survey mapped 45 percent of the acres in excellent condition, 31 percent in good condition, and 24 percent as unclassified or not mapped. The Periodic allotment inspections over the years have not identified any significant management problems. In August of 2010 a Line-Point Intercept transect was ran at Assessment/Photo Area 1 shown on the map at the end of the document. The transect data summary found: 5% Bare Ground and Soil Crusts, 6% Litter, and 89% Foliar Vegetative Cover composed of the species listed above. Annual grass species were not observed in the transect or assessment area.

Noxious Weeds:

No noxious weed species are documented to exist within the allotment on BLM administered lands. This allotment lies within the Ten Sleep Weed Management Area. This area is intensively managed and monitored for noxious and invasive weed species using an integrated pest management strategy with cooperation between private and public land managers within the area.

Wildlife Habitat:

The Little Lost Creek Allotment provides year long habitat for Antelope, Elk, and Mule Deer. The plant community described above provides year long grazing and browsing forage. The steeper slopes and small stands of Juniper and Limber pine create excellent cover for Big Game animals. No areas of Crucial Big Game Habitat have been identified in or near the Allotment. There are no Sage-grouse Leks within six miles of the Allotment and no other habitats types have been documented as suitable for winter, nesting, brood-rearing, and foraging habitat for sage grouse. However some of the Sagebrush dominated sites do have the potential to provide such habitat for sage grouse. Other birds that might utilize habitat within the Allotment include Western Meadowlark, Lark Bunting, Sage Thrasher, Horned Larks, Red-Tail and Ferruginous Hawks, and Golden Eagles. There are no recorded observations of federally listed threatened or endangered species on the allotment and none are known to be using the area.

Recreation:

The allotment is located within BLM-administered public lands managed as the West Slope of the Bighorns Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), where management to promote and sustain desired recreational opportunities, experiences, settings, and beneficial outcomes are a priority. The Southern Bighorns are a popular recreational destination for activities such as hiking, camping, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, motorized touring, and hunting. Historically, a dramatic spike in observed recreational use in this area is during the big game hunting season. Most recreational activities are observed in public lands that are legally accessible, including but not limited to Middle Fork of the Powder River area, Dry Farm Road, Mahogany Butte, and Cherry Creek Road areas. The Little Lost Creek Allotment is located in an area surrounded by private land, which makes the area inaccessible

unless permission is granted by the landowners, or with an outfitter. Motorized use is managed as limited to designated roads and trails. A travel management plan for this area has not yet been completed or implemented.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

Wilderness characteristics are resource values that include naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Areas evaluated for wilderness characteristics generally occur in undeveloped locations 5,000 contiguous acres and greater, or of sufficient size to be practical to manage for these characteristics. The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H.1601-1) states that the BLM must consider the management of lands with wilderness characteristics during the land use planning process. The criteria used to identify these lands are essentially the same criteria used for determining wilderness characteristics for wilderness study areas (WSA). However, the authority set forth in Section 603(a) of FLPMA to complete the three part wilderness review process (inventory, study, and report to Congress) expired on October 21, 1993; therefore, FLPMA does not apply to new WSA proposals and consideration of new WSA proposals on BLM-administered public lands is no longer valid. As mandated by FLPMA, Section 201, the BLM is still required to maintain an inventory of BLM-administered public lands to determine whether they possess wilderness characteristics. Recent inventories have found that the Little Lost Creek Allotment and surrounding areas absent of wilderness characteristics.

Visual Resource Management:

The Little Lost Creek Allotment is located within BLM-administered public land managed as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class IV. VRM Class IV objectives are to provide for management activities which require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Cultural:

Following policy provided in Instruction Memorandum (IM) WO-99-039, IM WY-99-020 and BLM Manual 8100 series a literature review was conducted using State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and BLM records. Results of the file search indicate that Little Lost Creek Allotment contains no known cultural resource sites. No Class III cultural inventories have been conducted within the allotment (BLM Project 1511031). Per the Wyoming State Protocol Agreement between the BLM and the SHPO (State Protocol) at Appendix B.27, renewal of grazing permits with no change in season of use or type of livestock is exempt from class III inventory. Standard cultural stipulations apply.

Paleontology:

The surface formation of Little Lost Creek Allotment is Oldest Gneiss Complex. This formation has a PFYC (Potential Fossil Yield Classification) rating of 1 or very low. This means the allotment has a very low sensitivity for paleontological resources. Fossil localities are uncommon in this formation. There are no recorded fossil localities within the Little Lost Creek Allotment. Because of the low potential to affect significant paleontological localities, a site-specific field inventory was not completed.

CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action to those potentially impacting resources described in the affected environment Chapter 3, above.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – RENEW GRAZING PERMIT

Livestock Grazing:

The monitoring data and stocking rate stated previously indicates there is an adequate amount of forage available to support the permitted number of livestock. The new grazing lease would authorize the same numbers and kind of livestock, and season of use as the existing lease. No changes to grazing management are proposed with this lease renewal; therefore it is not expected to have any new effects on range management. Impacts will not be significant.

Soils:

Continuation of current livestock grazing management in the Little Lost Creek Allotment would not significantly modify soil resources. It is anticipated that soil resources will be more likely improved than be degraded. The naturally occurring soil cover from standing vegetation and litter would continue to protect the soil surface from the erosive forces of overland flow and rain drop impact. Livestock concentration along the creeks and wetlands to springs located on private land could cause increased disturbance in similar wetland areas on public land. Impacts will not be significant.

Hydrology/Riparian:

The current grazing authorization allows warm/hot season use and continuation of use during this season could potentially impact water resources located on private lands. Given that riparian and water resource areas are more appealing to cattle, the areas become more susceptible to herbaceous utilization. As stated above, reduction of vegetative cover through grazing could affect soils by reducing protection from rain drop impact and becoming more susceptible to erosion caused by wind and water runoff. Livestock concentration along the creeks and around springs located on private land could cause increased disturbance in saturated areas thus reducing the stability of those sites. No major riparian degradation problems have been observed under the past and current management of livestock and conditions will remain the same under the issuance of the new grazing lease. Impacts will not be significant.

Upland Vegetation:

The prescribed grazing under this alternative would likely maintain or improve the upland rangeland health conditions in the Allotment. Portions of the annual forage production would continue to be removed by grazing livestock and the decrease of herbaceous surface cover could negatively affect soil and water resources. However, rangeland vegetation inventory and monitoring data indicates an adequate amount of forage is available to continue to support or improve rangeland health. Most of the grazing permitted occurs later in the growing season so the majority of rangeland plants have had the opportunity to complete their growth cycle, produce seed, and replenish root reserves. Current livestock grazing management will not likely change the dominant Idaho Fescue/Big Sagebrush plant community since it is highly resistant to change and has evolved under grazing and suppressed fire frequency. According to the NRCS Ecological Site Description, converting the current plant community to its Historic Climax Plant Community (HCPC) of Columbia Needlegrass/Spikefescue would require continued current grazing management and removal of fire suppression to allow the natural fire regime to reoccur and prevent Sagebrush establishment. Impacts will not be significant.

Noxious Weeds:

Grazing use as prescribed in the Proposed Action along with ongoing cooperative weed control efforts would benefit the health of the native plant community. A healthy native plant community often provides competition against the establishment and/or spread of noxious weeds. The issuance of the grazing lease would not result in any additional impacts in relation to the spread of noxious weeds. Impacts will not be significant.

Wildlife Habitat:

Prescribed livestock grazing proposed in this alternative should provide for the sustainability of wildlife habitats identified above in the affected environment, throughout all seasons of the year. Because there is little dietary overlap between cattle and wintering sage-grouse, mule deer or antelope, the cattle grazing proposed in this alternative would have little direct effect on wintering sage-grouse, or Big Game use of the allotment. The light to moderate livestock use levels observed and anticipated from the grazing prescribed in this alternative, would in average years, allow for adequate amounts of herbaceous residue and litter necessary for the sagebrush obligate species nesting, foraging and brood rearing habitat needs, as well as for the long term maintenance and sustainability of the plant communities. Impacts will not be significant.

Recreation:

Impacts to recreation from continued grazing use within the Little Lost Creek Allotment are expected to be very minimal due to the restrictive public access into the BLM-administered public lands, and the minute size of the BLM-administered parcels within the allotment which may not be the adequate environment to provide for the desired recreational experiences, settings, and beneficial outcomes. However, for users that are able to recreate within the allotment (ex. big game outfitter), conflicts may occur between recreationists and livestock grazing use, such as cattle harassment, trespassing issues, or livestock operations interfering with recreationists goals. The presence of livestock and associated uses may alter the desired settings for those seeking a wildland recreational experience. Two-tracks created from livestock operations will alter the desired recreational settings by minimizing the physical naturalness, as well as alter the social settings by potentially increasing the amount of motorized use on the new two-tracks. Adherence to the following off-road motorized use stipulation will minimize these impacts:

Limited cross-country vehicle travel is allowed for the purpose of maintaining existing range improvements or animal husbandry efforts if established access routes do not exist. Travel on or off wet or muddy road conditions should be avoided to prevent rutting and soil erosion. If the vehicle creates ruts in excess of 4 inches deep, on or off road conditions shall be deemed too wet to travel.

Impacts to recreation will be low due to lack of public access, and amount of BLM-administered public lands available for recreation, there are no anticipated impacts from this alternative.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

There are no wilderness characteristics inventoried within the allotment. In addition, many working landscapes containing livestock operations have been recently inventoried for wilderness characteristics. There will be no impacts to wilderness characteristics from this alternative.

Visual Resource Management:

Livestock operations may introduce contrasting elements of line, form, color, and texture against the surrounding landscape. These elements may be observed from trails left by cattle trailing, modified mosaics expressed as smooth distinct forms from grazing use, linear elements from off-road motorized use associated with livestock operations, and structural forms used for livestock operations that will introduce contrasting elements against the surrounding natural elements. However, due to the naturalness of most of these contrasting elements, they may not be noticed by the casual observer. Continued livestock use is within VRM Class IV objectives, and impacts to VRM will not be significant..

Cultural:

Under the current policy (IM WO-99-039, IM WY-99-020, and Wyoming State Protocol) when a permit remains substantially unchanged a review of cultural records can be used to identify affects to known historic or unevaluated properties. Results of the file search indicate that Little Lost Creek Allotment contains no historic properties. No properties are located within known livestock concentration areas. Consultation was conducted with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) under the State Protocol (BLM Project 1511031). Under current policy no additional analysis of known cultural resource sites is required.

In regards to unidentified cultural properties, there is a direct relationship between the rangeland health and potential effects to cultural resources. Provided rangelands remain in satisfactory condition and are not overgrazed, the potential effects to cultural resources from grazing lease renewals are expected to be minimal. Rangeland deterioration could constitute a viable threat to cultural properties. The Preferred Alternative is not expected to affect cultural resources given the fact that recent rangeland monitoring results are acceptable and total AUMs is constant.

Affects to cultural resources are most probable in high use areas such as around water wells or bottlenecks where livestock congregate. Those facilities that were in place prior to the initial Resource Management Plan (RMP) are considered an existing disturbance. Per Section IV-D Identification d. Existing Disturbance of the Wyoming State Protocol, after a determination by a cultural resource specialists, undertakings within previously disturbed areas are generally authorized to proceed without additional class III inventory. Those facilities installed after the RMP were previously subject to consideration under the NHPA. Away from livestock focal points, surface disturbance is minimal and impacts to cultural resources are negligible. Any and all future range development projects within the allotment will comply with the Wyoming State Protocol process, are subject to relevant cultural investigations prior to permit issuance, and will be analyzed under a separate and site specific EA.

Because livestock grazing is a dynamic ongoing process, cultural resource specialists, in conjunction with BLM range management and the leasee, will periodically monitor and inspect heavy use areas and cultural resource sites following current policy (Washakie RMP and BLM Manual 8100 series). Any adverse effects discovered will be mitigated in accordance with the State Protocol. Standard cultural stipulations apply. Impacts will not be significant.

Paleontology:

Paleontological localities are not common within the formation in the Little Lost Creek Allotment. There are no recorded fossil localities within the allotment. Effects on paleontological resources are most likely to occur at heavy use areas where livestock congregate. Outside these areas effects are minimal and dispersed. Paleontological resources are primarily found on bare, non-vegetated outcrops which are created as the result of active erosion processes. These are not locations livestock congregate. The Preferred Alternative has a low potential to affect paleontological localities. Because of the low potential to affect significant paleontological localities, a site-specific field inventory was not completed. Standard paleontology stipulations apply. Impacts will not be significant.

ALTERNATIVE 2 – DO NOT RENEW GRAZING PERMITS / ELIMINATE LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Livestock Grazing:

Under Alternative 2, the expired livestock grazing permit on the Little Lost Creek Allotment would not be renewed and grazing on public lands would be unauthorized. Denying the renewal of this grazing permit would not be in conformance with the Washakie RMP and would require an RMP revision to remove the grazing preference from the Washakie RMP grazing base. There are no fences or natural barriers separating BLM and non-BLM lands. It would not be practical or cost effective to fence out the public lands at this time. This alternative would affect how the adjacent private lands are grazed since the operator would have to keep livestock off of public lands either through herding or fencing, or be in violation of federal grazing regulations. Herding would be unpractical and difficult, due to the mixed ownership pattern and still would not assure public lands would not be grazed.

Soils:

With the cessation of livestock grazing on the public lands within allotment, forage would not be removed by domestic livestock. Standing vegetation and litter would increase. However, given the adequacy of the cover values under current management, few changes to runoff and erosion are anticipated. Wetland values on public lands would be anticipated to improve without livestock grazing, most notably due to the reduction in trampling by livestock.

Wildlife Habitat:

Livestock grazing generally occurs with some variable influence to ungulate wildlife populations, so the elimination of livestock grazing could benefit these species. However, it is worth noting that all of the wildlife habitats and species described above in the affected environment section have adapted with some degree of an ungulate grazing disturbance regime. In the absence of livestock grazing, any competition for forage between livestock and wildlife would be eliminated, and the public land within the allotment would be available for exclusive use by wildlife, without disturbance by the presence of livestock. Although the presence of livestock on public lands would be absent, livestock management activities would likely continue on private lands and could cause greater disturbance or displacement of wildlife if under the extraordinary circumstance constant herding is enforced or public tracts are fenced out. Because it would not be economically feasible for the BLM to fence all federal land parcels, fences would most likely be constructed on private land, fragmenting the area and making BLM unable to stipulate wire spacing to facilitate wildlife movement.

Upland Vegetation:

Absence of livestock grazing would favor plant growth and reproduction requirements in both, forbs and cool season grasses. Depending on annual precipitation, vegetation would be allowed to grow unrestricted to full potential, therefore aid in the development of above ground biomass to protect soils and provide desirable perennial cover for wildlife; to contribute to litter cover; and to continue to develop root masses which would lend itself to improved vigor and reproduction. The removal of livestock will not likely have any short-term effects to the dominant Idaho Fescue/Big Sagebrush plant community since it has evolved under grazing and suppressed fire frequency. According to the NRCS Ecological Site Description, converting the current plant community to its Historic Climax Plant Community (HCPC) of Columbia Needlegrass/Spikefescue would require removal of fire suppression to allow the natural fire regime to reoccur and prevent Sagebrush establishment.

Noxious Weeds:

The removal of livestock grazing on the public land could promote growth and potential overgrowth of perennial grasses and forbs thus crowding out or reducing the potential for invasion of noxious and/or invasive species. Overgrowth of vegetation would provide for an increase in fine fuels, which, in the case of wildfire, could then allow noxious and invasive species to move to the public lands.

Hydrology/Riparian:

Under this Alternative, watershed, and riparian conditions may improve at a faster rate than under Alternative 1. In the absence of livestock grazing, plant growth would be optimized and plant material would accumulate as litter. Surface litter provides for raindrop interception, slows runoff and thereby increases infiltration, reducing surface temperatures and evaporation. Additionally, litter helps to maintain nutrient cycling and energy flows to support healthy biotic and abiotic systems. The risk of riparian degradation from livestock activity would cease and conditions may improve or remain the same. While the estimated timeframe to achieving maximum ecological status and condition would undoubtedly be shorter in the absence of livestock grazing, it would still require several decades, and perhaps longer.

Recreation:

Under the No Action Alternative, grazing would not occur. No resulting effects on recreation would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

Under the No Action Alternative, grazing would not occur. Although the allotment is absent of wilderness characteristics, no resulting effects on wilderness characteristics would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

Visual Resource Management:

Under the No Action Alternative, grazing would not occur. No resulting effects on visual resource management would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

Cultural:

Under Alternative 2, the proposed grazing allotment renewal would not occur. A review of the historical records on file in the Worland Field Office indicates that Little Lost Creek Allotment, is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (36CFR§60.4(a) and (b)). No historic properties will be affected by this alternative.

Paleontology:

Under Alternative 2, the proposed grazing allotment renewal would not occur. No resulting effects on paleontological resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The lands involved in the application have historically been used for livestock grazing, and wildlife habitat. The incremental impacts identified within both Alternatives, when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions would not significantly contribute to any Cumulative Impacts. Grazing under the proposed permit renewal would aid in either making progress toward achievement or maintaining achievement of the Rangeland Health Standards, with the understanding that adjustments to grazing management would occur when any of the Standards are not being achieved.

No cumulative impacts of concern are anticipated as a result of the proposed action in combination with any other existing or planned activity.

CHAPTER 5**EA PREPARATION/CONSULTATIONS****Other Persons/Agencies Consulted:**

Vance Lungren -Little Lost Creek Grazing Permittee and Private Land Owner.

List of Preparer(s):

Michael Peck, Rangeland Management Specialist

List of Reviewers, BLM Worland Field Office:

CJ Grimes, NRS-Weeds
Jared Dalebout, Hydrologist
Marit Bovee, Archaeologist
Mike Tietmeyer, Supervisory RMS
Paul Rau, Recreation Specialist
Steve Kiracofe, NRS-Soils
Ted Igleheart, Wildlife Biologist

APPENDIX A
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

Project Title: Little Lost Creek Allotment Grazing Lease Renewal

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2011-0041-EA

File/Serial Number: 4901052

Project Leader: Michael Peck

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

- NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions
- NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required
- PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA
- NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

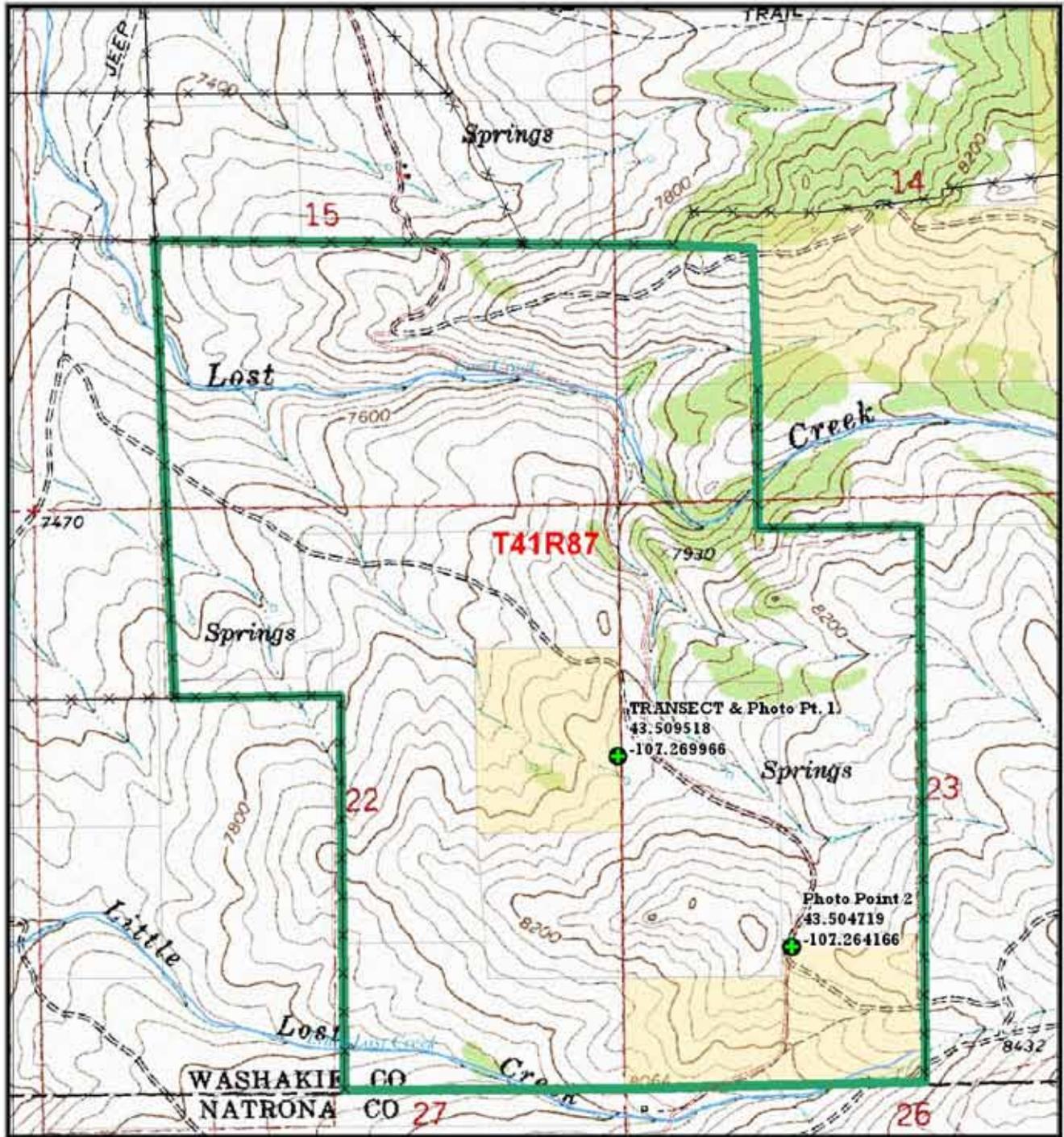
Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)				
NI	Air Quality	Unknown since no information is currently available to indicate adverse impacts.	N/A	
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	There are no ACECs within the allotment	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NP	BLM Natural Areas**	There are no BLM Natural Areas within the allotment	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NP	Cultural Resources	No known historic properties are recorded within the allotment.	Marit Bovee	3/9/2011
NP	Greenhouse Gas Emissions**	No information is currently available to indicate adverse impacts.	N/A	
NP	Environmental Justice		N/A	
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)		N/A	
NP	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	No significant impact to wildlife resources anticipated by proposed action.	Ted Igleheart	3/17/2011
NP	Floodplains	There are no designated floodplains in the allotment.	Jared Dalebout	3/15/2011
NI	Fuels/Fire Management		N/A	
NP	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production	There would be no modifications to mineral resources through the proposed action.	N/A	
NI	Hydrologic Conditions**	Not significantly impacted by proposed action.	Jared Dalebout	3/15/2011
NP	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	No known major populations Invasive or Noxious weeds present.	CJ Grimes	3/9/11
NI	Lands/Access	There would be no modifications to land use authorizations, therefore no impacts would occur. No direct or cumulative	M. Peck	3/4/2011

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		impacts would occur to access and land use.		
PI	Livestock Grazing	Analyzed in prepared EA.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
NP	Migratory Birds.	No significant impact to migratory birds as a result of proposed action.	Ted Igleheart	3/17/2011
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	No known concerns.	Marit Bovee	3/9/2011
NP	Paleontology	No recorded localities and allotment formation has a low sensitivity for paleontological resources.	Marit Bovee	3/9/2011
PI	Rangeland Health Standards	Analyzed in prepared EA.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
NI	Recreation	The allotment is within the West Slope of the Bighorns SRMA. Legal public access is severely limited, and the BLM parcels are very small minimizing recreational opportunities. Recreation is analyzed in the EA	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NI	Socio-Economics	No populations will be unduly affected by the proposed action.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
PI	Soils	Analyzed in prepared EA. Not significantly impacted by proposed action.	Steve Kiracofe	3/18/2011
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	No sensitive plant species have been found or known to inhabit this area.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	None observed or recorded within the proposed area.	Ted Igleheart	3/17/2011
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid)		Steve Kiracofe	3/18/2011
NI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)	Not significantly impacted by proposed action.	Jared Dalebout	3/15/2011
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Few minor seep areas are present but not impacted to a significant degree.	Jared Dalebout	3/15/2011
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no waterways eligible and suitable for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System within or surrounding the allotment	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NP	Wilderness/WSA	There are no wilderness or WSAs within or surrounding the allotment	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NP	Woodland / Forestry	There are no major areas of woodlands located on the Allotment.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
PI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species	Analyzed in prepared EA.	M. Peck	3/4/2011
NI	Visual Resources	The allotment is within BLM-administered public lands managed as VRM Class IV. VRM is analyzed in the EA	Paul Rau	3/9/2011
NP	Wild Horses and Burros	Neither the allotment nor any of its portions are located within a Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA).	M. Peck	3/4/2011
NP	Areas with Wilderness Characteristics**	BLM-administered public lands are absent of wilderness characteristics. Wilderness characteristics are analyzed in the EA	Paul Rau	3/9/2011

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	Andrew Tkach	5/5/2011	
Authorized Officer	Michael Phillips	5/5/2011	

APPENDIX B: MAP
LITTLE LOST CREEK #00103



- Assessment/Photo Point
- Access Road
- Allotment Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Private



0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4
Miles

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

APPENDIX C: PHOTOS



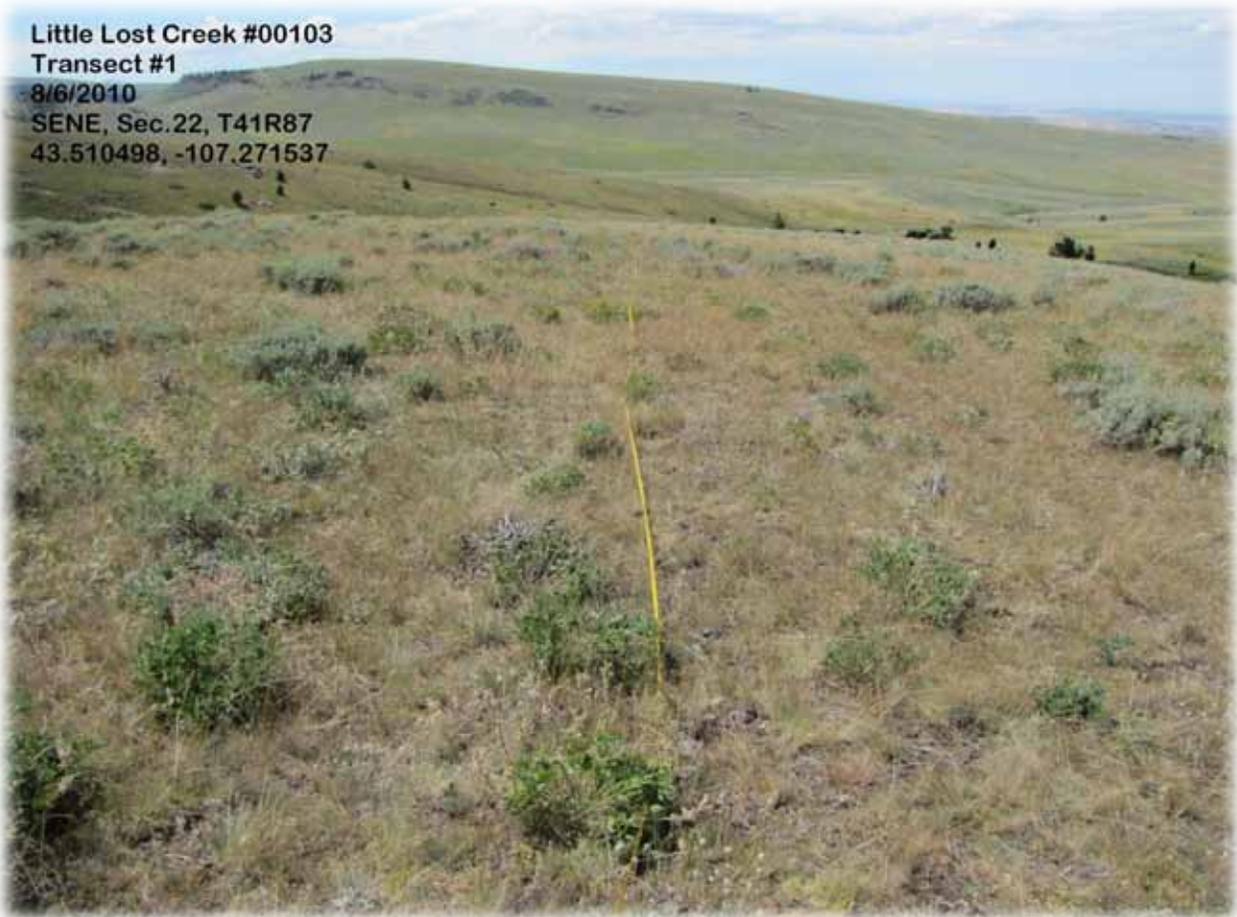
Little Lost Creek #00103
Photo Point #1
8/6/2010
SENE, Sec.22, T41R87
43.509518, -107.269966



Little Lost Creek #00103
Photo Point #2
8/6/2010
SESW, Sec.23, T41R87
43.504719, -107.264166



Little Lost Creek #00103
Transect #1
8/6/2010
SENE, Sec.22, T41R87
43.510498, -107.271537



Little Lost Creek #00103
Transect #1
8/6/2010
SENE, Sec.22, T41R87
43.510498, -107.271537

