

# United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

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Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2012-0106-EA

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## Finding of No Significant Impact

POTATO RIDGE ALLOTMENT #01537  
CHANGE-IN-KIND AND SEASON-OF-USE

LIVESTOCK GRAZING PERMIT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2012-0106-EA

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FY 2013



# **Finding of No Significant Impact Worland Field Office**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis to evaluate the grazing impacts of a change in kind from sheep to cattle and a change in season of use from winter to spring in the Potato Ridge Allotment #01537. The action would be whether to convert the current winter sheep grazing use to the requested cattle use and, if converted, under what mandatory terms and conditions such use would be made.

## **Need and Purpose of Action**

**NEED:** Flitner Ranch, c/o Dave and Paula Flitner and Flitner Ranch Limited Partnership, c/o Stan and Mary Flitner are not currently engaged in the sheep industry. The requested change from sheep to cattle would allow them to make use of their permitted grazing in the Potato Ridge Allotment.

**PURPOSE:** This action focuses on the environmental issues specific to livestock grazing management and the change in kind and season of use associated with this 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.

Four alternatives were analyzed in the EA.

## **PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:**

The alternatives within the EA must be in conformance with the following BLM Land Use Plans and the associated decision(s):

**Name of Plan:** Washakie Resource Management Plan (RMP)

**Date Approved:** September 2, 1988

**Remarks:** The Washakie RMP established the following Management Objective for Livestock Grazing Management:

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

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

“Livestock grazing would 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 would be adjusted to improve vegetative and wildlife resources and to protect areas unsuitable for livestock grazing on a case-by-case basis or as AMP’s are developed on the allotments.” [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, and
- changes in current use levels.” [Page 20]

“Management actions will be implemented to accomplish the long-term objective of good or better range condition on an estimated 960,000 acres of public land. Among the actions that will be used are those listed in Appendix B.” [Page 43]

Appendix B, Table B-1 listed the following management actions which are applicable to this allotment [Page 43]:

“As a general rule, on all allotment categories, adjustments would limit use prior to seed ripe on key forage species to one year out of 2 or 3 in areas with less than 10 inches of annual precipitation and one year out of 2 in areas with 10 or more inches of precipitation. A rest cycle would be considered any time use occurs prior to seed ripe.”

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

The RMP has been reviewed and it is determined that the proposed action conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, part 1610.5.

#### **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:**

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.

#### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:**

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and 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 do not exceed those effects described in the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

**Context:**

The Action would occur within Potato Ridge Allotment No. 01537 and would have local impacts on the resources similar to and within the scope of those described and considered within the Washakie Resource Management Plan and EIS/Record of Decision. The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 8,800 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

**Intensity:** (*Intensity refers to the severity of the impact.*) The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The Action/Alternatives would affect resources as described in the EA. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to the various resources were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Washakie Resource Management Plan/EIS/Record of Decision.
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** No aspect of the Action/Alternatives would have an effect on public health and safety.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no unique characteristics present within the allotment.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Controversy in this context is considered to be in terms of disagreement about the nature of the effects – not political controversy or expressions of opposition to the action or preference among the alternatives analyzed within the EA. No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified regarding the effects of the Action or Alternatives.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Action/Alternatives are not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that 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.** This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted-see EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those

already analyzed in the Washakie RMP/FEIS. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted.

- 8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** There are no features within the project area listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
  
- 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, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.** Wildlife habitat within the allotment has not been designated as crucial for any wildlife species. The allotment is not in a sage grouse core breeding area. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to wildlife have been incorporated into the design of the action alternatives through proper stocking rates, timing of use and utilization stipulations.
  
- 10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.** The Action does not threaten to violate any law. The Action is in conformance with the Washakie RMP which provides the direction and guidance for public land management for the area of which the Potato Ridge Allotment is in.

Authorized Official: Michael J. Kelly acty Fm

Date: 11/7/2012