

Finding of No Significant Impact South Gooseberry Group Allotment No. 00507 Livestock Grazing Permit Renewals

Wind River/Bighorn Basin District – Worland Field Office



May, 2010

The BLM manages more land – 253 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. 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.

DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0010-EA

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2010-0010-EA) for a proposed action to address livestock grazing permit renewals in the South Gooseberry Group Allotment No. 00507, located in Washakie County. The project would renew the applicant's livestock grazing permits for a term of ten years, or for the term of a valid base property lease, if applicable.

NEED AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:

NEED: The need for the action is to renew the existing grazing permits on the South Gooseberry Group Allotment which are due to expire, or have already expired.

PURPOSE: 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. 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.

DECISION TO BE MADE: BLM must decide whether to renew grazing permits in the South Gooseberry Allotment and if so, under what terms and conditions.

A no action alternative and one action alternative were analyzed in the EA.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

This action is subject to the following land use plan:

NAME OF PLAN: Grass Creek Planning Area Resource Management Plan (RMP)

DATE APPROVED: September, 1998

REMARKS: The Grass Creek Resource Management Plan (RMP) established the following Management Objective for Livestock Grazing Management:

“Improve forage production and range condition to provide a sustainable resource base for livestock grazing while improving wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and forage for wild horses.” [Page 13]

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

“The amounts, kinds, and seasons of livestock grazing use will continue to be authorized until monitoring indicates a grazing use adjustment is necessary, or an environmental assessment indicates that a permittee's application to change grazing use is appropriate.” [Page 13]

“In Salt Desert Shrub and Salt Bottom plant communities that are grazed during the growing season, grazing strategies will be designed to allow a combined forage utilization of 25 to 35 percent of the current year’s growth.” [Page 14]

“In other plant communities that are grazed during the growing season, grazing strategies will be designed to allow a combined forage utilization of 30 to 50 percent of current year’s growth.” [Page 14]

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

Relationships 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:

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 RMP/FEIS. 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 the South Gooseberry Group Allotment No. 00507 and would have local impacts on the resources similar to and within the scope of those described and considered within the Grass Creek Resource Management Plan and EIS/Record of Decision. The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 58,500 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 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 alternative. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Grass Creek 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.** The historic and cultural resources of the area have been reviewed and potential impacts mitigated in the design of the alternatives. Wilderness characteristics, although present in the area, would not be affected by the action for the reasons listed in Section 5 of the EA. The remaining components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area.
- 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 nature of the impacts.
- 5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. 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. An analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the alternatives is described in Section 5 of the 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 Grass Creek RMP/FEIS. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 5 of the EA.

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. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to wildlife have been incorporated into the design of the action alternative 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 Grass Creek RMP, which provides the direction and guidance for public land management for the area where the South Gooseberry Group Allotment is located.

Authorized Official:

Michael J. Phillips
Assistant Field Manager - Resources

Date: _____