



Briefing Paper

BLUE MOUNTAINS FOREST PLAN REVISION - 2015

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman
National Forests

Livestock Grazing & Grazing Vegetation: Frequently Asked Questions

How many acres will be available for grazing?

Appendix G has the acreages broken down by Allotment name and Alternative. Appendix G starts on page 427 in Volume 3 of the DEIS. The total acres suitable for livestock grazing on the Malheur National Forest are 1,197,000 for cattle and 101,000 for sheep. The total acres suitable for livestock grazing on the Umatilla National Forest are 284,000 for cattle and 42,000 for sheep. The total acres suitable for livestock grazing on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are 408,000 for cattle and 25,000 for sheep.

How are Sage grouse addressed with regard to grazing management in the Proposed Revised Forest Plan?

There is a relatively small amount of sage-grouse habitat on the Blue Mountains Forests. Sagebrush steppe habitat was estimated to occur on approximately six percent of the landscape within the Malheur National Forest; however, not all of this is considered sage-grouse habitat. Habitat mapping completed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) indicates that only 41,600 acres is considered greater sage-grouse habitat, and of this, 30,000 has been mapped as core habitat, and the remainder as low density habitat. Sagebrush steppe habitat was estimated to occur on less than one percent of the landscape for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, but according to ODFW a little more than 3,000 acres within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest would be considered sage-grouse habitat, most of which is mapped as core habitat. The greater sage-grouse is not expected to occur within the Umatilla National Forest.

The Preferred Alternative retains the Alternative B (Proposed Action) modified management direction with the following addition: In greater sage-grouse habitat, fence construction within one mile of known leks (protected activity centers) and seasonal high use areas should not be authorized or allowed. Fence construction on the crest of low hills should not be authorized or allowed unless the fence is marked with anti-strike markers.

Grazing utilization within occupied greater sage-grouse habitats should not exceed 40 percent at any time during the grazing season and will be determined specifically for each greater sage-grouse habitat, i.e., grazing utilization measured as an average of the entire pasture or grazing unit will not be used to determine compliance with this guideline.



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During greater sage-grouse breeding season, livestock turnout and trailing should avoid high concentrations on known greater sage-grouse leks (protected activity centers).

Where did the riparian utilization standards come from?

The new utilizations Guidelines were proposed in response to the need for accelerated restoration for aquatic habitat and species. The Guidelines are meant to balance the Preferred Alternative with aquatic and riparian resource concerns.

Why does the Proposed Revised Forest Plan reduce the riparian allowable forage utilization for livestock within riparian management areas? What will happen if my allotment has a higher utilization level authorized in riparian management areas than the Revised Forest Plan does?

Alternative E, the preferred alternative, proposes to increase the pace and scale of restoration. Decreasing the amount of utilization in riparian management areas would help to move them toward the desired condition. Once the Revised Forest Plan is in place, the term grazing permits for each allotment will be modified to replace the 1990 Forest Plan language with the Revised Forest Plan language. However, site-specific environmental analysis and consultation for threatened and endangered species will need to be completed on all of the allotments as each allotment management plan is revised, which will determine the appropriate level of utilization for your specific allotment.

What is a *Silene spaldingii*? There is a standard in the Proposed Revised Forest Plan that livestock grazing isn't allowed where that plant exists. Why is grazing a hazard for it?

Silene spaldingii is a listed threatened plant species under the Endangered Species Act. Spalding's Catchfly is the common name. The reason for the standard is that trampling from livestock grazing affects its growth and ability to reproduce. It is listed because there are very few plants. With that standard, we want to manage the timing of grazing; it's not a desirable plant for cow forage. We work with local permittees to help them identify the plant and they have been able to work around it.

Why wasn't a range of alternatives analyzed for grazing (no grazing alternative and an unlimited grazing alternative)?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the agency to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives. The EIS for the Blue Mountains Forest Plans analyzed an alternative with significantly reduced grazing (Alternative C), and an alternative with grazing above current levels (Alternative D). Furthermore, Alternatives G and J (Minimum Management Alternative and No Grazing Alternative respectively) which would have eliminated grazing, were considered but eliminated from detailed study. In addition, Forest Service Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with the following laws, regulations, and policies which require multiple use management:

Organic Administration Act of 1897: Gives regulatory authority to the President to establish National Forests. Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate rules and regulations for the use and occupancy of National Forests.

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Taylor Grazing Act of 1934: Intended to "stop injury to the public grazing lands [excluding Alaska] by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; to provide for their orderly use, improvement, and development; [and] to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range".

Granger-Thye Act of 1950: Provides for the issuance of term grazing permits for up to 10 years. It also provides for the use of grazing receipts for range improvement work.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960: Provides that national forests are established and administered for several purposes, including livestock grazing. This act also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to develop the surface renewable resources of national forests for multiple uses and sustained yield of the services and products to be obtained from these lands, without impairment of the productivity of the land.

Wilderness Act of 1964: Provides that livestock grazing, and the activities and facilities needed to support it, are allowed to continue in wilderness areas when such grazing was established before designation.

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act of 1974: Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a process for the revision of national forest land and resource management plans, including the identification of the suitability of lands for resource management.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976: States that public lands will be managed in a manner that will provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals.

National Forest Management Act of 1976: Reorganized, expanded and otherwise amended the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, which called for the management of renewable resources on National Forest Lands. The NFMA requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands, develop a management plan for each unit of the National Forest System. It is the primary statute governing the administration of National Forests.

Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978: Establishes and reaffirms the national policy and commitment to inventory and identify current public rangeland conditions and trends; manage, maintain and improve the condition of public rangelands so that they become as productive as feasible for all rangeland values in accordance with management objectives and the land use planning process; charge a fee for public grazing use which is equitable; continue the policy of protecting wild free-roaming horses and burros from capture, branding, harassment, or death, while at the same time facilitating the removal and disposal of excess wild free-roaming horses and burros which pose a threat to themselves and their habitat and to other rangeland values.

Rescission Act of 1995: Directs the Forest Service to complete site-specific NEPA analyses and decisions on allotments on a scheduled basis.

36 CFR 222

Forest Service Manual 2200: This manual summarized laws and regulations governing rangeland management and forest planning.

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Forest Service Handbook 2209.13: Grazing Permit Administration Handbook

Allotment Management Plans: Developed through site-specific environmental analysis, an allotment management plan uses Forest Plan direction and current issues to determine desired conditions, areas suitable for grazing, and a broad strategy on how to meet desired conditions. They describe site-specific grazing strategies, stocking, structural and nonstructural range improvement needs, and coordination with other resources. The output, or animal unit months (AUMs), is a result of the allotment management plan requirements, range improvements, and the ability of the permit holder to manage forage and livestock.

Non-Use for Resource Protection Agreements: These agreements may be entered into to provide long term non-use needed to address recovery of rangeland resource conditions, provide forage on a temporary basis to allow resource recovery on other area grazing units, provide temporary resolution of conflicts created by bighorn sheep or wolf predation on livestock, or provide supplemental forage in times of drought to assist area livestock operators and lessen the resource impacts of grazing.

Where can I find information on Livestock Grazing and Grazing Vegetation in the EIS?

Standards & Guidelines

Plant Species (Federally listed & species at risk) (Appendix A pg 120)

Species Diversity Riparian Habitat (Appendix A pg 119)

Range Management & Domestic Livestock Grazing (Appendix A pg 125) includes:

- Grazing After Wildland Fire (Appendix A pg 125)
- Grazing Near BHS (Appendix A pg 126-127)
- Grazing within Occupied Sage Grouse Habitat (Appendix A pg 125 & 126)
- Upland Forage Utilization (Appendix A pg 125)
- Upland Shrub Utilization (Appendix A pg 126)

MA 4B (Riparian Management Areas) - Appendix A pages 91 & 140-141

Livestock Grazing and Grazing Land Vegetation – Volume 1, Chapter 3, pages 126-159

How are bighorn sheep addressed in the plan with regard to grazing?

There are several Standards and Guidelines outlined in the Plan that are intended to prohibit disease transmission between domestic animals and bighorn sheep. They are:

RNG-9 Standard S-2 Domestic sheep or goat grazing shall not be authorized or allowed on lands where effective separation from bighorn sheep cannot be reasonably maintained.

RNG-10 Standard S-3 The use of domestic goats or sheep for manipulation of vegetation (i.e., noxious weed control, fuels reduction) shall not be authorized or allowed within or adjacent to source habitat for bighorn sheep.

RNG-11 Standard S-4 The use of recreational pack goats shall not be authorized or allowed within or adjacent to source habitat for bighorn sheep.

RNG-12 Standard An effective monitoring program shall be in place to detect presence of bighorn sheep in identified high-risk areas when authorized domestic sheep or goats are present on adjacent or nearby allotments.

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RNG-13 **Guideline** Trailing of domestic sheep or goats should not be authorized or allowed within 7 miles of bighorn sheep home ranges.

RNG-14 **Standard** When effective monitoring has not been conducted for bighorn sheep presence, domestic sheep or goat grazing shall not be authorized.

RNG-15 **Standard** Permitted domestic sheep and goats shall be counted onto and off of the allotment by the permittee. A reasonable effort to account for the disposition of any missing sheep must be made by the permittee.

RNG-16 **Standard** When permitted sheep are found to be missing, the Forest Service shall be notified within 24 hours.

RNG-17 **Standard** Authorized domestic sheep or goats shall be individually marked in a manner that allows immediate identification of ownership at a distance during the grazing season at all times while on NFS lands.

RNG-18 **Standard** Implement emergency actions when bighorn sheep presence is detected within 7 miles of active domestic sheep or goat grazing or trailing. Actions to be taken shall ensure separation between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep or goats.

RNG-19 **Guideline** To maintain separation, when bighorn sheep are found within 7 miles of an active domestic sheep and goat allotment, implementation of emergency actions for domestic sheep and goat grazing could include: Reroute (move) domestic sheep or goats to a new routing path that will take them away from the likely bighorn movement; this may involve rerouting within the permitted allotment, movement to a different allotment, or, if the situation cannot otherwise be resolved, moving the permitted sheep off of the national forest until the situation can be resolved Inform the appropriate state agency of the bighorn sheep location

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