

# Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision—2014

## Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



### Livestock Grazing & Grazing Land Vegetation

#### In a Nutshell (Preferred Alternative)

The Preferred Alternative would use vegetation management, aquatic and wildlife habitat treatments to emphasize active restoration, to move toward goals at an accelerated pace.

- A higher level of objectives would be designed for watershed restoration with an emphasis on improving hydrologic function and connectivity within anadromous and bull trout key watersheds.
- Acres suitable for livestock grazing would vary where there is more intensive management required for riparian management areas, botanical areas, Research Natural Areas, federally listed or species at risk plants, federally listed fish or critical habitat, occupied sage grouse habitat, grazing after wild fire, or Wild and Scenic River corridors.
- The estimated authorized livestock numbers (AUMs) would be based on forage production within suitable acres, as well as the appropriate standards and guidelines such as allowable forage or woody browse use.
- The presence or absence of ESA listed fish species would be one of the criteria used to develop different levels of suitable acres, AUMs, and allowable forage utilization standards.
- Standards and guidelines would be applied, in addition to and management direction, for ensuring the separation of bighorn and domestic sheep.
- Currently, the allowable upland forage utilization on suitable grasslands is 50 to 55% in satisfactory condition. The Preferred Alternative would reduce this utilization to 30 to 40%. These Guidelines would be a modest change with a limited effect since utilization in the uplands rarely exceeds 35 to 40% in most active allotments.
- Allowable use Guidelines in riparian areas whether on woody browse or herbaceous vegetation, would be 25% in bull trout spawning and rearing reaches, and 40% for all other watercourses including anadromous fish reaches.
- Some alternatives come to specific findings regarding suitability of landscapes for livestock grazing and this determination would be expected to result in project level decisions which could restrict permitted livestock grazing. Direct effects occur only at the project level and not at this planning level. Allotments would not be closed with the Preferred Alternative.



for the greatest good

## Definitions

- AUMs – Livestock grazing is measured in Head Months (HMs) or Animal Unit Months (AUMs) for permitted and authorized use. One AUM is the amount of forage a 1,000 pound mature cow and a calf consume in a 30 day period.
- HMs – A Head Month is a month’s use and occupancy of range by one adult (including weaned) animal, except for sheep or goats. Five sheep or goats, weaned or adult, are considered equivalent to one cow.
- Suitability – The appropriateness of permitted livestock grazing to a particular area of land.
- Capability – The potential of an area of land to support permitted livestock grazing under an assumed set of management practices and at a given level of management intensity.
- Phases – Plant communities or ecological seral stages within a steady state connected to each other by community pathways.

## Document Sections

- 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

## FAQs

### Q1. How many acres will be available for grazing?

A1. 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.

**Q2. How are Sage grouse addressed with regard to grazing management in the plan?**

A2. The Preferred Alternative retains the Alternative B (Proposed Action) modified management direction with the following addition: In greater sage-grouse habitat, fence construction within 1 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.

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

The greater sage-grouse is not expected to occur within the Umatilla National Forest.

Sagebrush steppe habitat was estimated to occur on approximately 6 percent of the landscape within the Malheur National Forest; however, not all of this is considered sage-grouse habitat. Habitat mapping completed by 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 1 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.

**Q3. Where did the riparian utilization standards come from?**

A3. 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 vegetation and water resource concerns.

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