

United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Proposed/Final Environmental Assessment # ID-230-2007-EA-3361

For the Jerome Allotment (#90910) and South Gooding Allotment (#90904)

GRAZING PERMIT RENEWALS

September 28, 2007

Location: Twin Falls District, Shoshone Field Office, 400 West F Street, Shoshone, ID.

83352

Table of Contents

1.0 PURPOSE & NEED	1
1.1 Introduction:	1
1.2 Background:	1
1.3 Need for the Proposed Action	4
1.4 Purpose(s) of the Proposed Action	4
1.5 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan(s)	5
1.6 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans.....	5
1.7 Identification of Issues.....	5
1.7.1 Soils and Watershed.....	5
1.7.2 Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species	5
1.7.3 Threatened , Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species	6
1.8 Summary.....	6
2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Alternative A – Proposed Action	7
2.3 Alternative B – No Action	8
2.4 Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative.....	8
3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	9
3.1 Introduction.....	9
3.2 General Setting.....	9
3.3 Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resources/Issues Brought Forward for Analysis	10
3.3.1 Resource 1: Soils & Watershed.....	11
3.3.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species	12
3.3.3 Resource 3: Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species	14
4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS	18
4.1 Introduction.....	18
4.2 Direct/Indirect Impacts	18
4.2.1 Alternative A – Proposed Action	18
4.2.1.1 Resource 1: Soils and Watershed	18
4.2.1.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.....	18
4.2.1.3 Resource 3: Threatened , Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species.....	19
4.2.2 Alternative B – No Action.....	20
4.2.2.1 Resource 1: Soils and Watershed	20
4.2.2.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.....	20

4.2.2.3 Resource 3: Threatened , Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species.....	20
4.3 Cumulative Impacts Analysis.....	21
4.3.1 Past and Present Actions	21
4.3.2 Reasonably Foreseeable Action Scenario (RFAS).....	22
4.3.3 Cumulative Impacts Summary	22
5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION	23
5.1 Introduction.....	23
5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted	23
5.3 Summary of Public Participation	23
5.4 List of Preparers	24
6.0 REFERENCES	24
6.1 References Cited	24
6.2 Attachments.....	24
7.0 APPENDIXES	25
Appendix A.....	25
Appendix B	28
Appendix C.....	30

1.0 PURPOSE & NEED

1.1. Introduction:

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of renewing the term grazing permit on the South Gooding and Jerome Allotments as proposed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of a Proposed Action. The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring determination as to whether any “significant” impacts could result from the analyzed actions. “Significance” is defined by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI). If the decision maker determines that this project has “significant” impacts following the analysis in the EA, then an EIS would be prepared for the project. If not, a Decision Record (DR) may be signed for the EA approving the selected alternative, whether the Proposed Action or another alternative. A Decision Record, including a FONSI statement, documents the reasons why implementation of the selected alternative would not result in “significant” environmental impacts (effects) beyond those already addressed in the 1985 Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP).

1.2 Background:

The action being analyzed is a renewal of the livestock grazing permits in both the South Gooding and Jerome Allotments in accordance with the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR Subpart 4180). Through this environmental analysis, a final decision will be rendered which will supersede the existing grazing use permits for the South Gooding and Jerome Allotments and result in a specific season of use, number and kind of livestock, AUMs, and management plan.

Under the 43 Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR), Subpart 4180 – Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration, the BLM is required to assess resource conditions on the allotment in conjunction with Technical Reference 1734-6 *Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health* (2000) and the final *Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (1997). Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines are used as management goals by the BLM for the betterment of the environment, protection of cultural resources, and sustained productivity of the range. They were developed with the specific intent of providing for the multiple use of the public lands. The regulations direct that existing grazing management be modified through the term permit to ensure that rangeland health standards are achieved. Ultimately, the intent of the fundamentals of rangeland health and the Idaho standards is to ensure that the resources within the allotments are meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health or are making significant progress toward meeting the Standards.

A Rangeland Health field evaluation was conducted in the South Gooding Allotment in May 2004 and in the Jerome Allotment in June 2004, both of which are included in this EA based on the fact that both allotments are in the same resource area. Findings of the field evaluations were documented in the Rangeland Health Assessment which were both sent out for public review and comment on March 4, 2005. No public comments were received for either allotment in regard to the Rangeland Health Assessment.

Based on the 2004 field assessment, the allotments were evaluated to determine if they were meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health. The Standards are:

Standard 1: Watersheds -Watersheds provide for the proper infiltration, retention, and release of water appropriate to soil type, vegetation, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Standard 2: Riparian Areas and Wetlands – Riparian areas and wetlands are in proper functioning condition appropriate to soil type, climate geology, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling and energy flow.

(NOTE: Standard 2 does not apply to the Jerome Allotment or the South Gooding Allotment.)

Standard 3: Stream Channel/Floodplains - Stream channels and floodplains are properly functioning relative to the geomorphology and climate to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling and energy flow.

(NOTE: Standard 3 does not apply to the Jerome Allotment or the South Gooding Allotment.)

Standard 4: Native Plant Communities - Healthy, productive, and diverse native animal habitat and populations of native plants are maintained or promoted as appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow.

Standard 5: Seedings - Rangelands seeded with mixtures, including predominately non-native plants, are functioning to maintain life form diversity, production, native animal habitat, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the hydrologic cycle.

(NOTE: Standard 5 may apply to the Jerome Allotment or the South Gooding Allotment in the future if the 2006 seedings are successful, but does not apply currently.)

Standard 6: Exotic Plant Communities, other than Seedings - Exotic plant communities, other than seedings, will meet minimum requirements of soil stability and maintenance of existing native and seeded plants. These communities will be rehabilitated to perennial communities when feasible cost effective methods are developed.

(NOTE: Standard 6 does not apply to the Jerome Allotment or the South Gooding Allotment.)

Standard 7: Water Quality - Surface and ground water comply with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.

(NOTE: Standard 7 does not apply to the Jerome Allotment or the South Gooding Allotment.)

Standard 8: Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals - Habitats are suitable to maintain viable populations of threatened and endangered, sensitive, and other special status species.

A formal determination by the Shoshone Field Manager has been made in regard to the South Gooding Allotment and the Jerome Allotment as to whether each standard is being met as required by federal regulation following a field review for Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and analysis of available monitoring data. Table 1 shows the summary of standards and guidelines. The guidelines, if applicable, direct the selection of grazing management practices and/or livestock management facilities when progress is necessary for attainment or maintenance of the standards.

Table 1. Summary of Rangeland Health Assessment Determination

<i>Standard</i>	<i>South Gooding Allotment Results</i>	<i>Jerome Allotment Results</i>
Standard 1 - Watersheds	Meeting	Meeting
Standard 2 - Riparian Areas and wetlands	Does not Apply	Does not Apply
Standard 3 - Stream Channel/Floodplain	Does not Apply	Does not Apply
Standard 4 - Native Plant Communities	Not meeting, livestock not a factor	Not meeting, livestock not a factor
Standard 5 - Seedings	Does not Apply	Does not Apply
Standard 6 – Exotic Plant Communities	Does not Apply	Does not Apply
Standard 7 - Water Quality	Does not Apply	Does not Apply
Standard 8 - Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals	Not meeting, livestock not a factor	Not meeting, livestock not a factor

Guidelines direct the selection of grazing management practices on the allotment and are outlined in the *Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (refer to Appendix B for a list of the Guidelines). These Guidelines, or grazing management practices, are intended to be implemented on the allotment through the term permit to promote significant progress toward, or the attainment and maintenance of the Rangeland Health Standards.

The permittees and current authorizations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Current Grazing Permit Authorization

Allotment	Current Permittee	Livestock #	Grazing Begin End	%PL ¹	Active AUMs ²	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Jerome	William Gulley	45 Cattle	4/15 to 6/14	100%	91	29	120
South Gooding	Justin and Jodie Sorenson	37 Cattle	4/15 to 5/20	100%	44	14	58

1.3 Need for the Proposed Action:

The current term grazing permits for the South Gooding and Jerome Allotments do not incorporate Rangeland Health Standards. The underlying need for the Proposed Action is to incorporate Idaho Rangeland Health Standards into the management of the allotments. Another need is to move the existing condition of specific resources in the allotments toward meeting or making significant progress toward meeting the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and to ensure that resources which currently meet the standard continue to maintain rangeland health standards.

A Rangeland health evaluation was conducted in the Jerome Allotment in June of 2004 and in the South Gooding Allotment in May of 2004. The assessments were documented in a subsequent assessment in March of 2005. The Standards for Rangeland Health and the finding of the field evaluation, as applied in the State of Idaho, are considered in the EA, and the current permits would be renewed by incorporating the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines, or grazing management practices, into the management of the allotment.

1.4 Purpose(s) of the Proposed Action:

Based on the mandates of several authorities³, the purpose of the action is to continue authorizing livestock grazing use in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments, consistent with the laws and regulations governing the activity. According to NEPA, an environmental assessment is necessary to determine the manner and degree to which issuing grazing permits would, based on existing information, continue to provide a reasonable balance between competing resource values and meeting the requirements for the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and the Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration required by Code 43 of Federal Regulations, Subpart 4180. Therefore, there is a need to determine what grazing authorization would be made and what management practices in the allotments would be established that would result in the existing resource conditions moving toward meeting, or making significant progress toward meeting the Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health.

¹ % PL = Percent Public Land, accounts for private or State land acreage within an allotment and issued for billing purposes.

² AUMS = Animal Unit Months, the equivalent of forage consumed by one cow/calf pair or one bull for one month.

³(a) the Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 as amended (43 U.S.C.315, 315a through 315r); (b) the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) as amended by the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); (c) Executive orders transfer land acquired under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of July 22, 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C 1012), to the Secretary and authorize administration under the Taylor Grazing Act; (d) The Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.); and (e) Public land orders, Executive orders, and agreements authorize the Secretary to administer livestock grazing on specified lands under the Taylor Grazing Act or other authority as specified. [43 FR 29067, July 5, 1978, as amended at 49 FR 6449, February 21, 1984; 49 FR 12704, March 30, 1984; 50 FR 45827, November 4, 1985; 61 FR 4227, February 5, 1996]

Through these authorities and the 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4100, the BLM manages allotment resources and issues grazing permits and leases, hereinafter referred to as permits, for a term not to exceed 10 years.

1.5 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan(s):

Livestock grazing use within these two allotments was analyzed in the 1985 RMP. The RMP resulted in a 16 percent decrease in AUMs for the pre-RMP authorized grazing use of 36,476 AUMs. In spite of the overall decrease for the Monument RMP, the allotments did not sustain any adjustments of their AUMs or grazing season. The action of re-issuing a term grazing permit for these allotments would not result in a change in the scope of the resource uses or a change in the terms, conditions, and decisions of the RMP. Establishing management practices and the appropriate grazing authorization through the incorporation of the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Guidelines would continue to allow allotment management to comply with the long-range direction outlined in the RMP. The Proposed Action described in this document is in conformance with the 1985 Monument RMP.

1.6 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans:

The aforementioned authorities (referenced in footnote 3) mandate or allow the BLM to authorize livestock grazing on public lands as part of the multiple-use management of natural resources.

1.7 Identification of Issues:

Issues raised during the analysis have been identified during public scoping with interested publics and the permittees. Rangeland Health Assessments for both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments dated March 4, 2005 were mailed to interested publics and the permittees; no comments were received. Issues have also been raised through internal (BLM) review and interdisciplinary processes including meetings, personal communication, and an analysis record checklist. Appendix A contains the analysis record checklist of all resources considered. The following section is a list of issues relevant to this analysis.

1.7.1 Soils and Watershed.

- The soils in the two allotments are mostly deep to very deep and are well or somewhat excessively drained. Development of the soil profile is very weak and the textures are mostly sand or loamy sand throughout. The Jerome Allotment also contains loams, silt loams and fine sandy loams, moderately deep to deep and well drained. Some gravels and stones may be present in the profile but do not affect the kind and amount of vegetation on the site. Both of the allotments are currently meeting the rangeland health standard for watersheds; however, there is some concern about the degree of mechanical impacts from livestock use to the soil/watershed resource. Both allotments burned completely during the summer of 2006 and Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) Plans were developed separately for each allotment.

1.7.2 Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.

- Because both of these allotments have had wildfires over the years, the native plant communities within these allotments have been compromised and are beyond the threshold of supporting the native grasses such as Indian ricegrass, Needle-and-thread grass and Thurber needlegrass. The allotments are currently not meeting the rangeland health standard for native plant communities because the understory in both allotments consists of cheatgrass and mustard. Both allotments burned completely during the summer of 2006 and BAR Plans were developed for the

allotments. In the fall of 2006, both of these allotments were seeded with a mix of native and non-native seed.

- The current starting date for livestock grazing in the allotments is April 15. From a phenological perspective, this is considered too early a start-date for grazing use to occur on the native grasses such as Indian ricegrass, Needle-and-thread grass and Thurber needlegrass, especially because it can occur on an annual basis under the current terms of the permits. A deferred rotation in the fall will be incorporated in the proposed action to allow for seed set.
- Diffuse knapweed and Rush skeletonweed are listed as noxious weeds in the State of Idaho and both have been observed in neighboring allotments and could potentially occur within the allotment boundaries. Cheatgrass, a non-native, invasive species, occurs in high concentrations throughout both allotments. There is some concern about the spread of these plants in the allotment from livestock use.

1.7.3 Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species

- **Animals:** The variation in habitat conditions and habitat structural components that currently exist on the allotment likely provides minimal suitable habitat for BLM threatened, endangered, and sensitive animal species. Canada lynx is very unlikely to occur at the elevation of this allotment or utilize the habitats available on the allotment. Bald Eagles may occur infrequently during the winter months, and the allotment provides relatively small and discrete areas of suitable or marginal winter habitat for sage grouse.
- **Plants:** Picabo milkvetch, a BLM Sensitive Species, is a wiry, diffuse, perennial milkvetch that occurs on deep, stable sandy soils overlying basalt, with flat to rolling topography, at approximately 3500 to 5000 ft elevation. This species tends to occur in areas where competing vegetation is sparse. It flowers May to July. Threats to Picabo milkvetch can include plow and seed projects and competition with exotics. Picabo milkvetch occurs immediately adjacent to both of the allotments. Picabo milkvetch has been documented to occur near the allotment and is likely to occur on sandy soils within the allotment.

1.7.4 Wildlife

- The proposed fall use period in the allotments could potentially increase competition between mule deer, antelope or elk and cattle for winter range.

1.8 Summary:

The chapter has presented the purpose and need of the proposed project, as well as the relevant issues, i.e., those elements of the human environment that could be affected by the implementation of the proposed project. In order to meet the purpose and need of the proposed project in a way that resolves the issues, the BLM has developed a range of action alternatives. These alternatives, as well as a no action alternative, are presented in Chapter 2. The potential environmental impacts or consequences resulting from the implementation of the each alternative are then analyzed in Chapter 4 for each of the identified issues.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Introduction:

The Proposed Action was developed based upon issues identified through internal scoping as well as public scoping and involvement. The Proposed Action was designed to address one or more of the identified issues as well as provide the opportunity for specific comparisons on which the decision maker can base a decision.

2.2 Alternative A – Proposed Action:

This is the BLM preferred alternative.

Issue the two grazing permits for ten-year terms which authorizes livestock use in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments and incorporates the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration (43 CFR 4180). This alternative describes the on-the-ground management action that the BLM proposes to implement and represents the proposed Management Guidelines. This alternative refers to renewing the grazing permits with the inclusion of utilization standards for the new seedings if they are successful. This alternative would also consider a seasonal rotation in the allotments that would incorporate a fall use period one out of every three years beginning when the mandatory rest from the restoration project is complete in order to relieve the pressures of spring use every year. It would tentatively resemble Table 3 if the allotments were reopened to grazing after the mandatory two growing seasons rest starting in September of 2008. Both the Jerome and South Gooding allotment grazing permits would be issued for a term of ten years. The new permit would authorize livestock use as specified in Table 4. No further AUMs are proposed to be suspended in either of these two allotments.

Table 3: Proposed Grazing Season Rotation

Allotment	YEAR			
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Jerome	Fall Use Period	Spring Use Period	Spring Use Period	Fall Use Period
South Gooding	Fall Use Period	Spring Use Period	Spring Use Period	Fall Use Period

It should be noted that the spring use period in the Jerome Allotment will be from April 15 to June 14 and the spring use period in the South Gooding Allotment will be from April 15 to May 20. The fall use period for both allotments will be from September 15 to October 31 and the start date for this new grazing schedule will be subject to the reopening of these allotments from the seedings that occurred in 2006.

Table 4: Proposed Grazing Permit Authorization

Allotment	Current Permittee	Livestock #	Grazing Begin End	%PL ¹	Active AUMs ²	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Jerome	William Gulley	45 Cattle	*4/15 to 10/31	100%	91	29	120
South Gooding	Jodi Sorenson	37 Cattle	*4/15 to 10/31	100%	44	14	58

* = proposed changes to the terms and conditions of the grazing permit.

If the 2006 seedings are successful and the seeded native plants establish, Management Guidelines would include:

- Utilization of seeded grasses would be limited to 40% of current growth in key areas, i.e., up to one half mile from water features, including perennial/intermittent streams, springs, ponds, canals, or troughs. Utilization would be conducted based on the Height-Weight methodology described in Interagency Technical Reference 1743-3, *Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements*. The grass species that will be monitored will be determined after the mandatory two growing seasons of rest have been completed in order to see what seeded grasses have become established successfully.
- If the seeded native plants do not establish but the Siberian wheatgrass does, the utilization in the allotments would be limited to 50% of current growth in key areas, i.e., up to one half mile from water features, including perennial/intermittent streams, springs, ponds, canals, or troughs.

Allotment Improvements under the Proposed Action.

No range improvements are proposed under this alternative.

2.3 Alternative B – No Action:

Under this alternative, there would be no change from current management; the terms and conditions of the permit, as well no utilization standards. The grazing permits in Jerome and South Gooding Allotments would be renewed for the same livestock number, kind, and grazing use period.

Allotment Improvements under Alternative B.

No range improvements are proposed under this alternative.

2.4 Alternative C - No Grazing Alternative *Close the Allotment to grazing.* Under this alternative, the BLM Shoshone Office Manager would not reissue a grazing permit and thus discontinue livestock grazing in both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. These lands are still allotted and made available for livestock grazing in the Land Use Plan and therefore the No Grazing Alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents the potentially affected existing environment i.e., the physical, biological, social and economic values and resources) of the impact area as identified in the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist found in Appendix A and presented in Chapter 1 of this environmental assessment. This chapter provides the baseline for comparison of impacts/consequences described in Chapter 4.

3.2 General Setting:

The Jerome Allotment is located in Jerome County; approximately two miles northeast of Jerome, Idaho (refer to Map 1). The allotment is 541 acres of land managed as one unit and is not divided into pastures. Elevations in the allotment are about 3,500 feet. Livestock use includes cattle grazing during the early spring. The allotment has no wilderness study area designated within its boundary.

The term grazing permit for the Jerome Allotment is currently held by William F. Gulley, for 91 active cattle animal unit months (AUMs) and 29 suspended AUMs for an annual season of April 15 to June 14, with livestock licensed at 100% public land. The current permit was issued for a ten-year term which expired February 2007.

The South Gooding Allotment is located in Gooding County; approximately three miles southeast of Gooding, Idaho (refer to Map 2). The allotment is 488 acres of land managed as one unit and is not divided into pastures. The elevation is about 3,600 feet. Livestock use occurs between April 15 and May 20. The allotment has no wilderness study area designated within its boundary.

The term grazing permit for the South Gooding Allotment is currently held by Jodi Sorensen, for 44 active cattle animal unit months (AUMs) and 14 suspended AUMs for an annual season of April 15 to May 20, with livestock licensed at 100% public land. The current permit was issued for a ten-year term which expired February 2007.

3.3 Critical Elements of the Human Environment and Other Resources/Issues Brought Forward for Analysis:

Critical elements of the human environment identified in Table 3 are subject to requirements specified in treaty, statute, regulation, or executive order and must be considered in all environmental assessments. Other important elements of the human environment, identified in Table 4, are not necessarily critical elements, but are nonetheless important to consider in assessing all impacts of the proposal. Elements which are present in the allotments and are likely to be affected are discussed in this section.

Table 3. Critical Elements of the Human Environment

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT All of the following elements have been analyzed. However, elements denoted by a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are <i>not affected</i> by the Proposed Action and will receive no further consideration.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened/Endangered Plants; Sensitive Plants
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Threatened/Endangered Fish; Sensitive Fish
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Threatened/Endangered Animals; Sensitive Animals
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Justice (EO 12898)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farm Lands (prime or unique)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Quality – Surface & Ground
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Floodplains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetlands/Riparian Zones
<input type="checkbox"/> Invasive, Non-native Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wilderness and WSAs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Migratory Bird Treaty Act Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wild & Scenic rivers – eligible, suitable and designated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native American Religious Concerns	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Treaty Rights

Table 4. Other Important Elements of the Human Environment

<p align="center">OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT All the following elements have been analyzed. However, elements denoted by a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are <i>not affected</i> by the Proposed Action and will receive no further consideration.</p>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paleontological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fisheries
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forest Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Availability of Public and/or Administrative Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Soils
<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wild Horse and Burro Designated Herd Management Areas
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation Use, Existing and Potential	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visual Resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing and Potential Land Uses (permits, leases, sales)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic & Social Values
<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetation Types/Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Critical and important elements that are checked as “not affected” were considered during the environmental analysis process but were identified as such because they are not present within the two allotments being analyzed. In the case of cultural resources, no range projects are being proposed, therefore, no cultural resource impacts are anticipated from continuing the current livestock use in these allotments. Similarly, for visual resources, no projects are being proposed; therefore, there would be no effect upon the existing character of the landscape. In the case of migratory bird species, no measurable negative change on migratory bird populations or their habitat is expected to occur if either the Proposed Action or alternatives were implemented. No key water bodies within these allotments have been listed under Section 303 (d) of the Clean Water Act for the State of Idaho.

3.3.1 Resource 1: Soils & Watershed.

Since the 1970s, 7 wildland fires occurred in these two allotments. The fires previous to the 2006 fire year were less than 60 acres and due to that no treatments were applied to stabilize the vegetation and soils which has led to these allotments consisting mostly of cheatgrass and Sandberg’s bluegrass. Both of these allotments burned completely in the 2006 fire year. Emergency Stabilization (ES) and Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) treatments were applied in the fall of 2006 which consisted of grass seedings, spraying for noxious weeds and aerial application of sagebrush seed. Currently, both allotments are under a fire closure for two full growing seasons or until they meet the objectives set forth

in the ES and BAR Plans. Please refer to the table below for the complete wildfire history. It should be noted that other fires may have occurred in these allotments prior to the 1960s that were not reported or documented.

Table 5: Wildfires

Allotment	Wildfire Name	Year	Acres
Jerome	Rocky Burn	1973	31
Jerome	Poorman	2001	35
Jerome	Hwy 46 MM7	2006	500
South Gooding	No Name	1965	4
South Gooding	Blincoe	1989	13
South Gooding	Pocket	2005	55
South Gooding	Goodtime	2006	450

Both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments are dominated by the Sandy 8-12” Basin Big Sagebrush/Indian Ricegrass/Needle-and-thread grass ecological site. This site is associated with the lower and central Snake River Plain. Slopes range from 0-10 percent and aspect has virtually no influence on this site. The average annual precipitation ranges from 8-12” and most of the precipitation occurs during the fall, winter and spring months. The soils on this site are mostly deep to very deep and are well or somewhat excessively drained. Development of the soil profile is very weak and the textures are mostly sand or loamy sand throughout. The field assessment consisted of evaluating the key ecological site(s) found within the allotments.

The Jerome Allotment also has a Loamy 8-10” Wyoming big sagebrush/ Thurber needlegrass ecological site. This ecological site is only present on about 80 acres of the Jerome Allotment, which is why a Line Point Transect was not conducted. This site generally occurs on nearly level, strongly sloping alluvial fans and basalt plains and slopes are predominantly 2-12%. Soils on this site are loams, silt loams and fine sandy loams, moderately deep to deep and well drained. Some gravels and stones may be present in the profile but do not affect the kind and amount of vegetation on the site.

3.3.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.

Both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments are categorized as a Custodial Management Allotments. Custodial allotments usually include only small acreage of public land and do not represent a significant problem, regardless of condition. They represent low potential for increasing production. Resource conflicts were considered either non-existent or were outweighed by other considerations. The objective for custodial allotments was to manage public lands with minimal expenditure of funds and continue protecting existing rangeland resource value. Cheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, basin big sagebrush, and Wyoming big sagebrush are the dominant plant species present today. The grazing permit has been renewed through the years and continues to be authorized today.

Since both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments are categorized as Custodial Management allotments, no trend data, utilization data or use pattern mapping has been completed. The field assessment of both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments consisted of evaluating the key ecological site(s) found within the allotments.

Actual use data for the Jerome Allotment has been collected annually since 1978. The average actual use between 1978 and 2006 was 23 AUMs or 32% of the active preference of 72 AUMs. In 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2002, and 2003 the Jerome Allotment was rested from cattle grazing. Actual use data for the South Gooding Allotment has been collected annually since 1978 except for 1983 to 1986. During that time frame, no data is available. The average actual use between 1978 and 2006 was 30 AUMs or 42% of the active preference of 72 AUMs. In 1979, 1980, 1982, 1990 to 1994 and 2000 to 2006 the South Gooding Allotment was rested from cattle grazing. The original actual use forms can be found in both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotment Studies File at the Shoshone BLM Office and they have also been summarized in Appendix C.

There are two ecological sites that comprise the majority of the Jerome Allotment and one ecological site that comprises the majority of the South Gooding Allotment:

Jerome Allotment

- Sandy 8-12" Basin Big Sagebrush/Indian Ricegrass/Needle-and-thread grass
- Loamy 8-10" Wyoming big sagebrush/ Thurber needlegrass

South Gooding Allotment

- Sandy 8-12" Basin Big Sagebrush/Indian Ricegrass/Needle-and-thread grass

The climate of both the above sites is characterized by hot, dry summers and cold winters, with snow cover most of the winter. Most of the precipitation occurs during the fall, winter and spring months and the optimum plant growth period is from mid-March to mid-April. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) site guide description for the Sandy 8-12" ecological site states that visually the dominant vegetation of the site is Indian ricegrass and basin big sagebrush. The potential natural plant community for grasses on the site includes Indian ricegrass, Needle-and-thread grass, sand dropseed with lesser amounts of bottlebrush squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass, Thurber needlegrass and thickspike wheatgrass. Forbs in the potential natural plant community include penstemon, aster, arrowleaf balsamroot, Hoods phlox and milkvetch, with lesser amounts of biscuitroot, yellow salsify and scurf pea. Shrubs in the potential natural plant community include basin big sagebrush, green rabbitbrush and four-wing saltbrush with lesser amounts of Wyoming big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, grey rabbitbrush and green rabbitbrush.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) site guide description for the Loamy 8-10" states that visually the dominant vegetation of the site is Thurber needlegrass and Wyoming big sagebrush. The potential natural plant community for grasses on the site includes Thurber needlegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, and Indian ricegrass, with lesser amounts of needle-and-thread grass, streambank wheatgrass, dryland sedge, and foxtail wheatgrass. Forbs in the potential natural plant community include, tapertip hawksbeard, arrowleaf balsamroot, and halogeton with lesser amounts of scarlet globemallow, longleaf phlox, onion, lupine, penstemon, biscuitroot, milkvetch, buckwheat, fleabane, plains pricklypear, and pussytoes. Shrubs in the potential natural plant community include Wyoming big sagebrush with lesser amounts of green rabbitbrush, horsebrush, broom snakeweed, and spiny hopsage.

Vegetation present in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments during the assessments consisted mostly of cheatgrass and Sandberg bluegrass with remnant populations of bluebunch wheatgrass in the Jerome Allotment. While the shrub component is still present in these allotments, the understory is lacking the desirable grasses and forbs. The forb community in the Jerome and South Gooding

Allotments has been displaced by cheatgrass and there is a substantial lack of forbs in the area (refer to Table 6). Other plants that were present in the Jerome Allotment but not in the transect include bottlebrush squirreltail, bitterbrush, basin wildrye, lupine, and Hood’s phlox and there were no other plants observed in the South Gooding Allotment that are not depicted in the table below.

The field assessments document that both the allotments are failing the rangeland health standard for native plant communities but that current livestock grazing practices are not contributing factors.

TABLE 6: Percent Cover in 2004

SPECIES	Jerome Allotment	South Gooding Allotment
Cheatgrass	32	20
Sandberg Bluegrass	-	21
Bluebunch wheatgrass	8	-
Rabbitbrush	8	-
Basin big sagebrush	4	9
Tumble Mustard	-	7

The Jerome Allotment and South Gooding Allotment burned completely during the summer of 2006 and ES and BAR Plans were developed separately for each allotment. In the falls of 2006, both of these allotments were seeded with ‘Valvilov’ Siberian wheatgrass, ‘Secar’ Snake River wheatgrass, ‘Alkar’ tall wheatgrass, ‘Sherman’ big bluegrass, ‘Immigrant’ forage kochia, basin big sagebrush, and Wyoming big sagebrush and the Jerome Allotment had some more species in the seed mix such as Siberian wheatgrass, ‘Eski’ sanfoin, Palmer pensteman, and ‘Ladak’ alfalfa. Both of these allotments will be rested from livestock grazing for two growing seasons in the hopes that these seedings become successful.

Historic use by livestock, previous wildfires, and the invasion of cheatgrass has contributed to the conditions that exist today in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. These two allotments may have experienced high levels of use by livestock historically but according to the actual use reports, (refer to Appendix C) these allotments have typically not experienced high utilization levels for quite some time. Even with the light utilization in these two allotments, this area is beyond the threshold of Thurber needlegrass, Indian ricegrass and needle-and-thread grass reestablishing under natural or normal conditions. The only way that desired plants would be reintroduced would be through seeding.

3.3.3 Resource 3: Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service federally listed animal species which may potentially occur in the allotments include the following: bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*); gray wolf (*Canis lupus*); and Canada lynx (*Felis lynx*). There is very little potential Bald Eagle habitat in the allotments; however, there is the potential for bald eagles to make incidental use of the proposed project area while wintering in the Little Wood River Watershed.

Lynx occur primarily in the boreal, sub-boreal, and western montane forests of North America. In the Intermountain West, lynx prefer spruce, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine forest communities. Older forests with a substantial understory of conifers or small patches of shrubs and young trees provide good

quality lynx foraging habitat. Thus, both the allotments proposed for permit renewal do not provide lynx habitat.

Use of the allotments by gray wolves is not anticipated. However, a pair of wolves was sited within one mile of the project area in the winter of 2002. These wolves were most likely traveling through the area. The BLM lists some additional animals and plants as BLM Sensitive Species in Idaho. The BLM Sensitive Species associated with these two allotments are discussed below and additional species are shown in Table 7.

Animals: BLM Sensitive animals that may occur on the allotments during all or a portion of the year are: prairie falcon, sage grouse, loggerhead shrike, Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, fringed myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, pygmy rabbit, wolverine, common garter snake, and western toad. Expected use of habitats based on the conditions of the allotments by the Sensitive animal species varies from incidental foraging activities to year-long use.

Pygmy rabbits (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) may be found in areas with a mature sagebrush overstory but the degraded sagebrush habitat in both the allotments makes the occurrence of the pygmy rabbit unlikely. The historic distribution of pygmy rabbits in Idaho spanned much of the Snake River Plain. Suitable pygmy rabbit habitat is thought to be associated with sites containing relatively deep soils that support a tall, dense overstory of big sagebrush. This type of habitat does not occur in both the South Gooding or Jerome allotments and no pygmy rabbits have been observed in these allotments.

Sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) are North America's largest grouse and are found primarily in habitats dominated by sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.), particularly big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp.). Records at the Shoshone Field Office show no active sage grouse leks in or adjacent to the Jerome or South Gooding allotments within 6 air miles. The Jerome Allotment is designated as R1 sage grouse habitat which is classified as sagebrush limited restoration habitat with an exotic understory. The shrub steppe habitat that occurs in the allotment has the potential to provide sage grouse winter habitat but due to the allotment's lack of desirable forbs, this area is not widely used in other seasons. The South Gooding Allotment is designated as R2 sage grouse habitat which is classified as restoration habitat with an exotic understory. The shrub steppe habitat that occurs in the allotment has the potential to provide sage grouse winter habitat but due to the allotments' close proximity to the town of Gooding, Idaho, this area is not widely used.

Plants: The allotments occur on the southwestern edge of the range for Picabo milkvetch (*Astragalus oniciformis*); however, there are no known populations within about 5 miles of the South Gooding allotment. Potential habitat might exist there; however, the degraded state of the vegetation makes it unlikely that any sizeable populations exist. Picabo milkvetch is a wiry, diffuse, perennial milkvetch that occurs on deep, stable sandy soils overlying basalt, with flat to rolling topography, at approximately 3500 to 5000 ft elevation. This species tends to occur in areas where competing vegetation is sparse. It flowers May to July. Associated species include Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, threetip sagebrush, thickspike wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, and needle-and-thread grass.

Picabo milkvetch is endemic to the northern edge of the Snake River Plain, from Gooding east to the eastern boundary of Craters of the Moon National Monument, and the lower foothills of the Pioneer Mountains near Picabo.

Threats include soil-disturbing activities including road/trail construction, pipeline construction, and high-intensity livestock use (such as around trough sites); and competition with weedy species.

Table 7-Federally Listed and BLM Sensitive Animal Species that may occur in the project area

Common Name	Scientific Name	General Habitat Use
Type 1-Threatened (T), Endangered (E), or Proposed (P)		
Bald Eagle (T)	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Forest, Sagebrush, Riparian
Grey Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	Forest, Sagebrush, Riparian
Canada Lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Forest
Type 2-Rangewide/Globally Imperiled Species		
Greater Sage Grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	Sagebrush, Riparian
Pygmy Rabbit	<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>	Sagebrush
Boreal Toad	<i>Bufo boreas boreas</i>	Riparian
Northern Leopard Frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>	Riparian
Type 3-Regional/State Imperiled Species		
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>	Sagebrush, Grassland, Cave
Fringed Myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	Sagebrush, Grassland, Cave
Fisher	<i>Martes pennanti</i>	Forest, Riparian
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo luscus</i>	Forest, Riparian
Prairie Falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	Sagebrush, Grassland
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Forest, Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Forest, Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
Mountain Quail	<i>Oreotyx pictus</i>	Forest, Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
Flammulated Owl	<i>Otus flammeolus</i>	Forest, Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
Lewis's Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonx trailii</i>	Forest, Riparian

Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Grassland, Sagebrush
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanias ludovicianus</i>	Sagebrush
Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	Sagebrush
Sage Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	Sagebrush
Common Garter Snake	<i>Sonora semiannulata</i>	Forest, Riparian
Western Toad	<i>Bufo boreas</i>	Forest, Riparian
Type 4-Idaho Peripheral Species		
California Myotis	<i>Myotis californicus</i>	Sagebrush, Grassland, Cave
White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	Grassland, Riparian
Virginia's Warbler	<i>Vermivora virginiae</i>	Forest, Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>	Grassland, Sagebrush, Riparian
<p>Type 1-Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species -These species are listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service as threatened or endangered, or they are proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.</p> <p>Type 2- Range-wide/Globally Imperiled Species -These are species designated as FWS candidate or are ranked by the Natural Heritage program network as globally rare to critically imperiled.</p> <p>Type 3-Regional/State Imperiled Species -These are species that are in danger of becoming extirpated from Idaho in the foreseeable future if factors contributing to their decline, or habitat degradation or loss, continue.</p> <p>Type 4-Peripheral Species -These are species that are in danger of becoming extirpated from Idaho and (a) may be local endemics with currently low threat levels or (b) peripheral, rare species in Idaho.</p>		

3.3.4 Resource 4: Wildlife

Big game wildlife species in these two allotments include mule deer, pronghorn and elk. Mule deer use occurs primarily in the fall, winter, and spring months. Pronghorn use occurs year round and are known to occasionally use this allotment. Elk use occurs mostly north of the allotments they may use the allotments occasionally.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the potential environmental impacts that may occur if the Proposed Action were implemented in the South Gooding Allotment and Jerome Allotment. This section will mirror the issues identified in the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist found in Appendix A and presented in Chapter 1 of this assessment. Because all known mitigating measures have been included in the Descriptions and the Alternatives, the environmental consequences described below are unavoidable.

4.2 Direct/Indirect Impacts:

4.2.1 Alternative A – Proposed Action

4.2.1.1 Resource 1: Soils and Watershed.

No direct measurements have been conducted following the 1985 Monument RMP to determine if a change in soil loss has occurred. Continued livestock grazing in these allotments would affect soil resources on public lands, but the BLM has not observed nor received any reports of noticeable soil erosion in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. Unacceptable levels of soil erosion due to livestock grazing as a result of the Proposed Action are not expected. Under the present management, the watershed condition in these allotments is adequate for maintaining soil stability and hydrologic cycling. The change in the season of use to allow for fall grazing has the potential to decrease soil compaction throughout the allotments by allowing grazing to occur during the dry fall months instead of during the spring when the soils are moist due to spring rains.

Litter is important in reducing compaction, erosion and increasing nutrient cycling of minerals and plant nutrients. Removal of vegetation reduces the amount of litter and nutrient cycling in the soil. However, this amount of vegetation removal has the potential to decrease under the Proposed Action due to the inclusion of the utilization standards in the Jerome Allotment and the South Gooding Allotment if the new seedings are successful.

4.2.1.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.

The rangelands where the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments are located have been dominated by cheatgrass for decades. Cheatgrass, a non-native, invasive annual grass, has displaced desirable native grasses such as Indian ricegrass, Thurber needlegrass and needle-and-thread grass. High utilization levels and early season grazing have the potential to alter the composition of the vegetative community, especially if high use levels occur in several subsequent years. During the field assessment, the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments were past the threshold of being able to support and promote viable populations of perennial grasses. Since that time, both allotments have had wildfires and ES and BAR Plans have been implemented which incorporated seedings of perennial grasses as well as forbs and sagebrush. These allotments will be rested for a mandatory two growing seasons in hopes that these seedings are successful. To further promote seeding success a maximum 40% utilization standard would be implemented in the Proposed Action. Also, allowing the allotments to be deferred until fall one year out of three has the potential to improve seed production and seed set for these allotments once in a three year cycle.

Under the Proposed Action, the populations of perennial grasses and forbs have the potential to increase over time due to the seedings implemented in fall of 2006 and the populations of cheatgrass should decrease over time as the perennial grasses begin to out-compete the annual vegetation.

4.2.1.3 Resource 3: Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species.

Animals: The proposed livestock grazing is not expected to perceptively alter habitat suitability for the federally listed bald eagle, gray wolf or Canada lynx which may utilize the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. The suspected very low, incidental use level of the allotments by these three listed animal species is expected to result in “No Effect” to the continued existence of the bald eagle, gray wolf and Canada lynx.

Cattle grazing during the spring would occur during sage grouse nesting and early brood-rearing periods. The proposed grazing use period would result in some cattle use of native forbs preferred by sage-grouse. The decrease in herbaceous cover values in the allotment would increase the possibility of nest site predation and reduce concealment and security cover for young sage grouse chicks. Reduction in height and diversity of vegetation would also reduce the number and occurrence of insects, a key component in the diet of young sage grouse chicks. Reducing plant species diversity and vigor in the native plant communities would produce fewer suitable habitat conditions for many of the sensitive shrub steppe wildlife species expected to occur in the area. The probability of this occurring is slight with the inclusion of the utilization standards of perennial grasses in both allotments. The utilization standards may also increase the vigor and rate of establishment of big sagebrush which would improve the habitat values for pygmy rabbits and wintering sage-grouse.

Plants: The potential habitat for Picabo milkvetch in the allotment is of poor quality due to the previous abundance of cheatgrass. The possibility of sensitive plants being impacted by the Proposed Action is slight due to the lack of known populations and lack of good quality potential habitat for Picabo milkvetch within the allotment boundaries. If the seedings are successful, and the utilization standards are upheld, the possibility of Picabo milkvetch becoming present in the allotment may increase under this alternative if there is a seedbank present in the area.

4.2.1.4 Resource 4: Wildlife.

Impacts to wildlife from this action would be a result of changes in plant species composition and cover, seasonal or long term changes in plant community structure, seasonal dietary overlap and in some instances social displacement. Cattle grazing during the proposed permitted use period (April 16th to October 31th) could result in competition between cattle, elk and mule deer for early season forage, though elk and mule deer tend to migrate north into higher elevations by this time. The dietary overlap between cattle and mule deer is limited resulting in a reduced impact to the local mule deer population from competition with cattle for forage. The potential cattle grazing during fall green-up could result in competition with pronghorn, mule deer and elk for some key native herbaceous species in the short term. This fall use could also potentially reduce nesting and cover values for many non-game wildlife species the following spring. The potential fall use period in these allotments is expected to improve the overall health and vigor of the seeded species by allowing for seed ripe and seed set one year out of every three which could in turn improve the habitat for wildlife species such as mule deer, pronghorn and elk in the long term.

The proposed inclusion of utilization standards for the new seedings in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments have the potential to increase residual cover for nesting birds as well as improve forage

conditions for big game winter range by not allowing the utilization by livestock to exceed 40%. If the seeded native plants do not establish but the Siberian wheatgrass does, the utilization in the allotments would be limited to 50% of current growth in key areas.

4.2.2 Alternative B – No Action

4.2.2.1 Resource 1: Soils and Watershed.

No direct measurements have been conducted to determine if a change in soil loss has occurred following the 1985 Monument RMP. Continued livestock grazing in these allotments would affect soil resources on public lands, but the BLM has not observed nor received any reports of noticeable soil erosion in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. Unacceptable levels of soil erosion due to livestock grazing as a result of the No Action Alternative are not expected. Under the present management, the watershed condition in these allotments is adequate for maintaining soil stability and hydrologic cycling.

Litter is important in reducing compaction, erosion and increasing nutrient cycling of minerals and plant nutrients. Removal of vegetation reduces the amount of litter and nutrient cycling in the soil. However, this amount of vegetation removal should only occur in very small areas where livestock congregate such as near livestock salting sites or watering facilities.

4.2.2.2 Resource 2: Vegetation, including Invasive, Non-native Species.

The rangelands where the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments are located have been dominated by cheatgrass for decades. Cheatgrass, a non-native, invasive annual grass, has displaced desirable native grasses such as Indian ricegrass, Thurber needlegrass and needle-and-thread grass. High utilization levels and early season grazing have the potential to alter the composition of the vegetative community, especially if high use levels occur in several subsequent years. During the field assessment, the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments were past the threshold of being able to support and promote viable populations of perennial grasses. Since that time, both allotments have had wildfires and BAR Plans have been implemented which incorporated seedings of perennial grasses as well as forbs and sagebrush. Under the No Action Alternative, these allotments will still be rested for a mandatory two growing seasons in order for the seedings to become established, but future grazing will not include the utilization standard as a term and condition of the South Gooding Allotment grazing permit or the Jerome Allotment grazing permit.

Under the No Action Alternative, without the utilization standards, the populations of perennial grasses and forbs may decrease over time due to continual heavy utilization, since the livestock will select these desirable species over the cheatgrass. There would also be no fall use in these allotments. Spring grazing would be permitted annually and not allow seed set or deferred use on the perennial vegetation. This has the potential to decrease the viable populations of seeded species overtime by having the same season of every year.

4.2.2.3 Resource 3: Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species.

Animals: The proposed livestock grazing is not expected to perceptively alter habitat suitability for the federally listed bald eagle, gray wolf or Canada lynx which may utilize the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments. The suspected very low, incidental use level of the project area by these three listed animal species is expected to result in “No Effect” to the continued existence of the bald eagle, gray wolf or Canada lynx.

Cattle grazing during the spring would occur during sage-grouse nesting and early brood-rearing periods. The proposed grazing use period would result in some cattle use of native forbs preferred by sage-grouse. The decrease in herbaceous cover values in the allotment would increase the possibility of nest site predation and reduce concealment and security cover for young sage-grouse chicks. Reduction in height and diversity of vegetation would also reduce the number and occurrence of insects, a key component in the diet of young sage-grouse chicks. Reducing plant species diversity and vigor in the native plant communities would produce fewer suitable habitat conditions for many of the sensitive shrub steppe wildlife species expected to occur in the area. Under the No Action Alternative, the probability of this occurring is high without the inclusion of the utilization standards as discussed in the Proposed Action.

Plants: The potential habitat for Picabo milkvetch in the allotment is of poor quality due to the previous abundance of cheatgrass. The possibility of sensitive plants being impacted by the Proposed Action is slight due to the lack of known populations and lack of good quality potential habitat for Picabo milkvetch within the allotment boundaries.

4.2.2.4 Resource 4: Wildlife.

Impacts to wildlife from the No Action Alternative would primarily be a result of seasonal or long term changes in plant community structure, seasonal dietary overlap and in some instances social or physical displacement. The dietary overlap between the kinds of livestock licensed in these two allotments and the native wildlife species would be similar to what is presently occurring. The heavier level of livestock use of the native seedings under this alternative would remove a greater portion of the herbaceous material and seed sources produced on the site. This would reduce the amount of forage available to wildlife and alter the horizontal and vertical cover values for native wildlife species with relatively small territories. The livestock grazing actions could potentially result in a reduction in the diversity and richness of the native habitat.

This alternative would not incorporate utilization standards for the new seedings in the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments which could have the potential to decrease residual cover for nesting birds as well as deteriorate forage conditions for big game winter range by allowing the utilization by livestock to exceed 40%. The heavier level of livestock use of seeded grasses under this alternative would remove a greater portion of the herbaceous material and seed sources produced on the site. This would reduce the amount of forage available to wildlife and alter the horizontal and vertical cover values for native wildlife species with relatively small territories. The livestock grazing actions could potentially result in a reduction in the diversity and richness of the native habitat.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts Analysis:

“Cumulative impacts” are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. The geographic scope of the proposed grazing permit renewals will be limited to just those 541 federal acres within the Jerome Allotment and 488 federal acres within the South Gooding Allotment.

4.3.1 Past and Present Actions

Livestock grazing has occurred in the area now known as the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments since the late 1800s. This area was first managed by the General Land Office (GLO) and designated as arid, broken, mountainous, or grazing in character (USDI- BLM 1988). Many western ranchers depended on this remaining public domain to help support their livestock. The local ranchers grazed

these lands in conjunction with their private ranch lands and it was on a first-come, first-serve basis. All of these lands had unregulated grazing until the implementation of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. In 1946, the Department of the Interior formed the Bureau of Land Management and grazing on public lands was formalized and divided into grazing allotments.

The Jerome Allotment borders the Pole Line Allotment to the north, the Common Allotment to the west, and private lands to the east and south. The South Gooding Allotment borders the Goodtime Allotment to the south, and private lands to the north, east and west. Because of the general lack of water (both distribution and time available) over what is known now as these two allotments, some areas were likely used less intensively than other areas.

The Jerome Allotment and South Gooding Allotment burned completely during the summer of 2006 BAR Plans were developed separately for each allotment. There most likely have been more wildfires prior to the ones that have just occurred but they have not been documented by the Shoshone Field Office. Historic use levels opened communities to exotic plant invasion, which reduced the resiliency of the communities to subsequent disturbance, such as introduction of new weeds and wildland fire.

4.3.2 Reasonably Foreseeable Action Scenario (RFAS)

There are currently no range improvement projects planned within the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments or within the neighboring allotments. The Shoshone Field Office does not foresee any other projects taking place within the allotments or within the surrounding areas as well. In approximately ten years, these allotments will again be reviewed and analyzed under existing regulations for consideration of permit renewal.

The Shoshone Field Office will begin the process for an updated Land Use Plan within a few years. At that time, changes to some grazing permits may be made. No changes in the South Gooding Allotment are anticipated but there are plans for the Jerome Allotment to be exchanged with Idaho State Lands and managed by them in the near future.

When considered with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, there are no known incremental effects to soils and watershed or threatened/endangered/BLM sensitive species as a result of the Proposed Action but there may be positive cumulative effects to the vegetation as a result of the new seedings, deferred season of use in the fall, and subsequent utilization standards if those seedings are successful.

4.3.3 Cumulative Impacts Summary:

No significant individual or cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action which is a continuation of the current situation in both the Jerome and South Gooding Allotments as well as the inclusion of utilization standards if the seedings are successful.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

5.1 Introduction:

The issue identification section of Chapter 1 identifies those issues analyzed in detail in Chapter 4. Appendix A provides the rationale for issues that were considered but not analyzed further. The issues were identified through the public and agency involvement process described in sections 5.2 and 5.3 below.

5.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted:

TABLE 8: LIST OF ALL PERSONS, AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED FOR PURPOSES OF THIS EA

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
William Gulley	Permittee	Fall use period was accepted
Jodi Sorensen	Permittee	Fall use period was accepted
Committee for the High Desert	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
ICL Public Lands Office	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Idaho Department of Fish & Game	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Idaho Wildlife Federation	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
The Wilderness Society	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Western Watersheds Project	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
David Skinner	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Rusty Tews	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Western Land Exchange	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Loyd W. Briggs	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Mel Quale	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Dennis Crane	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Chris J. Christiansen	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Kelly Adams	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Kenneth Sanders	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA
Paul McClain	Interested Public	No Comment on Pre-Decisional EA

5.3 Summary of Public Participation:

During preparation of the EA, the Public was notified of the proposed action through a Pre-Decisional EA mailed out on August 24, 2007 and a comment period was offered until September 24, 2007. No comments were received by interested publics or current permittees and thus, the Proposed/Final EA has been mailed out and posted on the following website: <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/info/nepa.html> on Sept 28, 2007.

5.4 LIST OF PREPARERS

Table 9. List of BLM –Shoshone Field Office Reviewers

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document	Review Date
Joanna Tjaden	Rangeland Management Specialist	Permit Renewal Team Project Leader	4/12/07
Ray Pease	Range Technician	Livestock Compliance and Range Monitoring	7/16/07
Bonnie Hunt	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Species and Wetlands / Riparian Zones	5/11/07
Julie Hilty	Botanist	Vegetation, including Special Status Plants.	7/16/07
Lisa Jaro	Natural Resource Specialist -Water Rights	Water Rights	7/3/07

6.0 REFERENCES

6.1 References Cited:

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. 1985. Final Monument Resource Management Plan. Document on file at the BLM, Shoshone Field Office, Shoshone, Idaho.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. 1988. Opportunity and Challenge: The Story of the BLM. US Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.

6.2 Attachments:

Map 1 – Jerome Allotment boundaries
 Map 2 – South Gooding Allotment boundaries
 Jerome Allotment Draft Determination
 South Gooding Allotment Draft Determination

7.0 APPENDIXES

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ANALYSIS RECORD CHECKLIST

Project Title: Permit Renewal for Jerome Allotment #90910 and South Gooding Allotment #90904 (located in Jerome County and Gooding County respectively)

NEPA Log Number: ID-230-2007-EA-3361

File/Serial Number:

Location of Project(s):

South Gooding Allotment – T 6S, R 15 E, Section 15

Jerome Allotment – T 7S, R 16E, Sections 14 and 15

Project Leader: Joanna Tjaden

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 significant impact analyzed in detail in the EA; or identified in a DNA as requiring further analysis

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section C of the DNA form.

Det ermi- nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
CRITICAL ELEMENTS				
NI	Air Quality (Team Leader)	There is no official air quality designation for the area. In any case, air quality is not going to be affected by renewing the permit.	JPF	3/13/07
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Joanna Tjaden)	There are no ACECs present in either allotment.	JPF	4/9/07
NP	Cultural Resources (Lisa Cresswell)	No previously recorded cultural resources have been identified within the allotments.	LTC	3/14/07
NP	Environmental Justice (Joanna Tjaden)	NP	JPF	3/13/07
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique) (Joanna Tjaden)	NP	JPF	3/13/07
NP	Floodplains (Joanna Tjaden)	PI – streambanks, floodplains did not meet RH standard. Historic livestock grazing issues related to this plus current recreation use effects are occurring.	JPF	3/13/07
PI	Invasive, Non-native Species (Julie Hilty)	Both allotments contain cheatgrass as a community dominant.	JH	3/23/07
NP	Native American Religious Concerns (Lisa Cresswell)	No specific sacred sites have been identified in this area by local tribes.	LTC	3/14/07

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species (Julie Hilty)	There are no federally listed or candidate plants in the allotments.	JH	3/23/07
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species (Bonnie Hunt)	Gray wolf , bald eagle and Canada lynx are very unlikely to occur in the grazing allotments.	BH	3/29/07
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid) (Timothy Fuller)	If any pesticides are used, they should be limited to those approved as described on WO IB No. 2007-028. Chemical storage should have prior permission, and only allowed with secondary containment. The permittee should indemnify the BLM in case of a hazmat incident.	TF	4/5/07
NP	Water Quality (drinking/ground) (Lisa Jaro)	No streams or other bodies of water in the allotment have been identified by the State of Idaho as water-quality limited.	LJ	4/9/07
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones (Joanna Tjaden)	PI – same discussion as Floodplains resource.	JPF	3/13/07
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers (David Freiberg)	No Wild and Scenic segments in the area.	DF	04/09/07
NP	Wilderness/WSA (David Freiberg)	No Wilderness or WSA in the area	DF	04/09/07
NI	Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines (Joanna Tjaden)	PI – Except for RH Standards for Streambanks/Floodplains and Riparian, the remaining applicable standards are being met in the allotment. Most riparian in allotment is in good health but some were identified as FAR and therefore not meeting the Riparian standard.	JPF	3/13/07
NI	Livestock Grazing (Joanna Tjaden)	PI- Term grazing permit is/has expired and needs to be renewed. Current allotment mgmt needs to be reviewed and other mgmt schemes need to be analyzed to order to move all resources toward meeting or maintaining RH Standards.	JPF	3/13/07
NP	Woodland / Forestry (Kasey Prestwich)	There is no Forest or Woodland vegetation with in these allotments.	KP	4/09/07
PI	Vegetation including Special Status Plant Species other than FWS candidate or listed species (Julie Hilty)	The allotments are dominated by cheatgrass and Sandbergs bluegrass with scattered sagebrush and rabbitbrush. They occur on the southwestern edge of the range for Picabo milkveth (<i>Astragalus oniciformis</i>), however, there are no known populations within about 5 miles of the South Gooding allotment. Potential habitat might exist there; however the degraded state of the vegetation makes it unlikely that any sizeable populations exist.	JH	3/23/07
PI	Fish and Wildlife Including Special Status Species other than FWS candidate or listed species eg. Migratory birds. (Bonnie Hunt)	Numerous BLM Sensitive animal species are either known or are likely to make use of the upland and riparian habitat conditions on public land in the allotment.	BH	4/9/07
NI	Soils (Joanna Tjaden)	Grazing use/mechanical impacts to the soil/watershed resource are expected.	JPF	3/13/07
NI	Recreation (John Kurtz)	The allotment is within the Monument Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Within ERMA's visitor health and safety, use and user conflicts and resource protection need to be addressed. There are no known visitor health	JK	3/21/07

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination	Signature	Date
		and safety issues, use or user conflicts and Standards identified as, not being met, are not a result of recreation activities; therefore no further detailed analysis regarding recreation is necessary.		
PI	Visual Resources (David Freiberg)	Visual resources are present, and will be impacted, and should be considered in the EA, but unlikely to very much affected.	DF	04/09/07
NP	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production (John Garth)	There are no active or proposed locatable, leasable, or salable minerals projects located within the two allotments.	JG	06/19/07
NP	Paleontology (Lisa Cresswell)	No known paleontological resources	LTC	3/14/07
NI	Lands / Access (Debbie Kovar)	There are some rights-of-way authorizations (road and canal) within the project areas; however, they will not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives.	DK	3/14/07
NI	Fuels / Fire Management (Joe Russell)	Vegetation communities consist of low-elevation shrub communities but would not be affected to a degree where detailed analysis of fire and fuels management would be required.	JR	4/10/07
NI	Socio-economics (Joanna Tjaden)	PI – a potential change in allotment mgmt may have an affect upon permitholder's personal economy.	JPF	3/13/07
NI	Water Rights (Lisa Jaro)	There are stockwater and wildlife water right claims for the springs and streams within the project area; however, they will not be affected by the proposed action or the proposed alternatives.	LJ	4/9/07
NI	Wilderness characteristics (David Freiberg)	Wilderness Characteristics exist in this area and should probably be considered in this EA, however, the area has been evaluated for wilderness character and the wilderness values present were determined not to rise to a level requiring consideration as a Wilderness Study Area, or as Wilderness.	DF	04/09/07

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
NEPA / Environmental Coordinator (Barb Bassler)	/s/ Barbara C. Bassler	9/24/2007	
Authorized Officer (Lori A. Armstrong)	/s/ Lori A. Armstrong	9/25/2007	

Idaho Guidelines per the *Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management*

1. Use grazing management practices and/or facilities to maintain or promote significant progress toward adequate amounts of ground cover (determined on an ecological site basis) to support infiltration, maintain soil moisture storage, and stabilize soils.
2. Locate livestock management facilities away from riparian areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian –wetland functions.
3. Use grazing management practices and /or facilities to maintain or promote soil conditions that support water infiltration, plant vigor, and permeability rates and minimize soil compaction appropriate to site potential.
4. Implement grazing management practices that provide periodic rest or deferment during critical growth stages to allow sufficient regrowth to achieve and maintain healthy, properly functioning conditions, including good plant vigor and adequate vegetative cover appropriate to site potential.
5. Maintain or promote grazing management practices that provide sufficient residual vegetation to improve, restore, or maintain healthy riparian-wetland functions and structure for energy dissipation, sediment capture, ground water recharge, streambank stability, and wildlife habitat appropriate to site potential.
6. The development of springs, seeps, or other projects affecting water and associated resources shall be designed to protect the ecological functions, wildlife habitat, and significant cultural and historical/archaeological/ paleontological values associated with the water source.
7. Apply grazing management practices to maintain, promote, or progress toward appropriate stream channel and streambank morphology and functions. Adverse impacts due to livestock grazing will be addressed.
8. Apply grazing management practices that maintain or promote the interaction of the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow that will support the appropriate types and amounts of soil organisms, plants, and animals appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform.
9. Apply grazing management practices to maintain adequate plant vigor for seed production, seed dispersal, and seedling survival of desired species relative to soil type, climate, and landform.
10. Implement grazing management practices and /or facilities that provide for complying with the Idaho Water Quality Standards.
11. Use grazing management practices developed in recovery plans, conservation agreements, and Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultations to maintain or improve habitat for federally listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and animals.

12. Apply grazing management practices and/or facilities that maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions necessary to sustain native plant populations and wildlife habitats in native plant communities.
13. On areas seeded predominantly with non-native plants, use grazing management practices to maintain or promote the physical and biological conditions to achieve healthy rangelands.
14. Where native communities exist, the conversion to exotic communities after disturbance will be minimized. Native species are emphasized for rehabilitating disturbed rangelands. Evaluate whether native plants are adapted, available, and able to compete with weeds or seeded exotics.
15. Use non-native plant species for rehabilitation only in those situations where:
 - a. native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities;
 - b. native plant species cannot maintain or achieve the standards; or
 - c. non-native plant species provide for management and protection of native rangelands.Include a diversity of appropriate grasses, forbs, and shrubs in rehabilitation efforts.
16. On burned areas, allow natural regeneration when it is determined that populations of native perennial shrubs, grasses, and forbs are sufficient to revegetate the site. Rest burned or rehabilitated areas to allow recovery or establishment of perennial plant species.
17. Carefully consider the effects of new management facilities (e.g., water developments, fences) on healthy and properly functioning rangeland prior to implementation.
18. Use grazing management practices, where feasible, for wildlife control and to reduce the spread of targeted undesirable plants (e.g., cheatgrass, medusa head, wild rye, and noxious weeds) while enhancing vigor and abundance of desirable native or seeded species.
19. Employ grazing management practices that promote natural forest regeneration and protect reforestation projects until the Idaho Forest Practices Act requirements for timber stand replacement are met.
20. Design management fences to minimize adverse impacts, such as habitat fragmentation, to maintain habitat integrity and connectivity for native plants and animals.

Actual Use History for Jerome Allotment and South Gooding Allotment

Year	Jerome Allotment Grazing Use Period	Active Preference (AUM's)	Actual Use (AUM's)	Percent of Active Use
1978	5/01 to 9/16	91	91	100%
1979	5/01 to 7/08	91	91	100%
1980	5/01 to 9/14	91	89	98%
1981	5/01 to 9/17	91	91	100%
1982	5/01 to 6/30 9/01 to 9/30	91	90	90%
1983	5/01 to 6/30	91	90	90%
1984	5/01 to 6/30	91	90	90%
1985	5/01 to 6/30	91	90	90%
1986	5/01 to 6/30	91	90	90%
1987	5/23 to 6/30	91	63	62%
1988	5/01 to 6/30	91	90	90%
1989	4/20 to 7/15	91	92	101%
1990	4/20 to 7/15	91	92	101%
1991	RESTED	91	0	0%
1992	RESTED	91	0	0%
1993	5/18 to 7/17	91	90	90%
1994	4/15 to 6/14	91	90	90%
1995	6/23 to 7/14	91	33	36%
1996	RESTED	91	0	0%
1997	5/08 to 7/01	91	90	90%
1998	RESTED	91	0	0%
1999	4/15 to 6/14	91	90	90%
2000	4/15 to 6/14	91	90	90%
2001	RESTED	91	0	0%
2002	4/25 to 6/24	91	90	90%
2003	4/15 to 6/14	91	90	90%
2004	6/19 to 7/18	91	91	100%
2005	RESTED	91	0	0%
2006	5/05 to 6/14	91	90	99%
2007	RESTED	91	0	0%

Appendix C Continued

Year	South Gooding Grazing Use Period	Active Preference (AUM's)	Actual Use (AUM's)	Percent of Active Use
1980	4/15 to 5/14	44	44	100%
1987	4/15 to 5/20	44	44	100%
1988	4/15 to 5/20	44	44	100%
1989	4/15 to 5/20	44	44	100%
1990	4/15 to 5/20	44	44	100%
1991	4/15 to 5/05	44	44	100%
1992	4/15 to 5/05	44	44	100%
1993	4/15 to 5/05	44	44	100%
1994	4/15 to 5/05	44	44	100%
1996	4/15 to 5/05	44	42	95%
1997	4/15 to 5/05	44	42	95%
1998	4/15 to 5/06	44	44	100%
1999	RESTED	44	0	0%
2000	5/05 to 6/22	44	58	132%
2001	5/06 to 6/10	44	45	102%
2002	5/05 to 6/09	44	45	102%
2003	5/04 to 6/08	44	44	100%
2004	4/24 to 5/29	44	44	100%
2005	5/01 to 5/29	44	35	80%
2006	5/01 to 5/20	44	43	98%
2007	RESTED	44	0	0%