

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Pre-Decisional Environmental Assessment
No. ID-230-2008-EA-1018

September 8, 2008

Permit Renewal for the
North Forty #80318, South 120 #80315,
and Rocky Bar #80313 Allotments

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**North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments
Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal
Environmental Assessment No. ID-230-2005-EA-1018**

I. Introduction

A. Background

There are several authorities¹ which mandate or allow the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to authorize livestock grazing on public lands as part of multiple-use management of natural resources. As a consequence, all land use plans (LUPs) for the BLM-Shoshone Field Office have established grazing allotments, grazing objectives and grazing allocation decisions. Goals, objectives, or decisions in the 1981 Sun Valley Management Framework Plan and the 1981 Sun Valley Grazing Environmental Impact Statement guide livestock grazing in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments.

The BLM issues grazing permits and leases, hereinafter referred to as permits, for a term not to exceed 10 years. In part because of ownership transfers of private base property, the qualifying base for Idaho BLM's livestock grazing preference, grazing permits issued to livestock permittees expire independent of each other and on a randomly staggered basis. Grazing permits may allow a permittee to graze livestock in one or more individual allotments or graze in common with other permittees livestock in one or more allotments.

The BLM completed Rangeland Health Standards and Guides (S&G) Assessments for the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments during June and July of 2003. These Standards are to be used as the BLM's management goals for the betterment of the environment, protection of cultural resources, and sustained productivity of the rangeland. They were developed with the specific intent of providing for the multiple-use of the public lands. The allotments were evaluated to determine if they were meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health. Explanations of the 8 standards are listed below and not all of them are applicable to the North Forty, South 120 and Rocky Bar Allotments.

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 and wetland areas are in properly functioning condition appropriate to soil type, climate, geology, and landform to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow. **This Standard does not apply to the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar**

1 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, Feb. 21, 1984; 49 FR 12704, Mar. 30, 1984; 50 FR 45827, Nov. 4, 1985; 61 FR 4227, Feb. 5, 1996]

Allotments because there are no natural riparian areas or wetlands present on public land in the allotments.

Standard 3: Stream Channel/Floodplain – Stream channels and floodplains are properly functioning relative to the geomorphology (e.g., gradient, size, shape, roughness, confinement, and sinuosity) and climate to provide for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow. **This Standard does not apply to the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar Allotments because there are no natural stream channels present on public land in the allotments.**

Standard 4: Native Plant Community – 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. **This Standard does not apply to the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar Allotments because there are no seedings present in the allotments.**

Standard 6: Exotic Plant Communities – 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. **This Standard does not apply to the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar Allotments because there are no exotic plant communities present in the allotments.**

Standard 7: Water Quality – Surface and ground water on public lands comply with the Idaho Water Quality Standards. **This Standard does not apply to the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar Allotments because there is no natural surface water present on public land in the allotments.**

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 Office Manager has been made for these Allotments on whether each of the eight standards were 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 the applicable standards below and the results of the formal determination. Available data that has been provided or gathered in relation to the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments has been reviewed for the development of this EA.

Table 1. Summary of Rangeland Health Standards and Assessment Determination

Standard	Allotment	Determination
Standard 1-Watersheds	North Forty	Meeting
	South 120	Meeting
	Rocky Bar	Meeting
Standard 2-Riparian Areas & Wetlands	North Forty	N/A
	South 120	N/A
	Rocky Bar	N/A
Standard 3-Stream Channel & Flood Plain	North Forty	N/A
	South 120	N/A
	Rocky Bar	N/A
Standard 4-Native Plant Communities	North Forty	Meeting
	South 120	Meeting
	Rocky Bar	Meeting
Standard 5-Seedings	North Forty	N/A
	South 120	N/A
	Rocky Bar	N/A
Standard 6-Exotic Plant Communities (Other than Seedings)	North Forty	N/A
	South 120	N/A
	Rocky Bar	N/A
Standard 7-Water Quality	North Forty	N/A
	South 120	N/A
	Rocky Bar	N/A
Standard 8-Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals	North Forty	Meeting
	South 120	Meeting
	Rocky Bar	Meeting

B. Type of Action

The type of action this environmental assessment is proposing is a grazing permit renewal with the addition of Grazing Management Objectives and Range Monitoring as well as a change of the number of livestock allowed.

C. Purpose and Need for Action

In 2003, the Rangeland Health Assessments for North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments were completed. In the 2008 Determinations for the three allotments, it was determined that all of the applicable Standards are currently being met in all three allotments. The current grazing management in the three allotments is adequate in providing for proper nutrient cycling, hydrologic cycling, and energy flow, however, the grazing management system needs clarification. Standards for Rangeland Health, as applied in the State of Idaho, are considered in this EA and the current permits would be renewed under the auspices of the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration.

Based on the mandates of the above mentioned authorities, the underlying need for action is to continue authorizing grazing in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments, incorporating the requirements of the Standards for Rangeland Health. All rangeland management practices are to result in meeting or continuing to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health.

An EA 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 meet the requirements for Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration required by 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 4180. Management actions would emphasize continuing to meet those standards that are currently met.

D. Location of Proposed Action

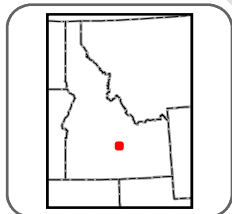
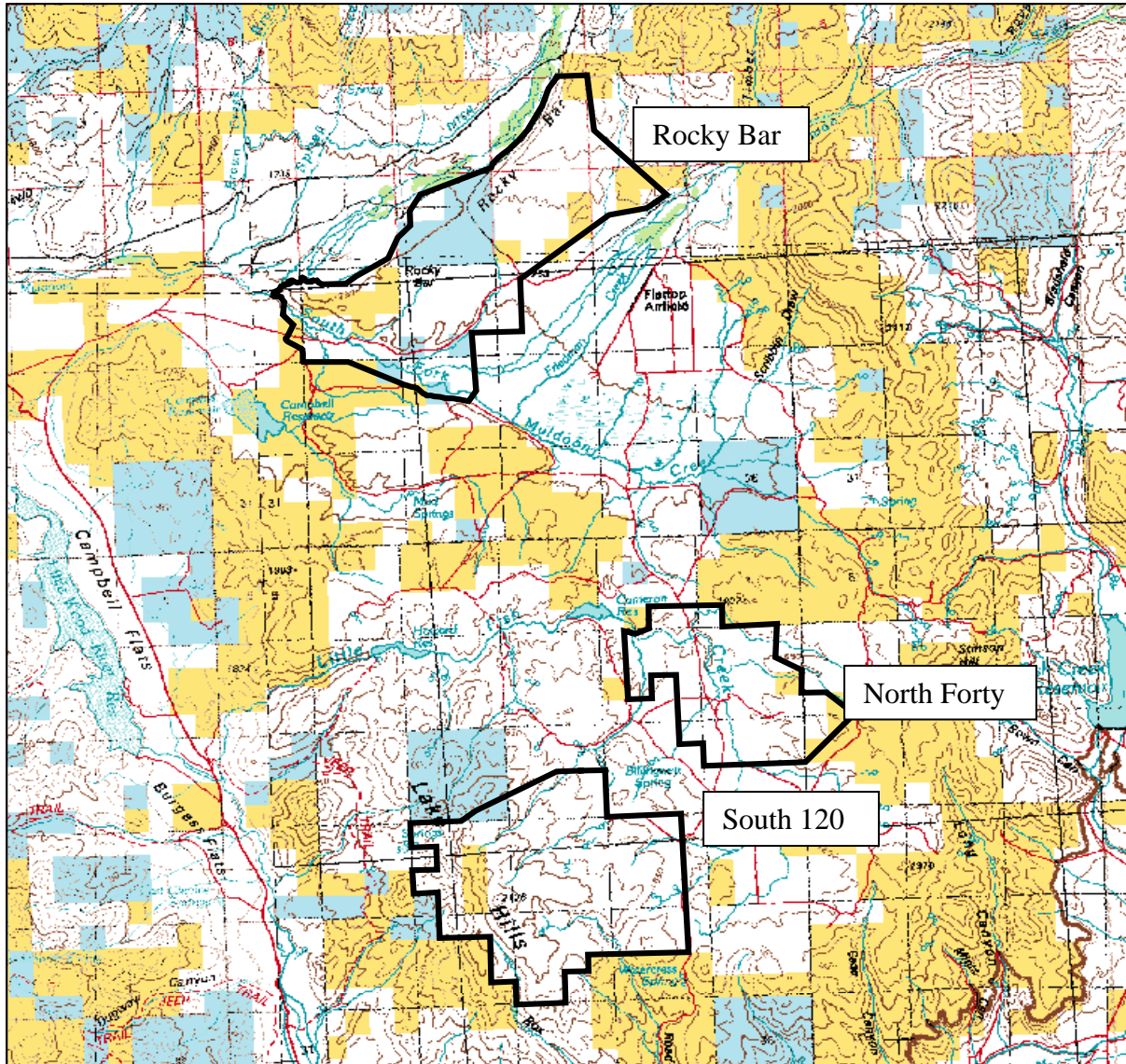
The North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments are located approximately 7 to 10 miles north of Carey, Idaho (See Map 1). The elevation on BLM land ranges from about 6,040 feet near the drainage bottom of the Rocky Bar Allotment to 6,970 feet at the highest ridge of the South 120 Allotment. Land ownership in this area (see Table 2) is mixed BLM, Idaho Department of Lands, and private.

Table 2: Ownership Acreage and Percent

Allotment	Ownership	Acres	Percent
North Forty	BLM	113	7
	State	0	0
	Private	1,466	93
	Total	1,579	100
South 120	BLM	122	4
	State	45	2
	Private	2,801	94
	Total	2,968	100
Rocky Bar	BLM	574	17
	State	583	17
	Private	2,261	66
	Total	3,418	100

Map 1: North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments

NORTH FORTY, SOUTH 120, AND ROCKY BAR ALLOTMENTS



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Twin Falls District, Idaho

Legend

-  Allotments
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  State
-  Private



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E. Conformance to Land Use Plan

Reissuance of grazing permits would be in conformance with the 1981 Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP) as implemented by the record of decision for the 1981 Sun Valley Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This action would not result in a change in the scope of resource use or a change in the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved plan.

Specifically, the Proposed Action and Alternatives 1 and 2 conform to the following objectives stated on page 1-1 of the Sun Valley Grazing Environmental Impact Statement:

- To maintain or improve wildlife habitat.
- To establish and/or maintain a diverse vegetation composition of grasses, forbs, and shrubs.
- To protect and provide for the needs of threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants and animals.
- To maintain or improve the visual quality of the landscapes.

F. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

An EA completed pursuant to the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 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 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration required by 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 4180.

Management actions would emphasize correcting any Standard that received a rating of not meeting the standard because of current livestock management practices. Currently, the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments are meeting all of the applicable Standards contained in Idaho's Standards for Healthy Rangelands.

The 1999 Sun Valley Planning Area Allotments Grazing Permit Renewals EA did not indicate the need to adjust the grazing use in any of these allotments. The North Forty and South 120 Allotments are not divided into pastures and can be used by sheep at any time between May 1 and November 30. The Rocky Bar Allotment is occasionally divided into two pastures (East and West by electric fence. These pastures are used in a rotation system with cattle between May 1 and October 31.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the on-the-ground management actions which the BLM proposes to implement as a result of the Standards for Rangeland Health Assessment and management issues and concerns brought forward by the permittee and interested publics.

A. Proposed Action—Reissue Modified Grazing Permits and Livestock Conversion

Under this alternative, the BLM Field Manager would continue to authorize livestock grazing in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments following the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180.1) to meet or make significant progress towards meeting Rangeland Health Standards. These permits would be issued for ten years in accordance with present management.

1. North Forty Allotment

In the North Forty Allotment, 30 of the 36 AUMs would be converted from sheep to cattle use. This allotment is suitable for cattle use due to the terrain and existing fences. Under this Proposed Action, up to 1500 head of cattle would be allowed to use the 30 AUMs. In the fall, the permittee often trails herds through the allotment, though they would rarely stay with over 400 head. This would allow for one herd to trail through while another was in the allotment. The remaining 6 AUMs would be left for sheep use. The number of sheep allowed to graze in the allotment would be increased to a maximum of 2000 head. The duration that livestock would be allowed to remain in the allotment would be shortened relative to the number of livestock (up to a maximum of 2000 head of sheep and 1500 head of cattle) so that the active permitted AUMs would not be exceeded without issuance of Temporary Non-Renewable AUMs. Table 3 shows what the new permit would look like and Table 5 gives some examples of what the length of the season would be under certain numbers of sheep and cattle for the North Forty Allotment.

2. South 120 Allotment

In the South 120 Allotment, 14 of the 28 AUMs would be converted from sheep to cattle use. Under this Proposed Action, up to 1500 head of cattle would be allowed to use the 14 AUMs. As in the North Forty Allotment, cattle are often trailed through the South 120 Allotment, but rarely would more than 400 head stay in the allotment. The remaining 14 AUMs would be left for sheep use. The number of sheep allowed to graze in the allotment would be increased to a maximum of 2000 head. The duration that livestock would be allowed to remain in the allotment would be shortened relative to the number of livestock (up to a maximum of 2000 head of sheep and 1500 head of cattle) so that the active permitted AUMs would not be exceeded without issuance of Temporary Non-Renewable AUMs. Table 3 shows what the new permit would look like and Table 5 gives some examples of what the length of the season would be under certain numbers of sheep for the South 120 Allotment.

Table 3: Livestock Grazing Permit Issued to Flat Top Grazing Association Under the Proposed Action.

Allotment		Livestock		Grazing Begin	Period End	% PL	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Number	Name	Number	Kind						
80318	North Forty	1500	Cattle	05/01	11/30	7	30	0	30
		2000	Sheep	05/01	11/30	7	6	4	10
80315	South 120	1500	Cattle	05/01	11/30	4	14	0	14
		2000	Sheep	05/01	11/30	4	14	12	26

Terms & Conditions:

Grazing must conform to the grazing plan set forth in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment # ID-230-2005-EA-1018 as implemented by the Field Office Manager's Final Decision dated _____.

Up to 2000 sheep would be allowed in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments, as long as total AUMs used does not exceed the 6 total Active AUMs established for the North Forty Allotment and 28 Total Active AUMs established for the South 120 Allotment.

Up to 1500 cattle would be allowed in the North Forty Allotment and South 120 Allotments, as long as the total AUMs used does not exceed the 30 total Active AUMs established for the North Forty Allotment and 14 Total Active AUMs established for the South 120 Allotment.

The allotments listed on this grazing application/license are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Subpart 4180- Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The application shall be modified, if necessary to meet these requirements, upon completion of a Standards and Guidelines Assessment and Determination as scheduled by the Authorized Officer.

Range improvements must be maintained, to Bureau standards, by the turnout date.

3. Rocky Bar Allotment

The permit in the Rocky Bar Allotment would be issued for the same kind of livestock and same active AUM preference level as previously authorized. Livestock grazing would be permitted to occur at any interval between May 1 and November 30 by up to 800 head of cattle. This number of cattle would amount to exhausting the AUMs within 1 ½ months. Active permitted AUMs would not be exceeded without issuance of Temporary Non-Renewable AUMs.

The following table summarizes the grazing permit that would be issued through this alternative and Table 5 gives some examples of what the length of the season would be under certain numbers of cattle for the Rocky Bar Allotment.

Table 4: Livestock Grazing Permit Issued to ABC Agra LLC Under the Proposed Action.

Allotment		Livestock		Grazing Begin	Period End	% PL	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Number	Name	Number	Kind						
80313	Rocky Bar	800	Cattle	05/01	11/30	10	120	0	120

Terms & Conditions:
 Grazing must conform to the grazing plan set forth in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment # ID-230-2005-EA-1018 as implemented by the Field Office Manager's Final Decision dated _____.

Livestock numbers shown above are the maximum number authorized to be used. Using the maximum number of livestock shown would require a shorter season of use in order to stay within the Authorized AUMs. The maximum number of cattle authorized would be 800 head.

The allotments listed on this grazing application/license are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Subpart 4180- Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The application shall be modified, if necessary to meet these requirements, upon completion of a Standards and Guidelines Assessment and Determination as scheduled by the Authorized Officer.

Range improvements must be maintained, to Bureau standards, by the turnout date.

Table 5: Length of Season for the Proposed Grazing Permit versus the Current Permit

Allotment	Alternative	Livestock Number	Length of Season
North Forty	Proposed Cattle	1500	9 days
	Proposed Sheep	2000	6 days
	Current Permit	367	213 days
South 120	Proposed Cattle	1500	7 days
	Proposed Sheep	2000	27 days
	Current Permit	500	280 days
Rocky Bar	Proposed Action	800	46 days
	Current Permit	199	183 days

Flexibility is maintained in the closing dates. The closing dates can be extended under the following conditions: 1) Utilization levels do not exceed an average of 40 percent on native key species, 2) Total preference for the allotment is not exceeded, and 3) Condition of the vegetative resources will not deteriorate as a result of an extension. The closing date may be moved forward, shortening the season, if any of the following conditions apply: 1) The allotment has reached full permitted use (use beyond permitted use may be authorized in accordance with the Temporary Nonrenewable Livestock Grazing Use Exceeding Recognized Preference Decision for Environmental Assessment ID050-EA-95028), 2) The allotment has reached an average utilization level of 40 percent on native key species on public land, and 3) Removal of livestock is necessary to protect vegetative resources. The key grass species are bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue.

The permits may be modified at any time should information collected subsequent to the permit renewal indicate changes in management are needed to follow the Fundamentals of Rangeland

Health. Management must also meet or make significant progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards and conformance to Guidelines (see Appendix A).

Grazing Management Objectives under the Proposed Action

The grazing permits would be issued based on the current active preference for each allotment and would include standard management practices such as salting, range readiness, required maintenance of improvements prior to commencing grazing use, billing, payment of fees, and actual use reporting.

Utilization of key perennial native grasses (i.e., bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue) would be limited to a maximum of 40% of current year's growth in key areas, i.e., ½ mile from water features, including perennial/intermittent streams, springs, ponds, or troughs. All utilization would be conducted based on the Height-Weight methodology described in Interagency Technical Reference 1734-3, "*Utilization Studies and Residual Measurements*".

Range Monitoring under the Proposed Action

Monitoring of upland areas would occur periodically during the active grazing use period to ensure that use on key native perennial grasses does not exceed the 40% utilization objective. Utilization mapping based upon key forage plant method would be done periodically after livestock are removed from each allotment. Actual use would be summarized from actual use cards collected at the end of the season.

When utilization levels are reached for areas within a pasture, the permittee will be required to either move the livestock to an area within that pasture where utilization levels are not met, move the livestock to the next scheduled pasture or out of the allotment, regardless of calendar date. Adjustments in the grazing system would be authorized to meet future conditions and situations.

B. Alternative 1: Reissue Modified Grazing Permits

Under this alternative, the BLM Field Manager would continue to authorize livestock grazing in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments following the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180.1) to meet or make significant progress towards meeting Rangeland Health Standards. These permits would be issued for ten years in accordance with present management.

This Alternative does not include a conversion in kind of livestock allowed in the North Forty or South 120 Allotments. There would continue to be 36 AUMs of sheep use in the North Forty Allotment and 28 AUMS of sheep use in the South 120 Allotment. The permit in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments would be issued for the same season of use and same active AUM preference level as previously authorized. The number of livestock allowed in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments would be increased to a maximum of 2000 head of sheep each. The duration that livestock would be allowed to remain in the allotment would be shortened relative to the number of livestock (up to a maximum of 2000 head) so that the active permitted AUMs would not be exceeded without issuance of Temporary Non-Renewable AUMs. Terms and conditions may be adjusted to account for the grazing decision rendered following the findings of this environmental analysis. Table 6 shows what the permit would look like and

Table 7 gives some examples of what the length of the season would be under certain numbers of sheep for the two allotments.

Table 6: Livestock Grazing Permit Issued to Flat Top Grazing Association Under Alternative 1.

Allotment		Livestock		Grazing Begin	Period End	% PL	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Number	Name	Number	Kind						
80318	North Forty	2000	Sheep	05/01	11/30	7	36	4	40
80315	South 120	2000	Sheep	05/01	11/30	4	28	12	40

Terms & Conditions:
 Grazing must conform to the grazing plan set forth in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment # ID-230-2005-EA-1018 as implemented by the Field Office Manager's Final Decision dated _____.

Up to 2000 sheep would be allowed in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments, as long as total AUMs used does not exceed the 36 total Active AUMs established for the North Forty Allotment and 28 Total Active AUMs established for the South 120 Allotment.

Livestock numbers shown above are the maximum number authorized to be used. Using the maximum number of livestock shown would require a shorter season of use in order to stay within the Authorized AUMs. In the North Forty and South 120 Allotments, the maximum number of sheep authorized would be 2000 head.

No Livestock use will be authorized outside the dates shown above.

The allotments listed on this grazing application/license are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Subpart 4180- Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The application shall be modified, if necessary to meet these requirements, upon completion of a Standards and Guidelines Assessment and Determination as scheduled by the Authorized Officer.

Range improvements must be maintained, to Bureau standards, by the turnout date.

Table 7: Length of Season for Alternative 1 Grazing Permit versus the Current Permit

Allotment	Alternative	Livestock Number	Length of Season
North Forty	Alternative 1	2000	39 days
	Current Permit	367	213 days
South 120	Alternative 1	2000	54 days
	Current Permit	500	280 days

Under this alternative, the permit in the Rocky Bar Allotment would be issued for the same active AUM preference level and number and kind of livestock, as the Proposed Action.

Flexibility is maintained in the closing dates. The closing dates can be extended under the following conditions: 1) Utilization levels do not exceed an average of 40 percent on native key species, 2) Total preference for the allotment is not exceeded, and 3) Condition of the vegetative resources will not deteriorate as a result of an extension. The closing date may be moved

forward, shortening the season, if any of the following conditions apply: 1) The allotment has reached full permitted use (use beyond permitted use may be authorized in accordance with the Temporary Nonrenewable Livestock Grazing Use Exceeding Recognized Preference Decision for Environmental Assessment ID050-EA-95028), 2) The allotment has reached an average utilization level of 40 percent on native key species on public land, and 3) Removal of livestock is necessary to protect vegetative resources. The key grass species are bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue.

The permits may be modified at any time should information collected subsequent to the permit renewal indicate changes in management are needed to follow the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health. Management must also meet or make significant progress toward meeting Rangeland Health Standards and conformance to Guidelines (see Appendix A).

Grazing Management Objectives and Range Monitoring under Alternative 1

The management objectives and monitoring for Alternative 1 would be the same as is outlined in the Proposed Action.

C. Alternative 2: Reissue Unmodified Grazing Permits

Under this alternative, the BLM Field Manager would continue to authorize livestock grazing in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments following the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (43 CFR 4180.1) to meet or make significant progress towards meeting Rangeland Health Standards. These permits would be issued for ten years in accordance with present management. The permit would be issued for the same number of livestock, kind of livestock, season of use, and same active AUM preference level as presently authorized. Terms and conditions may be adjusted to account for the grazing decision rendered following the findings of this environmental analysis.

The following table summarizes the grazing permits that would be issued.

Table 8: Summary of Livestock Grazing Permits Issued Under Alternative 2.

Current Permittee	Allotment	Number and Type of Livestock	Season of Use	Percent Public Land	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Flat Top Grazing Association	North Forty	367s	05/01 – 11/30	7	36	4	40
Flat Top Grazing Association	South 120	500s	05/01 – 11/30	4	28	12	40
ABC Agra LLC	Rocky Bar	199c	05/01 – 10/31	10	120	0	120
Terms & Conditions:							
Grazing must conform to the grazing plan set forth in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment # ID-230-2005-EA-1018 as implemented by the Field Office Manager’s Final Decision dated _____.							
The allotments listed on this grazing application/license are subject to the requirements of 43 CFR Subpart 4180- Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The application shall be modified, if necessary to meet these requirements, upon completion of a Standards and Guidelines Assessment and Determination as scheduled by the Authorized Officer.							

Range improvements must be maintained, to Bureau standards, by the turnout date.

The closing date may be moved forward, shortening the season, if any of the following conditions apply: 1) The allotment has reached full permitted use (use beyond permitted use may be authorized in accordance with the Temporary Nonrenewable Livestock Grazing Use Exceeding Recognized Preference Decision for Environmental Assessment ID050-EA-95028), 2) The allotment has reached an average utilization level of 40 percent on native key species on public land, and 3) Removal of livestock is necessary to protect vegetative resources. The key grass species are bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue.

The permits may be modified at any time should information collected subsequent to the permit renewal indicate changes in management are needed to follow the fundamentals of rangeland health. Management must also meet or make significant progress toward meeting rangeland health standards and conformance to guidelines.

Grazing Management Objectives and Range Monitoring under Alternative 2

The management objectives and monitoring for Alternative 2 would be the same as is outlined in the Proposed Action.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Soils

The BLM land in the North Forty Allotment consists of a Starhope-Peevywell-Smelter loam and an Elksel-Friedman-Starhope cobbly to very cobbly loam. These soils are typical of mountainsides and foothills in the area. The BLM land in the South 120 Allotment consists primarily of an Elksel-Starhope-Rock Outcrop cobbly to very cobbly loam. This is a typical soil type for naturally eroded areas of south and west facing mountainsides. The BLM land in the Rocky Bar Allotment consists primarily of a Mulshoe-Gaib-Rock Outcrop stony to very stony loam. These soils are typical of south and west facing foothills with exposed basalt.

B. Vegetation

The principal cover on public land in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments is mountain big sagebrush with a bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue understory. There is also a small area of public land in the North Forty Allotment with low sagebrush and an Idaho fescue-bluebunch wheatgrass understory. The South 120 Allotment also has an abundant antelope bitterbrush component. The primary cover in the Rocky Bar Allotment is mountain big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, and Sandberg's bluegrass, though there are also areas dominated by low sagebrush. Native forbs are abundant in all three allotments.

Invasive annual grasses, such as cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicus*) are present in these three allotments, but are not common. There were no noxious weeds found within any of the allotments, though spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed and Canada thistle occur on public and private land, as well as along roadways, near the allotments.

All three allotments were determined to be meeting Standard 4-Native Plant Communities. Standard 5-Seedings and Standard 6-Exotic Plant Communities Other than Seedings do not apply to these allotments.

C. Livestock Grazing

These allotments were originally managed under the recommendations of the 1981 Sun Valley Management Framework Plan as implemented by the record of decision for the 1981 Sun Valley Grazing Environmental Impact Statement. The Sun Valley Planning Area Allotments-Grazing Permit Renewals Environmental Assessment No. ID055-EA-990006 renewed the permits in these allotments without change to the management. The following table summarizes the current grazing use authorization for all three allotments.

Table 9: Current Grazing Authorization

Current Permittee	Allotment	Number and Type of Livestock	Season of Use	Percent Public Land	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total AUMs
Flat Top Grazing Association	North Forty *	367s	05/01 – 11/30	7	36	4	40
Flat Top Grazing Association	South 120 *	500s	05/01 – 11/30	4	28	12	40
ABC Agra LLC	Rocky Bar	199c	05/01 – 10/31	10	120	0	120

* Occasional cattle trailing also occurs within the North Forty and South 120 Allotment.

The average actual use in the North Forty Allotment between 1977 and 2004 is 23 AUMs or 67% of the active preference. There have been several years of nonuse, including 2003 and 2004, but from 1990 through 2002, the full preference was used. The average actual use in the South 120 Allotment between 1977 and 2004 is 30 AUMs or 102% of the current active preference. The average actual use in the Rocky Bar Allotment between 1977 and 2004 is 106 AUMs or 69% of the active preference. Use pattern mapping in the Rocky Bar and North Forty Allotments shows that the majority of the use occurs on private land, with light use occurring on the BLM areas, due to lack of water and location of the public land parcels on the periphery of the allotments. Use supervision in the South 120 Allotment has shown that the same pattern occurs in that allotment due to the location of the public parcel, but also due to rockiness, slope, and relative inaccessibility.

The North Forty and South 120 Allotments are usually used by one band of about 1000 to 1500 head per band. These bands usually do not spend more than a few weeks in each allotment at a time. The Rocky Bar allotment is usually used by up to 750 head of cattle.

D. Wildlife

Wildlife species which are commonly associated with a native shrub/steppe habitat in the foothill and mountainous terrain in the resource area are present in these three allotments. A list of some of the possible animal species likely to occur in habitats found in the allotments is referenced in the Sun Valley Grazing EIS (1981). Big game wildlife species which occur in the allotments include mule deer, pronghorn, and elk. Mule deer, elk, and pronghorn use can occur year-round, but only a small portion of the South 120 Allotment is considered crucial mule deer and elk

winter range. The following table summarizes big game forage allocated in the three allotments by the Sun Valley Grazing EIS.

Table 10: Big Game Seasonal Use Forage Allocation in the Sun Valley Grazing EIS.

Allotment	Deer Months Summer (05/01 – 10/30)	Deer Months Migration (04/16 – 04/30) (11/01 – 11/14)	Antelope Months Summer (03/01 – 09/30)
North Forty	15	0	10
South 120	12	0	0
Rocky Bar	73	10	41

E. Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Biannual Resource Area Species List SP #1-4-05-718 presents those Threatened or Endangered Species that are known or suspected to occur in the Field Office. The species on this list include the gray wolf and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The BLM lists some additional plants and animals as BLM Sensitive Species in Idaho. The Threatened and Endangered and BLM Sensitive Species that may occur in the allotments are discussed below.

Plants

Bug-leg goldenweed (*Pyrocomma insecticruris*) is a perennial yellow composite that occurs in gravelly to heavy clay soils in ephemerally moist herbaceous meadows, swales, and weak drainages in bottomlands or hillsides; saddles dominated by herbaceous vegetation, dryer edges of seeps, and occasionally on stony sites. These sites usually intergrade into dryer sagebrush communities or into the edges of conifer-aspen woodlands, with bugleg goldenweed occurring between the moist communities dominated by sedges or rushes and the uplands where shrubs are dominant. The elevation range of this species is approximately 4500 to 7500 feet. Bugleg goldenweed is endemic to the Camas Prairie, Bennett Hills, and the foothills of the Soldier, Smoky, Boulder, and Pioneer Mountains.

There are several instances of this species on private land within the Rocky Bar Allotment, one small population directly north of the northern boundary of the North Forty Allotment, and about two miles from the South 120 Allotment. There are no recorded populations on the BLM administered lands within these allotments; however potential habitat exists and there is a high likelihood of its occurrence.

Shallow disturbances such as scraping may be tolerated but deep disturbance (excavation for pipelines, cable burial, mining, right-of-way maintenance, trail or road construction, etc.) will kill plants. This species tolerates livestock grazing. Other threats include competition with exotic species and sod-forming grasses (Popovich 2001).

Animals

The presence of gray wolf in the general area of the allotments would most likely occur in the winter. Bald eagles may make incidental use of the allotments while wintering in the Little Wood River watershed. A pack of gray wolves was sighted a few miles east of the general area of these allotments in the spring of 2002. A pair of wolves was reported near the town of Picabo, Idaho, about eight miles southwest of the general area during the winter of 2002. A lynx was reported to have been observed in the vicinity of Bellevue, Idaho in January, 1984. This observation was about 12 miles from the general area of these allotments. In Idaho, lynx are thought to primarily occur in higher elevation cold forest habitats. These allotments do not contain forest habitats.

Shrub steppe habitat is crucial to the reproductive success and long-term survival of a number of animal species. Sage grouse require large areas of sagebrush to survive and we have considerable knowledge of their habitat requirements in comparison with other sagebrush obligates. Sagebrush habitats which contain the structural components and habitat diversity necessary to meet the life cycle needs of sage grouse are also likely to provide suitable habitat conditions for other sagebrush obligate species.

There are no active or historic sage grouse leks documented within the North Forty Allotment. A total of 12 sage grouse leks are located within six miles of the allotment. One of these leks was active in 2001. A total of three of the 12 leks were active in the early to middle 1980's. In 1979 all but one of the leks was active. The habitat on all parcels of public land in the North Forty allotment is considered key sage grouse habitat. The allotment may provide sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing, and winter habitat. Information collected during the survey effort for the allotment indicates that the forbs preferred by sage grouse were common enough to determine that the allotment provides suitable habitat for sage grouse during the nesting and brood-rearing periods.

There are no active or historic sage grouse leks documented within the South 120 Allotment. A total of six sage grouse leks are located within six miles of the allotment. All six of these leks were active in 1979 and one of these leks was active in 1980. The historical record indicates that these six leks were not monitored from 1981 through 2002. Monitoring of the leks in 2003 found no sage grouse activity. The habitat on the parcel of public land in the South 120 Allotment is considered key sage grouse habitat. The allotment is thought to provide sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing and winter habitat. Information collected during the survey effort indicates that the forbs preferred by sage grouse were common on the allotment. Much of the allotment appears to be suitable for winter habitat; however, it is believed that snow levels in the area may limit sage grouse winter use.

There is one active sage-grouse lek and two historic sage-grouse leks documented within the Rocky Bar Allotment. A total of 15 sage grouse leks are located within six miles of the allotment. Two of these leks have been active in the last five years. Three of the 15 leks were active in the early to middle 1980's. In 1979 all but one of the leks were active. The habitat on all parcels of public land in the Rocky Bar allotment is considered key sage grouse habitat. The public land in the allotment may provide sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing and winter habitat. Information collected during the survey effort for the allotment indicates that the forbs preferred

by sage grouse were common enough to determine that the allotment provides suitable habitat for sage grouse during the nesting and brood-rearing periods.

Prairie falcons, Townsend's big-eared bats, and fringed myotis may make incidental use of the general area during the spring, summer, and fall seasons for dispersed foraging activities. A 2003 study (Rachlow) determined that approximately 90% of the public lands within the three allotments have high pygmy rabbit habitat potential. However, there are no confirmed observations of either individuals or burrow systems within or adjacent to the area.

There are three sensitive passerine bird species (Brewer's sparrow, sage sparrow, and loggerhead shrike), and the calliope hummingbird that are expected to use suitable habitat in the allotments during the spring, summer and fall season. These birds would use habitat on the allotment for nesting, security, escape and foraging cover.

Standard 8-Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals is being met in these three allotments.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section describes the effects that the Proposed Action and Alternatives may have upon the various resources described earlier. Unless otherwise specified, the effects of each alternative may be assumed to be the same as the Proposed Action

A. Effects of the Proposed Action—Reissue Modified Grazing Permits and Livestock Conversion

1. Soils

The Public land parcel in the South 120 Allotment has a high potential for erosion. These soils experience high rates of erosion naturally, and livestock can contribute to increased rates. The terrain and slope would again help reduce livestock use in this area, but some limited livestock use does occur.

Increasing the number of livestock allowed in these allotments would shorten the term that they would be allowed in the allotments. If this higher intensity grazing were to occur in the spring when soils may be moist, higher rates of soil compaction and erosion may occur. The public land parcel in the South 120 Allotment would be expected to experience only limited amounts of these increased compaction and erosion rates, due to its rockiness, slope, and relative inaccessibility to livestock. This limited increase in compaction rate would also apply to public land in the North Forty and Rocky Bar Allotments. Being located at the periphery of the allotments and lacking water would reduce the likelihood of this compaction occurring on public land. The erosion risk in the North Forty and Rocky Bar Allotments is not as high as the South 120 Allotment

If the higher intensity/short duration grazing proposed in this action were to occur later in the season when the soil was firm and dry, there should be no change in the effects that livestock management would have on the soil under this alternative. Allowing grazing later in the season in the Rocky Bar Allotment without increasing the amount of livestock or the duration they

would be in the allotment would provide the permittee with the option of postponing the turnout date. This could reduce the amount of soil compaction that would occur in this allotment. However, if grazing occurs into late October, soils may be moist and not yet frozen and soil compaction could occur.

The primary difference between the effects of cattle and sheep upon soil and watershed resources lies in the manner in which they use the landscape. Sheep are more likely to utilize steeper slopes and ridges than are cattle. Sheep also tend to use ridges for bedding grounds. Due to the location of the BLM lands within this allotment, conversion from sheep use to cattle use in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments would likely reduce these effects.

Through implementation of the utilization standards, this action would continue to maintain the soil cover values provided by foliar cover, basal cover, and non-persistent litter in all three allotments. The data collected for the Rangeland Health Assessment and summarized in the Assessment under Standard 1 indicate that little detectable long term change has occurred to watershed protection factors. The watershed condition would continue to be adequate in all three allotments for maintaining soil stability and hydrologic cycling.

2. Vegetation

Cattle tend to select grasses over forbs. Conversely, sheep tend to select for forbs. Thus, perennial native grasses like bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue would be tend to be utilized with cattle use under the Proposed Action, and the forbs that are also preferred by sage grouse would be tend to be utilized with sheep use under Alternative 1. Continued selection of forbs by sheep during the early growing stages of the year may contribute a lower forb diversity and recruitment. Long-term studies at the US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho showed greater forb diversity in test plots that were historically grazed in the fall and lower forb diversity in pastures grazed in the spring (Bork et al. 1998).

Sheep are also herded more actively than cattle and therefore are more likely to use the rocky slopes that tend to comprise much of the public land within these allotments. Therefore, the public land portion of the allotment would likely receive more use with sheep grazing than with cattle grazing. However, herding also allows the flexibility of moving off of an allotment to graze elsewhere, then coming back to the allotment, after shipping lambs for example, without re-grazing the same areas as were utilized earlier in the year.

Increased numbers of livestock allowed in these allotments would shorten the duration that they would be allowed in the allotments. This could cause the full allowable levels of utilization in a shorter period of time upon key species in these allotments than is currently the case; however, utilization would not be allowed to exceed 40%. It would also allow longer terms for these species to recover from that defoliation, allowing completion of the growth cycle, depending on when use occurs. If grazing ends earlier in the year, moisture could still be available for completion of the growth cycle. If grazing occurs after the active growth period (up to about mid to late July), most forbs and grasses are dormant and there would be little effect on vegetation. Complete use of the permitted AUMs in the Rocky Bar Allotment would occur prior to the flowering stage of most mid-sized bunchgrasses if the permittee were to turn out on May 1. This would allow livestock to be removed and the vegetation to go on to flower.

Allowing the permittee of the Rocky Bar Allotment to postpone turnout and graze later in the year would reduce the impacts upon key species. Allowing the permittee of the Rocky Bar Allotment to reduce the number of livestock in the allotment and graze for a longer term would also change the impacts upon vegetation. The key species are sensitive to defoliation and relatively slow to recover from grazing damage associated with early season use and season long grazing. Although grazing during any growth period will reduce carbohydrate reserves of these species, the impact is short-lived if defoliation is not complete and continuous, and environmental conditions are adequate for recovery. The management of grasses in late summer and fall, the period of maximum carbohydrate storage rate, not only affects winter survival, but it also has an impact on bud initiation (Waller *et al.*, 1985). Summer grazing of forage plants should allow enough remaining leaf area to provide carbohydrates for regrowth and winter survival. Requiring no more than 40% utilization on these key species would allow for this.

The North Forty Allotment is only 7% public land, all located on the periphery of the allotment. Livestock use in this allotment is concentrated on the private land in the allotment, due to the location of water, however some BLM land is used as sheep bedding grounds for about 4 days during the grazing season. The South 120 Allotment is 4% public land, and much of it is relatively inaccessible, due to rock outcrops and slope. Livestock use is also concentrated on the private land in this allotment due to these factors and water availability on the private land. Therefore, livestock utilization levels on public land in these allotments are expected to be light for the Proposed Action. Public land in the Rocky Bar Allotment is relatively accessible, but there are no water sources on these scattered tracts. The largest piece of public land is located near the main water source in the west half of the allotment and would be expected to receive light to moderate use, not to exceed 40% utilization of key species.

The protection provided the public land in these allotments by location, slope, soil type, water availability, and a 40% maximum allowable utilization would also be expected to limit impacts upon vegetation. The grazing management under this alternative would be expected to continue meeting the standards for rangeland health in all three allotments.

3. Grazing Management

Under this alternative, livestock grazing management would change as summarized in the description of the Proposed Action. It would allow increased flexibility in the manner that the allotments could be managed. Increased numbers of sheep and cattle would be allowed for shorter durations in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments, though total active AUMs allowed would not change. In the Rocky Bar Allotment, the permittee would be allowed to postpone turnout and graze later in the year with the same number of cattle or reduce the number of cattle turned out and lengthen the season. The permittee would also be allowed to increase the number of livestock and graze for a shorter term, or any combination of the three. Active AUMs allowed would not be changed in the Rocky Bar Allotment.

4. Wildlife

Impacts to wildlife from this action would be a result of seasonal or long term changes in plant community structure, seasonal dietary overlap and in some instances social displacement. The effects of the Proposed Action upon wildlife resources lie in the livestock numbers, duration

within the allotments, and season-long use. Increases in the numbers of livestock would intensify the social displacement encountered, though these effects would be mitigated through the shortened duration of livestock presence. Reduced livestock numbers would reduce the social displacement encountered, though the longer duration of livestock presence would increase it.

Domestic sheep, pronghorn and mule deer have similar seasonal dietary preferences, as do cattle and elk. The conversion from sheep to cattle in the North Forty Allotment would increase the competition for forage between cattle and elk. However, the competition between sheep and deer and pronghorn would decrease. Livestock grazing during the spring and early summer months would result in the greatest overall dietary overlap with mule deer, pronghorn and elk. Furthermore, the extension of the fall season of use could result in competition for habitat during elk and mule deer mating seasons.

Postponing turnout in this allotment would result in better spring forage conditions for wildlife, but would affect the migration period shown in Table 10 on page 16. However, the forage allocated for wildlife that is shown in that table would still be available.

5. Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species

Plants

Since the proposed livestock grazing systems do not result in deep soil disturbance, the Proposed Action is not expected to affect the potential bugleg goldenweed populations or habitat that may be found on public land in any of the three allotments. Limiting utilization to 40% on key species would help maintain the plant communities where this species is found.

Animals

The livestock grazing systems presented under the Proposed Action are not expected to perceptively alter habitat suitability for the BLM Sensitive species which may occur in the North Forty, South 120, or Rocky Bar Allotments. The suspected level of use within the general area by these animal species is expected to result in "No Effect" to their continued existence. For example, sage-grouse habitat is expected to be unchanged and remain adequate for breeding, brood rearing, and wintering activities.

6. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative effects of the Proposed Action are primarily defined in the context of effects to the vegetation resource in the North Forty, Rocky Bar, and South 120 Allotments, which influences other natural and cultural resources. Cumulative effects of grazing management on vegetation are discussed in detail below.

a. Past Actions (Last 100 Years)

The North Forty Allotment borders the Little Fish Creek Allotment to the south and west, Flat Top Allotment to the east, and the Corral Allotment to the north. The Rocky Bar Allotment borders the Flat Top Allotment to the southwest, Two Springs Allotment to the northeast, and private land to the northwest and southeast. The South 120 Allotment borders the Flat Top Allotment to the west, the Little Fish Creek and Corral Allotments to the north and east, and the

Road Canyon, Rocky Draw, and Hideaway Allotments to the south. Because of the distribution of natural surface water and developed springs, the privately owned areas were likely used more heavily than the public parcels.

There have been no known fires within any of these allotments for the last 70 years. There are no seedings or other type of land treatment (i.e. brush spray, chaining, etc.) that occurred on public lands within these allotments. However, there have been a few fencing projects that occurred on public land in the North Forty Allotment. There have also been some spring developments within the allotments, but all have occurred on private land. Historic use levels have been concentrated around those water developments in all three allotments and along the South Fork of Muldoon Creek in the Rocky Bar Allotment.

There have been no actions other than permit renewals and transfers within the last 20 years.

b. Future Actions

Purchase of the public land in the South 120 Allotment has been proposed by the owner of some of the private land and permit within that allotment. If this land were sold, there would no longer be a permit issued for the South 120 Allotment.

The South 120 Allotment is currently used by cattle only through trailing. If the permit were modified to allow for cattle use beyond trailing, there would be a need for fencing on the west side of the allotment. Fencing would be done entirely on private land, but could result in a slight bottlenecking of livestock onto the BLM land that currently receives little use. If this becomes the case and utilization reaches the 40% threshold, the permittee would be required to herd livestock off of the BLM portion of the allotment or remove cattle from the allotment entirely.

B. Effects of Alternative 1—Reissue Modified Grazing Permits

The following description of expected consequences under Alternative 1, refer to those impacts likely to occur in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments which differ from the likely impacts described for the Proposed Action. The impacts described for the Proposed Action apply to Alternative 1 unless provided below.

1. Soils

There would be no difference between the soil and watershed effects under alternative 1 compared with the “No Action” alternative. The effects to the soil and watershed resources in the North Forty Allotment and South 120 Allotment would differ under Alternative 1 compared to the proposed action due to the difference in effects brought on by cattle and sheep. The primary difference between the effects of cattle and sheep upon soil and watershed resources lies in the manner in which they use the landscape. Sheep are more likely to utilize steeper slopes and ridges than are cattle. Sheep also tend to use ridges for bedding grounds. Due to the location of the BLM lands within this allotment, conversion from sheep use to cattle use in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments would likely reduce these effects. Under this Alternative, this conversion would not occur.

Under the present management, the watershed condition in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments is adequate for maintaining soil stability and hydrologic cycling. This would not change with the management in this alternative.

2. Vegetation

The effects to the vegetation resources in the Rocky Bar Allotment would be the same for Alternative 1 as described in the Effects of the “No Action” alternative (Section IV.C.2.).

The effects to the vegetation resources in the North Forty Allotment and South 120 Allotment would differ under Alternative 1 due to the difference in effects brought on by cattle and sheep. The primary difference between the effects of cattle and sheep upon vegetation resources lies in the manner in which they graze. Sheep are more likely to graze the forbs that are preferred by sage grouse and other upland game than are cattle. Continued selection of forbs by sheep during the early growing stages of the year may contribute a lower forb diversity and recruitment. Long-term studies at the US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho showed greater forb diversity in test plots that were historically grazed in the fall and lower forb diversity in pastures grazed in the spring (Bork et al. 1998).

3. Grazing Management

Under this alternative, livestock grazing management would change as summarized in the description of Alternative 1. It would allow increased flexibility in the manner that the allotments could be managed. Increased numbers of sheep would be allowed for shorter durations in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments, though total active AUMs allowed would not change. In the Rocky Bar Allotment, the permittee would be allowed to postpone turnout and graze later in the year with the same number of cattle or reduce the number of cattle turned out and lengthen the season. The permittee would also be allowed to increase the number of livestock and graze for a shorter term, or any combination of the three. Active AUMs allowed would not be changed in the Rocky Bar Allotment.

4. Wildlife

The effects of Alternative 1 on wildlife in the Rocky Bar Allotment would be the same as described in the Effects of the “No Action” alternative (Section IV.C.4.).

Impacts to wildlife in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments would result from the continued use by domestic sheep. This action would result in seasonal or long term changes in plant community structure, seasonal dietary overlap and in some instances social displacement. The difference between the impacts of this alternative and the Proposed Action lie in the kind of livestock allowed in the two allotments. An increase in the numbers of sheep has the potential to intensify competition for forage and habitat between sheep and mule deer and pronghorn.

5. Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species

Plants

Since the proposed livestock grazing systems do not result in deep soil disturbance, Alternative 1 is not expected to affect the potential bugleg goldenweed populations or habitat that may be

found on public land in any of the three allotments. Limiting utilization to 40% on key species would help maintain the plant communities where this species is found.

Animals

The effects of Alternative 1 on BLM Sensitive wildlife in the South 120, North Forty and Rocky Bar Allotments would be the same as described in the Effects of the Proposed Action (Section IV.A.5.).

6. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative effects for Alternative 1 would be similar with regards to past and future actions to those described for the “No Action” alternative. As discussed above, future actions for the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments include evaluating and analyzing the allotments under existing regulations for consideration of a livestock term grazing permit. Overall, it is expected that Alternative 1 would continue to provide for the health of the shrub steppe ecosystem and continue meeting the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health.

The primary difference in cumulative impacts compared to the Proposed Action is in the conversion from sheep to cattle in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments. Under this alternative, the two allotments would continue to be used by cattle only through trailing. There would be no need for additional fencing in the South 120 Allotment to accommodate the cattle.

C. Effects of Alternative 2: Reissue Unmodified Grazing Permits (No Action)

The following description of expected consequences under Alternative 2, refer to those impacts likely to occur in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments which differ from the likely impacts described for the Proposed Action. The impacts described for the Proposed Action apply to Alternative 2 unless provided below.

1. Soils

Implementation of this alternative would result in fewer livestock in the allotments for a longer period of time, as compared to the Proposed Action. This would likely result in reduced impacts associated with stocking density upon the public land. Cattle in the Rocky Bar Allotment and sheep in the North Forty and South 120 allotments would be more likely to spend more time on the private land within the allotments where water is available, and not disperse as far or as often onto the public land. This would reduce impacts to the soil and watershed values upon public land in the allotment.

This action would continue to maintain the soil cover values provided by foliar cover, basal cover, and non-persistent litter in all three allotments. Under the present management, the watershed condition in the North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments is adequate for maintaining soil stability and hydrologic cycling. This would not change with the management in this alternative.

2. Vegetation

Under this alternative, there would be no change in the way vegetation is currently impacted by livestock grazing. The majority of impacts to vegetation in the North Forty, South 120, and

Rocky Bar Allotments are centered on the needs of bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue. Both species are sensitive to defoliation and relatively slow to recover from grazing damage associated with early season use and use throughout the growing season. Although grazing during any growth period will reduce carbohydrate reserves of these species, the impact is short-lived if defoliation is not complete and continuous, and environmental conditions are adequate for recovery. The management of grasses in late summer and fall, the period of maximum carbohydrate storage rate, not only affects winter survival, but it also has an impact on bud initiation. Summer grazing of forage plants should allow enough remaining leaf area to provide carbohydrates for regrowth and winter survival. Sheep grazing in the North Forty and South 120 Allotments also would affect many of the forbs present in the allotments. Sheep tend to select for forbs more readily than cattle, and the impacts of spring grazing on these forbs can be similar to those of bluebunch wheatgrass. Most of the forbs that are preferred by sheep and sensitive to grazing are dormant by early to mid summer. Quite often they have senesced by this point and are not selected by sheep and would not be impacted by grazing.

The grazing management under this alternative would be expected to result in continuing to meet all applicable Standards for Rangeland Health in all three allotments.

3. Grazing Management

Under this alternative, grazing management would not be affected. Livestock management would continue as summarized in the current permit and the description of Alternative 2.

4. Wildlife

Impacts to wildlife from this action would be a result of seasonal or long term changes in plant community structure, seasonal dietary overlap and in some instances social displacement. Sheep, pronghorn and mule deer have similar seasonal dietary preferences as do cattle and elk. Livestock grazing during the spring would result in the greatest overall dietary overlap with mule deer, pronghorn and elk. Elk are more likely than cattle to utilize forage on slopes greater than 60%. The ability of elk to use steeper slopes coupled with their social avoidance of activities associated with domestic livestock would result in elk utilizing the steeper slopes while livestock are present.

Sheep would utilize many of the same plants during the trailing period as deer and pronghorn. Deer and pronghorn do not seem to require social separation from sheep, which reduces the amount of displacement that occurs but increases the level of direct competition for forage between these three animal species. The foraging, nesting and escape cover values for many small game and nongame wildlife species would essentially remain unchanged from current conditions.

5. Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive Species

Plants

Since the propose livestock grazing systems do not result in deep soil disturbance, Alternative 2 is not expected to affect the potential bugleg goldenweed populations or habitat that may be found on public land in any of the three allotments. Limiting utilization to 40% on key species would help maintain the plant communities where this species is found.

Animals

The effects of Alternative 2 on BLM Sensitive wildlife in the South 120, North Forty and Rocky Bar Allotments would be the same as described in the Effects of the Proposed Action (Section IV.A.5.).

6. Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts of Alternative 2 are expected to be similar to those described for the Proposed Action. However, the scattered tracts of public land in these three allotments have been proposed to be exchanged or purchased outright by private entities. In the event of an exchange, the impacts of this alternative may change. The BLM could block up the public land into continuous tracts, making management of these parcels easier, and allow other alternatives to be considered. In the event of land purchase or trades in these allotments, should the management of these allotments require a change, a new environmental assessment would be required.

Purchase of the public land in the South 120 Allotment has been proposed by the owner of some of the private land and permit within that allotment. If this land were sold, there would no longer be a permit issued for the South 120 Allotment.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. Persons and Agencies Consulted

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Lilly Condie Trust
John Peavey (Permittee)
Pete Peterson (Permittee)
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife
Idaho State Historical Society

B. List of Preparers

Doug Barnum	Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
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Citations

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Appendix A

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.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Upper Snake River District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F
Shoshone, Idaho 83352

**North Forty, South 120, and Rocky Bar Allotments
Livestock Grazing Permit Renewal
Environmental Assessment No. ID-230-2005-EA-1018**

Compiled by Dan Patten, Rangeland Management Specialist

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