Rangeland Management

Grazing Preference

Within each grazing allotment or group of allotments, a grazing preference is established at a level that will ensure adequate forage is also available for wildlife. Sufficient vegetation is reserved for purposes of maintaining plant vigor, stabilizing soil, providing cover for wildlife, and other non-consumptive uses.

Grazing decisions or agreements may be made for those allotments where adequate information exists. In the other allotments where there is inadequate information, an initial decision will be made which will outline a process and schedule for gathering the necessary information. An initial stocking rate will also be established, which may be adjusted upwards or downwards in the final decision as a result of monitoring. All grazing decisions will be issued in accordance with applicable BLM regulations.

Range Improvements, Grazing Systems, Other Range Management Practices

A variety of range improvements, grazing systems, and other range management practices may be considered in conjunction with livestock management on individual allotments. Such practices will be based on the range management category (maintain, improve, custodial) in which the allotment has been placed and will be formulated in consultation, coordination, and cooperation with livestock operators, and other interested parties.

Wild Horses and Burros

Adopted animals will be monitored until title is transferred. Since no wild horse or burro populations exist in the planning area, reserving forage for maintenance of the populations is not necessary for the Monument RMP.

Recreation

Recreation Management

BLM will manage recreation on the public lands. A variety of means to maintain or improve recreation opportunities will be considered. Some areas may be subject to special restrictions to protect resources or eliminate or reduce conflicts among uses.

Recreation Facilities

BLM may develop and maintain various recreation facilities on public lands, including campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, etc. Those recreation facilities are provided to meet existing or anticipated demand.

Watershed

Watershed Management

A variety of methods may be employed to maintain, improve, protect, and restore watershed conditions. Priority will be given to meeting emergency watershed needs due to flooding, severe drought, or fire.

Water Improvements

Facilities and structures designed to maintain or improve existing water sources, provide new water sources, control water level or flow characteristics, or maintain or improve water quality may be developed. BLM will work closely with the Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other local, State, and Federal agencies to determine appropriate location and designs for such projects.

Water Rights

Water rights are administered by the Idaho Department of Water Resources. The Bureau complies with all State of Idaho water laws.

Wilderness

Preliminary Recommendations to Congress

Only Congress can designate an area wilderness. BLM recommends areas suitable or nonsuitable for preservation as wilderness. Those recommendations are preliminary and are subject to the findings of mineral surveys and final consideration by the Secretary of the Interior and the President before being submitted to Congress. Until Congress acts on the President's suitability recommendations, BLM will manage areas recommended as suitable or nonsuitable in accordance with the Interim Wilderness Management Policy. After Congress acts, a different policy will apply, depending on whether or not Congress designates an area wilderness.

Areas Designated Wilderness

Areas designated wilderness by Congress will be managed in accordance with BLM Wilderness Management Policy. Specific management provisions will be formulated in a wilderness management plan developed for each area following designation.

Areas Not Designated Wilderness

Areas determined by Congress to be nonsuitable for wilderness will be managed for other purposes. A tentative management scheme developed during the planning process will be given final consideration following Congressional action on the President's suitability recommendations.

Control of Noxious Weeds

BLM will control the spread of noxious weeds on public lands and eradicate them where possible and economically feasible. BLM Districts will work with their respective County governments to monitor the location and spread of noxious weeds and to maintain up-to-date inventory records.

Where weed control is warranted, the Bureau will consider alternatives including herbicide applications, plow and seed, burn and seed, livestock grazing strategy, and biological controls. Coordination with adjoining landowners will be pursued if appropriate. If herbicide application is selected as the preferred method of control through the NEPA process, application will be made through the Idaho State Director to the BLM Director in Washington D.C. This application will indicate all pertinent data including chemicals, rate, and method of application and target plant species. Herbicide applications will be applied under the direction of a Licensed Pesticide Applicator and every effort will be taken to ensure public safety.

In addition to control efforts, a weed prevention program is under way to prevent the introduction and establishment of specific weed species in areas not currently infested.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The following procedures will be followed in implementation of the Monument RMP.

Fire Management

The present Bureau policy is to aggressively suppress all new fires on or threatening public lands. Exceptions to this policy occur where management has analyzed alternatives to full suppression and prepared a written course of action prior to fire occurrences. These plans are termed Limited Suppression Plans and they establish criteria under which fires may be allowed to burn with little or no suppression action.

Less than full suppression also occurs whenever multiple fires ignite simultaneously. In these situations, priority is determined by value-at-risk. These values are predetermined by evaluating each resource separately to determine either beneficial or detrimental effects fire has on that resource. A numerical rating is given each resource, plus being detrimental and minus beneficial. After each resource has been evaluated individually, the totals

are summarized to establish the values. Crews are dispatched to fires with the highest values until all crews are utilized. Fires with lower values may have delayed suppression times.

Less than full suppression may also occur whenever fires ignite in an area proposed for prescribed fire. These fires may be allowed to burn with little or no suppression action, but only when conditions are within the limits specified in approved, site-specific prescribed burn plans.

The Bureau cooperates with adjacent landowners on a case-by-case basis to reduce fire hazard where efforts are cost effective and the results will benefit BLM's fire management program. Cooperative efforts may range from consulting with private landowners on hazard reduction plans, to development of cooperative agreements and performance of hazard reduction.

The suppression policy of the Shoshone District is to extinguish fires with the least amount of surface disturbance possible. Whenever burning conditions and terrain are such that direct attack is not feasible, the suppression strategy is to burn out from existing natural barriers and established control points, such as roads.

Surface disturbing equipment, such as bulldozers, are utilized only with management approval. First priority is clearing of existing roads and second priority, when all other methods are exhausted, is construction of new control lines.

Selecting Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas for Wildlife (L11) From Agricultural Entry (T2) Areas

The following criteria are intended to ensure that sufficient habitat is provided for upland gamebirds, primarily winter habitat for ring-necked pheasants, within areas developed for intensive agriculture. Since pheasants are dependent on agriculture for survival, selection of tracts for wildlife management which would make agricultural development proposals unfeasible would benefit neither pheasants nor agricultural development. In these cases, arable land will not be selected for retention and management as L11 areas.

1. Tracts selected for management as L11 areas will be distributed through the T2 areas so that areas developed for agriculture are within one-half mile of suitable winter cover.

2. Tracts will generally be selected in areas with existing suitable winter habitat (sagebrush live crown cover greater than 15 percent). However, tracts with potential for developing suitable cover could be selected if their location is key.

3. The minimum size of selected tracts will be 20 acres.

4. Tracts will not be selected from areas subjected to grazing unless the grazing is subsequently excluded.

Range Improvements

The following design features, construction practices, and mitigation measures are common to the several kinds of range improvements proposed in the Monument RMP. Structural improvements are generally installations which help control livestock distribution, while nonstructural improvements are vegetation treatments.

Structural Improvements

Fences. New fences will provide exterior allotment boundaries, divide allotments into pastures, and protect sites having other values from livestock disturbance. Fencing will be three or four-strand barbed-wire built in accordance with BLM specifications. In big-game habitat, fences will be constructed in accordance with BLM Manuals and handbooks to facilitate wildlife movements. Existing fences that create wildlife movement problems will be modified. Where fences cross existing roads, cattleguards or gates will be installed. Gates will be installed every half mile and in corners, as needed. Fence lines may be cleared to the extent necessary for construction, but mechanical clearing of vegetation to bare soil will not be allowed.

Cattleguards. Cattleguards will be 8 feet across and 12 to 24 feet wide, depending upon the road type and traffic pattern.

Wells. Wells will generally be located on high points so that outlying troughs may be supplied by gravity flow from a storage tank adjacent to the well. In addition to the tank, the well site will generally have a well house to protect the generator, and will be enclosed by a fence. Open storage tanks will have bird ladders to allow wildlife use. All applicable State laws and regulations which apply to the development of ground water will be observed. Disturbed areas will be reseeded.

Pipelines and Troughs. Water pipelines will be buried in a trench excavated by a backhoe, with excavated material used for the backfill. Rigid plastic pipe may be used. Flexible pipe may also be installed with a ripper tooth. Valves will be installed at intervals along each pipeline to allow easy drainage to prevent freezing. Troughs will be placed where needed to provide an even distribution of livestock water. Each trough will have a bird ladder to allow wildlife use. Separate wildlife water storage and watering devices may also be constructed at regular intervals. Disturbed areas will be reseeded.

Roads. Several miles of new roads will be bladed to provide access to new water developments and to grazing areas which now receive little use. Existing

vegetation will be eliminated and the soil surface will be bared. Depending upon the amount of traffic, herbaceous vegetation could reestablish itself upon the new roads without impairing their function.

Nonstructural Improvements

"Sage Grouse Management in Idaho" (Autenrieth 1981) will be used as a reference to assist in the design of proposed projects in sage grouse habitat.

Prescribed Fire. Prescribed fire may be used to release the native understory from sagebrush competition in areas proposed for brush control (see the Monument RMP decision map). Burning will be done to meet the objectives of this plan and in accordance with site-specific prescribed burn plans. The plant succession implications discussed in Appendix B of the Final EIS for the Monument RMP will be carefully weighed in preparing burn plans. Where wildlife habitat is a major consideration, areas will be burned to create a mosaic of shrubby and herbaceous vegetation. Burned areas will be rested from livestock grazing for two growing seasons following treatment.

Plowing, Disking, and Seeding. This treatment will be used to eliminate brush and cheatgrass competition in order to establish new seedings. Treatment will be done in irregular patterns. Size limitations on individual treatment areas may be necessary in major wildlife habitat areas. Burrowing owl nest sites will not be treated. Seed will generally be planted with a standard rangeland drill. The seed mixture will include grass, forb, and shrub seeds as appropriate for the specific site and management objectives. Treated areas will not be grazed for at least two growing seasons following treatment.

Chemical Control of Vegetation. The use of chemicals to control unwanted vegetation will be considered when it is environmentally acceptable and a cost-effective method to meet management goals and objectives. All regulations and policies regarding the use of chemicals on public land will be followed.

Cost Effectiveness of Range Improvements

A benefit/cost analysis for AMP improvement packages was completed before issuance of the RMP decisions. The benefit/cost analysis will be used to help prioritize allotment investments based on projected economic returns. The analysis may be updated to reflect changes in economic conditions.

Maintenance of Range Improvements

Structural improvements will be maintained by the permittees, while roads and vegetation treatments will be maintained by the BLM.

Grazing Systems

Rest-Rotation Grazing

Under a rest-rotation grazing system, the allotment is divided into pastures, usually with comparable grazing capacities. Grazing is deferred on various pastures during succeeding years in a rotation sequence with complete rest for a year also included in a planned sequence. Each pasture is systematically grazed and rested so that livestock production and other resource values are provided for, while the vegetation cover is simultaneously maintained or improved. This practice provides greater protection of the soil resource against wind and water erosion.

Any of several rest-rotation grazing systems may be used, depending upon the objectives for the allotment and the number of pastures.

Modified Rest-Rotation Grazing

The usual modification in the planning area is that spring and/or fall sheep grazing is permitted in the pasture which is rested from cattle use. There may be limitations on the amount of sheep use that can be made.

Deferred Rotation Grazing

Deferred rotation is the postponement of grazing on different parts of an allotment in succeeding years. This allows each pasture to rest successively during the growing season to permit seed production, establishment of seedlings, and restoration of plant vigor (American Society of Range Management 1964). One or more pastures are grazed during the spring, while the remaining one or more pastures are rested until after seed ripening of key species, and then grazed. Deferred rotation grazing differs from rest rotation grazing in that no yearlong rest is provided.