



April 30, 2015

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Travis Ames
PO Box 768
Pinedale, WY 82941

Dear Mr. Ames:

Following are the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's (WDA) comments pertaining to Pinedale Bureau of Land Management Field Office's (BLM) Environmental Assessment (EA) proposing to renew the livestock grazing permit for the James Ryegrass and Webb Draw Pasture allotments.

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this project impacts our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and continue to provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

WDA appreciates the concerted efforts to revise and reissue the EA. We are in support of the Proposed Action, which incorporates the designated acres and Animals Unit Months (AUMs) of the Ball Horse Creek allotment into the James Ryegrass allotment. We offer the following comments to include in the Final Decision:

Page 6 and 7: The EA determined Standard 2 was not met for several reasons, including: *"drought, historic irrigation alterations, road crossings, natural gas pipeline crossings, wildlife use, and livestock grazing."* We support the efforts proposed to address the riparian areas not meeting standards, but urge BLM to ensure the other contributing factors are considered in the analysis. Livestock grazing was not determined the causal factor; therefore, the BLM should not solely rely on changes to livestock grazing management alone to improve riparian areas.

One of the projects proposed on page 11, last paragraph, includes a boundary fence. However, the same paragraph also includes information regarding an enclosure to *"...consist of a pole top and 2 smooth wires spaced to wildlife friendly spec."* WDA recommends the specifications for the enclosure are kept separate from the three acre enclosure project.

We are very concerned about the second paragraph on page 14 stating *"Upon failure to meet the terms and conditions in 2 years of any consecutive 5 year period, the grazing permit would be modified and reissued..."* WDA believes this statement has the potential to have multiple interpretations. There

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is no set start or end date to the five year period, thus creating ambiguity and an ongoing interpretation.

Another concern is BLM modifying and reissuing a new permit with changes to meet new terms and conditions. The ramifications of this are immense and we strongly oppose this. The BLM already included Term and Condition 6, stating *"If grazing use consistently exceeds appropriate use levels..."* WDA strongly recommends removal of the paragraph *"Upon failure to meet..."* in its entirety. Additionally we strongly urge BLM to include adaptive management practices to provide flexibility while addressing a localized issue. An example might include: *"If the allotment does not meet the terms and conditions, then BLM will work cooperatively with the grazing permittee to implement adaptive management practices to address the needs of the allotment."*

We are concerned BLM is proposing additional stipulations on page 61, second paragraph. The statement reads as follows;

"Under the proposed action, the grazing operator would be able to renew the lease for the James Ryegrass (12102) and Webb Draw Pasture (02101) Allotments and would continue to authorize grazing use. However, stipulations would be added to better define the limits of grazing management and the kind and amount of flexibility and the allowed use would help the BLM achieve land health standards and other resource objectives."

Merriam-Webster¹ defines "stipulation" as "something that is required as part of an agreement; a condition, requirement, or item specified in a legal instrument." We do not support adding stipulations when there are already previous terms and conditions in place. Also as previously stated, we strongly urge utilizing "adaptive management" options to address localized problem areas, without blanketing the entire permit with unnecessary "stipulations."

The following page indicated the No Action Alternative would *"continue to meet the upland standards for rangeland health but standard 2 would not be met and would not meet the PRMP livestock and riparian objectives."* WDA strongly disagrees with this statement and recommends BLM revise accordingly. The current permit allows the permittee to implement changes in livestock management practices, with time could meet Standard 2, including but not limited to using range riders or changing supplement locations. Utilizing adaptive management practices in all future permit renewals is highly recommended to ensure flexibility.

The fifth paragraph on page 64 states, *"The other terms and conditions that are applied to the permit for upland and riparian areas would be beneficial to improve or maintain soil stability..."* Pages 12 and 13 include "Mandatory Terms and Conditions" and "Other Terms and Conditions." We understand all terms and conditions are "mandatory" and come with consequences for not following them. We recommend modifying the EA to reflect these concerns.

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stipulation>

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WDA recommends BLM include the cumulative impacts of the No Grazing Alternative to address the sale and development of private lands. Housing developments are undoubtedly a cumulative impact causing long term, negative impacts on multiple resources. Additionally, on page 81, the third paragraph states *"There would be an increase in fine fuels resulting from no grazing which could potentially increase the risk of wildfire within the CIAA."* We recommend analyzing the cumulative impact of wildfires burning from an un-grazed allotment to neighboring allotments, fences, and wildlife habitat, such as sage-grouse nesting areas.

In conclusion, we support BLM's efforts to renew the livestock grazing permit for the James Ryegrass and Webb Draw Pasture allotments. We look forward to working with you in the near future. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact Justin Williams, Senior Policy Analyst at 307-777-7067.

Sincerely,



Doug Miyamoto
Director

DM/jw

CC: Governor's Policy Office
Wyoming Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
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