CHANGE TO SEASON-OF-USE IN THE STARR WINTER PASTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT EA OR-026-01-021 ANDREWS RESOURCE AREA BURNS DISTRICT OFFICE ALLOTMENT #06020/GRAZING RECORD #362582

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Appendix A

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The 1996 Pueblo-Lone Mountain Allotment Management Plan (AMP) identified development of a new pasture, the Starr Winter Pasture. The AMP established the season-of-use for this pasture to be from November 1 to February 28, yearly. In the 5 years since the implementation of the AMP, the permittee, Nolan Edwards, has attempted to use the pasture as prescribed. However, due to the typically cold temperatures during the months of use, the livestock fail to utilize the upper elevations of the pasture and concentrate in the very lowest elevation portions. Mr. Edwards submitted a proposal to our office to effect a change in the season-of-use for the Starr Winter Pasture.

The purpose of this action is to allow the permittee early-season livestock use of cheatgrass in order to reduce competition between cheatgrass and native perennial forage species, while promoting an even utilization pattern throughout the entire pasture.

A change to the livestock season-of-use in the Starr Winter Pasture is needed in order to accomplish the desired livestock forage use and utilization pattern.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) incorporates by reference the 1996 Pueblo-Lone Mountain AMP EA OR-026-93-030, in its entirety. The 1996 EA addresses all critical elements consistent with the alternatives presented in this document, with the exception of Environmental Justice. Environmental Justice will be addressed in this EA, with regard to the alternatives presented.

This EA is consistent with the 1982 Andrews Management Framework Plan, the 1983 Andrews Grazing Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the 1989 Final Oregon Wilderness EIS.

CHAPTER II. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. Proposed Action

Change the established season-of-use in the Starr Winter Pasture from November 1 through February 28 to February 1 through March 31. No increase or decrease will occur to the allocated forage within the pasture. Livestock numbers will be adjusted to accommodate the shorter season-of-use. A greater number of livestock utilizing the pasture for a shorter season-of use will result in no change of livestock impacts to the resources in the pasture, since this will result in the same net number of animal-days in the pasture.

B. No Action Alternative - Considered But Not Analyzed In Detail

Livestock would continue to utilize the Starr Winter Pasture from November 1 to February 28. The objectives of decreasing cheatgrass competition and obtaining more uniform livestock forage utilization would not be achieved under this alternative. As such, no further analysis was conducted.

CHAPTER III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment was adequately described in the 1996 Pueblo-Lone Mountain AMP EA, with the exception of Environmental Justice and migratory birds. The proposed action, as described, does not affect minority populations or low income communities (E.O. 12898) or migratory birds (Recent E.O.).

CHAPTER IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The environmental consequences and cumulative effects of livestock grazing in this pasture were addressed in the 1996 Pueblo-Lone Mountain AMP EA. The proposed change to the season-of-use would allow livestock to utilize the early season green-up on cheatgrass, while providing for primarily dormant season use of native perennial grasses. This early season use of cheatgrass would aid in decreasing later competition between cheatgrass and more desirable perennial grass species. As an annual plant, cheatgrass seedlings would be weakened by livestock grazing during their initial growth period. The perennial native grasses, utilized primarily during their dormant stage, would still be allowed a full season of growth and seed production after livestock were removed at the end of March, thus providing the same positive plant responses as earlier season winter livestock use.

The current season-of-use also limits livestock utilization of the upper elevation portions of the pasture. Snow cover at the upper elevation of the pasture is typically heavier than on the valley floor, and makes this forage unavailable for livestock use. Livestock use is concentrated on the lower elevation forage by necessity, and the resultant uneven utilization pattern cannot be remedied through herding or salting practices. The milder temperatures associated with 2 months of use during February and March will result in reduced snowpack and more availability of dormant forage. This will allow livestock to better utilize the upper elevation portions of the pasture, thereby producing a more desirable pattern of forage utilization. The utilization pattern could then be further improved through herding and salting practices.

CHAPTER V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Carolyn Chad - Preparer/Rangeland Management Specialist
Nolan Edwards - Permittee
Gary Foulkes - Environmental and Planning Coordinator
Terri Geisler - Geologist/Hazardous Materials Coordinator
Rick Hall - Natural Resource Specialist
Bruce Hazen - Water Quality Technician
Brian McCabe - Archaeologist
Cynthia Weston - Fisheries Biologist