

USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Andrews Resource Area, Burns District
Hines, Oregon 97738

Finding of No Significant Impact
and
Decision Record
for
Stonehouse Allotment Management Plan
Environmental Assessment

OR-026-99-47

An evaluation of rangeland monitoring data for Stonehouse Allotment was completed by a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Interdisciplinary Team in April 1999, and approved by the Andrews Resource Area Field Manager on April 29, 1999. The evaluation determined that the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on Public Lands Administered by the BLM in Oregon and Washington (August 12, 1997) were not being met. The watershed function of riparian/wetlands was not achieved, standards for watershed function of uplands (5,408 acres) were determined to be at-risk, functioning of ecological processes were also determined to be at-risk, and the standard for water quality and locally important species (redband trout) were not achieved. Livestock were determined to be the causal factor for not achieving the standards for watershed function of riparian/wetlands, water quality and for locally important species. Additionally, current management is not in conformance with Guidelines 1 and 6 which are:

1. The season, timing, frequency, duration and intensity of livestock grazing use should be based on physical and biological characteristics of the site and management unit.
6. Provide periodic rest from grazing for rangeland vegetation during critical growth periods to promote plant vigor, reproduction and productivity.

The BLM, Burns District, Andrews Resource Area has analyzed the effects of implementing the Stonehouse Allotment Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (AMP/EA) to achieve the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on Public Lands Administered by the BLM in Oregon and Washington (August 12, 1997), and allotment objectives outlined in the Stonehouse AMP/EA.

This proposal is in conformance with objectives and land use plan allocations in the 1982 Andrews Management Framework Plan, the 1983 Andrews Grazing Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the Proposed Andrews Management Unit/Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area Resource Management Plan. The proposed action is in conformance with objectives of, and would help achieve standards for, rangeland health, in Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management for Public Land Administered by the BLM in the States of Oregon and Washington.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental effects contained in the attached EA and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects discussed in the EA have been disclosed. Analysis indicated no significant effects on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Burns District, Andrews Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely affected. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse effects to prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplains, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Floodplains, wetlands, riparian habitat, and water quality would be protected and enhanced.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State or local natural resource-related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative effects related to other actions that would have a significant adverse effect were identified or are anticipated.

8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural resource surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance or other means, no adverse effects to significant cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or use areas or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as identified by the Environmental Justice policy.
9. No adverse effects were identified to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.
10. Wildlife habitat would improve.
11. The proposed action would enhance and protect the integrity of watershed function, improve watershed stability, and decrease accelerating erosion by increasing vegetation cover and litter, and reduce the amount of exposed soil.
12. Riparian condition would be improved. Stream functionality would be improved by increasing hydric herbaceous and deciduous riparian woody species vegetation cover and improving bank stability. Wetland meadows would be improved by increasing hydric species vegetation cover and improving the functionality of these headwater meadows.
13. Improved grazing management opportunities would have a significant beneficial effect on overall visual quality as management actions improve vegetation communities.
14. Recreation opportunities would be enhanced as the overall health of the land improves.
15. This proposed action is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.
16. All actions are in accordance with the Interim Management Policy for Wilderness Study Areas and would not have any negative effects on potential wilderness values.

Having considered a range of alternatives and associated effects within the analysis of the Stonehouse AMP/EA, it is my decision to implement Option A of the proposed action. The proposed action established the best combination of management actions to achieve the best overall health of the landscape, while providing for the best livestock management upon Federal lands.

I have selected the proposed action for the following reasons:

The proposed action provides for the most flexibility while at the same time controlling the timing, duration, and intensity of grazing by providing for periodic rest.

The proposed action allows for adaptive management that lends consideration to past years monitoring results and climatic conditions.

The proposed action improves landscape diversity by improving landscape health.

The proposed action is in compliance with the Proposed Andrews Management Unit/Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area Resource Management Plan (2004).

The proposed action is in compliance with Federal laws that mandate the management of public land resources (Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976).

The decision does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation.

I have also considered alternatives to the proposed action including:

Alternative I – Three Pasture Adaptive Rotational Grazing. I did not select this alternative because it limits the amount of management available to be used to accomplish objectives.

Alternative II – Early Season Use Only. I did not select this alternative as it does not properly address riparian areas or the actions that need to take place to improve them, in addition, no management actions are proposed to improve uplands.

Alternative III – No Action. I did not select this alternative as no progress will be made within the allotment to achieve allotment objectives.

Alternative IV – Two Pasture, Early-Deferred Rotational Grazing. I did not select this alternative because it does not adequately address management objectives (Standards for Rangeland Health).

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is filed, your notice must be filed in the Burns District Office, 28910 Hwy 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738 by September 26, 2004. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed is in error.

If you wish to file a petition, pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21, for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the Appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
4. Whether or not the public interest favors granting the stay.

Signature on File

Karla Bird
Andrews Resource Area Field Manager

8/23/2004

Date