



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Surprise Field Office
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**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION**

Initiation of Public Scoping Grazing Permit Renewal for the Crooks Lake Allotment

Dear Interested Party:

The BLM proposes to reissue the grazing permits for livestock grazing on the Crooks Lake Allotment. The need for the action is to comply with the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision of April 2008 that allocates public land within the Crooks Lake Allotment for livestock grazing. Additionally there is a need to ensure that any livestock grazing in the allotment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the RMP and the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada, Standards for Rangeland (Land) Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management of July 2000 are achieved.

The BLM has been directed to renew all grazing permits using the information from the land health standards determinations or evaluations, and to complete environmental impact analysis. In accordance with that policy, the Surprise Field Office will analyze the environmental impacts of a reasonable range of alternatives, including an alternative to issue 10 year livestock grazing permits to qualified applicants on the Crooks Lake Allotment. The grazing permits or authorizations (including crossing or trailing permits) will include the type and level of use authorized, including the kind and number of livestock, the period of use, the amount of active use in animal unit months (AUMs), and terms and conditions for grazing use.

All grazing permits are issued in accordance with 43 CFR 4100. Grazing permits must be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Background Information

The Bureau of Land Management recently completed a Rangeland Health Assessment for the Crooks Lake Allotment. This assessment concluded that all standards were being met. The determination for the RHA was issued on December 30, 2008 and is posted on the Surprise Field Office homepage at http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/surprise/grazing_permit_renewals.html.

Overview of Affected Resources

The Crooks Lake Allotment is located four miles east of Fort Bidwell, California. The allotment lies in both northeastern California and northwestern Nevada at T45N, R18E and consists of 36,860 acres of public and 5,840 acres of private land (see attached map).

The Crooks Lake Allotment is categorized as "I" (Improve), meaning it is a high priority allotment with considerable public land, has significant resource and grazing management issues that require attention, along with a high potential for improvements in range condition.

Grazing Management

Current authorized use for the Crooks Lake Allotment allows cattle to utilize a total of 3062 AUMs from April 1 thru October 31; 26 AUMs from April 15 thru October 31 are authorized for horses.

Tables below display the permitted use summary and existing grazing schedule.

Permitted Use Summary

Allotment	Active AUMs	Suspended AUMs	Total Permitted Use
Crooks Lake (01107)	3,088	1,630	4,178

Existing Grazing Permit Schedule

Operator	Authorization Number	Number of livestock	Class	Season of use	Public AUMs	% Public Land
Fee Ranch Inc.	0402621	373	Cattle	4/1 – 10/31	2621	100
		4	Horse	4/15-10/31	26	100
Owen Schafer	0403239	63	Cattle	4/1 – 10/31	441	100
Total		436	Cattle	4/1 – 10/31	3062	100
		4	Horse	4/15-10/31	26	

Cultural Resources

The Crooks Lake Allotment contains a number of prehistoric and historic cultural resource sites. A number of these sites are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A portion of the allotment lies within the North Hays Range Cultural Resource Management Area.

Wildlife

Available information indicates approximately nineteen bird species occur within the allotment including sage-grouse. Two active sage-grouse leks and known summer use areas have been identified. One active and one historic golden eagle nest also occurs within the allotment. Mule deer and pronghorn antelope as well as numerous other game and non-game mammal species have also been observed within the allotment. Limited use by California bighorn sheep has been

documented by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Speckled dace, trout, and various aquatic macroinvertebrates are also found on the allotment.

Wild Horses

The Crooks Lake Allotment is not part of a Herd Management Area (HMA), although currently there are about 60 wild horses using the allotment yearlong from a HMA adjacent to the allotment.

Recreation

The allotment also provides opportunities for dispersed recreation. These opportunities include but are not limited to hunting, off highway vehicle (OHV) use, rock hounding and camping and fishing at Fee Reservoir.

The Land Health Determination

The rangeland health assessment and determination was completed in 2008 for the Crooks Lake Allotment. The following table contains the determination results. Note: if an assessment site does not meet a standard, then the standard was considered not met for the entire allotment.

Table 1. Achievement of Rangeland Health Standards Crooks Lake Allotment

Rangeland Health Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Current livestock are a causal factor for not meeting Yes or No	Remarks (locations, etc.)
Upland Soils	✓			The Standard for Upland Soils is currently being met for the Crooks Lake Allotment #01107. The standard achievement determination was based on information/data from the 1999 Washoe County Soil Surveys - North Part, Crooks Lake Upland Health Assessments, actual use data, composite utilization mapping and photos taken during the assessment process, along with management records, monitoring data, and observations on the allotment since 1988. Data from the four Upland Health Assessments rated Soil/Site Stability as stable and Hydrologic Function as functioning for all sites evaluated. Ocular observations made during the upland health assessments also verified the above determination that the allotment has an abundance of total cover to protect the soil from wind and water (raindrop and surface flow) impacts.
Stream Health	✓			The Standard for Stream Health is currently being met for the Crooks Lake Allotment #01107. The standard achievement determination was based on data collected during the Riparian Functional Assessment and water quality sampling on 06/26/2008 for one unnamed drainage. The unnamed drainage is between Crooks Lake and Poison Springs. The two designated reaches within this drainage are properly functioning and maintain a healthy component of herbaceous and woody vegetation (willows and aspens).

Riparian/ Wetland	✓			<p><u>The Standard for Riparian Wetland Areas</u> is currently being met for the Crooks Lake Allotment. A variety of species and age classes were noted at all sites. Riparian and wetland vegetation is controlling erosion, stabilizing stream banks, shading water areas to reduce water temperature, filtering sediment, aiding in floodplain development, dissipating energy, delaying floodwater and increasing recharge of ground water that is characteristic for these sites. Vegetation surrounding seeps and springs is controlling erosion and reflects the potential natural vegetation for the site.</p>
Water Quality	✓			<p><u>The Standard for Water Quality</u> is currently being met for the Crooks Lake Allotment #01107. The standard achievement determination was based on data collected during the Riparian Functional Assessment and water quality sampling on 06/26/2008 for one unnamed drainage. The unnamed drainage is between Crooks Lake and Poison Springs. The two designated reaches within this drainage are properly functioning and maintain a healthy component of herbaceous and woody vegetation (willows and aspens). The presence of trout and macroinvertebrates as well as the vigorous and healthy vegetation component supports a conclusion that this standard is being met.</p>
Bio-diversity	✓			<p><u>The Standard for Biodiversity</u> is currently being met for the Crooks Lake Allotment. Monitoring has indicated several key upland vegetative parameters have been compromised as a result of historic grazing. However these changes have not resulted in observed biological diversity outside of expected natural fluctuations.</p> <p>Riparian values are considered very high for the allotment and riparian conditions are good to excellent at all sites. The presence of trout, dace, and abundant macroinvertebrates in the small stream reaches, coupled with the vigorous and diverse distribution of key riparian woody and herbaceous vegetation provides a strong indicator that all necessary components are being met for instream aquatic life in the allotment.</p>

Request for Input

Please submit any comments that you have regarding this permit renewal to the Surprise Field Office by August 31, 2009. We will use your comments and those received from other interested parties to identify issues and alternatives for consideration in the Environmental Assessment (EA). You will receive a copy of the EA and proposed decision, which are expected to be issued in late September 2009.

Thank you for participating in this grazing permit renewal process. If you have questions, or if you're not interested in receiving any addition information related to this proposed action, please call Steve Surian or Steve Mathews at (530) 279-6101.

Your comments maybe submit to the address below:

By Mail:
Bureau of Land Management
Surprise Field Office
Attn: Steve Mathews
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

By E-mail: smathews@ca.blm.gov

Sincerely,


Shane DeForest
Acting Field Manager

Shane DeForest,
Surprise Field Manager

Crooks Lake Allotment Map, attached

