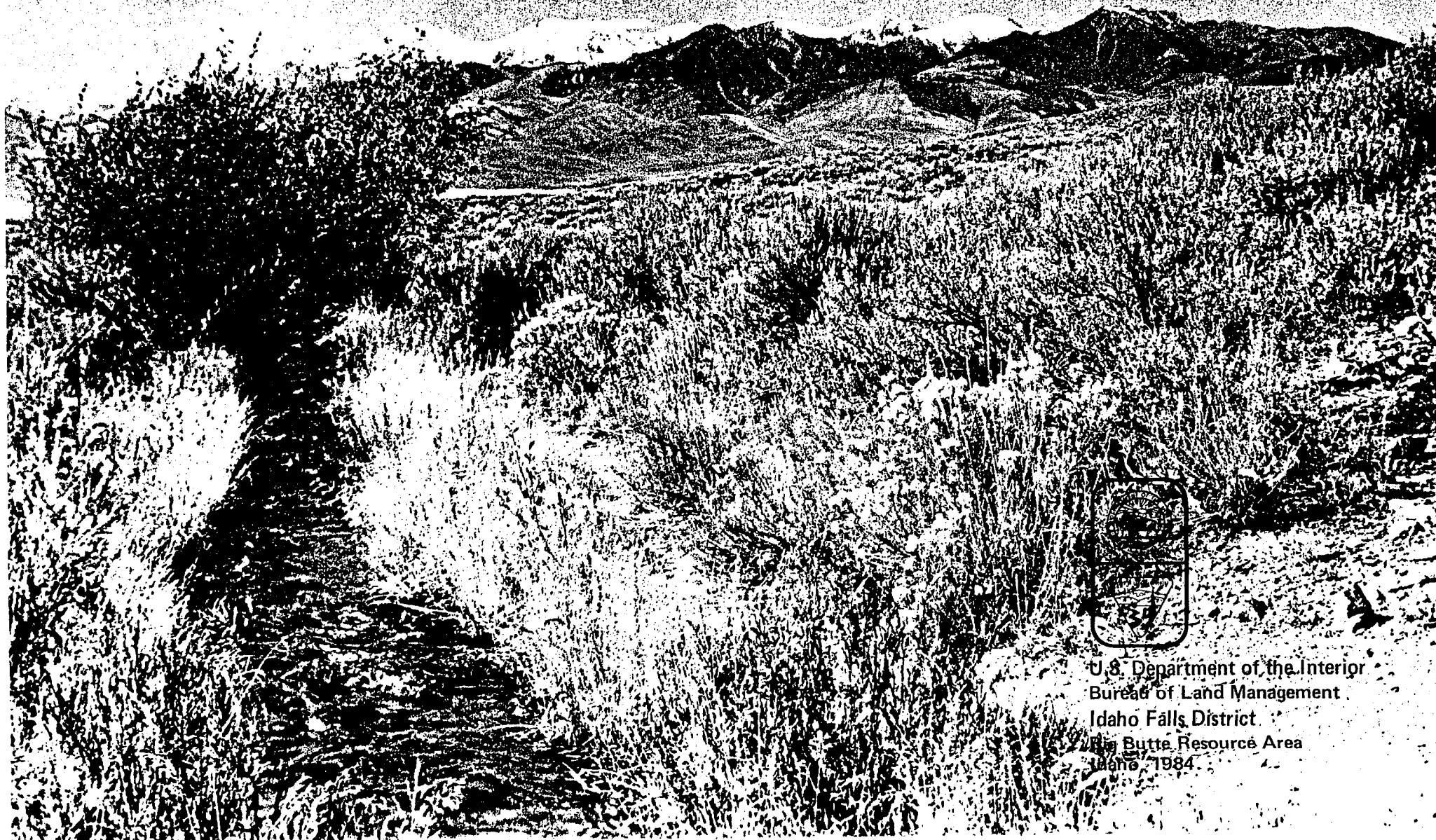


BY LOST LAND USE DECISIONS & RANGELAND PROGRAM SUMMARY



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho Falls District
Big Butte Resource Area
June 1984

KEY TO ALLOTMENTS

IDAHO
1984

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1000 Alder Creek | 1035 Bliss |
| 1001 Upper Elbow | 1036 Stoddard Creek |
| 1002 Beaverland Pass | 1037 Era Flat |
| 1003 Arco Peak | 1039 Rocky Canyon |
| 1004 King Spring | 1040 Martin Pasture |
| 1005 Serviceberry | 1041 Lower Elbow |
| 1006 Deadman | 1050 Champagne Creek NE |
| 1007 Blizzard Mountain | 1051 Huggins |
| 1008 Dry Fork | 1022 Mahogany |
| 1009 Judd Brown Canyon | 1023 McGee-Berry |
| 1010 North Lava Craters | 1024 Hammond Canyon |
| 1011 Crawford Canyon | 1025 Techick Canyon |
| 1012 Marsh Canyon | 1026 Latham Hollow-Timbered Dome |
| 1013 Waddoups Canyon | 1027 Champagne Creek SW |
| 1014 Earl Smith | 1028 Champagne-Chicken Creek |
| 1015 Sheep Mountain | 1029 Trail Creek |
| 1016 Leslie Butte | 1030 Goodman Canyon |
| 1017 Beck Canyon | 1031 Appendicitis Hill |
| 1018 Newman Canyon | 1032 Aikele |
| 1019 Sorensen | 1033 George |
| 1020 Harger Point | 1034 Nichols |
| 1021 Dry Canyon | |

- COUNTY BOUNDARY.....
- PLANNING UNIT BOUNDARY.....
- U.S.F.S., I.N.E.L. & NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY.....
- TOWNSHIP LINE.....
- HIGHWAY / ROAD.....
- RIVER / STREAM.....
- TOWNS.....

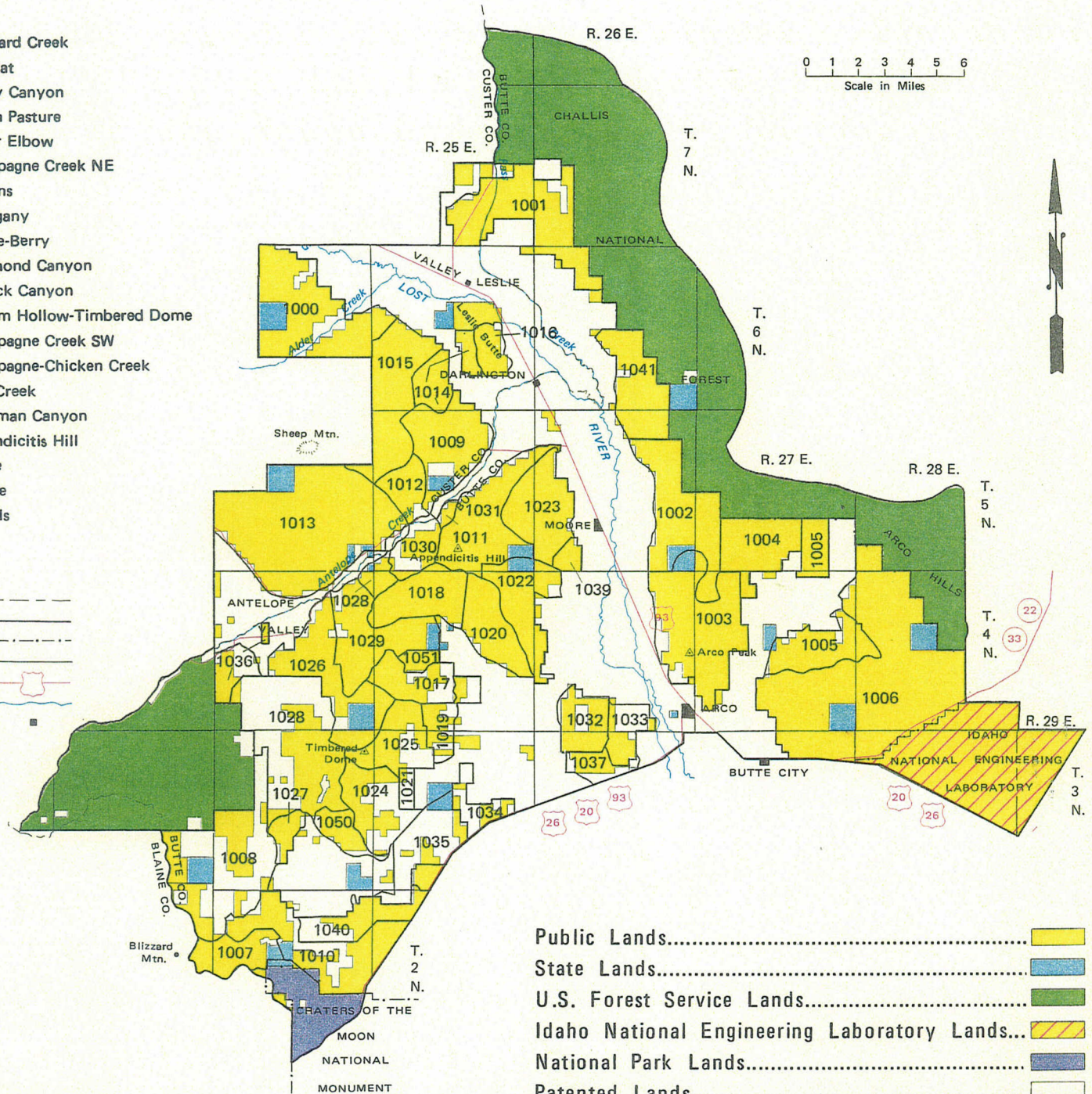


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Cover photo: Pass Creek makes its way down from the Lost River Mountains into the Big Lost Valley near Leslie. The White Knob Mountains rim the far side of the valley.

INTRODUCTION

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, land, wildlife, mineral, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial Affairs are also concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources."

The Department works to assure the wisest choices in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States — now and in the future.

The Bureau of Land Management, an agency in the Department of the Interior, administers programs for conservation and development of the public lands and resources. In Idaho, there are six Bureau of Land Management districts with offices in Idaho Falls, Boise, Burley, Salmon, Shoshone, and Coeur d'Alene.

This document summarizes land use decisions for the Big Lost Management Framework Plan (MFP) and the Big Lost Unit portion of the Big Lost-Mackay Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A separate brochure covering land use decisions for the Mackay Unit is available from the Salmon District Office.

Because of the large number and complexity of the land use decisions, it is not possible to present all of them here. Therefore, we have highlighted the most significant decisions in each resource program.

The complete Big Lost Plan, EIS, and all related documents are available for your review at the Idaho Falls District Office. My entire staff and I are available to discuss the decisions and help you review the documents. In order to meet public needs and to cope with changing local and national conditions, we expect to revise the Big Lost Plan from time to time. Significant changes will be done with full public participation. The range section of this summary will be updated periodically to maintain public awareness of management decisions and progress in the range program.

Thanks to everyone who assisted in this effort. We look forward to working with you again.

O'dell A. Frandsen
District Manager
Idaho Falls District

April, 1984

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Big Lost Planning Unit contains 160,649 acres of public land managed by the Big Butte Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Butte and Custer Counties. Table 1 shows planning unit acreage by ownership and management responsibility. The Department of Energy acreage represents land within the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL), a withdrawal of public and private lands for nuclear research and development.

The major population centers are Arco, Moore, Darlington, Leslie, and Butte City. The rest of the area is rural and rangeland.

The public lands lie in the valley of the Big Lost River and in the foothills of the Lost River Range on the east, and the Pioneer and White Knob Mountains on the west. These lands are used primarily for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, watershed, and recreation. Livestock production, agriculture, and the INEL are the major sources of area income.

The public lands in the Big Lost area have four major vegetation types that make up about 80 percent of the unit: big sagebrush, low sagebrush, black sagebrush, and mountain mahogany woodland. More than 96 percent of public lands in the unit is composed of native vegetation. Yearly precipitation ranges from about 11 inches at Arco to over 20 inches in the upper foothills. Elevations range from 5,320 feet near Butte City to over 8,350 feet on Timbered Dome west of Arco.

TABLE 1

Land Ownership in the Big Lost Unit

<u>Land Ownership</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Public Lands (BLM)	160,649
Department of Energy Withdrawal (INEL)	13,350
U. S. Forest Service	72,960
State	8,960
National Park Service	3,790
Private	122,942
TOTAL	<u>382,651</u>

MAJOR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Major issues and problems result from present and potential land use conflicts, unavoidable environmental impacts of resource use and development, and social and economic impacts on local communities and lifestyles.

These issues and problems were identified through the BLM's planning and EIS process, both of which involved public participation. The following section describes the issues and problems for each resource.

SIGNIFICANT MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The capability of the land provides the basis for management decisions. Therefore, major considerations in the Big Lost land use decisions were soils, geology, climate, topography, wildlife, and vegetation along with public demand.

The following decisions are not all-inclusive because only the most significant are presented here. You may examine the complete set of decisions at the Idaho Falls BLM District Office.



The Big Lost River winds through cottonwoods north of Arco.

RANGELAND PROGRAM SUMMARY

This section summarizes the rangeland management decisions for the Big Lost Unit. Multiple use planning and the grazing environmental impact statement provide the basis for these decisions. This summary conforms to Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4160.1-1(a). The summary also conforms to the record of decision requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Table 2 provides data for each allotment relating to management decisions. A few of the allotment acreages in the table differ from those presented in the EIS. These differences are due to allotment boundary and land status corrections.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Since 1980, many formal and informal public contacts were involved in the planning process producing comments and ideas that were included in the draft grazing environmental impact statement (EIS). This EIS went out for public review and comment in April of 1983. Significant public comments on several planning issues and the draft EIS led to the development of an additional alternative and other changes in the final EIS, which was released in September of 1983. Further public contacts will be made as the decisions are implemented and for any major decision changes.

BACKGROUND

A total of 157,800 acres of public land and 13,350 acres of withdrawn land on the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory are included in grazing allotments within the Big Lost Unit. Two of these allotments have portions outside the unit with 5,650 acres of public land and 16,069 acres on the INEL in the Big Desert Unit. Sixty-two livestock operators are licensed to graze on 42 allotments. Active grazing preference (see Glossary) totals 17,304 AUMs. Cattle account for 90 percent of the livestock use, while sheep (9 percent) and horses (1 percent) make up the remainder.

Rangeland condition in the unit is 67 percent good, 25 percent fair, and 8 percent poor. About 15 percent of the area is unsuitable for livestock grazing due to steep slopes, heavy timber, rock outcrops, lava flows, or distance to water. Most range condition problems are due to lack of rotation grazing systems and/or poor distribution of livestock caused by steep terrain and distance to water.

RANGELAND DECISIONS

IMPLEMENT THE MAJOR ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN ALTERNATIVE E OF THE EIS.

Analysis of all elements of Alternative E is documented in the Final Big Lost-Mackay Grazing EIS. This alternative was developed as a result of public comment on the draft EIS and is the same as Alternative A with respect to the initial livestock stocking rate and grazing systems. Alternative E, however, presents a more desirable approach to livestock management on crucial wildlife habitat by mitigating adverse impacts of range improvements on these areas. This preferred alternative provides a desirable balance between resource improvement, land uses, and economic and social conditions. All practical means of avoiding or minimizing adverse environmental impacts have been made a part of this alternative. The alternative is also the environmentally preferred alternative. The following section describes the elements in Alternative E that will be implemented.

THE INITIAL LEVEL FOR LIVESTOCK GRAZING IS 15,856 AUMs.

The initial stocking level for each allotment is shown in Table 2. Although some allotments would have more livestock grazing, sufficient forage would be available for current and projected big game population estimates made by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Overall, the allocation represents an 8.7 percent decrease from active grazing preference and a 12.2 percent increase from the 5-year average level of grazing. Most livestock increases depend on the development of range improvements that will allow implementation of grazing systems and improved livestock management.

On allotments where sufficient data are available, livestock use would be adjusted over a 5-year period beginning in 1985 according to the following schedule:

1. Grazing reductions in the first year would not exceed 10 percent of the previous year's active preference, except in Champagne Creek allotment where the entire 11 percent reduction will be implemented in 1985.
2. After consultation, cooperation, and coordination with livestock operators and other affected interests, the remaining balance of the reductions will be divided between the third and fifth years of the reduction schedule. Range condition, forage utilization, and actual use will be monitored each year to determine if the next reduction needs to be placed in effect.

On allotments where sufficient data are not available (see Table 2), monitoring studies will be initiated in 1984 to determine if adjustments are needed. If necessary, the adjustments would be implemented over the 5-year period beginning in 1987.

DEVELOP THE FOLLOWING RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT THE GRAZING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: 6,460 ACRES OF VEGETATION MANIPULATION, 7.25 MILES OF PIPELINE, 12 SPRING DEVELOPMENTS, 23 PONDS, 1.5 MILES OF FENCE, AND 5.5 MILES OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

All projects will be analyzed through an environmental analysis process. The environmental assessments will be available for public review at the Idaho Falls District Office.

TABLE 2
BIG LOST ALLOTMENT SUMMARY

ALLOTMENT	GRAZING SYSTEM	MANAGEMENT CATEGORY	FEDERAL LAND ACREAGE	LIVESTOCK CLASS C=cattle S=sheep H=horses	PREFERENCE AUMS (ACTIVE)	INITIAL STOCKING LEVEL (AUMS)	CHANGE FROM PREFERENCE (%)
ALDER CREEK	Deferred Rotation	Improve	5,680	C	501	501	
APPENDICITIS HILL	Seasonal	Improve	3,880	C	360	300	-17
BEAVERLAND PASS	Deferred Rotation	Improve	7,168	C,S	1,024	538	-47
BECK CANYON	Deferred Rotation	Improve	1,852	C	175	175 ^{1/}	
BLIZZARD MOUNTAIN	Deferred Rotation	Improve	1,960	C	540	270	-50
CHAMPAGNE CREEK	Deferred Rotation	Improve	1,812	C	205	182	-11
CHICKEN CREEK	Deferred Rotation	Improve	5,120	C,H	585	585	
CRATERS	Seasonal	Improve	7,250 ^{2/}	S,C	342	342	
CRAWFORD CANYON	Deferred Rotation	Improve	212	C	35	12 ^{3/}	-66
DEADMAN	Rest Rotation	Improve	53,419 ^{2/}	C	2,550	2,550	
EARL SMITH	Deferred Rotation	Improve	2,200	C	426	196	-54
ELBOW	Rest Rotation	Improve	7,129	C	330	497	+51
HAMMOND CANYON	Deferred Rotation	Improve	3,100	C	205	205	
HARGER POINT	Rest Rotation	Improve	3,008	C	320	280 ^{3/}	-13
HUGGINS	Deferred Rotation	Improve	686	C	58	58	
LATHAM HOLLOW	Deferred Rotation	Improve	4,777	C	665	545 ^{3/}	-18
LAVA CREEK	Seasonal	Improve	3,442	S,C	475	475	
LESLIE BUTTE	Seasonal	Improve	1,141	C	142	116 ^{3/}	-18
MARSH CANYON	Deferred Rotation	Improve	1,289	C	139	139	
MARTIN PASTURE	Seasonal	Improve	1,658	C	97	97	
MCGEE-BERRY CANYON	Rest Rotation	Improve	4,366	C,H	442	442	
NEWMAN CANYON	Deferred Rotation	Improve	3,699	C	428	251 ^{3/}	-41
NICKLES	Seasonal	Improve	603	C	10	45	+350
RAMSHORN CANYON	Rest Rotation	Improve	4,240	C	974	974	
ROCKY CANYON	Seasonal	Improve	597	C	300	119	-60
SERVICEBERRY	Deferred Rotation	Improve	4,576	C	382	382	
SHEEP MOUNTAIN	Deferred Rotation	Improve	6,066	C	720	720	
STODDARD CREEK	Seasonal	Improve	877	C	86	86	
TRAIL CREEK	Deferred Rotation	Improve	4,598	C,H	400	320 ^{3/}	-20
WADDOUPS CANYON	Seasonal	Improve	14,047	C	1,384	1,384	
ARCO PEAK	Deferred Rotation	Maintain	6,935	C	257	303	+18
JUDD BROWN CANYON	Seasonal	Maintain	3,740	C	540	540	
KING SPRING	Seasonal	Maintain	3,960	C	460	460	
MAHOGANY	Seasonal	Maintain	3,861	C	300	300	
SORENSEN	Seasonal	Maintain	1,148	C	152	152	
TECHICK CANYON	Seasonal	Maintain	2,723	C	139	159	+14
AIKELE	Seasonal	Custodial	1,871	C	120	120	
BLISS	Seasonal	Custodial	940	C	118	118	
DRY FORK	Seasonal	Custodial	4,116	C	640	640	
ERA FLAT	Seasonal	Custodial	740	C	55	55	
GEORGE	Seasonal	Custodial	972	C	94	94	
GOODMAN CANYON	Seasonal	Custodial	1,411	C	129	129	
TOTALS			192,869		17,304	15,856	-8

^{1/} Revised due to additional data collected after Big Lost-Mackay EIS.
^{2/} Part of the allotment is in the Big Desert unit.
^{3/} Additional data needed to support initial reduction.

IMPLEMENT REST-ROTATION GRAZING SYSTEMS ON 5 ALLOTMENTS, DEFERRED ROTATION ON 17 ALLOTMENTS, AND SEASONAL ON 20 ALLOTMENTS.

It is anticipated that range condition will improve through intensive grazing management. Some allotment boundaries will be adjusted for better management. (See Table 2 for the grazing system selected for each allotment.)

CLASSIFY ALL ALLOTMENTS INTO ONE OF THREE CATEGORIES TO ASSIGN MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES.

This "selective management" approach allows for the primary objective of identifying those allotments where resource conditions and conflicts warrant immediate action. All allotments would be managed. Those grouped in the improve category have either a significant resource conflict or have the most immediate potential for increasing vegetative productivity. They must also provide a positive return on investment. Allotments in the improve category have more than 20 percent public land.

Allotments in the maintain category have satisfactory resource conditions with limited or no land use conflicts. These allotments have high or moderate resource production potential, but with limited opportunity for economic return from increased production. More than 20 percent of the allotment must be public land.

Protecting existing resource values is the primary objective for custodial category allotments. Present management on these allotments is satisfactory or the only logical practice under existing conditions. Custodial allotments have no serious resource conflicts and vegetation production is below potential, but improvement is very limited.

First priority for intensive livestock grazing management and funding of range improvements would go to improve category allotments. Maintain and custodial category allotments would be second and last, respectively, in priority. (See Table 2 for the category selected for each allotment.)

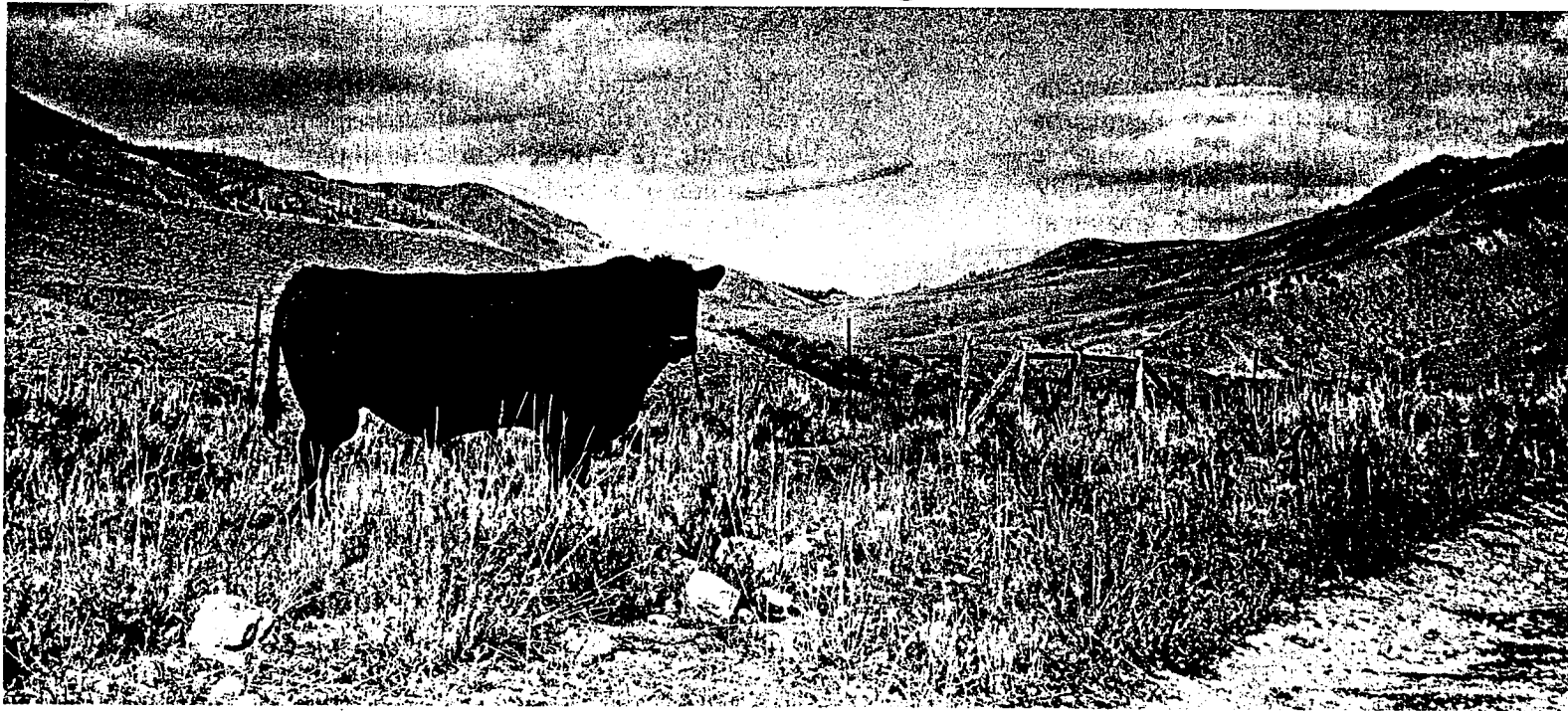
Impact Summary

Range condition and trend would improve substantially on 19 allotments that presently have no rotation grazing system or are overstocked. Vegetative cover is expected to increase, and soil erosion and compaction would decrease. Sufficient forage would be available for current and projected big game populations. Crucial wildlife habitat would receive significantly less impact than the original preferred Alternative A. Land treatments could have positive results for deer, antelope, and sage grouse due to mitigation measures included in standard operating procedures and design criteria.

It is estimated that overall rancher income would be increased by about \$18,000 initially and \$20,000 after 15 years. Secondary economic impacts would be about \$55,000 initially and \$7,000 after 15 years. Range improvement costs, if all were constructed, would total \$149,700.

OTHER EIS ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the four remaining alternatives addressed in the EIS, and the impacts that would have occurred had they been selected. The following summaries are taken from the final Big Lost-Mackay Grazing EIS and are for the Big Lost Unit only.



*Cattle allotment
in the Big Lost
Valley.*

ALTERNATIVE A – ORIGINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The initial stocking level for this alternative is the same as Alternative E at 15,856 AUMs. Proposed range improvements include 7 cattleguards, 31 ponds, 26 springs, 12.75 miles of pipeline, 24.5 miles of fence, 8 miles of waterhaul roads, 1 storage tank relocation, and 12,540 acres of vegetation manipulation.

Impact Summary

As in Alternative E, 15,856 AUMs represent a 12.2 percent increase over the 5-year average and an 8.4 percent decrease from the active preference. After 15 years, there would be a total of 28,502 AUMs available for livestock use, a 27 percent

increase over the 5-year average and an 8 percent increase over the preference. Range condition, soil erosion, watershed, and environmental consequences would be essentially the same as for Alternative E.

Wildlife habitat would be expected to decrease in quality under this alternative. The quality of winter range for elk, deer, and antelope would decrease to some extent along with summer range for deer. A more substantial decrease in the quality of elk summer range and sage grouse habitat would be expected, largely as a result of proposed range improvements. Riparian zones would continue an apparent downward trend in condition.

It is estimated that overall rancher income would be increased \$11,800 initially and \$4,900 after 15 years. Range improvement costs would total about \$161,650.

ALTERNATIVE B – NO ACTION

The initial stocking level would be the same as the 5-year average level of grazing use for livestock at 14,104 AUMs. Permittees could increase livestock use up to their total preference which is 17,304 for the Big Lost Unit. Range improvements would only be constructed where needed to maintain livestock grazing at the current level as funds were available. The level of range improvements would not be expected to exceed 25 percent of those identified for Alternative A.

Impact Summary

If grazing use were to continue at 14,104 AUMs, range condition would be expected to remain static or slightly decline after 15 years. It is estimated that 10 percent of the present condition class acreage would fall to the next lower condition class in 15 years.

Wildlife habitat would remain unchanged under this alternative along with soil erosion and watershed conditions.

Rancher income would not change as a result of this alternative. Secondary economic impacts would amount to about \$8,400 initially and \$400 after 15 years. Range improvement costs would be about \$40,000.

ALTERNATIVE C – DECREASED LIVESTOCK USE

The initial stocking level would be 13,804 AUMs under this alternative. Proposed range improvements include 1 cattleguard, 13 ponds, 12 springs, 8.25 miles of pipeline, 1.5 miles of fence, 5.5 miles of waterhaul roads, 1 storage tank relocation, and 6,160 acres of vegetation manipulation.

Impact Summary

The 13,804 AUMs of livestock grazing represent a 20 percent decrease from the preference. Decreases would be made in those allotments where use exceeds carrying capacity, but no increases would be made above the 5-year average.

Soil erosion would decline somewhat from 27 percent of the EIS area greater than 2 tons per acre per year to about 23 percent. Bank vegetation would show some improvement, but watershed conditions would essentially remain unchanged.

Wildlife habitat quality would be improved for elk winter and summer range and for deer summer range. Other wildlife habitat would be expected to decrease in quality. Riparian zones would continue an apparent downward trend in condition.

Overall rancher income would decline an estimated \$40,000 initially, but would increase by \$12,200 after 15 years. Secondary income changes would be about \$5,000 initially and \$3,700 after 15 years. Range improvement costs total \$168,500.

ALTERNATIVE D – NO GRAZING

Livestock grazing would be discontinued under this alternative and no AUMs would be authorized. All forage in the unit would be reserved for other uses. No new range management projects nor any livestock management facilities would be constructed.

Impact Summary

No livestock grazing would represent a 100 percent reduction in grazing use by livestock. All public land would show a long-term improvement. It is estimated that 50 percent of all the good, fair, and poor range condition class acreage would improve to the next condition class in 15 years. Vegetation would increase by about 4,600 AUMs, a 31.6 percent increase.

Soil erosion and watershed conditions would show significant improvement. About 17 percent of the area would remain at an annual rate of 2 tons per acre, and all facets of streambank stability would improve between 5 and 19 percent.

Wildlife habitat would improve in riparian areas. Elk and sage grouse habitat would improve, but deer and antelope range would decline over the long term where livestock grazing is now maintaining shrub cover. Elk habitat would improve more than habitat for other species due to elimination of competition for forage and cover.

This alternative would have a devastating effect on rancher income with annual losses of \$552,000 or about 91 percent of total rancher income. A secondary income loss of about \$135,000 would be expected, making a total regional annual income loss of \$686,700.

MONITORING

Studies and evaluation will follow implementation of each grazing system to determine if specific objectives are being met. Studies typically gather data from actual use, range trend, watershed condition, forage utilization, weather, carrying capacity, and wildlife habitat monitoring.

DEVELOP RANGELAND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND THE IDAHO FALLS BLM DISTRICT ALLOWING FOR ONE AGENCY TO MANAGE GRAZING ALLOTMENTS PRESENTLY BEING MANAGED BY BOTH AGENCIES.

In the Big Lost Planning Unit, ten allotments can be combined into five management units to be administered by one agency. The combining of two allotments into one can achieve improved grazing rotation management and significantly reduce agency administrative costs.

FORESTRY PROGRAM SUMMARY

Forested lands in the Big Lost Unit amount to about 9,400 acres, of which 5,600 acres are woodland (juniper, cottonwood, and/or aspen) and 3,800 acres are Douglas-fir forest. There are approximately 1,750 acres of Douglas-fir lands, containing some 4 million board feet of timber, considered productive and suitable for intensive timber production management. These productive areas occur in several scattered stands of 200 acres or less. The Appendicitis Hill Wilderness Study Area contains about 2,100 acres of Douglas-fir forest.

In the past, forest products supplied to local markets from these lands were very limited due to low productivity, steep slopes, and access problems. A few small fencepost and firewood sales have been made in the juniper woodlands.

FORESTRY DECISIONS

MANAGE 5,585 ACRES OF WOODLAND AND 1,750 ACRES OF PRODUCTIVE FOREST LAND TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF FOREST PRODUCTS TO MEET LOCAL MARKET DEMAND AND TO COMPLEMENT OTHER RESOURCE VALUES.

Small local markets exist for a variety of products including firewood, post and poles, mine props, and hobby materials.

MANAGE 2,100 ACRES OF FORESTED LAND IN THE APPENDICITIS HILL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA) AS SET-ASIDE ACREAGE PENDING A FINAL DECISION ON WILDERNESS STATUS.

Appendicitis Hill WSA has been recommended not suitable for wilderness designation in the Big Lost-Pahsimeroi Wilderness EIS. Demand for forest products is low in this area, and multiple use management of the WSA will depend upon a decision by Congress.

LANDS PROGRAM SUMMARY

The BLM's land program in the Big Lost area is primarily concerned with reviewing public lands for retention or disposal and providing lands for public purposes such as sanitary landfills and gravel pits. Other work includes access, agricultural trespass, and rights-of-way.

LANDS DECISIONS

BY 1987, PROVIDE LAND FOR LEASE TO BUTTE COUNTY FOR A SANITARY LANDFILL.

Although one solid waste site has been authorized near Moore, it has been completely used. The BLM is assisting Butte County in its effort to locate another suitable landfill site.

FOR APPROVAL OF DESERT LAND ENTRY APPLICATIONS, THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA WILL BE APPLIED TO DETERMINE IF SUCH LANDS ARE CAPABLE OF LONG-TERM CROP PRODUCTION:

- SOILS ARE RATED CLASS I, II, OR III (SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE CLASSIFICATION).
- WATER SUITABLE FOR IRRIGATION PURPOSES MUST BE AVAILABLE.
- AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IS ECONOMICALY FEASIBLE.
- DISPOSAL OF LANDS WOULD NOT IMPOSE UNACCEPTABLE CONSEQUENCES ON OTHER RESOURCE USES AND VALUES.

Although a tract of land may have soils that would support agriculture, other factors or conditions might make it unsuitable for agricultural development. Field examinations are conducted prior to issuing decisions which classify the land as suitable or unsuitable for disposal. Public lands which are being used for unauthorized agricultural uses are usually intermingled with private agricultural lands making management by the BLM difficult. Disposal of these lands would simplify management of other public lands and reduce administrative costs.

TRANSFER PUBLIC LANDS WHICH ARE DIFFICULT FOR THE BLM TO MANAGE OUT OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP BY:

- SALE BY COMPETITIVE BID.
- MAKING LAND AVAILABLE TO CITIES OR COUNTIES FOR RECREATION SITES OR OTHER PUBLIC PURPOSES.
- DESERT LAND ENTRY ACT.
- EXCHANGING WHEN IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

Transfer of lands out of public ownership would only occur where disposal would not create unacceptable consequences on other resource uses and values. The BLM's efforts should be directed toward lands that can be managed effectively and efficiently.

ISSUE RIGHTS-OF-WAY FOR THOSE UNAUTHORIZED FACILITIES WHERE THE IMPACTS DO NOT IMPOSE UNACCEPTABLE CONSEQUENCES TO OTHER RESOURCE USES AND VALUES.

By encouraging counties and others to legalize existing uses such as unauthorized roads and ditches, the BLM could protect users should the public land leave Federal ownership. This would also provide additional rental to the

United States for most of the rights-of-way, except from State or local governments where rights-of-way serve the general public. Applicants filing for unauthorized rights-of-way that existed before October 21, 1976, will not be required to reimburse the United States for the unauthorized use if they file before July 31, 1984.

RETAIN IN FEDERAL OWNERSHIP ALL RIPARIAN AREAS, PERMANENT WATER SOURCES, AND RANGES CRITICAL TO ANTELOPE, ELK, MULE DEER, AND SAGE GROUSE.

Critical wildlife ranges, water sources, and riparian areas are necessary to provide habitat requirements for many species.

Isolated tracts west of Arco are of particular concern due to antelope, deer, and sage grouse values associated with this area.

MINERALS PROGRAM SUMMARY

The BLM's minerals program in the Big Lost Unit is primarily concerned with:

1. Disposal of minerals by lease, permit, or sale;
2. Coordination of minerals development with other land uses;
3. Assurance of rehabilitation of mined land; and
4. Evaluation and processing of mineral patent applications and appraisals.

Minerals activity in the area is confined mainly to small mining operations, prospecting, limited oil and gas exploration, and extraction of mineral materials such as sand and gravel by county governments. Numerous mining claims for heavy metals are located in the western foothills of the unit.

The U.S. Geological Survey has classified areas near the Craters of the Moon lava flow as potentially valuable for geothermal resources. Over 60 percent of the open public oil and gas estate within the unit has been leased or is under lease application. The annual demand for sand and gravel is between 10,000 and 25,000 cubic yards, with an estimated \$300,000 worth of mineral materials having been mined up to this year.

MINERALS DECISION

KEEP THE FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE OPEN TO MAKE ENERGY MINERALS (GEOTHERMAL, OIL, GAS), LOCATABLE MINERALS (SILVER, LEAD, AND ZINC ORES;

AGATE; LIME), AND MINERAL MATERIALS (SAND, GRAVEL, CINDERS, RIPRAP, BUILDING STONE) AVAILABLE FOR USE ON A MANAGED AND CONTROLLED BASIS CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL ENERGY POLICIES AND PUBLIC DEMAND.

Energy development and providing an uninterrupted supply of mineral commodities from public lands has become an important national priority to reduce dependency on foreign mineral sources. All leases of oil, gas, and geothermal resources will contain stipulations that will protect wildlife, watershed, and wilderness study area values. The BLM has very little discretion involving mineral entry under the 1872 Mining Law, but provisions for protecting other resource values can be made. Material sites are used primarily for maintenance and construction of local roads and involve small parcels of land, usually without interference with other resource values.

RECREATION PROGRAM SUMMARY

Recreationists use public lands in the area primarily for hunting, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, sightseeing, and rockhounding. Fishing and camping areas are very limited (except on adjacent National Forest lands) because the major streams in the area are mostly on private land. Recreationists use the public land year-round, but most use occurs during the fall hunting season.

A portion of the Oregon Trail known as Goodale's Cutoff has been accepted in the National Register of Historic Places and is located on public lands near Craters of the Moon National Monument. There are two wilderness study areas in the planning unit totaling about 35,450 acres.

RECREATION DECISIONS

OBTAIN LEGAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS ACROSS PRIVATE LANDS TO TIMBERED DOME, APPENDICITIS HILL, AND HAMMOND CANYON.

The BLM manages large tracts of land in the hills west of Arco that are important recreation areas but have limited legal access.

DESIGNATE ALL PUBLIC LANDS IN THE AREA AS OPEN TO OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE EXCEPT WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS AND THE ARCO HILLS WHERE USE WILL BE RESTRICTED TO EXISTING ROADS AND TRAILS.

The Arco Hills (north and east of Arco), Appendicitis Hills, and White Knob have steep slopes and shallow soils with high erosion potential, and ORV use is increasing. These areas will be monitored to determine if the restriction is sufficient to protect vegetation, soils, and visual resources. All other areas will be monitored to determine if restrictions are necessary.

RECOMMEND TO CONGRESS AS NOT SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS THE APPENDICITIS HILL AND WHITE KNOB MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS.

Congress has ultimate authority in designation of wilderness. The reasons for a non-wilderness recommendation by the BLM are the following:

1. Even though the WSAs possess wilderness characteristics, the areas are not necessary to expand opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation or significantly improve geographic distribution of wilderness areas.
2. The WSAs would be difficult to manage as wilderness over the long term.

3. Should habitat conditions for deer and elk decline further, wilderness management would limit mechanical techniques needed to reverse the process.

MANAGE ALL PUBLIC LANDS IN A MANNER THAT WILL PROTECT OR ENHANCE VISUAL QUALITY OF THE AREA.

All projects authorized on public lands would be designed to minimize the impact on visual resources. Existing eyesores, such as unauthorized dump sites, would be cleaned up as funds are made available.

MANAGE PUBLIC LANDS TO PRESERVE OREGON TRAIL SEGMENTS (GOODALE'S CUTOFF), PREHISTORIC CULTURAL SITES, HISTORIC MINING STRUCTURES, AND PIONEER CEMETERIES.

Measures are needed to protect cultural and historic sites from further deterioration and destruction.

WATERSHED PROGRAM SUMMARY

The BLM's watershed objectives for the unit are primarily concerned with preventing soil losses by reducing water erosion and controlling mining-related sources of pollution.

WATERSHED DECISIONS

MANAGE LIVESTOCK GRAZING AND SOIL-DISTURBING ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE RANGE CONDITION AND/OR INCREASE VEGETATIVE COVER.

With soil as our most basic resource, erosion on public lands can best be controlled by maintaining or increasing vegetative cover. Wind erosion is usually not a serious problem in the area. Soil loss is most serious on about 8 percent of the planning unit that is in poor range condi-

tion. Generally, these areas are in or near drainage bottoms and are associated with concentrated livestock use.

CONTROL WATER POLLUTION IN CHAMPAGNE CREEK CAUSED BY MINING OPERATIONS.

Water quality in the creek is near toxic levels for livestock and may pose a threat to agricultural practices downstream. Most of the problem is related to seepage and flow through tailings of abandoned mines. Problem tailing deposits not presently within existing mining claims will be cleaned up by the BLM as funds permit. The BLM will work with existing mining claim operators in an attempt to initiate pollution control measures.

WILDLIFE PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Big Lost Unit contains habitat for many wildlife species. Areas of particular importance for critical wildlife habitat management include:

1. Appendicitis Hill and Sheep Mountain elk and mule deer winter ranges.
2. Lava Creek—Champagne Creek elk and mule deer summer range.
3. Lost River Mountains bighorn sheep range.

Sage grouse and antelope occur throughout the unit. In the areas north and west of Arco, habitat for these species has been diminished as rangeland was converted to agriculture. Here, scattered tracts of public land may become increasingly important for these species.

Except for upland springs and small creeks, aquatic wildlife habitat is associated primarily with private lands in the unit. Bald eagles, classified as an endangered species, migrate through the area in fall and winter. Small numbers of eagles stay in the Big Lost River area during the winter months.



The typical rangeland and foothills of the Big Lost Valley.

WILDLIFE DECISIONS

ALLOCATE FORAGE TO SUPPORT PRESENT NUMBERS OF ANTELOPE, ELK, MULE DEER, AND BIGHORN SHEEP.

Most of the critical big game ranges experience little or no conflict with livestock ranges. In other areas, livestock forage allocation and grazing systems combine to provide adequate wildlife forage needs. Winter range and limited migration routes are the limiting factors for big game animals in the Big Lost Unit.

IMPROVE MULE DEER AND ELK WINTER RANGE IN THE APPENDICITIS HILLS BY THINNING MOUNTAIN MAHOGANY STANDS.

This project would be considered only if Congress designates the Appendicitis Hill Wilderness Study Area as non-wilderness or if the project could be made compatible with wilderness values should the area be designated wilderness. Wintering elk and mule deer rely heavily on mountain mahogany for forage in the Big Lost area. Most mahogany areas are characterized by closed stands of overmature shrubs where seedling establishment is minimal and growth

from younger plants is stagnated due to plant competition. Thinning and soil scarification would allow regeneration and an increase in palatable young growth, increasing the carrying capacity of the winter range.

CONSTRUCT WATER STORAGE FACILITIES FOR WILDLIFE IN AREAS WHERE WATER IS UNAVAILABLE DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS.

Wildlife habitat can be improved by adding buried wildlife water storage tanks that can be filled from existing livestock pipelines only in the spring season. Areas without pipelines can be improved by constructing rainfall catchments. These storage facilities would primarily benefit chukars, sage grouse, antelope, and small birds.

MANAGE RIPARIAN AREAS TO PROTECT THE QUALITY OF WATER AND VEGETATION.

Wetland areas on public land are only a small fraction of the Big Lost Unit. These wetlands are extremely important to wildlife, fisheries, and water quality. Livestock tend to concentrate in these areas which can result in damage to the vegetation under unmanaged conditions. Grazing systems or fencing of riparian areas can improve them for wildlife habitat.

FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY

Wildfires on public lands pose a threat to many resources and range improvements and could spread to State, Forest Service, and private lands.

FIRE MANAGEMENT DECISION

DESIGNATE THE ENTIRE PLANNING UNIT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE APPENDICITIS HILLS, AS A FULL WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION AREA.

Fires in the Appendicitis Hills area are likely to burn to ridgetops and extinguish themselves. This area would be designated a limited suppression area where bulldozers would not be used and less than full suppression efforts would be undertaken.

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

FOREST PRODUCTS

There is little forest activity in the area; the environmental impact would be slight. Even if economically feasible, timber sales in the unit would be very limited.

LANDS

Actions in the lands program produce little environmental impact. Lands decisions most often benefit social and economic conditions.

MINERALS

With the limited mineral activity in the area, overall environmental impact is small. Actions to control localized pollution caused by mining operations would be beneficial. Mineral entry on public lands in the unit is open under the 1872 Mining Law, and the BLM is responsible for making provisions to protect other resources.

RANGE

Livestock management decisions would increase the quantity and quality of vegetation leading to improved range condition in the unit. All activities that are dependent on a sustained yield of productive rangeland vegetation would benefit from this program.

RECREATION

Environmental impacts from recreation management decisions would be slight. Most decisions are oriented toward protection of existing resources.

WATERSHED

Decisions in the watershed program are related to improved grazing management and control of water pollution caused by mining operations. Environmental benefits expected are decreased soil erosion and improved vegetative cover and water quality.

WILDLIFE

Forage allocated to wildlife is sufficient to support present and projected population levels. Decisions regarding winter range mahogany thinning and wildlife waterer installations would improve habitat. In addition, livestock grazing management, improved range condition, periodic rest from grazing, and water developments would benefit most species.

Riparian systems would be monitored and efforts made to improve the condition of the vegetation.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

During a wildfire, suppression activities may cause short-term ground disturbance. These efforts are necessary, however, to protect other resources.

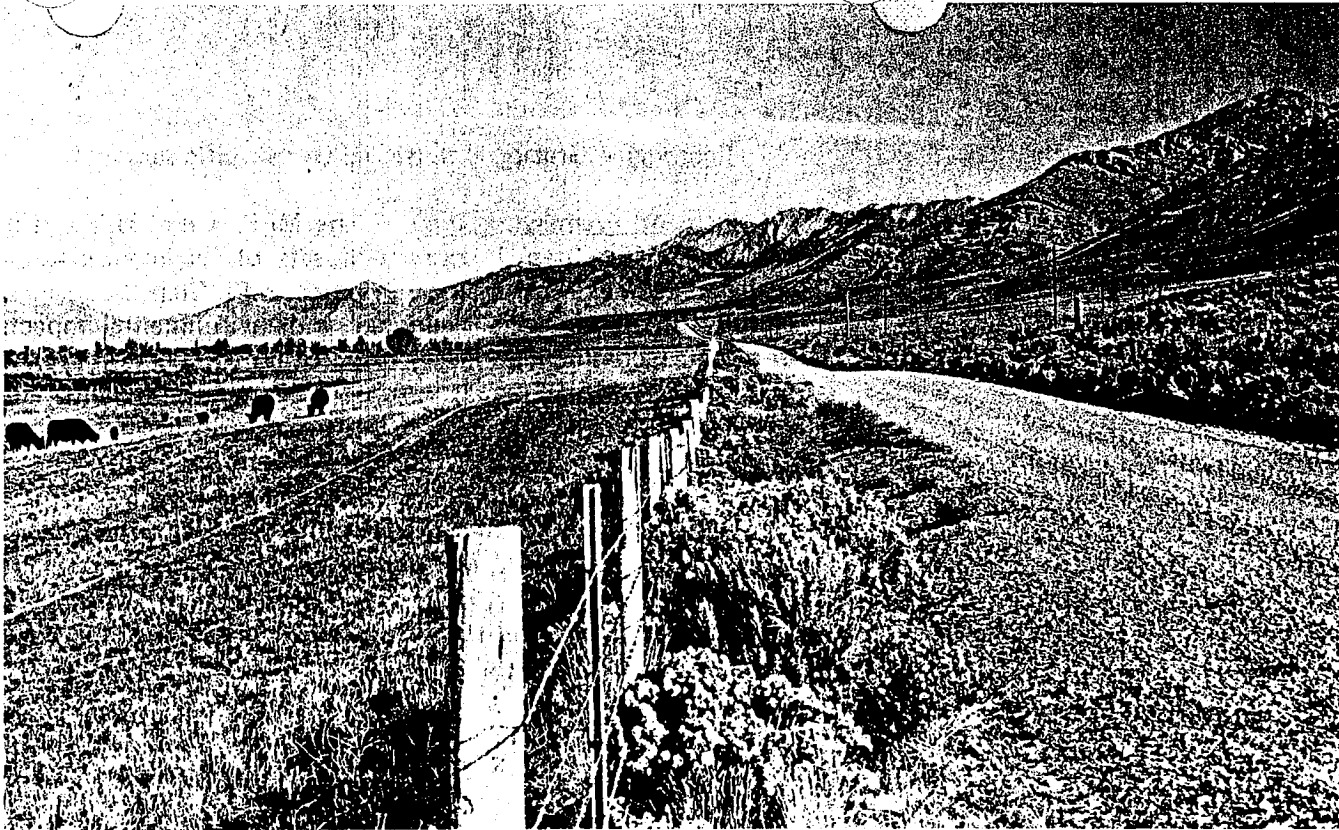
CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Public review was very important in the preparation of the grazing environmental impact statement (EIS) and the land use plan. Throughout the planning and EIS process, members of the general public, as well as Federal, State, and local agencies, provided information and offered suggestions to improve the documents.

To avoid conflict with other agencies' land use plans, Big Butte Resource Area staff contacted representatives of these groups. Many significant comments from these people were used by the Area Manager to revise and refine the plan. As a result, Big Lost land use decisions conform with the land use and zoning requirements of Butte and Custer counties.

During the development of the draft grazing EIS, consultation with the public, user groups, and other agencies provided identification of issues which led to the formation of alternatives analyzed in the EIS. After release of the draft EIS, public comment resulted in development of another alternative which was later selected as the preferred course of action (see Rangeland Program Summary).

Consultation with range users helped to identify needed range improvements and grazing systems proposed in the final EIS. The BLM's rangeland management policy includes cooperation, consultation, and coordination with range users and owners of lands intermingled with public lands. The policy is an integral



To avoid conflicts with nearby private, State, and county lands, BLM personnel consulted and coordinated with affected landowners.

part of the land use and grazing management decision-making process. BLM resource area personnel had discussions with each range user in the Big Lost Unit and with all concerned State and Federal agencies.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

This plan will be followed by on-the-ground actions. Some decisions in the plan will require more detailed planning before implementation.

Development projects are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. An environmental analysis will be conducted for each specific action. All projects will be

considered under either the categorical exclusion review process or the environmental assessment process. If the impacts are unacceptable, the proposed action may be modified or rejected. Some decisions have already been or are being implemented.

The management decisions will be used in programming and budgeting for the annual work plan. Because on-the-ground actions depend on funding by Congress, it may be some time before some decisions can be implemented.

In response to changing resource conditions and management requirements, this plan will be updated and management decisions revised as new information becomes available. The public will have opportunities to participate in the planning process when major revisions are made.

GLOSSARY

Allotment Management Plan — A detailed plan for intensively managing and improving a specific grazing allotment.

Animal Unit Month (AUM) — The amount of forage needed to sustain one cow or five sheep for one month.

Apparent Trend — A one-time observation of the direction in range condition described as upward, stable, or downward.

Capital Position — A financial position based on current capital assets. A change in capital position occurs when the value of capital assets changes.

Carrying Capacity — The maximum stocking rate possible without damaging the vegetation or related resources.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) — A document that analyzes the environmental impacts of a proposed action and several alternatives.

Grazing Preference — The maximum number of AUMs that can be grazed on public lands. The grazing preference is attached to private lands owned or controlled by the permittee or lessee.

Grazing Systems:

Rest Rotation — Grazing is deferred on various parts of an allotment during succeeding years. The deferred parts are allowed complete rest for one or more years.

Deferred Rotation — Changing the time of year when a pasture is grazed. Use in one pasture is rotated between use in other pastures. This provides each pasture periodic rest during some part of the grazing season.

Seasonal — Grazing is restricted to a specific season.

Management Framework Plan — The MFP is the BLM's land use plan. MFP Step 1 consists of sets of recommendations designed to maximize a single resource. MFP Step 2 considers conflicts in use and social, economic, and environmental impacts in sets of recommendations by resource for overall multiple use management. MFP Step 3, which considers all comments and experience gained through the EIS process, includes land use decisions for future multiple use management.

Planning Unit — A portion of a resource area for which inventories and land use plans are developed.

Public Lands — Lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management for multiple uses.

Range Readiness — The stage of plant growth at which grazing may begin (under a specific management plan) without permanent damage to vegetation or soil.

Riparian — Pertaining to or situated on the banks of a river or other body of water. Riparian vegetation is the vegetation found along a river or other body of water.

Section 3 and 15 Leases — A Section 3 lease refers to grazing administration on public lands under Section 3 of the Taylor Grazing Act for lands that were originally within grazing districts. Section 15 leases were under Section 15 of the Act for lands that were originally scattered tracts outside of grazing districts.