APPENDIX H

Rangeland Program Summary for Cassia Resource Management Plan

INTRODUCTION:

The primary function of this program summary is to define the authorized use of the public lands by livestock. This includes the kinds, numbers, periods, and other stipulations under which the range user agrees to operate. These authorizations are established through historic use, consultation with the range user and coordination with other disciplines to ensure the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) multiple use mandates and policies are being complied with. Additionally it directs the expenditures of funds for the installation of range improvements on public lands.

BACKGROUND:

The Cassia RMP/EIS was written in response to litigation against the Bureau of Land Management by the Natural Resource Defense Council, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and associated regulation.

In preparation for this effort, a limited inventory was conducted on the major blocks of BLM land. The primary components of this inventory included the updating and refinement of available soils information, assessment of range condition, the identification of problem areas and opportunities for improvement. This inventory enabled the BLM to implement the Grazing Management Policy which involves classifying allotments into selective management categories which are used to focus attention on the areas of highest concern. Those allotments currently in unsatisfactory condition or with significant resource conflicts with good potential for improvement are classified as "I" or Improve allotments. Those allotments currently in satisfactory condition, or where current management is such that conditions are significantly improving, are classified as "M" or Maintain allotments. Allotments that have extremely low potential or consist of small isolated tracts are in the "C" or Custodial allotments

A total of 447,541 acres of public land are included in 115 grazing allotments. The remaining 21,601 acres of public land is unallotted. Livestock operators are licensed to use these allotments, active grazing preference (Authorized Use) for the planning unit which is 56,172 Animal Unit Month (AUMs) with a six year average use of 58,316 AUMs.

Initially stocking rates were developed with the intention of providing vigorous, palatable rangeland vegetation on a sustained yield basis. This would satisfy the objective of providing for the physiological requirements of the vegetation so that the public rangelands are maintained in a healthy, productive condition.

Each allotment was evaluated on its own merits in arriving at an initial stocking rate. The evaluation included such things as long-term actual use, utilization, trend, condition, suitability, plant phenology and precipitation and temperature data. Based on the results of monitoring, this initial stocking rate will be adjusted as necessary to assure a stocking level at which the range vegetation (forage plants) may be utilized without being detrimentally affected. In general, this proper use level will be 40 percent on native range and 60 percent on seeded range. Adjustments to achieve the proper stocking level may be made in the season of use, the level of AUMs, or at activity planning stages in the management system used to regulate livestock grazing patterns.

Of the 115 grazing allotments above, 18 are in selective management category "M", 90 are in category "I", and 7 are in category "C".

Four alternatives and one sub alternative actions were analyzed in the RMP and from these a proposed action was formulated. In respect the grazing management the proposed action alternative is the same as Alternative C (Preferred Alternative).

Alternative A: Basically, this alternative would continue the current management philosophy and direction of the 1974 Management Framework Plan (MFP). Existing activity management plans will continue to be implemented. Current on-the-ground management will continue.. Under this alternative the use of lands and resources will remain essentially unchanged from the present or will reflect only changes identified in decisions in the current MFP.

Alternative B: This alternative is directed toward the production and use of marketable resource commodities. Management emphasis is on maximizing livestock production, harvest of woodland products, mining, and mineral and energy development. Management direction is toward facility-dependent and motorized dispersed recreation. Forage will be assigned only to meet current wildlife demand. All minimum environmental protection standards legally required will be met as will statewide resource management guidelines.

Alternative C: Preferred Alternative: This alternative emphasizes a balanced approach to land management. The alternative is designed to provide for a variety of renewable resource uses within the sustained yield capabilities of the public lands in the Cassia RMP area. It represents a balancing of conflicts and tradeoffs between land uses while protecting fragile, non-renewable resources as required by law. Management attention would be directed toward improving rangeland conditions; expanding livestock grazing opportunities; increasing forage production for mule deer and antelope; maintaining or improving upland and non-game wildlife habitat; providing a variety of recreation opportunities; and meeting local needs for sand, gravel and building stone. This management direction would favorably influence orderly economic growth of the local and regional economy.

Alternative D: Emphasis in this alternative is on the non-consumptive use of resources. Management direction is toward the preservation and protection of wildlife habitat, scenic values, watershed values, and

cultural resources. Resource dependent and non-motorized dispersed recreation is emphasized. Wildlife forage requirements through 1995 will be met. Other resource outputs may be reduced or eliminated from specific areas to enhance the non-consumptive uses of the public lands.

Sub Alternative D: The "no livestock grazing alternative," provides the basis for comparative analysis of impacts between no livestock and various levels of livestock use. This sub alternative is identical to Alternative D except all management area objectives and required actions which relate to livestock use levels and the development of range improvements necessary for livestock management are no longer applicable as all livestock grazing on public lands would be eliminated. The overall emphasis and management direction relative to the use and development of other resources under Sub Alternative D are the same as in Alternative D.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

Formal and informal public contacts were made during the planning process. Public, individual and group meetings or mailings were completed on issue identification, planning criteria, management situation analysis, formulation of alternatives and estimation of effects. In February of 1982 we met informally on a one-to-one basis, with all livestock permittees in the RMP area to review the planning process and solution input, particularly with regards to possible range developments. Then in December, 1982 and January, 1983 we met with permittees on an allotment basis to discuss allotment selective management categorization and proposed action forage allocation as they relate to the Cassia Planning. A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Cassia RMP was prepared and released for public review and comment in December, 1983. Both written and oral comments were responded to in the Final EIS on the Cassia RMP which was released in June of 1984.

RANGELAND DECISIONS:

ALLOCATE 62,150 AUMs FOR USE BY LIVESTOCK AND 10,083 AUMs FOR WILDLIFE.

The initial livestock vegetation allocation by Management Area and Allotment is shown in Appendix C. Vegetation allocated to mule deer and antelope by Management Area and Allotment is shown in Appendix D. As planned project and maintenance work is completed additional forage will be available for wildlife and livestock use. The wildlife allocation will increase to 13,596 AUMs for mule deer and 721 AUMs for antelope, which is sufficient forage to meet 1995 population projections for mule deer and antelope developed jointly by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the BLM. Allocation for livestock will increase by 15,953 AUMs as proposed land treatment projects and maintenance work is completed. The long-term target allocation of 78,108 AUMs by Management Area and Allotment is also shown in Appendix C.

IMPROVE RANGELAND CONDITION ON 324,758 ACRES OF POOR AND FAIR-TO-GOOD.

The number of acres to be improved by Management Area can be found in Resource Management Objectives by Management Area starting on page 13 and continuing to page 62 of this document.

PREPARE OR CONTINUE ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLANS (AMPs) AND COORDINATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ON 59 ALLOTMENTS.

There will be 41 Allotments Management Plans to be prepared, 9 Coordinated Resource Management Plans to be prepared and 4 AMPs on which to continue implementation. The list of Plans by Management Area can be found in Required Action for each Management Area starting on page 13 and continuing to page 60 of the document. Appendix E shows the class of livestock, season of use, and type of Management Plan by Management Area and Allotment.

DO LAND TREATMENTS ON 82,176 ACRES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT LONG TERM GOALS IN GRAZING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

For each Management Area the acres to be treated and increased forage production from treatment can be found in Appendix C and in Management Area write up under Required Action. The treated acres increased forage production by allotment can also be found in Appendix C. Also each Management Area map shows areas to be treated.

Impact Summary: Effect on wildlife, for the most part, would be positive. Forage to meet projected 1995 mule deer and antelope populations would be provided. Cover, food, and general habitat diversity would be improved on 17 percent of deer winter range scheduled for land treatment. These would help ease the competition on mule deer winter range. In most areas this competitive use would be for one month or less. On the average, only 30 percent of the affected allotments are considered as crucial winter range. Twenty-four percent of sage grouse habitat would be improved through increased forb production and better habitat dispersion resulting from land treatment.

Erosion would decrease on 24 percent of the area. The average erosion rate of 3.8 tons/acre/year represents a seven percent decrease over the present situation. Water quality conditions would remain static or show some improvement over the long term. Wetland/riparian conditions would remain stable or show slight improvement over the long-term. Livestock trampling would increase on 79 percent of known cultural sites within the area. Hunting is projected to increase 18 percent from the current level.

The income for all sizes of ranch operations would increase in both the short and long term. Employment would increase as would income. Net present worth would increase 10 percent over present management.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Administrative Actions:

Release of the Cassia RMP and RPS Appendix serves as public notice

of the Range Management Program.

After this release, written agreements will be pursued with individual permittees and/or grazing associations after consultation and coordination. All proposed decisions shall be submitted to the associations or permittees not later than May of 1986 (17 months) following release of this document. Copies of the proposed decision(s) shall also be sent to those who have indicated in writing that their interests may be affected by the proposed decision.

Continued consultation and coordination with the affected range users and other interested parties is very important in the development of AMPs, Coordinated Resource Management Plans and Allotment Agreements.

On allotments where AMPs need to be prepared, BLM will cooperatively prepare in consultation with the permittee(s). Allotments calling for Coordinated Resource Management Plans will be developed with cooperating agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service and State of Idaho.

RESOURCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

Monitoring and evaluation of resource conditions to evaluate the effectiveness of the rangeland program will be done by field studies as set out in Appendix A (Resource Monitoring and Evaluation Plan) in this Document.

Future Adjustments:

Allotments that need future adjustments will be based on monitoring to better gauge proper grazing capacity. Available range survey information will be used as an initial basis for evaluations. Reductions or increases will be based on more detailed data, consultation, and/or monitoring of actual use and utilization. Other adjustments needed in grazing management such as changes in the season of use, class of livestock, and areas of livestock use will be developed through consultation with affected parties and rangeland monitoring.

Land Tenure Adjustment Program:

The Cassia (RMP) recommends adjustment of lands in the Snake River Resource Area for recreation, public access, wildlife habitat and to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness of management. These adjustments areas are shown on Map 19. Transfer areas are identified under Resource Management Objectives for each Management

Area in the front of this document. These land tenure adjustments will affect operators by possibly reducing their adjudicated grazing preference. However, operators will be given a minimum two years notice prior to any disposal action. They will further be allowed a

45 day comment period prior to any land action in which to comment on the proposed action.

Periodic Progress Reports:

As the RMP is implemented, a record of progress will be maintained and specific program details will be outlined in periodic updates of this RPS. These updates will include necessary program changes, monitoring results, range improvement progress, improvement efforts made by permittees, and management system information.

This record of progress will be reflected in future RPS updates that will be distributed for public information and comment.

ALTERNATIVES:

This section describes the alternative rangeland management programs analyzed in the EIS and the impacts that would have occurred had they been selected.

Alternative A:

This alternative is the "No Action" alternative allowing for the management and flow of outputs from the public lands and resources at present levels as directed by an existing 1974 Land Use Plan.

Livestock grazing would be maintained at the current six year average (1976-81) licensed use level of 58,316 AUMs. No new range improvements or land treatment would be initiated. There would be little opportunity to improve grazing management. Seventy percent of the rangeland would remain in fair or poor condition with 84 percent in static or downward trend.

Current grazing systems and seasons of use will be continued. Maintenance of existing range improvements and land treatments will continue at current levels.

Impact Summary: Forage production would be suppressed in nearly 75 percent of crucial deer winter range as a result of late fall and early spring grazing by livestock. Habitat conditions for upland game will have a general slow decline. Erosion rate of 4.1 tons/acre/year would continue and water quality on slightly more than half of the area streams would exceed Idaho State water quality standards. Seventy-five percent of wetland/riparian areas presently in fair or poor condition would decline.

Direct and secondary income would increase slightly in both the short and long term as would employment. Ranchers income would not be effected.

Alternative B:

This alternative is directed toward the production and use of

marketable resource commodities. Management emphasis is on maximizing livestock production and the harvest of woodland products. Minimal constraints are placed on mineral and energy

development. Recreation emphasis is geared toward dispersed motorized recreation.

Livestock would continue to utilize the allotments under present grazing systems or new systems would be developed to enhance rangeland conditions and improve livestock husbandry.

Maintenance of existing range improvements and land treatments will continue at the current or increased level.

Impact Summary: At best, mule deer and antelope numbers would be held to present levels, forage production would be suppressed on nearly 75 percent of crucial deer winter range as a result of a 46 percent increase in late fall and early spring grazing by livestock. Thirty-five percent of deer winter range would be treated to increased forage production for livestock. Additional livestock use would increase trampling, nest desertion and loss of succulent forbs in sage grouse brood-rearing areas. Livestock oriented land treatments would adversely affect the food source and cover for a variety of upland game species as well as decrease the prey base for many birds of prey. Erosion would increase on 71 percent of the RMP area. Erosion rate of 5.1 tons/acres/year a 24 percent increase from the present situation. Fragile soils in the Goose Creek Area would have land treatments for livestock forage. Water quality on 75 percent of the Area's streams or 21 percent more than at present would exceed Idaho State water quality standards. Livestock trampling would increase on 86 percent of known cultural resource sites. Largest increase in ranchers income and long-term employment would be realized by this alternative.

Alternative D:

Management direction under this land use option is geared toward the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, scenic values, watershed values, and cultural resources. Non-motorized dispersed recreation is emphasized.

Livestock use levels would be set at 44,774 AUMs, 23 percent below the six year (1976-81) average licensed use. As a result of lower livestock use, the present 30 percent of rangeland in good to excellent condition would increase to 65 percent while the 16 percent in upward trend would improve to 51 percent.

Livestock would continue to utilize the allotments under present management systems, or grazing management systems would be developed to enhance wildlife, watershed and overall rangeland vegetation conditions. Existing range developments and land treatments would continue to be maintained in a useable condition. No new livestock land treatments would be authorized except in emergency cases such

as after wildfire. New range improvements, such as fences and pipelines, would be allowed if necessary to implement AMPs.

Impact Summary: Overall, wildlife would benefit because forage would be provided for projected 1995 mule deer and antelope numbers. Forage competition between livestock and mule deer on winter range would be minimized. Sage grouse populations would increase as a result of improved nesting and brood-rearing cover due to reduced livestock grazing. Soil erosion would decrease from 4.1 to 3.5 tons/acres/year. Water quality would improve with sub standard conditions minimized or possibly eliminated. All sizes of ranch operations would loose money in both the short and long term. Up to 85 out of 147 ranchers may have to seek outside employment, consider ranch consolidation or sell their ranches. There would be an initial employment loss which would stabilize over the long term.

Sub Alternative D:

The "no livestock grazing alternative," provides the basis for comparative analysis of impacts between no livestock and various levels of livestock use. This sub alternative is identical to Alternative D except all management area objectives and required actions which relate to livestock use levels and the development of range improvements necessary for livestock management are no longer applicable as all livestock grazing on public lands would be eliminated. The overall emphasis and management direction relative to the use and development of other resources under Sub Alternative D are the same as in Alternative D.

All public lands in the RMP area would be unallotted, and existing AMPs would be cancelled. Livestock trailing permits would be issued as necessary to allow livestock movement to or from National Forest, State and privately owned lands. BLM would provide range use supervision. Existing range developments and land treatments would be maintained only if considered beneficial for non-livestock uses such as wildlife, watershed protection, or cultural resources. Any structural developments detrimental to wildlife would be removed. Livestock operators with investments in cooperative range development projects (e.g., fencing) would be entitled to appropriate salvage rights. No new range development projects would be undertaken unless necessary for non-livestock programs.

Impact Summary: Projected 1995 mule deer and antelope populations would be met. All livestock wildlife related conflicts such as forage utilization and nest trampling would be eliminated. Improved riparian habitat and water quality would benefit fisheries, waterfowl, furbearers and other species that utilize these areas. Initial population increases for upland game, long-billed curlew and the western burrowing owl would decline over the long-term as a result of various habitat becoming overgrown and choked with dense vegetation.

Soil loss would decrease 46 percent from 4.1 to 2.2 tons/acre/year. Overall watershed conditions would improve water quality would meet

or exceed state standards.

Hunting would increase 42 percent over the present use level.

Ranchers income would decline in both the short and long term. The loss in ranch income would be so acute that 142 out of 147 permittees would have to seek outside employment to subsidize income or sell their ranches. The local economy would experience significant direct and indirect income losses.