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MemorandumDEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

IN REPLY REFER TO:

RM

To : Area Manager, Big Butte Resource Area

FROM : Wildlife Biologist, Big Butte Resource Area

SUBJECT: Wildlife Numbers in Little Lost/Birch Creek

Date: 4/2/80

I have estimated changes in wildlife numbers resulting from AMP implementation on Williams Creek, Wet Creek, Warm Springs, Pass Creek, Bell Mountain and Uncle Ike Allotments. I have not been able to determine impacts on Spring Canyon or Jumpoff Allotments because I have not seen the AMPs.

Some changes in management plans subsequent to the ES have changed estimated wildlife numbers from those presented previously. The detailed descriptions of grazing plans provided by the AMPs allow more specific analysis of impacts to wildlife and quantification by an allotment basis is possible. Big game numbers changes are predicted, however bird populations are not known and changes are difficult to quantify. Some generalities are possible for birds (such as increases in sage grouse brood production would be expected with installation of wildlife waters on pipelines and decreases in brood production expected with brush control in nesting areas), however numbers are not available for accurate quantification. I have shown a plus or minus for upland game birds for each AMP I have reviewed. A plus indicates upland game would benefit, a minus indicates they would be adversely affected.

Discussion follows to document any changes in numbers from those presented in the ES. The forms required for cost benefit analysis are included.

Williams Creek - The AMP is already outdated and must be changed to incorporate 500 acres of plow and seed in the south pasture. A deferred grazing system is planned with use being confined to the proposed seeding until June 15th (after peak of sage grouse hatching and antelope fawning). Under this system, big game and upland game populations should increase.

Wet Creek - The grazing plan provides for wildlife values and future increases are expected.

Warm Springs - The grazing plan does not provide consideration for antelope fawning or sagegrouse nesting. Population decreases are expected.

Pass Creek - The grazing plan has changed significantly from what was proposed in the ES. Although cattle levels will increase, wildlife values have been considered and future increases are expected.

Bell Mountain - The grazing plan has changed significantly from what was proposed in the ES. Mule deer numbers should increase dramatically if the AMP objective to improve deer winter range is accomplished.

Uncle Ike - The grazing plan provides for wildlife values and future increases are expected.

Bob McCarty

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
FINAL DECISIONS - STEP 3

Name (MFP)	
Little Lost-Birch Creek	
Activity	
Wildlife	
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Decision #1

Maintain 366,000 acres of antelope habitat in the Planning Unit by:

- a. Retain in public ownership 120,000 acres of antelope fawning areas, 170,000 acres of antelope winter range and all permanent water sources and riparian areas. Excludes 920 acres which may have agricultural potential in Howe, Idaho area. WL-1.1
- b. Maintain the existing shrub production on 9,868 acres of critical antelope range on the Jumpoff Allotment. Allow land treatment on 800 acres. WL-2.1
- c. Dividing AMP's to consider antelope habitat requirements. WL-1.3
- d. Allocating 6,822 AUMs for antelope. WL-1.4
- e. Including mixtures of forbs, grasses and shrubs on reseeding treatments. WL-1.9
- f. Maintain 35-40 percent native shrub composition on 169,000 acres of antelope winter range. WL-1.11
- g. Maintaining diversity of vegetation on 191,000 acres of spring-summer antelope range to include 20-35 percent shrub composition. WL-1.12

Reasons

The PU contains year-long habitat which supports the largest antelope herd in the State of Idaho. Idaho Fish & Game projects an annual increase in hunter demand for antelope of 24 percent in Unit 51 (Little Lost Valley) and 14 percent in Unit 58 (Birch Creek Valley). The Idaho State Game Commission has indicated that antelope populations should be increased.

Antelope hunting provides a source of income to local businesses. Antelope provide many hours of observation value to the public, due to their habitat preference for open sagebrush occupied rangelands. Antelope add to the aesthetics of the PU and provide for a high quality human environment.

Winter range, fawning areas, and permanent water sources are critical areas to antelope populations in the planning unit. The Jumpoff Allotment is critical winter range and receives heavy use when snow conditions concentrate wintering antelope in this area. Antelope forage requirements can be insured in development of allotment management plans under the multiple use principal.

See: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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Little Lost-Birch Creek

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Reservation of adequate amounts of forage for antelope is necessary to realize IF&G objectives.

Inclusion of native grass, forb, and browse seed in vegetation manipulation and fire rehabilitation will enhance vegetative diversity on reseeding. Antelope habitat requirements are best met when maximum vegetative diversity is available throughout their range.

Maintenance of native vegetative diversity is necessary to provide food and cover requirements to antelope. 35 - 40 percent shrub cover on antelope winter ranges is necessary to provide winter feed to antelope.

Maintenance of native vegetative diversity is necessary to provide food and cover requirements to antelope. Succulent plants are preferred forage for antelope in the spring and summer and importance of shrubs for food and cover is high throughout the year. Maximum diversity of native vegetation is necessary to insure high quality spring/summer antelope habitat.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
FINAL DECISIONS - STEP 3

Name (MFP)	
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Decision #2

Enhance and expand antelope habitat in the PU by:

- a. Maintaining livestock water developments full of water through October 1. WL-1.5
- b. Constructing precipitation catchments at seven additional locations near Bird Canyon, Sands Canyon, Fallert, Eight Mile Canyon, O'brian Canyon, Rattlesnake Gulch, and Cedar Canyon. (WL 1.5)
- c. Restricting livestock trailing during the fawning season (May 25 to June 21) to existing roads only. (WL-1.6)
- d. Maintaining migration routes free from livestock concentration during spring (March 30 to May 30) and fall (October 1 to November 30) migrations. (WL-1.7)

Reasons:

Water is a limited resource in certain locations within the planning unit. Livestock and wildlife distribution can be enhanced through water development. Coordination between range and wildlife developments is necessary to insure non-duplication of effort. Water catchments should be excluded from livestock use to insure an adequate supply of water to wildlife throughout the hot, dry season. Restricting livestock trailing operations to existing roads would enhance antelope fawn survival with negligible impacts to other resource values.

The Dry Creek Flume is a hazard to resident wildlife in the Donkey Hills and Mulkey Bar area. Annually, antelope, mule deer, coyotes, badgers, reptors, and small mammals are killed in the flume. The major part of the flume occurs on public land under right-of-way permit. The design of the flume does not allow for escape once anything has become caught in the fast flowing water. Currently the flume is fenced on either side immediately adjacent to the flume. Animals which jump the fence, land directly in the flume. Wildlife crossings are limited at the present time. Freedom of antelope movement can be insured by restricting livestock concentrations from migration routes with negligible impacts to other resource values. See Lands L-7.5 for remedial action.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
FINAL DECISIONS - STEP 3

Name (MFP)	Little Lost-Birch Creek
Activity	Wildlife
Overlay Reference	Step 1 Step 3

Decision #3

Maintain 91,661 acres of mule deer habitat within the Planning Unit by:

- a. Designing allotment management plans to minimize dietary overlap between livestock and deer (WL-2.2). (WL-2.1)
- b. Allocating 2,490 AUMs to deer. (WS-2.3)
- c. Retaining all deer winter range in federal ownership. (WS-2.4)
- d. Not treating winter ranges for brush control. (WL-2.6)

Reasons:

The planning unit contains habitat which presently supports an increasing population of mule deer. Idaho Fish & Game estimates that current annual population increases of more deer in the Planning unit equals 5 percent in the Little Lost and 2 percent in the Birch Creek Valleys. The Idaho State Game Commission has indicated that mule deer populations should be increased. Idaho Fish & Game estimates that current hunter demand far exceeds supply and hunter demand is projected to increase.

Mule deer hunting provides a source of income to local businesses. Mule deer add to the aesthetics of the planning unit.

Competition for forage between mule deer and livestock becomes significant when dietary overlap occurs. Livestock seasons of use can be designed to maintain proper use of important forage species for both deer and livestock. AMPs can be designed with deer winter range in mind utilizing herding, fencing, or rotational techniques to mitigate dietary overlap. Idaho Fish & Game estimates a current annual population increase of 5 percent in the Little Lost and 2 percent in the Birch Creek Valley. Allocation of forage is necessary to meet Idaho Fish & Game management objectives.

Critical winter range should be retained so that mule deer will be assured the habitat needed for this period of high stress. Private ownership of these winter ranges could result in reducing or elimination of habitat requirements for mule deer.

The primary food source for deer in the winter is browse. Large scale brush control on deer winter range would reduce the availability of this primary food source.

See: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
FINAL DECISIONS - STEP 3

Name (MFP)

Little Lost-Birch Creek

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Decision #4

Improve 5,000 acres of deer winter range by:

- a. Designing allotment management plans to increase vegetative composition of important deer forage. (WL 2.2)
- b. Thinning or pruning mountain mahogany to stimulate growth within reach of deer. (WL 2.5)

Reasons:

Browse provides the major food source for wintering mule deer in the PU. Livestock grazing seasons can be manipulated to favor growth of key deer forage species on winter ranges by concentrating use on grasses and minimizing use on shrubs. Advanced age composition and high lining of mountain mahogany has made most of this palatable browse species unavailable for deer use. Concentration of growth occurs in the upper portion of these shrubs which is out of reach of the deer. The age composition of these stands is such that mature shrubs occupy the majority of the site. Seedling establishment is minimal and young plant growth is stagnated due to the heavy competition for growing space from these over mature shrubs. Carrying capacity of the winter ranges on which these projects would occur would increase. By making more of this highly palatable, nutritious and digestible forage available, the deer utilizing these ranges would have more of a valuable food source to help survive a hard winter.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
FINAL DECISIONS - STEP 3

Name (MFP)	Little Lost-Birch Creek
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Decision #5

Maintain 8,254 acres of elk habitat in the PU by:

- a. Removing all livestock by October 1. (WL-3.1)
- b. Allowing brush control only if it is beneficial to elk. (WL-3.2)
- c. Mahogany pruning on 595 acres of elk winter range (WL-3.3)
- d. Allocating 1,177 AUMs to elk (WL-3.4)
- e. Retaining all elk range in federal ownership. (WL-3.5)

Reasons:

The planning unit presently contains habitat which supports an increasing elk herd. Moderate hunting pressure with low success rates for elk occurs in the planning unit. The Idaho State Game Commission has indicated that elk populations should be increased. Elk hunting provides a source of income to local businesses. Elk add to the aesthetics of the planning unit.

Hawley Mountain allotment is large enough to absorb livestock use in other areas and not be cut by removing use from elk winter range. A small portion of Warm Springs allotment is impacted and management system design will insure forage for elk is left in that portion of the allotment involved in the winter range. Forage allocation procedures showed problems on elk winter ranges based on present elk numbers. Future elk population increases could result in over allocation of forage in these areas if steps are not taken to insure adequate amounts of forage are reserved for elk.

Dietary preference of elk in the planning unit is presently under study. Until results from this study determine the importance of browse to wintering elk, maintenance of the browse density on elk winter ranges would insure a stable food source for these animals. No conflicts were identified in the planning system. No social or institutional values are impacted. Unregulated livestock use on elk range can result in insufficient forage supplies for elk and can cause long lasting range damage and reduction of elk population. Idaho Fish & Game estimates a current annual population growth rate of 8 percent for elk in the planning unit. Allocation of forage is necessary to meet IF&G management objectives. These forage allocations will provide for optimum elk population levels as identified by IF&G.

Critical elk range should be retained to insure adequate habitat is provided for these animals. Private ownership of these ranges could result in reduction or elimination of habitat requirements for elk.

See: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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Decision #6

Maintain 375,243 acres of raptor nesting and hunting habitat by:

- a. Maintaining current vegetative diversity and aspect. (WL 4.1)
- b. Minimizing human disturbance within 1 mile of all nest sites during nesting season for prairie falcons, ferruginous hawks, and golden eagles. (WL 4.2)
- c. Retaining these lands in federal ownership. (WL 4.3)

Reasons:

Raptors are important indicators of environmental contamination as their food consists of primary and secondary consumers which may concentrate some pollutants. Birds of prey have significant aesthetic, observation, educational and scientific values. Raptors can exert a significant influence on control of small prey species. Idaho State Game Commission has identified the goal to develop programs to maintain or increase raptor numbers in Idaho. Raptors are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and are subject to federal law and state regulation.

Some species of raptors show very little flexibility or adaptability in utilizing a diversity of nesting sites or habitats. Prey abundance and an appropriate nesting site are both key factors in determining the suitability of an area for nesting. Diversity and abundance of prey are related to vegetative diversity and cover. Elimination of cover or reduction of vegetative diversity would result in a lower prey base for raptors and could affect nesting success. By reducing prey availability potential raptor nest site quality would be negatively impacted.

Maintenance of quality of nesting and hunting habitat is necessary to insure present and future populations of raptors are preserved. The general disturbance caused by human activity can discourage many raptor species from nesting in an area, even though other key factors are suitable. Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons are particularly susceptible to disturbance and the end result could be a reduction of the number of total sites available to these birds.

The Ferruginous Hawk is presently on the Idaho State sensitive species list and steps to permit maximum nesting success are necessary to insure maintenance of the population level for this species in the planning unit.

These lands are critical to the maintenance of existing raptor nesting and hunting habitat. Private ownership of these lands could result in degradation of the areas for raptor and elimination of critical habitat.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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Decision #7

Maintain 375,000 acres of upland game and non-game habitat by:

- a. Consider "The Guidelines for Maintenance of Sage Grouse Habitats" from the Western States Sage Grouse Committee in Vegetative Manipulation projects. (WL-5.1)
- b. Retaining in federal ownership 250,500 acres of sage grouse nesting brood rearing and wintering habitat. (WL-5.2)
- c. Maintaining vegetative diversity except on existing crested wheatgrass seedings. (WL-5.3)
- d. Reserving approximately one-half the annual production of livestock forage for food and cover. (WL-5.6)

Reasons:

The planning unit presently contains habitat which supports many species of upland game and non-game wildlife. Medium to high densities of sage grouse inhabit the planning unit. Hunting pressure is presently moderate for sage grouse and hunter success for the planning unit exceeds statewide averages. IF&G projects sage grouse populations to increase 5 percent per year with hunter demand projected to increase 4 percent per year.

Upland game hunting provides a source of income to local businesses. Predator-prey relationships are dependent upon proper management of upland game and non-game species. Carnivorous mammals and raptors require upland game and non-game population maintenance to insure adequate food availability maintenance of habitat diversity and insurance of adequate cover and forage is necessary to provide habitat requirements to upland game and non-game species.

The Western Association of State Game and Fish Commissioners has prepared and periodically updates guidelines for protection of sage grouse habitats. It has long been recognized that sage grouse are dependent upon a sagebrush dominated environment.

Winter range, brood rearing areas, and permanent water sources are critical areas to sage grouse population in the planning unit. Private ownership of these lands could result in degradation of the areas for sage grouse and elimination of critical habitat. Maximum diversity of native flora is necessary to provide the habitat requirements for the various species of upland and non-game which inhabit the planning unit.

Allocation of forage for upland and non-game wildlife species would vary annually due to the cyclic nature of these species. Adhering to 50 percent proper use of primary livestock forage species would help provide food and cover requirements to these animals during most periods of these cycles.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
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Name (MFP)

Little Lost-Birch Creek

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Decision #8

Improve upland game and non-game habitat within the planning unit by:

- a. Providing water for sage grouse, small mammals, etc. (WL-5.5)
- b. Designing allotment management plans to consider sage grouse nesting and brood rearing habitat on 250,500 acres. (WL-5.4)

Reasons:

Permanent water sources are lacking in certain portions of the planning unit and are a major factor in proper distribution and utilization of habitat by certain wildlife species. Most of the existing livestock watering facilities are of a tank or trough design and do not allow access for small animals or young birds in the flightless stage. The protected seep areas will enhance brood habitat which will be beneficial to the area's gallinaceous birds. Improved distribution of non-game and upland game is desirable in the planning unit.

Concentrated livestock use on sage grouse nesting and brood rearing areas during the nesting season can result in nest desertion. Nest desertion would result in lower brood production. Livestock grazing systems designed to concentrate use on sage grouse nesting and brood rearing areas before June 15 would be in conflict with sage grouse production.

Livestock training operations will be confined to existing roads. Uncontrollable livestock concentrations such as sheep herds grazing through an allotment or cattle movements from one pasture to another will occur. AMPs will consider these periodic concentrations on sage grouse nesting and brood rearing areas.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
Recommendations which were Rejected

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1.8 - Existing crested wheatgrass seedings will be managed to maximize livestock production.

1.10 - Remedial action for Dry Creek Flume is found under Lands L-7.5.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

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