



United States Department of the Interior

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Jackson  
mtw  
alot  
5/16/97

In Reply Refer To:  
4120  
(NV-22.13)

May 16, 1997

Dear Interested Public:

Please find enclosed the draft environmental assessment for the Mid-Jackson Creek Drift Fences. I am soliciting your input on the proposed project. If you have any comments would you please provide them to me by **June 2, 1997**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lynnda Jackson of my staff at 702-623-1500. You are also welcome to contact Ron Hall for questions related to wild horses and Lynn Clemons for questions on the wilderness study areas.

Sincerely,

Colin P. Christensen  
ADM Renewable

Enclosure

Draft Environmental Assessment  
Mid-Jackson Creek Drift Fences

I. Introduction/Overview

Purpose and Need

The proposed action is to construct two fences. Both would extend from existing private fences which enclose private land. The purpose of the proposed project is to protect riparian habitat on the middle portion of Jackson Creek. The mid-section of the creek is within a narrow canyon which tends to concentrate livestock use. The construction would allow the mid-section of the creek to be managed as a riparian pasture. Up to 200 cattle would utilize the mid-section of the creek from May 25 through June 15. Livestock would otherwise be excluded from the area except when being actively trailed.

The proposed action was identified in the Final Multiple Use Decision for Jackson Mountain Allotment dated 05/27/94 for evaluation through the project planning process. The decision is under appeal by the permittee. However, the permittee has agreed to remove livestock from the Jackson Creek area by 07/15 as per the decision and has done so since 1994. In addition he has agreed to provide the labor to construct the proposed fences and to manage livestock in the mid-Jackson Creek area as per the decision as described in the previous paragraph.

The proposed fence sites are within the North Jackson Mountains and South Jackson Mountains Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), and within the boundary of the Jackson Mountains Herd Management Area (HMA).

The proposed action is consistent with the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan and with federal, state and local laws, regulations, and policies.

II. Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct two fences. The fences would extend from existing private fences which enclose private land (see Map 1). One fence would extend 1620 feet in the SE¼, Section 26, T40N, R31E, MDB&M. The other would extend 1620 feet in the NE¼, Section 34, T40N, R31E, MDB&M.

White tops on fence posts would not be permitted to minimize visual contrast. Minimal vegetation removal using hand tools would be allowed during construction. No motorized access would be permitted for maintenance or construction except on existing roads. Access to the sites and delivery of materials would be by motorized vehicle on existing roads and by foot.

The three strand barbed wire fence would be constructed to BLM antelope/bighorn sheep specifications.

The project would be implemented under a cooperative agreement. The Bureau would provide the materials. The permittee would provide labor and would maintain the project. It would be required that if any threatened, endangered, candidate or sensitive species are discovered during construction, the Assistant District Manager for Renewable Resources would be notified.

#### Alternative 1

Under this alternative the fence would be constructed at a different location. However, there is no feasible location outside of the wilderness study areas.

In order to prevent access to the streambank riparian areas the fence could be constructed downstream from the proposed site. However, the fence would be located within the WSAs. Any impacts to wilderness values would not be diminished and a smaller portion of the stream would be protected.

This alternative will not be considered further.

#### Alternative 2

Under this alternative the fences would not be built and livestock would be regularly herded to protect riparian areas. One or two riders would be required. Cattle would be removed once a week at a minimum, however removal every other day may be needed. This practice would not be as effective as fencing.

#### No Action Alternative

The fence would not be built and conditions would not change.

### III. Affected Environment

#### Wilderness Study Areas:

The proposed fences intersect two wilderness study areas, the North Jackson Mountains (NV-020-606) and the South Jackson Mountains (NV-020-603). The sizes of the two wilderness areas are 26,457 acres and 60,211 acres respectively. The fences would extend 1130 feet into the North Jackson Mountains WSA and 1620 feet into the South Jackson Mountains WSA. The portion of Jackson Creek that would be affected by the proposed action is within both wilderness study areas.

#### Wild Horse Herd Management Area:

The proposed fences are within the boundaries of the Jackson Mountains Herd Management Area (see Map 2). Distribution and census data shows that historically and presently wild horses do not inhabit the portion of the Jackson Mountain Allotment where the proposed action would be implemented. The Final Jackson Mountain Allotment Evaluation recommends that the boundary be changed to reflect the actual wild horse distribution which is characterized by two distinct populations.

#### Visual Resources:

The proposed project site is located within a Class IV Visual Resource Management Area. The portion of Jackson Creek that would be affected by the proposed project is within a relatively narrow canyon bottom. The canyon sides, which include the construction site, are steep, rocky in some areas and dominated by big sagebrush or juniper. The riparian area along the creek is dominated by woody species, primarily willow and also includes grass and grasslike species. The vista is limited to the ridge tops north and south of the creek and is limited by the twists and bends of the narrow canyon.

#### Naturalness and Solitude:

The primary visitor use area is the road along Jackson Creek. This road provides the most convenient route through the Jackson Mountain range and receives regular use. The road is the boundary between the North Jackson Mountains WSA (NV-020-606) and the South Jackson Mountains WSA (NV-020-603). Jackson Creek provides several camp sites that are accessible by vehicle and are popular with hunters. Opportunities for solitude are low in the area.

The proposed action is within designated mule deer summer range and lies between two designated bighorn sheep yearlong ranges. Jackson Creek is a designated recovery water in the US Fish and Wildlife Service Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan. Brook trout have been found in the creek during stream surveys.

Private land immediately adjacent to the proposed project site is fenced. There are no other livestock management facilities in the vicinity of the proposed project. There is a drift fence near the mouth of Jackson Creek approximately two miles downstream from the proposed project site. No additional facilities would be needed in support of the proposed fences.

No pristine areas nor conditions exist in the vicinity of the proposed project.

#### Planning:

The Final Multiple Use Decision for Jackson Mountain Allotment dated 05/27/94 identified the proposed fences for evaluation through the project planning process. Implementation of the proposed action would facilitate obtainment of several allotment specific objectives documented the Final Multiple Use Decision. The allotment specific objectives include utilization objectives, fisheries, water quality, and vegetative condition objectives (see Appendix 1).

The record of decision of the Paradise-Denio Environmental Impact Statement was issued on 09/18/81. The Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan was issued on 07/09/82. These documents guide the management of public land within the former Paradise-Denio Resource Area portion of the Winnemucca District, including the Jackson Mountain Allotment.

#### Primitive Recreation:

There are outstanding opportunities for day-hiking, camping, backpacking, hunting, rock climbing, mountaineering, and nature study within the WSAs. While the quality of the opportunities are highly dependent upon a natural appearing environment on portions of the WSAs, the dependence is reduced in the vicinity of the proposed project due to the presence of existing roads and fences.

#### Special Features:

There are no special features identified in the vicinity of Jackson Creek or the proposed fence site.

Surface Water:

Alkalinity measurements, as determined by the Nevada Division of Wildlife stream survey, exceeded the state criteria for wildlife propagation at all but one station. The elevated alkalinity may be due to the lithology of the area. The typical geology of the Jackson Mountain Allotment area is andesitic in nature. This situation normally leads to natural conditions which are alkaline.

Turbidity measurements taken in 1983 and 1985 exceeded the state criteria for propagation of cold water aquatic life.

Data is insufficient to determine whether water quality meets the remaining state criteria.

Vegetation:

Ecological Site Inventory has not been conducted on the Jackson Mountain Allotment.

Vegetation at the proposed site is predominately Wyoming sagebrush, big sagebrush, lupine, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, squirreltail, and juniper.

Riparian condition class is an average of bank cover and bank stability and was measured in eight times between 1976 and 1992. Trend has been variable throughout those years but overall trend was downward from the mid 1970's into the mid 1980's and was upward through the late 1980's. Riparian condition class fell from excellent in 1989 to good in 1992. That change has been attributed to drought conditions.

Utilization of upland species and woody riparian species has been consistently less than 50% in the vicinity of the proposed project. Utilization of herbaceous riparian species has consistently exceeded 50% on the portion of the creek below the proposed fences.

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur within the project area. The following USFWS species of concern and BLM sensitive species may occur in the project area:

<u>Plants</u>	
<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>
windloving buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum anemophilum</i>
cordelia beardtongue	<i>Penstemon floribundus</i>

Overall plant vigor is fair to good in the vicinity of the proposed project.

The total number of animal unit months of specified livestock grazing for Jackson Mountain Allotment is 8,857 AUMs. An additional 3,023 AUMs are in historical suspended use. 8,074 AUMs may be authorized pending resolution of the appeal from the Final Multiple Use Decision. Actual use is displayed in Appendix 2.

Precipitation data is displayed in Appendix 3.

Currently, cattle graze the Jackson Creek area beginning in late May and are removed by July 15. Prior to 1994 livestock normally grazed the area from April into August. Historically, the area has been used by domestic sheep and into the fall by cattle.

#### Wildlife:

Jackson Creek is under consideration for reintroduction of Lahontan cutthroat trout which is a threatened species. The following USFWS species of concern and BLM sensitive species may occur in the project area:

##### Mammals

###### Common Name

pygmy rabbit  
spotted bat  
small-footed myotis  
long-eared myotis  
fringed myotis  
long-legged myotis  
pale Townsend's big-eared bat  
Pacific Townsend's big-eared bat  
California bighorn sheep

###### Scientific Name

*Brachylagus idahoensis*  
*Euderma maculatum*  
*Myotis ciliolabrum*  
*Myotis evotis*  
*Myotis thysanodes*  
*Myotis volans*  
*Plecotus townsendii pallescens*  
*Plecotus townsendii townsendii*  
*Ovis canadensis californiana*

##### Birds

###### Common Name

northern goshawk  
western burrowing owl  
ferruginous hawk  
black tern  
least bittern  
white-faced ibis  
western sagegrouse

###### Scientific Name

*Accipiter gentilis*  
*Athene cunicularia hypugea*  
*Buteo regalis*  
*Chlidonias niger*  
*Ixobrychus exilis hesperis*  
*Plegadis chihi*  
*Centrocercus urophasianus*

The spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*) is a federally designated candidate species that may occur in the project area.

The proposed action is within designated mule deer summer range and lies between two designated bighorn sheep yearlong ranges. Brook trout have been found in the creek during stream survey.

The Final Jackson Mountain Allotment Evaluation included population estimates of 275 mule deer and 209 pronghorn in

1992. Bighorn sheep populations were estimated at 90-100 on King Lear Peak and 40-50 on Parrot Peak.

Sagegrouse and several other upland bird and mammal species occur on this allotment. Various species of nongame birds and mammals occur on the allotment.

Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment either are not present or would not be adversely affected by the proposed action: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, prime or unique farmland, floodplains, Native American religious concerns, paleontological resources, wastes (hazardous or solids), water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness.

#### IV. Environmental Consequences

##### Proposed Action

The visual contrast created by the proposed action would be low. The proposed action would be a continuation of the visual line created by existing fences and the new fences would be substantially unnoticeable, both individually and cumulatively. The proposed action would result in no change in form, color or texture of the landscape.

Maintenance of the fences would require less than half a day once a year. The proposed action would result in a negligible increase in human activity. Opportunities for solitude are low in the area and would not be impacted by the proposed action.

Implementation of the proposed action would result in decreased evidence of livestock on the mid-section of Jackson Creek since cattle would not have access to the area after June 15. Currently cattle are removed July 15.

No additional facilities would be needed in support of the proposed fences.

There are no pristine areas or conditions in the vicinity of the proposed fences, therefore there would be no impact to those wilderness values.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan.



The proposed action would result in no reduction in the availability or quality of primitive recreation. Improvement of streambank riparian habitat would improve aesthetics and fisheries which would enhance the quality of primitive recreation.

There are no special features in the vicinity of the proposed action, therefore there would be no impact to those resources.

Water quality would be expected to improve from implementation of the proposed action, including state criteria for propagation of cold water aquatic life. Increased standing herbaceous vegetation would improve sediment filtering, bedload capture and would aid floodplain development. Further development of root masses would further stabilize streambanks. While stream energy is primarily dissipated by the existing woody species, increased standing vegetation would further dissipate the stream energy associated with high waterflows, thereby reducing erosion.

The proposed action would result in lower levels of utilization of herbaceous streambank vegetation by livestock, improved plant vigor, increased plant diversity and cover, and improvement in seral condition. There would be no negative impact on threatened or endangered plant species. Construction would result in minimal disturbance of vegetation and soil. Vehicle access would be by existing roads only. No additional soil compaction would occur.

The proposed action would enhance streambank riparian habitat. Jackson Creek is under consideration for reintroduction of Lahontan cutthroat trout, a threatened species which would benefit from enhanced fisheries habitat. Improved riparian habitat would be expected to enhance the diversity of wildlife species using the area. There would be no negative impact on threatened or endangered, candidate or sensitive animal species.

A cultural resources inventory was completed at the proposed fence site. CR2-1216 shows there are no cultural resources at the proposed construction site. A review of the Federal Register shows no resources eligible to the National Register in the vicinity.

If the proposed project's impacts, including cumulative impacts, had existed at the time of the intensive inventory, those impacts would not have disqualified the area, or any portion of the area, from being included in a WSA. The proposed project would not constrain Congress's decision to designate the areas as wilderness.

### Cumulative Impact Analysis:

All resources have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action.

### Nonimpairment:

Implementation of the proposed action would enhance streambank riparian habitat. Therefore, the wilderness value of naturalness would be enhanced. The wilderness value of primitive recreation would be enhanced by improved aesthetics and fisheries.

### Alternative 1

As stated in section II, this alternative will not be considered further.

### Alternative 2

The environmental impacts of this alternative would be similar to the proposed action with the following exceptions. It would be less effective in excluding livestock from mid-Jackson Creek. There would be an increased human presence in the area during the period of herding. There would be no localized disturbance from fence construction.

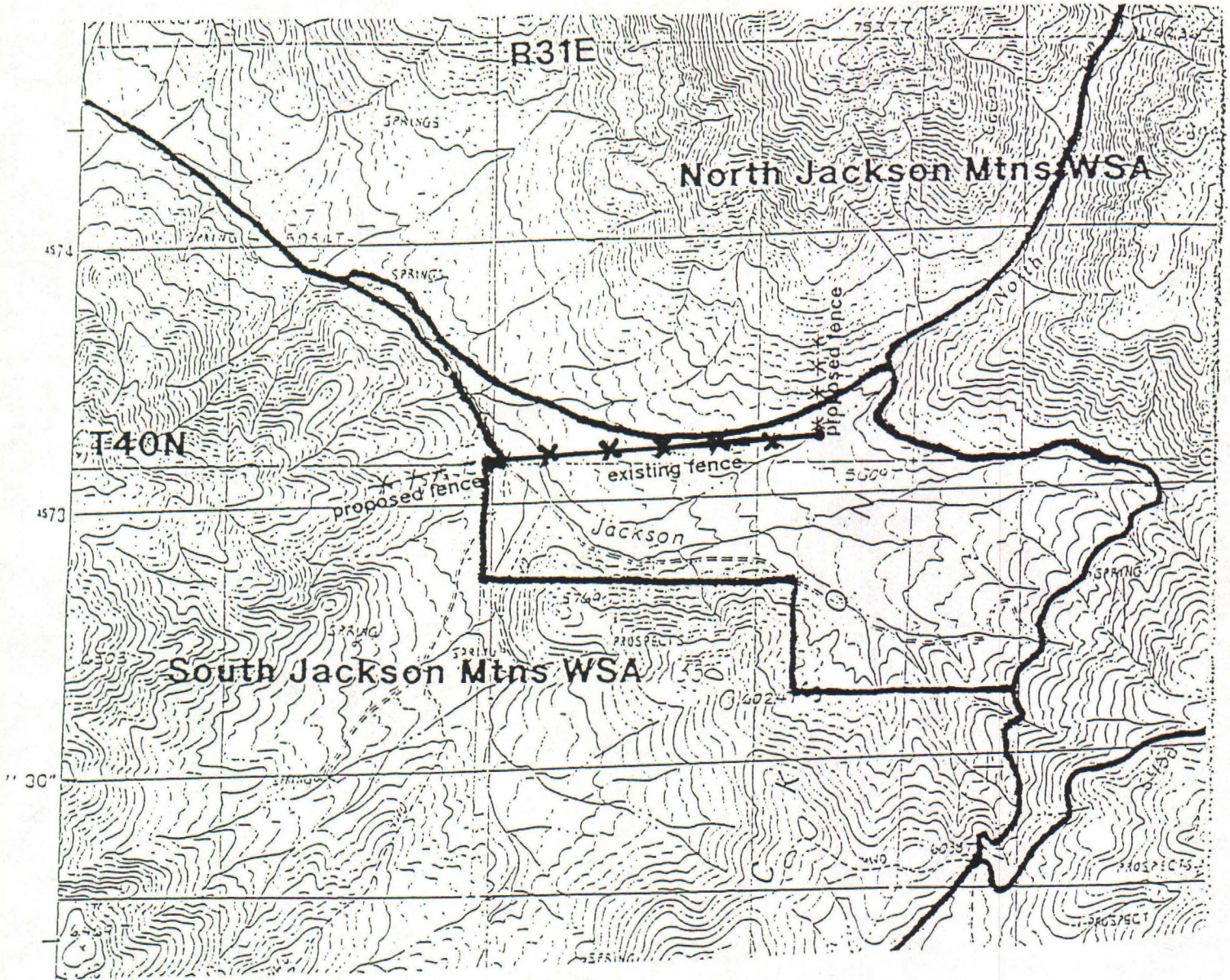
### No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative improvement of riparian condition are expected on Jackson Creek overall because hot season grazing has been eliminated. However, because the middle portion of Jackson Creek is within a relatively narrow canyon resulting in increased use of riparian habitat, improvement of this area is expected to be slower and limited.

## V. Specialist Coordination/Concurrence Comments

In accordance with the wilderness Interim Management Policy, a letter of notification was mailed to those included on the Winnemucca District wilderness mailing list notifying them of the proposed action. A thirty day notification period was provided to allow for input and comment. No replies were received.



# Map 1

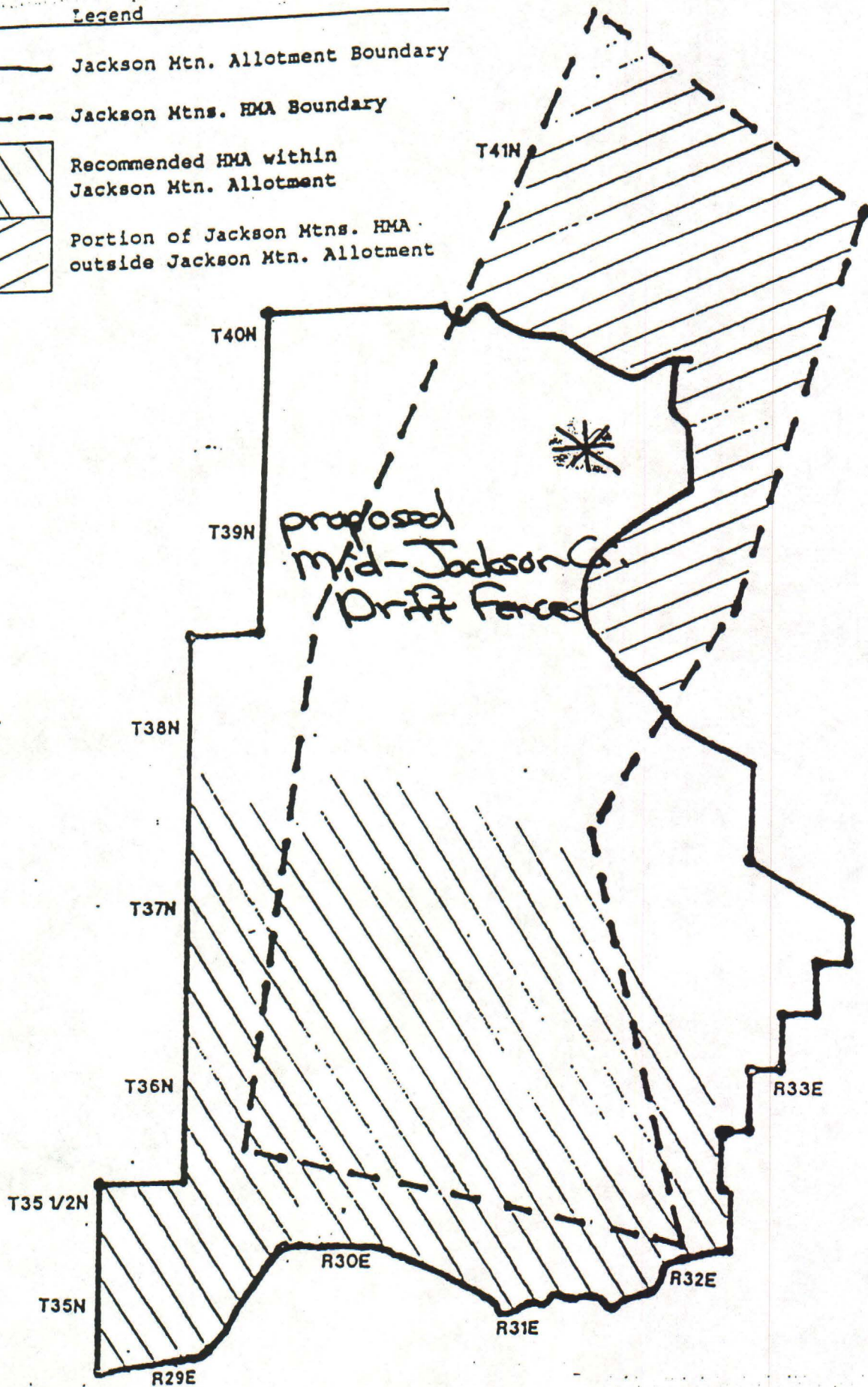


Scale: 1:50,000  
North Arrow

# Map 2

## Legend

- Jackson Mtn. Allotment Boundary
- - - Jackson Mtns. HMA Boundary
-  Recommended HMA within Jackson Mtn. Allotment
-  Portion of Jackson Mtns. HMA outside Jackson Mtn. Allotment



## Appendix 1

### Allotment Specific Objectives Jackson Mountain Allotment Final Multiple Use Decision

#### Short Term Objectives

1. The objective for utilization of key species (POA, JUNCUS, CAREX, POLYP2, POPUL, SALIX) on streambank riparian habitat on Trout Creek, Jackson Creek and Mary Sloan Creek is 30% utilization following fall green up.
2. The objective for utilization of key species (POA, JUNCUS, CAREX, POLYP2, DISTI) on wetland riparian habitat is 50% utilization at the end of the grazing season.
3. The objective for utilization of key species (SYMPH, AMELA, CEANO, PURSH, FEID, SIHY, POSE, STTH2, AGSP, ORHY, EULA5, EPHED, ATCO) on upland habitat is 50% at the end of the grazing season.

#### Long Term Objectives

1. Manage, maintain and improve public rangeland conditions to provide forage on a sustained yield basis for big game, with an initial forage demand of 378 AUMs for mule deer, 60 AUMs for pronghorn and 275 AUMs for bighorn sheep.
  - a. Improve to and maintain 102,930 acres in good or excellent mule deer habitat condition.
  - b. Improve to and maintain 186,523 acres in fair to good pronghorn habitat condition.
  - c. Improve to and maintain 48,429 acres in good to excellent bighorn sheep habitat condition.
2. Manage, maintain and improve public rangeland conditions to provide forage on a sustained yield basis for livestock, with an initial stocking level of 8,857 AUMs.
3. Improve range condition from poor to fair on 355,225 acres.
4. Maintain and improve free roaming behavior of wild horses by protecting and enhancing their home ranges.
5. Provide forage for 117 wild horses.

6. Improve or maintain 967 acres of riparian and meadow habitat types in good condition with maximum species diversity, reproduction and recruitment for maintenance of herbaceous and woody riparian species.
7. Improve or maintain 65 acres of aspen stands in good condition by allowing reproduction and recruitment within the stand and maximizing understory diversity.
8. Improve or maintain 447 acres of mahogany stands in good condition by allowing successful reproduction and recruitment in the stand.
9. Improve or maintain 1 acre of ceanothus in good condition by allowing for successful reproduction and recruitment in the stand.
10. Improve or maintain bitterbrush, snowberry and serviceberry by maximizing reproduction in the community.
11. Protect sage grouse strutting grounds and brooding areas. Maintain a minimum of 30% canopy cover of sagebrush for nesting and winter use.
12. Improve to or maintain the following stream habitat conditions from 67% on Mary Sloan Creek, 58% on Trout Creek and 58% on Jackson Creek to an overall optimum of 60% or above.
  - a) Streambank cover to 60% or above.
  - b) Streambank stability 60% or above.
13. Improve to and maintain the water quality of Jackson, Trout, and Mary Sloan Creeks to the state criteria set for the following beneficial uses: stockwater, cold water aquatic life, water contact recreation and wildlife propagation.

## Appendix 2

### Livestock Actual Use Jackson Mountain Allotment

Year	Actual Use (AUMs)
1996	7,184
1995	8,228
1994	6,426
1993	7,426
1992	5,700
1991	7,099
1990	7,099
1989	8,093
1988	7,050
1987	7,357
1986	7,465
1985	8,684*
1984	8,857*
*Licensed use. Actual use not available.	

### Appendix 3

#### Leonard Creek Ranch Station Monthly and Annual (Jan-Dec) Precipitaion in Inches

<u>Year</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Total</u>
1982										1.04	2.08	0.94	N/A
1983	1.3	1.48	2.64M	0.71	0.2	1.44	0.01	1.94	1.49	0.49	1.91	4.13	15.1M
1984	0.32	0.79	0.89	0.62	0.25	0.29	0.32	0.63	0.27	1.51	2.11	0.5	8.5
1985	0.39	0.73	1.2	0.04	0.05	0	1.09	0.1	1.13	M	1.59	0.5	6.82M
1986	0.49	2.8	1.35	0.83	0.72	0.47	0.48	1	0.93	0	0.15	0.38	9.6
1987	0.91	0.81	1.32	1.09	1.59	1.2	0.07	0.15	0	0.56	0.83	0.77	9.3
1988	1.52	0.26	0.3	1.67	0.09	0.56	0.14	0.18	0.33	0	1.53	1.53	8.11
1989	0.73	0.81	1.09	0.34	1.69	0.65	0	0.21	0.85	0.42	0.58	0.11	7.48
1990	0.28	1.15	0.47	1.86	1.55	0.02	0.21	0.56	0.53	0	0.12	0.44	7.19
1991	0.61	0.61	1.87	0.8	1.69	0.23	0.2	0.27	1.06	1.04	0.26	0.4	9.04
1992	0.07	0.81	1	0.26	0	0.7	0.4	0.02	0.03	2	0.76	1.77	7.82
1993	3.07	0.89	1.35	0.49	0.56	1.87	0.11	T	0.12	0.85	0.28	0.43	10.02
1994	0.12	1.71M	0.67	0.52	0.95	0	0.01	0	0.25	0.18	1.81	2.09	8.31M
1995	2.32	0.07	2.34	1.66	1.33	1	0.32	0.05	0.08	0	0.14	2.18	11.49
1996	2.75	1.12	0.8	0.96	1.04	2.19	0.85M	0	0.22				M
Normal Precip.	1.02	0.83	0.8	0.69	0.69	0.71	0.3	0.5	0.46	0.46	1.05	1	8.51

T: Trace Precipitation

M: Insufficient Data