Draft



## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT Elko Field Office 3900 East Idaho Street Elko, Nevada 89801-0611 http://www.nv.blm.gov

In Reply Refer To: 4130 (NV-012) APR - 9 2001

4/9/01

Hammond Ranches, Inc./Oro Vaca, Inc. c/o Roy Shurtz P.O. Box 2148 Elko, NV 89803

Dear Mr. Shurtz:

During the 2000 wild fire season, approximately 33,716 acres of public and private land within the Little Humboldt, Tall Corral, Jakes Creek, and Bullhead Allotments burned. To ensure proper recovery of the burned area and protect the seedings which were completed this fall and winter, we propose to close the burn area to grazing for a period of time as outlined in the attached proposed Agreement for Fire Closure and Management on the Little Humboldt, Tall Corral, and Jakes Creek Allotments. Please review this draft agreement and provide any comments no later than April 16, 2001.

A copy of this draft agreement will also be sent to those who have specifically requested more detailed information regarding proposed closures and changes in management as a result of the 2000 wildfires. The interested public is also requested to provide any comments no later than April 16, 2001.

If you have any questions please contact Karl Scheetz or Donna Nyrehn of my staff at (775) 753-0200.

Sincerely,

CLINTON R. OKE, Assistant Field Manager Renewable Resources

Enclosure: as stated above

cc:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Attn: Robert Williams Nevada Division of Wildlife Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses, Attn: Cathy Barcomb Elko County Commissioners Kenneth Buckingham Committee for Idaho's High Desert Phyllis Jo Dean Ellison Ranching Company Farm Credit Services Federal Land Bank of Sacramento Intermountain Range Consultants Nevada First Corp., Attn: Gary Bengochea Resource Concepts, Inc., Attn: John McLain Trout Unlimited, Attn: Stephen Trafton Westside Watersheds Project, Attn: Jon Marvel Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA), Attn: Dawn Lappin



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### DRAFT

### AGREEMENT FOR FIRE CLOSURE AND MANAGEMENT ON THE LITTLE HUMBOLDT, TALL CORRAL, AND JAKES CREEK ALLOTMENTS

The Tall Corral Allotment has one permittee: Hammond Ranches, Inc. (aka Oro Vaca, Inc.) The Little Humboldt Allotment has two permittees: Ellison Ranching Company and Hammond/Oro Vaca. The Jakes Creek Allotment has three permittees: Hammond/Oro Vaca, Ellison Ranching Company, and Kenneth Buckingham. Ellison's use in the Little Humboldt and Jakes Creek Allotments is outside of the burned area; Buckingham has applied for non-use on the Jakes Creek Allotment for 2001. Therefore, this agreement is made between the Bureau of Land Management and Hammond/Oro Vaca. This agreement is entered into in accordance with 43 CFR § 4110.3-3. The area which will be closed is also included in the attached Notice of Closure.

The Bureau of Land Management and Hammond/Oro Vaca hereby agree to the following rehabilitation objectives, actions, and considerations for the rehabilitation of the 2000 Kelly Creek wildfire.

### Background

During the 2000 wild fire season, approximately 33,716 acres of public and private land within the Little Humboldt, Tall Corral, Jakes Creek, and Bullhead Allotments burned. The Bullhead Allotment is administered by the Winnemucca Field Office of the BLM and is not affected by this agreement. To ensure proper recovery of the burned area and protect the seedings which were completed or will be completed this coming fall, it is necessary that all of the burned areas within the Jakes Creek and Little Humboldt and Tall Corral Allotments be rested from livestock grazing during the peak growing period for one to two years.

See the attached Map 1 for location of the Kelly Creek fire, allotments, pastures, and proposed fence locations.

- I. Completed and Planned Rehabilitation for the Kelly Creek Fire within the Jakes Creek, Tall Corral, and Little Humboldt Allotments
- 1. Drill seed approximately 2,337 acres with Nordan and Hycrest crested wheatgrass, Siberian wheatgrass and Russian wildrye.
- 2. Spring disk and fall drill seed approximately 2,400 acres with Nordan and Hycrest crested wheatgrass, Siberian wheatgrass and Russian wildrye.

- 3. Aerially overseed approximately 4,844 acres with forage kochia and Western yarrow. (This overseeding will be done in two parts following completion of a portion of the drill seeding in the spring and the remainder of the drill seeding in the fall of 2001.)
- 4. Aerially seed approximately 4,465 acres with forage kochia, Wyoming big sagebrush, and Western yarrow to improve sage grouse habitat.
- 5. Aerially seed 1,740 acres with Secar Snake River wheatgrass and Western yarrow in critical big horn sheep habitat.
- 6. Aerially seed approximately 4,821 acres (includes portions of the Bullhead Allotment) with Basin big sagebrush, Secar Snake River wheatgrass, Ladak alfalfa, Appar Lewis flax, and Western yarrow.
- 7. Re-seed 300 acres of dozer lines.
- 8. Construct approximately 21.49 miles of new fence to protect the burned area from livestock grazing during the fire closure.

See Map 2 for the location of the proposed and/or completed seedings.

### Kelly Creek Seeding Pastures North and South only

## A. Kelly Creek Drill Seeding (approximately 4,844 acres)

Rehabilitation Objectives:

1. Herbaceous species: Density of 3-5 firmly rooted perennial grasses of the seeded or native species per square meter. The density objective will apply to both native and seeded species since the existing perennial species may act to out-compete the seeded species.

However, Hammond/Oro Vaca is concerned that 3-5 perennial grasses may exceed the ecological capability of the site. Therefore, the BLM and Hammond/Oro Vaca will review the BLM's seeding density studies on other sites of the same ecological potential to determine the attainability of this density level. If it is shown to be unlikely to attain such density in the same ecological sites, this density objective will be adjusted downward to an appropriate level.

2. Half-shrubs (forage kochia): Density of one firmly rooted half-shrub (kochia) per square meter. However, some of this area was dominated by shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) before the burn, and experience shows that shadscale may or may not reoccupy such sites after fire. Therefore, if shadscale sprouts in 2001 and/or 2002, the objective will also include shadscale.

BLM and Hammond/Oro Vaca recognize that due to the small seed size and lack of persistence in the soil seedbank from year to year of forage kochia, if the objective of one firmly rooted plant per square meter is not met in the first year it may not be met in the second year. Likewise, if shadscale does not sprout in the first year it will not likely re-occupy the site and the objective for shrubs and/or half-shrubs may not be attainable.

# **B.** Knolls Sage Grouse Aerial Seeding (approximately 4,465 acres total in both pastures)

### Rehabilitation Objectives:

Half-shrubs (forage kochia): Density of one firmly rooted half-shrub (kochia) per square meter.

### C. Actions for Kelly Creek Seeding North and South Pastures:

There will be two growing seasons rest (from spring turn-out, 2001 to August 31, 2002 for Kelly Creek Seeding South and from spring turn-out, 2001 to August 31, 2003 for Kelly Creek Seeding North) to allow seedling establishment, provided however that:

If seedling and mature herbaceous and half-shrub and/or shrub plants meet the density objective, then fall/winter grazing after the first growing season (i.e. September 1, 2001 or 2002) may be authorized. The September 1 date is tied to phenology of kochia and will allow established kochia plants to set seed.

If the seedling and mature kochia and grass plants density objective has not been met after two growing seasons, then one additional growing season of deferment may be required (no longer than through August 31, 2003), but if an additional growing season of deferment is required, dormant season use ( approximately September 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003) may be authorized. During the dormant season, soil will be firm or frozen. At this time seedlings will either be too small to be selected by cattle or if large enough to be selected, due to the firm or frozen ground the seedlings are unlikely to be pulled out of the soil. Dormant use has little effect on seedling growth and survival the next growing season.

### **Jakes Creek Pasture**

# A. Knolls Sage Grouse Aerial Seeding (approximately 4,465 acres total in both pastures)

#### Rehabilitation Objective:

Half-shrubs (forage kochia): Density of one firmly rooted half-shrub (kochia) per square meter.

### **B.** Big Horn Sheep Aerial Seeding (approximately 1,740 acres)

Rehabilitation objective:

Herbaceous species: Density of 3-5 firmly rooted perennial grasses per square meter, including seeded and/or native release plants. Hammond/Oro Vaca is additionally concerned that 3-5 perennial herbaceous plants my exceed the ecological capability of the site. BLM and Hammond/Oro Vaca will review BLM's seeding density studies on other sites of the same ecological potential to determine the attainability of this density level. If it is shown to be unlikely to attain such density in the same ecological sites, this density objective will be adjusted downward to an appropriate level.

# C. Wildlife Aerial Seeding (approximately 4,821 acres seeded however, a portion is in the Bullhead Allotment)

### Rehabilitation objective:

Herbaceous species: Density of 3-5 firmly rooted perennial grass or alfalfa plants per square meter, including seeded and/or native release plants. Hammond/Oro Vaca is additionally concerned that 3-5 perennial grasses or alfalfa plants my exceed the ecological capability of the site. BLM and Hammond/Oro Vaca will review BLM's seeding density studies on other sites of the same ecological potential to determine the attainability of this density level. If it is shown to be unlikely to attain such density in the same ecological sites, this density objective will be adjusted downward to an appropriate level.

# **D.** Native Release Areas (approximately 10,734 acres): Applies to non-seeded portions of the Jakes Creek Pasture only

### Rehabilitation objective:

Herbaceous species: Perennial, native grass production within the burned area equals or exceeds perennial, native grass production within a comparable unburned range site.

### E. Aspen

### Rehabilitation objective:

Fifty percent of suckers/saplings which sprout in 2001 or 2002 attain a height of seven (7) feet or more, provided, however, that:

The objective does not apply to snow-pocket aspen which are usually stunted due to the presence of heavy snowpacks.

Terminal leader use by wildlife will be evaluated along with the measurements of height. If terminal leader use by deer will prevent the attainment of the objective, this objective will be revised to an attainable one, will be dropped, or other actions such as installing deer fencing, etc. will be implemented.

### F. Actions for Jakes Creek Pasture:

There will be two growing seasons rest (from spring turn-out, 2001 to September 1, 2002) to allow seedling establishment, provided however that:

If seedling and mature kochia plants and/or native, perennial herbaceous plants meet the density objective and the native release production objectives are met, then fall/winter grazing after the first growing season (i.e. September 1, 2001) may be authorized.

If the seedling and mature kochia and grass plants and/or native, perennial herbaceous plants density objective and perennial species production objective for the native release area have not been met after two growing seasons, then one additional growing season of deferment may be required (no longer than through August 1, 2003), but if an additional

growing season of deferment is required, dormant season use (approximately August 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003) may be authorized. During the dormant season, soil will be firm or frozen. At this time seedlings will either be too small to be selected by cattle or if large enough to be selected, due to the firm or frozen ground the seedlings are unlikely to be pulled out of the soil. Dormant use has little effect on seedling growth and survival the next growing season.

If the herbaceous and kochia density and production objectives have been met but the aspen objective has not been met, the Jakes Creek Pasture may be opened to grazing provided use would ensure objectives for aspen would be met. Options to protect aspen may include exclosures, riding, herding, salting, timing of use (i.e. prior to July 15), etc.

### **II.** Further Considerations:

Each of the recovery areas may be opened and/or exempted from achievement of objectives independent of the other areas **provided that such authorization of grazing will not prevent attainment of objectives in the other areas.** The Kelly Creek Seeding is fenced separately from the other rehabilitation areas. The other rehabilitation areas are within the Jakes Creek Pasture. If objectives are met for one or more areas within the Jakes Creek Pasture, those areas may be opened for grazing provided that temporary measures (fences, exclosures, riding, herding, salting, timing of use, etc) can be accomplished so that use of the Jakes Creek Pasture will not deter the accomplishment of objectives of the remaining area(s).

### III. Livestock Authorization:

Livestock will be authorized within the Jakes Creek, Little Humboldt, and Tall Corral Allotments during the periods of use and at levels of authorized use as outlined below.

Allotment/ Pasture	Kind Livestock	Periods of Use	Non-use or Suspended AUMs	Active Permitted Use
Jakes Creek Allot	ment			
Flat	Cattle & Horses	3/1-11/15	0	206
FFR	Cattle & Horses	4/1-2/28	0	50
Kelly Sdg North		Fire rehab closure	27	0-27 1
Kelly Sdg South		Fire rehab closure	130	0-130 <sup>1</sup>

Allotment/ Pasture	Kind Livestock	Periods of Use	Non-use or Suspended AUMs	Active Permitted Use
Divide	Cattle	4/16-1/31	0	
1993 EFR	Cattle	4/16-1/31	0	
Spring Ck	Cattle	4/16-1/31	0	
Rim	Cattle	4/16-1/31	0	
Castle Ridge	Cattle	4/16-1/31	0	
Basin	Cattle	Described in separate Decision <sup>2</sup>		6,267 <sup>2</sup>
Sawtooth Spring/Oust	Cattle	Trailing; also see Decision on 1999 Clover Fire Closure <sup>3</sup>	384	0-384 <sup>3</sup>
Jakes Ck	Cattle	Fire rehab closure	1,342	1,342 1
Kelly Sdg North	Cattle	Fire rehab closure	129	0-129 1

<sup>1</sup> See criteria for opening to livestock use in the agreement.

<sup>2</sup> Authorized livestock use in the Basin Pasture(s) is covered under a separate decision. See Decision effective upon issuance date April 5, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Periods of closure and AUMs suspended in the Sawtooth Spring/Oust Pasture are included in a Decision/Notice of Closure for the Little Humboldt Allotment dated December 10, 1999. See criteria for opening to livestock use in Decision dated 12/10/99.

The permittee agrees to place 1,628 AUMs in non-use associated with the Kelly Creek Fire rehabilitation area until livestock use is authorized as outlined in the Actions above. However, additional AUMs may be available from non-use by other permittees within the Jakes Creek Allotment. These non-use AUMs may be permitted to Hammond/Oro Vaca in addition to the AUMs outlined above.

1. Livestock will graze in accordance with grazing authorizations issued by the BLM.

2. Kelly Creek Seeding North and South will be rested as prescribed under Actions listed above. During the time these pastures are not grazed, 156 AUMs and 130 AUMs, respectively will be placed in non-use.

3. Jakes Creek Pasture will be rested as prescribed under Actions listed above. During the time this pasture is not grazed , 1,342 AUMs will be placed in non-use.

4. The Flat Pasture, Divide Pasture, and 1993 EFR Pasture will be used for livestock turn-out. If utilization has not reached 50% or if timing of use permits regrowth of forage after termination of grazing in the spring, these pastures will also be permitted for use in the fall/winter, up to the permitted active use, or up to 50% utilization, whichever comes first. If active permitted use is reached before 50% utilization is reached, BLM may authorize temporary non-renewable use up to 50% provided such use would be compatible with attainment of multiple use objectives. This use would be applied for in advance and authorized in the same manner as all temporary non-renewable use. (Advance notice of three to four weeks would be necessary to conduct monitoring, consult with the interested public, and evaluate any request prior to authorization.)

5. The Oust Pasture/Sawtooth Spring Seeding Pasture will be used only to trail through in the spring and fall in 2001, to and from the Flat, Divide, and 1993 EFR Pastures, and to and from the Spring Creek and Rim Pastures. (Objectives for seeding establishment, non-use AUMs, etc. are outlined in the Decision dated 12/10/99.)

6. Livestock will be primarily "staged" in the Spring Creek and Rim Pastures, either coming from spring turn-out areas to the Basin Pasture or other pastures, or coming from the Castle Ridge Pasture to the other pastures or home meadows.

7. Livestock will be moved out of all pastures when average utilization reaches 50% in those areas reasonable available to livestock or according to livestock management needs (branding, husbandry, economics, etc.), whichever comes first. If a given pasture is not grazed to 50% in the spring, or if timing of use permits regrowth of forage after termination of grazing in the spring, the pasture will be available for grazing in the fall/winter/early spring, up to 50% average utilization within the dates and AUMs specified above. If utilization reaches 50% in all available (non-rested) pastures, livestock will be removed from the allotment(s). If active permitted use is reached before 50% utilization is reached, BLM may authorize temporary non-renewable use up to 50% provided such use would be compatible with attainment of multiple use objectives. This use would be applied for in advance and authorized in the same manner as all temporary non-renewable use. (Advance notice of three to four weeks would be necessary to conduct monitoring, consult with the interested public, and evaluate any request prior to authorization.)

### **IV. Wild Horse Removal from the Rehabilitation Areas:**

Approximately 40 wild horses are within the fire rehabilitation area on the Jakes Creek Allotment. The Jakes Creek Allotment is outside of a Herd Management Area. BLM will remove these horses from this allotment to protect the areas which have been seeded as Nevada BLM priorities allow.

#### V. Monitoring Site Selection and Methods:

Monitoring sites for each of the objectives listed above will be selected in the summer of 2001 by BLM, the permittees, and the interested public who participate in field selection, as follows:

Density will be monitored using the Density Method (Technical Reference 1734-4) with quadrant size and sample size to be determined in the field, unless another method is agreed upon by the BLM, permittee, and interested public who participate.

Production will be monitored by clipping and estimating vegetation using the doubleweight estimate method, in not less than ten 9.6 square foot plots at each selected monitoring location to which the production objective applies.

Aspen height will be determined by tagging not less than 50 aspen suckers at each monitoring site to which the objective applies, in the spring and summer of 2001 and measuring the heights of the tagged plants. To the extent possible, the individuals tagged will be selected systematically (e.g., "first 50 plants", "closest plant after every step", "closest plant after every two steps", etc) to be determined in the field and to be determined so as to represent the stand being monitored. Tagging will ensure that "new" aspen suckers arising in later years do not interfere with the analysis of the objective by depressing the percentage or height readings.

Utilization by pasture will be determined by weighted average utilization of those areas reasonable available to livestock. Utilization intensity of each utilization transect conducted in a representative area of the utilization zone, will be determined by using the Height-Weight Utilization Method per Technical Reference 1734-3 (1996).

Subject to change by BLM and Hammond/Oro Vaca, utilization will be monitored on the following **tentative** schedule:

Flat, Divide, 1993 EFR Pastures:		Spring – May 15, May 30	
		Fall/winter (if used) - to be determined	
Spring Creek:		Summer – prior to fall use	
Rim:		Summer – prior to fall use	
Castle Ridge:	Aug 30, Sept 15, Sept 30, Oct 15, Oct 31		
Rim:	After fall use staging	g out of the Basin and/or Castle Ridge Pastures	

BLM and/or Hammond/Oro Vaca may monitor for any and all of the above objectives, but each will give the other at least five (5) days notice and invitation to participate in each monitoring event.

## VI. Agreement

The agreed upon changes identified above are binding on any successor interest or future transferees with such modifications as approved or required by the authorized officer.

Roy Shurtz, Manager Hammond/Oro Vaca Livestock Grazing Permittee

Date

Clinton R. Oke, Assistant Field Manager Renewable Resources

Date

### NOTICE OF CLOSURE TO LIVESTOCK GRAZING USE

For protection of the soil and reestablishment of perennial vegetation on the public lands in the Little Humboldt, Tall Corral, and Jakes Creek Allotments, I hereby exclude the grazing by any kind of livestock within the burned portions of the following:

•Kelly Creek Drill Seeding South, Kelly Fire, from March 16, 2001 through August 31, 2002; •Kelly Creek Drill Seeding North, Kelly Fire, from March 16, 2001 through August 31, 2003;

•Jakes Creek Pasture, Kelly Fire, from March 16, 2001 through August 31, 2002;

as shown on the attached map. These areas are located in Elko and Humboldt Counties, within the Bureau of Land Management's Elko Field Office area of administration.

This closure is effective March 16, 2001 and will remain in effect until the establishment criteria are met or no longer than August 31, 2003 for the Kelly Creek Drill Seeding South and the Jakes Creek Pasture and no longer than August 31, 2004 for the Kelly Creek Drill Seeding North. Establishment criteria for the Kelly Creek Drill Seeding South and Kelly Creek Drill Seeding North are: (1.) three to five firmly rooted perennial grasses of the seeded or native species per square meter and (2.) one firmly rooted seeded half-shrub or native shrub per square meter. Establishment criteria for the Jakes Creek Pasture are:

Knolls Sage Grouse Aerial Seeding: one firmly rooted seeded half-shrub per square meter.

Big Horn Sheep Aerial Seeding: three to five firmly rooted perennial grasses of the seeded or native species per square meter.

Wildlife Aerial Seeding: three to five firmly rooted perennial grass or alfalfa plants, including seeded or native species per square meter.

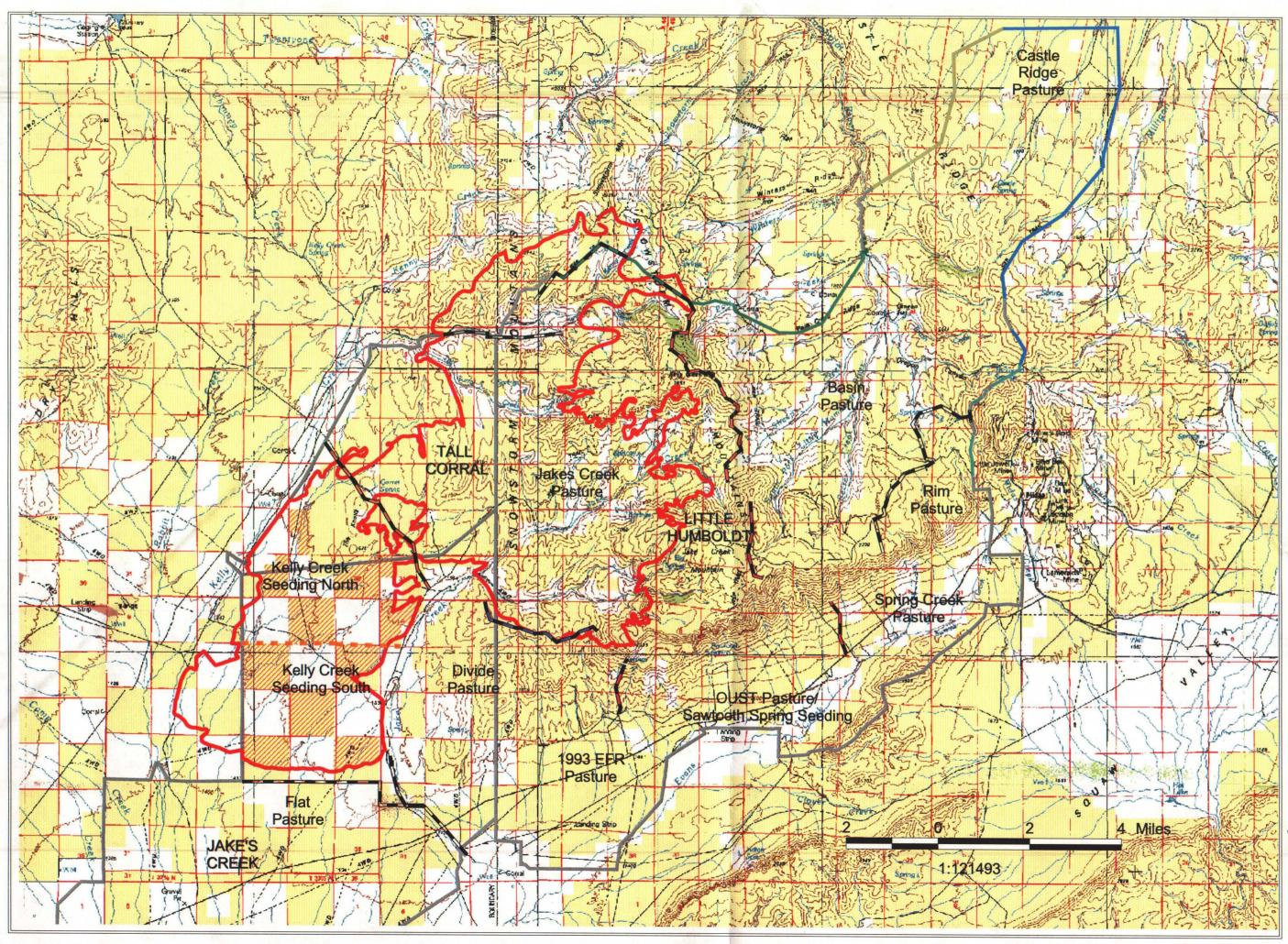
Native Release Areas: Perennial native grass production within the burned area equals or exceeds perennial native grass production within a comparable unburned range site. Aspen: Fifty percent of suckers/saplings which sprout in 2001 or 2002 attain a height of seven (7) feet or more.

If the establishment criteria are not met by the end of the second growing season of closure, these burned areas will be evaluated for the potential to meet the criteria. Some of the factors to be considered in this evaluation will be: amount of total precipitation, amount of growing season precipitation, how close to meeting the establishment criteria the seeding or areas managed for native release are at the end of the first and second growing seasons, what benefits, if any, an additional growing season of rest might provide, etc. If the evaluation at the end of the second growing season concludes that a third year of growing season rest would be beneficial, a third year of growing season rest may be implemented.

This closure is issued as a final decision, in full force and effect pursuant to Title 43, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 4110.3-3(b) and 4160.3(f). Hammond/Oro Vaca, Inc. will be notified of the date that the closed portions of the Jakes Creek, Tall Corral, and Little Humboldt Allotments will be open for grazing.

All owners of livestock affected by this closure will refrain from grazing livestock on the affected lands and will continue to keep all livestock off the above lands during the designated time period. During this time period the Assistant Field Manager, Renewable Resources, Bureau of Land Management, Elko District, or his authorized representative, may proceed to impound, remove and dispose of any livestock found in violation of this notice pursuant to 43 CFR § 4150.4.

CLINTON R. OKE, Assistant Field Manager Renewable Resources Date



**KELLY CREEK FIRE FENCES** AND SEEDING TREATMENT New Fire or Fire-Affected Fence Fire Fences

Fire Fences Basin Buckingham Allotment Fence Garvey-Hammond #2 Fence Garvey-Hammond Allotment Fence Hammond-Allied Division Fence Jake's Drift Fence Knoll Fence Little Humboldt Oust South Fork Stream Exclosure Proposed Seeding Fence Disc/Drill Range Seeding Kelly Creek Fire Boundary Allotment Boundary Line

Jake's Creek Little Humboldt Tall Corral Land Status

Public (Administered by BLM) Private



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT ELKO FIELD OFFICE



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> 3-29-01 by K. Dedolph

