

7-23-04



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104
www.ca.blm.gov/surprise

In Reply Refer To:
4100 (CA 370) (P)

July 23, 2004

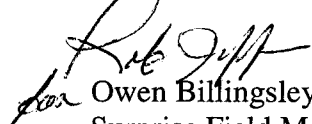
Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) on the proposed renewal of livestock grazing permits for the Sand Creek Allotment.

The assessment will analyze the environmental impacts of continuing livestock grazing on this allotment. Please return any comments that you have regarding this allotment to this office by August 6th, 2004, to ensure consideration. We will use your comments and those received from other interested parties to determine the significant issues to be analyzed in the EA. You will receive a final EA and proposed decision at the end of this process.

Thank you for participating in this grazing permit renewal process. If you have questions, please call Rob Jeffers at (530) 279-2712.

Sincerely,


Owen Billingsley
Surprise Field Manager

Enclosures:
Allotment Summary Information



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Issue Scoping Information Sand Creek Allotment

Introduction

The Sand Creek Allotment has been categorized as an "I", or improve level management category allotment. The Cowhead/Massacre Planning Units Environmental Impact Statement and Nevada Cow Head Management Framework Plan III Grazing Amendment designated this allotment as having improved management potential for intensive livestock practices and did consider it for project development. BLM determined this improved management potential by taking into consideration the size, accessibility, isolation and percentage of private lands included within the allotment. The allotment is within Washoe County, NV, and Modoc County, CA, between the towns of Cedarville and Denio (see map 1)

Mic (Michael) Bunyard, Stu Brown, Ray Page, Joe Stevenson, Dale Steward, Michael Stewart, and Kathy Zandstra currently hold the grazing permits for the Sand Creek Allotment. The allotment consists of 66,712 acres of public land with 9,780 acres of private, totaling 76,492 acres with 3,647 active AUMs.

The allotment is further divided into three descriptive areas: Desert Shrublands 17,053 acres public, 6,620 private, Improved Rangeland 32,305 acres public, 920 acres private, and Carter Reservoir Uplands 12,631 acres public, and 2,240 acres private.

The Sand Creek Allotment permittees each owns or leases base property attached to the Sand Creek Allotment. The allotment is used grazing season long with a five pasture rest rotation system based on range readiness. Application has been made and authorized for full preference on the Sand Creek Allotment for the past 10 years. Current permitted use on the allotment is as follows:

Sand Creek Allotment		Livestock		Grazing Period		% Public Land	Type Use	AUM's		
Auth. #	Permittee	Number	Class	Begin	End			Active	Suspended	Total
0402636	Zandstra	35	C	4/15	9/30	100	Active	195	50	245
0402645	Ray Page	107	C	4/1	5/15	100	Active	159	85	244
0402645	Stewart	81	C	4/16	9/30	100	Active	446	114	560
0402657	Stu Brown	208	C	4/16	7/15	100	Active	749	187	936
0402658	Stevenson	104	C	4/16	9/30	100	Active	988	249	1237
0402660	Steward	101	C	4/15	9/30	100	Active	560	140	700
0402674	Bunyard	293	C	4/16	9/30	100	Active	962	191	1153
	Total	816	C	04/01	09/30	100%	Active	3647	902	5075

Basic Livestock Operation

The livestock operation consists of seven cow/calf operators running cattle in common. The basic use period would be as follows:

106 cattle	04/01 - 4/15	53 AUMs.
812 cattle	04/16 - 05/15	812 AUMs.
706 cattle	05/16 - 07/15	1,412 AUMs
548 cattle	07/16 - 09/30	1,370 AUMs
816 cattle	Total	3,647 AUMs

Rangeland Health Assessment: An RHA was conducted on the Sand Creek Allotment in 1999.

Soils Health: Met Standards for Rangeland Health

Stream Health: Not meeting Standards, but progressing towards.

Riparian/ wetland: Not Meeting Standards, but progressing towards

Biodiversity: Not Meeting Standards, but progressing towards

Allotment Condition: Native Range and Seeding slight upward trend

Known Issues

- The allotment has a moderate cheatgrass infestation with the potential to develop a cheatgrass monoculture after a catastrophic fire.
- Large areas of the allotment have juniper encroachment due to disrupted fire cycles.
- The grass to shrub ratio demonstrates the disrupted fire cycle; shrubs are becoming the dominant plant form on many range sites.
- Access roads have impacted riparian areas and water quality with increased sediment loading.
- Grazing has impacted plant population distribution: Blue bunch wheatgrass, Green needle grass, and Idaho fescue have decreased, or are absent on many range sites. Sandberg Bluegrass has become the dominant grass in grazed area.
- Water quality (water temperature) has been impacted by changes in stream channel morphology and reductions in plant populations that shade water courses. Both of these impacts are directly due to livestock impacts in riparian areas. Currently riparian exclosures are in place to limit livestock access.
- Wild horses were reduced to appropriate management levels in the summer of 2003; between 20 to 30 head currently populate the allotment.

Need for the Proposed Action

In 2000, the term grazing permits for the Sand Creek grazing allotment were renewed in accordance with section 123 of public law 106-113, Consolidated Appropriations Act 2000. The permit renewals were to be in effect until the BLM could complete full processing of each proposed permit renewal in compliance all applicable laws and regulations.

The proposed action is needed to authorize grazing in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and to be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Proposed Action

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to issue seven grazing permits in the Sand Creek Allotment. These permits would be for 10 years, or for the term of each base property lease (not to exceed 10 years), as applicable. The permitted grazing use would remain unchanged for the Sand Creek permits. The permits would be issued following a grazing decision expected to be issued by the end of 2004.

Grazing Authorization:

The following Permitted Use and Terms and Conditions would be made part of the permits in accordance with 43 CFR 4110.2-2 & 43 CFR 4130.3, 4130.3-1 and 4130.3-2:

Sand Creek Allotment		Livestock		Grazing Period		% Public Land	Type Use	AUM's		
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Additional Terms and Conditions common to all permits:

1. Grazing use offered or authorized by BLM is subject to all provisions of the grazing regulations (43 CFR Parts 4100) and other applicable law and regulation. Grazing use would be in accordance with the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for California and Northwestern Nevada Final EIS approved by the Secretary of the Interior on July 13, 2000. Grazing use authorization may be modified in accordance with regulation to attain progress towards achieving rangeland health standards (subpart 4180.1 and 4180.2 Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration).
2. Grazing use in the Sand Creek Allotment will be in compliance with the Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and all other applicable decisions. Any livestock use found outside the limits of flexibility of the AMP, without prior authorization, would be subject to unauthorized use billing.
3. Billing would be based on your actual use reports which are to be submitted within 15 days of your last authorized take off date for each allotment. If actual use reports are not submitted within 15 days, or if grazing billings are not paid within 30 days of the due date, actual use billing privileges may be suspended.
4. Any deviation in season of use, livestock number, or pasture rotation must receive prior approval from the authorized officer.

5. Salt and/or mineral supplements would be placed no closer than ¼ mile from any public water source.
6. Livestock grazing is not permitted within enclosures, unless such use promotes meeting the objectives for the enclosure, and use is prescribed in the annual operating plan.
7. Sheep would not be allowed to camp in aspen stands and riparian areas.
8. All range improvements must be maintained to standards prior to livestock turnout. All assigned fence maintenance must be completed annually, even if your permit is not activated. Failure to complete assigned fence maintenance may result in suspension of your grazing authorization.

Range Improvements

There are cooperative agreements or section 4 permits for range improvements for the Sand Creek Allotment. New range improvements are currently planned for the Sand Creek Allotment. Range improvements may be identified as needed by the BLM or applied for by the lessee in the future. Future improvements would be authorized in accordance with grazing regulations and other applicable laws and regulations.

Monitoring

Grazing monitoring data is available for Sand Creek Allotment. This data is located in the allotment files. The allotment has been monitored in accordance with appendix 2 of the *Record of Decision for the Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (June 1999)*, which is available at the BLM Surprise Field Office.

Please provide your comments by August 6, 2004 to Ken Lucas, BLM rangeland management specialist. You can provide your comments in the following ways:

Mail:

Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Ken Lucas
PO Box 460
Cedarville CA 96104

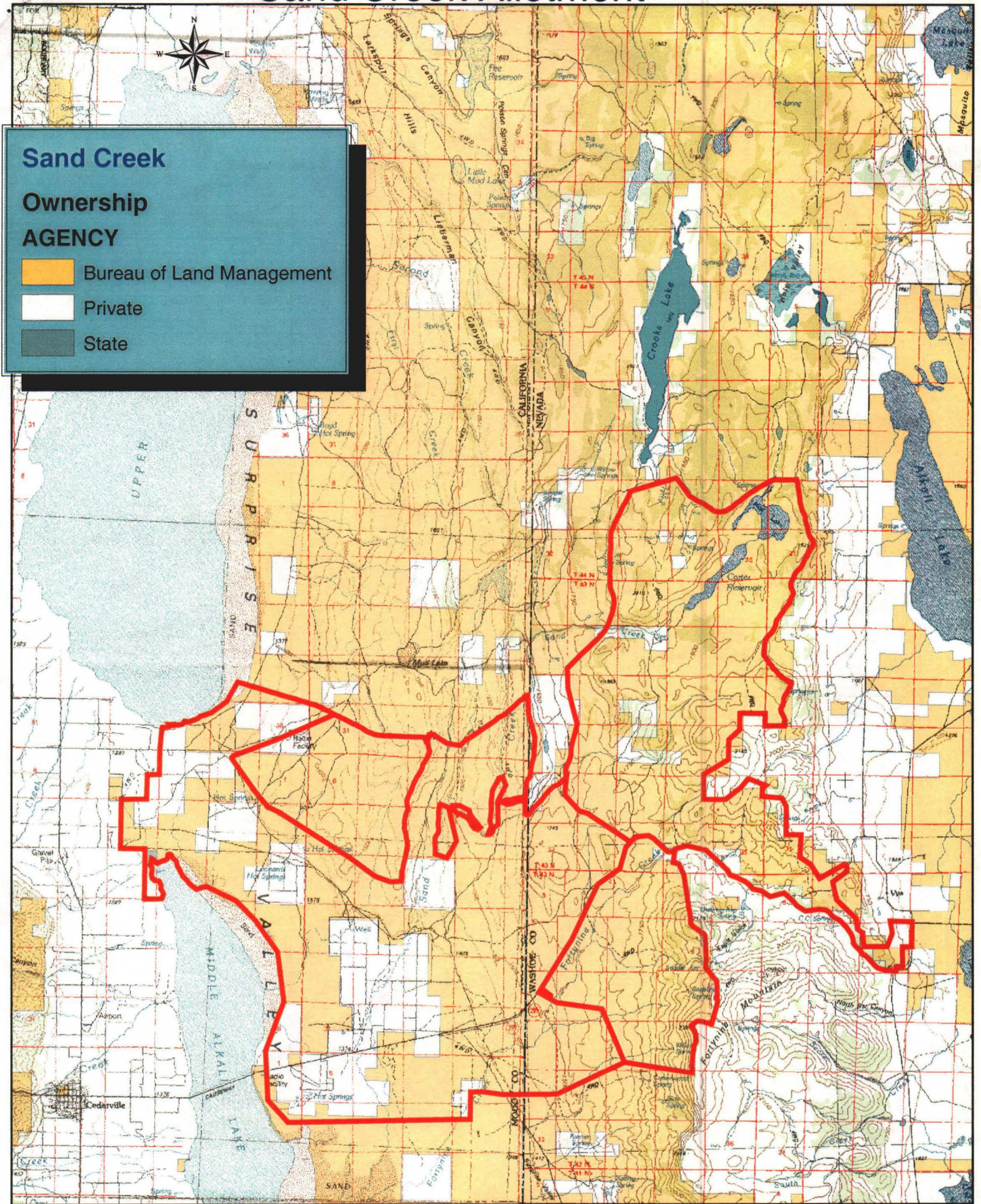
E-mail:

ken_lucas@blm.gov

Phone:

(530) 279 2724


Sand Creek Allotment




Sand Creek

Ownership

AGENCY

 Bureau of Land Management

 Private

 State

